

THE CHANGING AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF KING DINGANE IN  
HISTORICAL LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY IN THE  
CONSTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE IN 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

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IN 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY**

**BY**

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## DEDICATION

To my parents and extended family for their unwavering support. Also to my beloved colleagues, teachers and principals at Emisebeni Lower Primary School and Vukuzenzele Higher Primary School in Mofolo Village, Soweto, way back in the 1960s. Those were toughest years in life, never mind the punishment, *ngifunda ezomlando* (reading history), *ukubhala* (writing), *kanye nezibalo* (and arithmetic). It is only now that I understand the meaning of those years -including the past.

## ABSTRACT

Because History, among other things, serves ideological purposes, it is essential to examine the asymmetrical relationship between power and knowledge, including the ways in which historical knowledge is constructed and handed from one generation to the next (and this includes the impact of academy). One of the key ways in which this is done is examining the images of African peoples in History and produced by themselves. Consequently this thesis analyses the construction of African images of King Dingane, the second Zulu King, in various historical sources and texts. The African images are an appropriate focus because over the years the Afrikaner Nationalist image of the monarch has attained a certain, fragile hegemony. The colonial encounter between King Dingane and white settlers involved more than the acquisition of land and labour. At the centre of this encounter were issues of definition and difference, language and identity, and the intimate workings of power. In contemporary South Africa one can deduce that God desires white supremacy and that he will not abandon whites. It is very difficult to separate out images of King Dingane from such a claim. All these issues are at the core of Afrikaner Nationalist historiography and conventional history. This is exemplified by the so-called 'Dingane-Retief Treaty', the Battle of 'Blood River' and the Day of the Vow/Covenant celebrations on the 16th of December that honour the Voortrekkers and the 'Great Trek'.

There exists sufficient primary and secondary sources that portray images of King Dingane. These include recorded African oral traditions which can be found in the James Stuart Archives, *izibongo*, newspapers articles in *iLanga laseNatali*, *iNkundhla yaBantu*, the *Bantu World* and *Umsebenzi* among others, historical novels, journals and history texts published by Africans, for example, Petros Lamula and Bhambatha Vilakazi. In addition, drama/ theatre, poetry, public spheres, community halls, rallies and mass meetings organised by workers, the African National Congress and Inkatha were used as weapons to construct King Dingane's image. These multiple images varied and reflected the mixture of attitudes and the range of perspectives held by Africans.

## PREFACE

The production of history based on various monarchs was an exercise undertaken by both the colonisers and the colonised. This historiography largely relied on existing African oral traditions, *izibongo*, myths and legends. This study examines the active role undertaken by African agents in the production of historical knowledge by using King Dingane as a case study. Any of the images of King Dingane are conditioned by successive political concerns and are also powerfully influenced by raw materials that are neither objective nor neutral. This study will try and understand how 'earliest facts' about King Dingane were constructed and how they influenced contemporary images about the monarch. I will focus my attention on the efforts of organic- public intellectuals, workers, authors, journalists, politicians and scholars in the construction of King Dingane's images during the 19th and 20th centuries. The various images of King Dingane are not homogenous because they are related to, and in some measure are constructed according to social formations as well as targeted audiences. In responding to this challenge, I will therefore carry out a sustained, systematic examination of the coexistence of, and interrelationship between, the production of history and the social world in which historical representation form oral traditions, *izibongo*, religion, trade unionism, journalism, academies, political struggles, and economic discourse-play an important role in the construction of historical knowledge on King Dingane.

Whereas the representation and history of the image of King Shaka has been studied, a similar exercise is lacking concerning King Dingane. Therefore this exploratory study will attempt to plug the existing gap and make contribution towards the production of historical texts based on the monarch. The 'earliest facts' about the image King Dingane were constructed by, amongst others, *izimbongi* like Magolwane kaMakhathini and Mshongweni as public intellectuals who were subjects of the Zulu Kingdom. They used Zulu culture, customs and traditions in their production of historical knowledge about the king. This study shows how the resulting images were dynamic and multifaceted and changed in a given time. This paved the way for the existence of divergent views on the monarch, which were sometimes linked to those of King Shaka. Hence Skota's assertion that

Dingane had not the military genius of Shaka, nor had he the vision of the great African empire, the Empire that his brother had eagerly fought for, even to an extent of earning for himself the name of 'Shaka the Terrible'<sup>1</sup>

But on a different note Credo Mutwa is of the opinion that

Shaka was an even worse chief than Dingana, a madman and a tyrant who, the history books inform us, was the greatest the Zulu ever had-probably because he never once offered resistance to European encroachment.<sup>2</sup>

The pro-King Dingane African nationalist regarded the advent of the white settlers in kingdom as symbolising the struggle for control over people, political power and land. Voortrekkers sought the very independence and freedom they were out to destroy among Africans. This is the context that African nationalist feel King Dingane's attack on Piet Retief and voortrekkers should be understood. According to Jordan Ngubane, in particular, King Dingane was vindicated later when the Afrikaners legalised racism and lived up to their reputation as oppressors. So in their literature King Dingane's mistrust of whites and resistance to white encroachment transform him from an unthinking tyrant to a perceptive martyr. Seloape Thema was one of the first African Nationalists to propagate this viewpoint in the beginning of the 20th century. The above-mentioned nationalistic images can be found in speeches and writing of various politicians, authors and academics. Their interpretations of King Dingane's relationship with white settlers depict the latter as disrespectful imperialists and unscrupulous men, attempting to enrich themselves at the expense of the indigenous population. Commenting on this issue Herbert Dhlomo highlighted the invasion of Zulu land by the voortrekkers by putting the following words in King Dingane's mouth

...Now white men are coming into my country, not one by one as they came in Shaka's time, but by ten and ten; riding on horse, their deadly guns in their hands, ready to spread amazement and death. This is a new thing. Shaka never had to face it, nor my father Senzangakhona, nor his father, Jama, before him. It has come to me.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> T.D. Mveli, *The African Yearly Register*, Johannesburg, 1932; R. Dhlomo, *uDingane*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> C. Mutwa, *Indaba my children*, Johannesburg, Blue Crane Books, nd, p.130.

<sup>3</sup> H. Dhlomo *Dingana 3* manuscript. p.15.



The French travel writer, Adulphe Delagorgue, also wrote of important eyewitness accounts about events in the wake of impi yaseNcome. Disputing that King Dingane had granted land to the voortrekkers in a form of a treaty, he commented:

They (Africans) simply laughed, unable to take the matter seriously; they laughed at the foolishness of the Europeans. They laugh as we would laugh if a Chinese junk arrived to take possession of France in the name of the Celestial Empire, we could consider it a matter of great mirth, and this is just what the natives did. The situation here was exactly similar. The (Zulu) land was not virgin; it was inhabited by numerous population...<sup>4</sup>

To expand on this point I also pay considerable attention to the “Dingaan’s Day” counter-commemorations. It is possible to plot changing images of King Dingane constructed by the Communist Party of South Africa, Independent Commercial Union, and African National Congress through newspapers, leaflets, handbills and police reports of various “Dingaan’s Day” activities. Their construction of King Dingane's images question conventional depictions of colonial conquest and show the importance of African unity for emancipation to be achieved. Strongly inferred as well is the rejection of any alliance between whites and Africans since the former cannot be relied upon. They show that that the African based the events that led up to 'Blood River' on suspicion and the fear of conquest. So the reputation that preceded the voortrekkers was one that did not augur well for the meeting with King Dingane. The ANC position was ambivalent and changed with time. In the late 1920s and 30s they were reformist and did not appropriate the king and "Dingaan's Day" as a symbol resistance. Their position changed when the Afrikaner Nationalist government banned the liberation movements in 1960 leading to the formation of uMkhonto weSizwe in 1961. The ANC's African nationalist position gained momentum during the 1970s as their publications like Sechaba and Dawn conferred on King Dingane the status of a martyr and freedom fighter.

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<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Jeff Guy for this reference, A. Delegorgue, Travels in Southern Africa, University of Natal, Chapter 10, Volume 1, pp.120-121. See J. Guy working paper on 'Re-interpretations of Zulu perceptions of the Boer/Zulu conflict in the 1830', presented on at the University of Zululand October 1988 seminar on impi yaseNcome/Blood River

A further aim of the thesis will be an exploration of the ambiguities of Zulu nationalist representations of King Dingane. What is fundamental to the differing portrayal of the king by the King is the influence of oral traditions. These are at the central core of the narrative whether expounded Thomas M'zwenduku Masuku or Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. These images can be compared and contrasted with those articulated by Africans who had accepted Christianity as a religion and other culturally inspired religious formations. The Zulu based African independent church, the Shembe Church, was one of the independent black churches that celebrated "Dingane's Day". This church also constructed a particular image of the Zulu monarchs. The former, as a class, represents amakholwa like Magera Fuze and John Dube. This group, who at first began to doubt their culture and the philosophical foundations of their existence, who asserted that Western civilisation was superior, regarded King Dingane as an uncouth barbarian. They celebrated the demise of 'heathens and tyrants' like King Dingane. The apparent commonality expressed under their images is the fact that King Dingane acquired the throne by treachery and he was an unpredictable, insecure, and cruel king. For this discussion I will rely on various publications, newspapers like iLanga including the publication of academics like Mazisi Kunene and Themba Msimang who were influenced by this group.

The use of historical materials and sources in relation to the construction of particular images will be a central issue addressed by this study. In a study of this kind themes and sources intertwine so closely that it becomes artificial to treat them separately. They are therefore considered together here. A preliminary survey points to the existence of sufficient primary and secondary sources. Like Carolyn Hamilton, I question not only the distinction between the fields of history, politics and literature but challenge divisions implicit within each area.<sup>5</sup> Such distinctions exist within academic historical writings between historical texts, oral traditions, izibongo, and accounts of travellers, missionaries and colonial officials. Within the field of literature distinctions exist between poetry, drama and historical novels. I query the distinction between historiography and the sources mentioned above. An unquestioning acceptance of this division ignores what is similar in all these sources, namely the construction of King Dingane's images in these texts.

Up to now South African historians depended largely on sources written in Afrikaans and English. In contrast my study will use sources written and published in isiZulu as an official

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<sup>5</sup> C.A. Hamilton, 'Authoring Shaka: Models, Metaphors and Historiography', Ph. D thesis, John Hopkins University, 1993.

language. I have tried to translate most of the passages for both the international and South African audience who might have an interest in my study. But a few passages have not been translated. This has nothing to do with ethnic or African nationalism. I did this in order to celebrate the historical epoch in South Africa when African languages were given equal status to both English and Afrikaans. By using isiZulu in this thesis I have shown that African languages have played a significant, multi-faceted role than they are appreciated in the existing historiography of South Africa.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many people have contributed to my enduring, hazardous and long doctoral thesis journey. I am sad because along the way I lost my father, paternal grandmother and maternal grandfather. I hereby wish to acknowledge their understanding and support whilst they were still all. This thesis nearly did not see the light of the day and the darkness of the night. It is still a mystery to my doctors and family that I am still alive today after I was hospitalised in 1998. I therefore want to thank my ancestors, *amadlozi*, *amathonga* from both my maternal and paternal side including nurses and doctors at Milpark hospital, Johannesburg for ensuring my survival. The doctors names are Drs. Dalby, Girdwood and Stanley. Surely I am blessed

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to my former colleagues and students at Vista University, Sebokeng Campus, particularly my Honours class of 1994 and 95. I hope they still remember that horrible History Method Memorandum on King Dingane written by one of my colleagues in the History Department. After they voiced their dissatisfaction I promised them that I will do something about it before I pass away- hence the long drives I embarked upon to Wits University History Department in 1995 to register for my Ph.D degree. To my former students- I tried my best. This thesis about images of King Dingane provides the necessary proof. I also hereby confess that I do not have all the solutions to the questions that were raised during the seminars.

At Wits I was welcomed with open arms by Professor Phillip Bonner who along the treacherous journey invited Professor Carolyn Hamilton to join the team and as they say- the rest is history. This was definitely a team effort and I tried my best to play my part and accepted all my responsibilities. Thanks to both Phillip and Carolyn, *ningadinwa nangomuso* and *izandla ziyagezana*. To Carolyn, your tears at Milpark Hospital were not in vain- I did manage to soldier on. I have kept all the versions of Chapter 1. They are about ten. I kept on coming back and at the end I enjoyed the fact that you were exhausted, I apologise. Probably you can use this experience the day you decide to write a manual on 'Supervision of Postgraduate Students'. As a good historian you will need documented primary evidence, oral histories and traditions. I am available and I will help you in this regard.

I also extend my gratefulness to uBab' Mazisi Kunene, Elliot Zondi and Themba Msimang for the interviews. I will also like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to uBab' Bernard Magubane for his encouragement. IsiZulu sithi '*indlela ibuzwa kulabo aba phambili*'. To my family- Gugulethu, daughter Demi and son Mxolisi, I still cannot explain what is a doctoral thesis or post-graduate studies in any African language but I am sure your experiences and observations throughout this journey can provide the necessary answer to that perennial question, '*kanti uqeda nini ukufunda*'. It is now your turn and I will pose the same question. I apologise for spending less quality time with all of you. To Sis' Kate and Bhuti Eric thanks for looking after me all these years. To uMam' Philisile at Pietermaritzburg thanks for taking care of Mxolisi. To Khanyisile and MacKenzie thanks for looking after my grandfather- the beloved Mkhulu while I was away from Soweto. All

your efforts made it easier for me to focus on my studies even though there were problems at home. This was another team effort and thus without such family support structure and network I would never have survived in this individualistic world. I hope these structures will not be undermined by the future because they are effective and are part of our past, culture and tradition. I also know that I have the dubious distinction of being the first one in the family to register for a doctoral degree but I am humbled by your understanding, encouragement and help all the way through. My achievement is our achievements and therefore I require no special treatment. I am still the same introvert and to confess, it was a difficult, painful journey. To all my friends particularly Cliff Mhlongo who allowed being a squatter in his room at the University of Natal's Durban Alan Taylor Residence. This was during the days of the vicious De Klerk Bills before I took my transfer to the Pietermaritzburg campus. Thank you Ntemi for showing *ubuntu*.

Last but not least, the financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (CSD), my former employers, towards writing of this work is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this thesis and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily attributed to the CSD.

## CHAPTER 1

### KING DINGANE: 1828 - EARLY 20TH CENTURY

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the creation of the archive<sup>1</sup> on King Dingane by Africans. The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part of this archive comprises mainly on izibongo and oral traditions found in the James Stuart Archives. In the first part I examine the role of izimbongi, Magolwane kaMakhathini and Mshongweni and the central part they played in creating the king's image and archive through izibongo. This section of the chapter also looks at the role of African public intellectuals in contributing to that archive by discussing the main themes defining the oral tradition on King Dingane. Part two analyses the first published collection of these traditions on King Dingane in the book Izindatyana zabantu<sup>2</sup> published by William Ngidi and Rev. J. W. Colenso in 1858.

Izibongo<sup>3</sup> are amongst the earliest forms of historical materials that make it possible for us to gain insight into the images of Zulu kings amongst others, Dingane.<sup>4</sup> In his general discussion

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<sup>1</sup> The question on the establishment of the archive has in the last few years received substantial theoretical treatment, for a historiography of these debates, particularly those relating to the Zulu Kingdom see C.A. Hamilton, 'Authoring Shaka: Models, Metaphors and Historiography', Ph.D. thesis, John Hopkins University, 1993; D. Golan, 'Construction and Reconstruction in Zulu History', Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University; E. Hobsbawn and T. Ranger (eds.), The invention of tradition, Cambridge, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Church of England Mission, Izindatyana zabantu:kanye nezindaba zaseNatal, Bishopstowe, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> On 'precolonial history' of izibongo and discussion of their merits and drawbacks, see B.W.Vilakazi, 'The oral and written literature in Nguni', unpublished Phd thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1945; Sibusiso Nyembezi, 'The historical background to the izibongo of the Zulu Military Age', African Studies, December 1948, pp.110-125,157-174; M. Kunene, 'An analytical survey of Zulu Poetry both traditional and modern', M.A. dissertation, Natal University 1957; 'Portrait of Magolwane-the great Zulu Poet', Cultural Events in Africa, 32, 1976, pp. 1-14.

<sup>4</sup> See James Stuart collection of Izibongo zika Dingane, JSA, File 28, KCM 23478. This file is a 20 pages long compilation of different izibongo from different izimbongi. I have decided to use this version for my work, as it is a collation of izibongo by Tununu, Ngidi, Sivivi and Lunguza among others. See also C.S.L. Nyembezi pathbreaking work, 'The historical background' and Izibongo zamakhosi, Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1958, Chapter 5 on the historical significance and analysis of izibongo zikaDingane. Ngcobo and Rycroft further carried on with Nyembezi's work in Izibongo zamakhosi, in the late 1980s. This publication also included an English translation of Stuart's standard version, see A.B. Ngcobo and D.K. Rycroft, The praises of Dingana: Izibongo zikaDingana, Pietermaritzburg, 1988; E. Gunner, 'Ukubonga Nezibongo:Zulu Praising and Praises', Phd thesis, University of London, 1984. T. Cope [ed.], Izibongo: Zulu Praise Poems, London, 1968. For interpreting izibongo zika Dingane I am indebted to Thokozani Nene, a prominent member of uKhozi,

of izibongo, Sibusiso Nyembezi asserts that izibongo are a feature of the south Eastern Bantu. They constitute concentrated and rich historical texts and were recited in praise of kings, their izinduna and all others that for some reason or other gained public recognition and distinction. The warrior who went to the battlefield and by his valorous deeds drew attention to himself won praises or added to those he already possessed. Women of rare ability like the Regents Mnkabayi and Ntombazi likewise ignited the poetic spark in the Zulu bard that would result in a spontaneous recital of their accomplishments. Generally women were praised when they married (perhaps that is why so much was made of their beauty to impress their in-laws). It was also not uncommon in Zulu society to give praises to a child newly born. Such praises formed part of what the amaZulu call ukuteketisa. Some people praised themselves. A warrior might stand up and sing his own praises and be urged on by listeners cheering him.<sup>5</sup> According to Hamilton, izibongo bear complex witnesses to the societies from which they emerge and exhibit a double ideological aspect. They were at once a form of history in which the worldview of the rulers was expressed, and a vehicle for the expression of social disaffection. They were, at the same time, the chronicles of individual lives, of both rulers and commoners, for praises were not confined to the scions of chiefly society.<sup>6</sup>

Izibongo were also not confined to human beings. One of the primary interests of isiNtu-speakers is cattle, although the impact of European economy is changing that outlook. Cattle played a very important part in their ceremonials. This high esteem for ritual animals causes them to enter into the fabric of izibongo. Men are represented as animals and animals themselves are personified. When there was drought, cattle were slaughtered in propitiation of the spirits; they were also used to pay lobola, which served as an important factor to legalise the union between man and wife. Also, rams and dogs were praised.<sup>7</sup>

As has been pointed out above, praises were really a record of the valorous deeds of great people. The praises were a reservoir for historical events. It must not be forgotten that

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[formerly called Radio Zulu] who is also this station's leading 'expert' in the culture and history of amaZulu- an incomplete taped interview of Thokozani is in my possession. This interview was carried out on my behalf by Bhekisisa Malinga, an undergraduate history student at Natal University, 20th and 30th May 1996. Nyembezi's book is also useful, but has stanzas that are different to the Stuart izibongo. I will discuss this text chapter 4 of the thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Nyembezi, 'The historical background to the izibongo', part 1. The general discussion of izibongo largely depends on this publication.

<sup>6</sup> C. Hamilton, 'Ideology, oral traditions and the struggle for power in the early Zulu Kingdom', Masters dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985, p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> Nyembezi, 'The historical background to the izibongo', p.111.

Africans had no system of recording on paper the passing events as they came to pass, so that the handing down of history over generations had of necessity to be oral. To keep these events fresh in the minds of the praiser himself and the people, more generally, in all ceremonial occasions the custom was to praise the king, starting with the forefathers who were no more. Imbongi would recite the praises one after the other until he ended with those of the reigning sovereign. Not only the praises but the proverbs, riddles, folklore etc, were handed down in the same way, that is, orally. Izibongo if properly studied, may provide ideas as to what people of the time thought of their kings. Although not much could be said against the king by the court poet but he did have a measure of poetic licence to criticise. The following praise words of King Dingane composed by Magolwane kaMakhathini will always remain true:

Vezi kof' abantu, kusal'izibongo  
 Izone zosala zibadalula  
 Izone zosal'zibalilil'emanxiweni  
 [Vezi, people will die, praises will remain  
 They will remain exposing them  
 They will remain mourning for them in the deserted kraals].<sup>8</sup>

### **1. Magolwane kaMakhathini and Mshongweni and the creation of the archive of King Dingane through izibongo**

Most of izibongo of the Zulu kings recorded by James Stuart<sup>9</sup> were composed by one of the most eminent Zulu public intellectuals, Magolwane kaMakhathini,<sup>10</sup> including the praises of King Dingane and the Regent Mnkabayi analysed in this chapter. Both Magolwane and Mshongweni as prominent izimbongi collected, composed and recited izibongo. Tununu claims that Magolwane was 'unina wezimbongi zonke', that is, 'the mother of all

<sup>8</sup> All translation of izibongo are from Ngcobo and Rycroft, The Praises of Dingana unless stated otherwise.

<sup>9</sup> These are available and are part of the James Stuart Archives housed at the Killie Campbell library under the title of 'Stuart Book of Eulogies'. Stuart's collated version of izibongo zikaDingane, KCM 23486, File 29a, Sivivi version was recorded by Stuart in 1907, Book of Eulogies, File 75, Vol 1; Tununu version was recorded in 1903, File 75, Vol 1; Ngidi's version was recorded in 1904, File 75, Vol 1; Lunguza's version was recorded in 1909, File 75, Vol. 1, Ngcobo and Rycroft, The Praises of Dingana, p.51.

<sup>10</sup> M. Kunene, 'Magolwane, the greatest Zulu Poet', Afro-Asian Writings, Vol 1, No 4, p.13, 1970. This paragraph is largely based on this article and 'Analytical survey of Zulu Poetry'. On oral traditions about Magolwane see his son's, Mshayankomo's testimony in James Stuart Archive, vol. 4, 1986, pp.106- 7, hereafter JSA, C. Webb and J. Wright [Eds.] The James Stuart Archive of recorded oral evidence relating to the history of the Zulu and neighbouring peoples, Vols1(1976), 2 (), 3(), 4 (1986) Durban and Pietermaritzburg.



praise-singers' as 'he would get up early, go into the kraal and start bongaing so as to vus' inkosi (Dingane) esigodhlweni'.<sup>11</sup> As Mandhlakazi observed to James Stuart

I, Mandhlakazi, once asked a son of Magolwana how it was that the Zulu imbongi were able to remember the praises of kings to so extraordinary a degree, how it was that they managed to dispose themselves to receive and retain so much, what drugs they ate which opened up the chest or heart to the reception of so much. He said it was because they were given always tripe to eat. Moreover, they used to eat the drug umklele.<sup>12</sup>

Mazisi Kunene has described Magolwane kaMakhathini as the greatest Zulu poet if not one of the greatest world poets/imbongi. Magolwane lived in the early 19th century and was the national poet at the peak of the Zulu Kingdom. His poetry can best be understood within an appreciation of the historical background that nurtured his immense genius. Bhambatha Wallet Vilakazi provides the following important sketch of Magolwana's life history<sup>13</sup>: It is important to elaborate on Magolwane's life history so as to encourage further research based on him and some of his peers.

Yisilomo, isikhulu phezu kwazo zonke izimbongi zakwaZulu lomfo wakwaJiyana (*The son of Jiyana is the most famous and very important praise-singer ever from kwaZulu*):

“Umkhabisa Nyathi,  
Uhlabana ngomhlubulo,  
Isiguq'esadl'esinye isiguqa  
Ngoba wadl'esikaMzilikazi:  
Umbambo zenkomo yakwaMashobana”<sup>14</sup>

[Umkhabisa Nyathi  
is very impressive in his regalia  
The tough one who devoured another 'toughie'  
The one from Mzilikazi's group  
The rib of Mashobana's cow].<sup>15</sup>

Iphimbo kanye nekhono lakhe ekubongeni amakhosi kubonakele kusekhona yena umnikazi-zwe (King Shaka) [*His voice and talent in praise singing was apparent during the times of the founder of the nation (Shakan times)*].

Unodumehlezi kaMenzi,  
Usilwane hele'emizini yabantu<sup>16</sup>  
[The famous one from the House of Menzi  
roaming people's house like an animal]

Lapha uMkhabisa-nyathi (uMagolwana) wavela khona ngobugagu bakhe kukuDingane, kwaze kwaba kuMpande. Nguye uyise wezimbongi zonkana owaqhamuka nokuthi uma

<sup>11</sup> JSA, KCM 24259, evidence of Tununu.

<sup>12</sup> JSA, Volume 2, evidence of Mandhlakazi, pp.176-177.

<sup>13</sup> B.W. Vilakazi, 'The oral and written literature in Nguni'.

<sup>14</sup> Izibongo zikaMagolwana by Vilakazi referring to his bravery as a warrior in the battlefield.

<sup>15</sup> My translation.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, praise-words for King Shaka.

imbongi isiphumela ukubonga amakhosi, kayoqala ikhuze umsindoezixukwini, nce zithule zilalele, abesephuma athi qecele asehlobile...*Mkhabisa-nyathi's (Magolwane's praise name) expertise in praise singing was at peak during Dingane's times, and also during Mpande's times. He is the father of all the praise-singers who was the first to propose that audiences should keep quiet and listen when the praise-singer was praising the kings, and to proceed with the spirit of friendship*

Inkaba kaMagolwane ikwelakubo phezu kukaCeza enhla nelikaDiyikana kaHlakanyana wasemaMbatheni. Abakubo babedabuka kwabakwaNtombela. Kwa 'jiyana' amagazi khon'endulo (kuqond' ukuthi uJiyana waganwa khona kwaNtombela, sesesiphela esakwaNtombela ngalokho). *(Magolwane originated from kwaCeza in the upper regions of Diyikana kaHlekayana polity of the Mbatha clan. His family originally came from the Ntombela clan and this name disappeared through intermarriages between the Jiyana and the Ntombela)*

Eyaziwayo inkosi yakwaJiyana nguKhondlo, khona phezu kukaCeza, lapha uyise kaMagolwane, uMakhathini wayakhe khona. Ubethandeka kakhulu uMagolwane kuMpande nakuDingane. Ubengavunyelwa ukojwayela ekhaya lakhe, ngoba bekunguyena-mbongi eyikitiza inhliziyo inkosi. Ubesho nakuyo angayifihleli athi *(Khondlo was the most famous chief to originate from kwaCeza where Magolwane's father, Makhathini had a homestead. He was a favourite of both Dingane and Mpande. As a result he was never allowed to take a break and visit his home and family, because he was the only praise-singer who provided the king with heart-warming entertainment. Also he did not hide anything and therefore was not afraid to criticise (King Dingane).*

Lalela munt'omemezayo,

Umemeza-njuyalila,

Ulilel'izinkomo ngezakho yini?

KungezakwaBulawayo-njena?

[Listen here noise-maker,

Shouting and crying simultaneously,

Do the cattle you are crying for belong to you?

Are they not from kwaBulawayo?<sup>17</sup>

Naye uMpande ubengamesabi uMagolwane ukumtshela ngazo izibongo ukwenza kwabakayise athi, "Wen'usilwane esibek'abakayise bakhothame". Uze wabuz'uMpande kuMagolwane wathi wenzelani ukumbonga ngabakayise. Wathi u'Magolwane, "kanti khona manje awubabulalanga yini abakayihlo Na?" *(Magolwane was also not afraid of Mpande and criticised him for the bad things he had done to his siblings by saying 'You are an animal who destroyed his siblings', and Mpande would ask him why he does not refrain from using his family members as part of his praises and Magolwane would answer, 'Is it not a fact that you murdered your siblings?')*

Nasekuhlabaneni ngomkhonto uMagolwane ubezihlabanela mathupha angayesabi impi. Ubethi uma eseyelala nenye indoda empini, aqale ngokubonga amakhosi khona endle asho: *(Magolwane was also a brave warrior who was not afraid of skirmishes in the battlefield as part of impi. He would sing praise all the past kings before involving himself in a one to one combat with another warrior*

<sup>17</sup> My translation.

“Usefikil’ uMthwaz’ongangezintaba (uSenzangakhona)  
Usefikil’uNomashovushovu (uShaka)  
Usefikil’ uMphankominamabele (uDingane)

UDingane lona akamfihlelanga khona ezibongeni ukuthi wenze kalukhuni ukubulala amaBhunu. Uthi: *(He did not hide the fact to Dingane that the killing of the Boers was a harsh decision.)*

“Yebuya weHwanqa laseMgungundlovu, yebuya  
Wangenis’ umkhonto kwelakwaZulu,  
Wabulala amaBhunu na?  
Wangenis’umkhonto esiswini!  
Les’isibind’ esingaka, lesi na?”

[Come back the bearded one from Mgungundlovu, come back  
You brought the spear into the Zulu country,  
Did you kill the Boers?  
You pierced a spear into a stomach!  
Where did you get such courage? <sup>18</sup>

Lembongi ibizicabangela kakhulu ngenhliziyo, ibonga nebingazange ibabone, kaziqedwa izibongo ezabunjwa nguMagolwane, ebonga: oMageba, noPhunga, noJama, noMnkabayi, noKhonzaphi (uMpande), noNzibe, noGqugqu, noMbuyazi, noShonkwani, noMantantashiya, noMduba, noSomklwana, noLangazana, noBibi, bonke noNandi, noSongiya. Ubenohlamvu lwakhe alushoyo uma eseqedile ukubonga inkosi ethile.... *(This praise-singer was a great thinker whose composition were straight from his heart, he praised even those unknown to him, you will never be able to trace/count all the praises composed by Magolwane, praising: Mageba, Jama, Mnkabayi, Mpande, Nzibe, Gugqu, Mbuyazi, Shonkwani, Mantantashiya, Mduba, Somklwana, Langazana, Bibi, Nandi and Songiya, among others. He had his own unique opening line whenever he began praising a particular king...)*

“Yaminz’indlov’emnyama!  
Ulibinda silo sezwe,  
Ulibinda Zul’eliphezulu”

[The black elephant has sunk  
you are silent beast of the nation  
the heavenly is silent]<sup>19</sup>

Ubengemi ndawonye lapha ebonga amakhosi, ubevakasha aye le nale, nale, njalo aze aqede ukubongela. Ubejakele kakhulu uMagolwane, izitho zakhe kuyimigxusha, ekhulile emude, emuhle, ethandeka.... *(He never stood still when praising kings, he used to move from one place to another until he finished his act. He was well built, with strong calves, tall, handsome and lovable)*

Mazisi Kunene argues that the greatness of Magolwane subsists in the way he revolutionised the whole Zulu poetic idiom whose primary concerns at that point were the description of physical features - the beauty of the human body, the beauty of friendship, and indeed the beauty of life. Magolwane's great epic on the conquest of the Zulu Empire introduced

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

political and social analysis into the praise-poem, while also delving deep into the character of the individual king. The changes Magolwane brought about in discarding the usual practice of describing physical features elevated Zulu poetry to dramatic heights as had never been achieved before.<sup>20</sup>

We find that in Magolwane's *izibongo* characters like King Dingane and other individuals stand for specific social, political and historical meanings. Having discovered that the individuals assumed a greater significance if their life history is analysed over a long time-span, to represent a series of events, Magolwane decided to give added meaning to events by using characters with descriptive names. Unless one is acquainted with the history and events that have gone before it is sometimes difficult to know whether a particular character is real or merely a symbol.<sup>21</sup> This is apparent when one analyses the descriptive names of those captured after the military expedition to Mzilikazi's territory in the interior; and those murdered together with Piet Retief at uMgungundlovu. To describe a virgin captured during the expedition Magolwane uses the following idea of a virgin, "wadi'ntombi ingakezwa mthondo kwaMashobane" (He devoured a virgin from Mashobane's chiefdom); for a drunkard/or beer taster Magolwane has the following, "wadi'uMhabula-ngwebu kwaMatshobana" (He devoured drinker of beer foam from Mashobane's chiefdom); and for a character who had unusual teeth among the voortrekkers, "wadi'uMaziny'ansasa" (He devoured scattered teeth); for the voortrekker with a moustache covering his mouth, Magolwane creates the following praise word "wadi' uMlomogubu" (He devoured mouth covered with moustache); and the voortrekker with a double-barrel gun, "wadi' dubula ngesingamakhal'amabili" (He devoured firer with double-barrelled gun).

The conflicts between individuals were depicted as conflicts of character and national interests so that the figures in Magolwane's greatest epic poem became symbolic of great issues involving the destiny of nations and peoples.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, his poetry offers two levels of meaning. The first level itself is an historical description of events, each with their own aesthetic meanings. On the second level, the same events become symbolic of human drama and life. This symbolism is self-conscious: the poet consciously gives hints and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Kunene, 'Magolwane' and 'An analytical survey of Zulu poetry'.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> This also includes the conflict between the king and the voortrekkers.

suggestions as to the inter-connection between the descriptive and the philosophical.<sup>23</sup> This is apparent in the following praise-words of King Dingane, ‘uMgabadeli owagabadela inkundla yakwaBulwayo’ (The daring one who dared the courtyard of Bulwayo). This praise-word describes an historical event; King Dingane’s usurpation of the crown from King Shaka but at the same time suggests succession problems that riddled the Zulu Royal house, including bloodletting and the killing of the king’s siblings. The debate on the succession policies, traditions, disputes within the royal house and within African communities transcends description and falls within the ambit of political philosophy.

The same line also points to another dimension of the izibongo because the perceived storming of kwaBulwayo, one of King Shaka’s royal homesteads, by King Dingane was seen as an attempt to halt the tyranny of King Shaka. This led to King Dingane being referred to as ‘uMalamulela’, literally meaning, a saviour, by some of his subjects. The king was also negatively caricatured as “ithole elihamba likhahlel’ amany’ amathole ngezimpumulo”(The calf that went and kicked other calves nostrils). These apparently inconsistent negative and positive images of the king that permeate izibongo, survive because generally it is not easy to intervene in izibongo - as originally composed by Magolwane and Mshongweni. Hamilton argues that the absolutely crucial role of izibongo in most ‘rituals’ would have ensured that they were conserved in their original form as far as possible. The anachronisms and archaisms characteristic of izibongo survived even once their meaning became obscured, while the poetic form of the praises would also have facilitated their memory over time.<sup>24</sup>

Mtshayankomo kaMagolwana said the following regarding his father

(Magolwana) did not pause for rest before he had finished the praises of a particular king. When he had finished he would cry out, ‘The elephant (king) has swallowed him. You are the silent one, great sky above! You are the silent one, great lion! You are the silent one, great leopard! You are the silent one, great elephant!....He puts on a great deal of finery and is a great size when dressed up. He walks about as he bongas. The king is listening with his assembly the whole time, and every now and then whistles his approval, but says nothing....If he is praising the king from Mgungundlovu (Dingane), he cries, ‘Hail, now, bewhiskered one from Mgungundlovu! You killed the Boers and brought harm to the Zulu country! You brought harm; did you not bring harm to yourself? This great boldness? Boldness as this?...Magolwana would be given 20 or 30 cattle after bongaing, on the next day cattle would be apportioned to him. He had no sisters. His ‘sisters’ were the kings themselves. Magolwana used to bonga Dingana completely before Mpande, even though they fought together (in one of King Dingane’s regiment). Mpande liked to

<sup>23</sup> Kunene, ‘Magolwana’.

<sup>24</sup> Hamilton, ‘Ideology, Oral Traditions’, p.72.

hear Dingana's praises, for he was no longer alive. Mpande refused to allow Magolwana to go to his home; he wanted him to remain with him all the time. When Magolwana was about to begin the praises of Mpande...<sup>25</sup>

Mshongweni was the second most illustrious and influential imbongi of this period. According to Mazisi Kunene there is nothing known about Mshongweni except that he was King Dingane's court poet.<sup>26</sup> Mazisi is of the opinion Mshongweni was also a great poet as his eulogy on Dingane shows. Mshongweni's main contribution to Zulu literature is the highly analytic style permeating his eulogies. He was a brave poet because he criticised King Dingane for his misdeeds without concern of gaining disfavour from him. In so doing he voiced public opinion.<sup>27</sup> Mshongweni's perceptions of the king greatly influenced Kunene, a point I will discuss later in the study. The following critical praise-words are attributed to Mshongweni by Kunene, 'uNomashikizela, uMashiyimpi yakhe' (uNomashikizela, the deserter of his own army), meaning that King Dingane cannot be compared to King Shaka who fought his own battles. The former, is in fact, a coward who deserted his own army.

Mshongweni pictures King Dingane as not just a decorated butterfly ('uVemvane') like most pre-Shakan rulers, but as an aggressive type. Mshongweni points to the king's treacherous nature: 'Isiziba esinzonzo sinzonzobele. Siminzisa umuntu ethi uyageza' (pool that is both silent and overpowering. It drowned someone intending to bathe), presumably an allusion to King Dingane's sibling Mhlangana's assassination. Regardless of these self-defeating and destructive strategies, Mshongweni says of the 'uncompromising' King Dingane, who still holds control over huge armies, 'ebengangabazingeli bakwaMavela, ebebezingela izimbongolwana' (He was like the hunters of Mavela's place, who hunted flying ants). With the arrival of Boers the king was justifiably uneasy, as 'indlovu ekulala kuQwambayiya, ezinye ziyalala ziyathokoza' (elephant whose sleep is fitful, while others sleep happily). Nevertheless Mshongweni argued that the king was not overawed and as a progeny of Malandela could still strategise accordingly, hence, 'inhlabathi yoNdi noKhahlamba, ngifika abakwaMalandela beyihlela, nami ngafika ngahlala phansi ngahlala' (soil of uLundi noKhahlamba mountains; I found the children of Malandela levelling it; And I too sat down and levelled it).

<sup>25</sup> Statement of Mtshayankomo, *JSA*, Vol 4, p.107.

<sup>26</sup> This section on Mshongweni is largely based on Kunene, 'An analytical survey of Zulu poetry', pp.129-133.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Mazisi Kunene notes that Mshongweni enumerated thirty one characters in a stretch who it is said King Dingane captured and killed, including women and children.<sup>28</sup> The court poet also referred to the fact that the Dingane came back to ‘kill’ King Shaka whilst the armies were away on a military expedition at kwaSoshangane, where they were killed by the poisonous synadenium tree-umdlebe hence ‘ezinye ziyofa umdlebe’ (others will die because of umdlebe), and ‘inkomo eyabuya yodwa kwaSoshangane’, (Cow that came back alone from Soshangane land). Mshongweni presents King Dingane as not having the bravery of his brother, as ‘umalunguza izindonga kande ukuwela’ (He who peeps over dry ravines before crossing) and as carefully examining everything before he committed himself. The king was disliked by those yearning for the days of King Shaka’s rule, ‘ungezwa bethi dlula Pheqe kaNdaba basoVemvaneni, emva kwakho bakugodlela amaklwa nezinqindi’,<sup>29</sup>(You could hear them saying pass on, Pheqe of Ndaba, they are at Vemvaneni, after which they hid their assegais, stabbing spears and fists).

Both Magolwane and Mshongweni elaborated and highlighted the following main themes during their performance and recitation of izibongo; King Dingane’s accession to the throne; the king’s character; the king’s battle campaigns with both amaSwazi and amaNdebele kaMzilikazi; the king’s turbulent relationship with his siblings and domestic enemies; and lastly, the king’s relationship with the voortrekkers. Mandhlakazi kaNgini elaborated, ‘Magolwana used to recite praises to such an extent that he would go on hands and knees, and lose his voice’,<sup>30</sup> Soon, as it will be shown later in this chapter, oral traditions of the king would be produced, invented and elaborated upon within the confines of these themes.

When analysing the orientation of the two izimbongi, we become aware that Magolwane, the eldest of the two, was more ambiguous and circumspect. He was mature and experienced for he practised and perfected his art within the Zulu royal court during the reigns of Senzangakhona, Regent Mnkabayi, Shaka and Dingane. Magolwane was also a well known formidable warrior steeped in the military traditions of amaZulu and would probably give his life to honour and defend the Zulu Royal House. The young and radical Mshongweni, a

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> JSA, Volume 2, evidence of Mandhlakazi, p. 177.

court poet for both Dingane and Mpande clearly had a negative and critical view of what was happening within the Zulu Royal court. Accordingly, we can read this as evidence that the negative images of King Dingane were not the sole preserve or invented by the voortrekkers and other white settlers.

Other versions of izibongo zikaDingane have been preserved in the James Stuart Archives kept in the Killie Campbell library in Durban,<sup>31</sup> notably those of Sivivi kaMaqungo wakwaMalunga,<sup>32</sup> Socwatsha kaPhaphu,<sup>33</sup> Lunguza kaMpukane wasebaThenjini,<sup>34</sup> Nduna kaManqina, Ngidi kaMcikiziswa waseLangeni,<sup>35</sup> Tununu kaNonjiya wakwaQwabe,<sup>36</sup> Mtshayankomo kaMagolwane<sup>37</sup> and Ndhlovu kaTimuni<sup>38</sup>, who as relayers of oral traditions to Stuart, played a role in constructing precolonial histories on King Dingane's reign and providing Stuart with izibongo zenkosi uDingane. Their interpretation of izibongo are known to us today as a result of commendable and invaluable efforts of James Stuart who collected their versions of izibongo in Zulu transcription around the turn of the twentieth century. For example, Stuart interviewed Tununu in 1903; Ngidi's version of izibongo zikaDingane was recorded by Stuart in 1904, Sivivi's version in 1907 and Lunguza's version in 1909.<sup>39</sup>

A much earlier but shorter version of izibongo zikaDingane was also collected and published by William Ngidi and Colenso in 1858, while more recently the elaborate and scholarly field work of Vilakazi, Nyembezi and Kunene have recovered other variants. Collectively this constitute a written and documented version of a derivative template. This template is attributed to Magolwane and Mshongweni by some of those interviewed by the above named researchers. This was confirmed to me by Mazisi Kunene who claimed that he collected oral traditions on Magolwane and Mshongweni during his field work research for his Masters

<sup>31</sup> See C. Webb and J. Wright JSA, Vols 1-4. See also the evidence given by Ngidi, Nduna, and Sivivi unpublished [Vol. 5] and Socwatsha and Tununu [Vol 6]. Both these volumes are not yet published but John Wright has given me access to his manuscripts. Most of these 'informants' had their own versions of Izibongo zika Dingane that Stuart combined into a single document, see JSA-File 29a, KCM 23486 and Ngcobo and Rycroft, Izibongo.

<sup>32</sup> JSA, KCM 24319, File 62 for his testimony, he was interviewed in 1907.

<sup>33</sup> JSA, KCM 24220, File 58 for his testimony, he was interviewed in 1910.

<sup>34</sup> JSA, Volume 1, pp. 297-353, he was interviewed in 1909.

<sup>35</sup> JSA, KCM 24317, he was interviewed in 1904.

<sup>36</sup> JSA, KCM 24258, he was interviewed in 1903.

<sup>37</sup> JSA, Vol 4, p.107, he was interviewed in 1922

<sup>38</sup> JSA, Vol. 4, p.117, he was interviewed in 1902

<sup>39</sup> JSA, KCM 23485-24403.



degree dissertation and his book on King Shaka. The names of the people and areas visited by these scholars to collect the oral traditions including their different works are mentioned in chapter five and six of this thesis. These researchers recorded the template because they recognise that people in southern Africa were presumably making oral representations of pastness for themselves and their communities from the time when the earliest recognisably human societies became established in the region.<sup>40</sup>

The next sections explore two issues, how far Tununu, Sivivi and Lunguza, among others, reproduced the same images, metaphors and themes, and how far they merit the description of public intellectuals. It is quite possible that Tununu, Ngidi and Sivivi each learnt ukubonga from izimbongi Magolwane kaMakathini and Mshongweni. Tununu,<sup>41</sup> Sivivi,<sup>42</sup> (inceku yasenhla) and Ngidi<sup>43</sup> (inceku yokuhamba ngasenhla) were all 'household' officials/court attendants, izinceku, who personally served King Dingane and witnessed Magolwane and Mshongweni renditions and performances. They provide both with eyewitness accounts and izibongo zika Dingane.<sup>44</sup> There are no significant differences or minor differences between izibongo as relayed by Lunguza, Tununu, Sivivi or Ngidi because it was not easy to tamper with izibongo. They all reflect both the positive and negative images of the king. The following is Lunguza's version of izibongo zikaDingane. Lunguza's version is an example and is representative of the others because it gives both the negative and positive attributes of the king as the first ten lines suggest:

UMgabadeli, owagabadel' inkundla Yakwa\Bulawayo ngezinyembezi  
 Ithol'elinsizwa, lakokaDonda  
 Elihamba likhahlel'amany'amathole ngezimpumulo;  
 Lakhahlel'uNzwakele kwaKhutshwayo.  
 UMalamulela  
 Owalamulel'izintombi namasoka  
 UGabadele, onjengebhubhesi.  
 Injonjololo eziziba zolwandle  
 Oze noMhabula kwaMzilakazi;  
 Oze nodwedwe lwezintombi, kwaMzilakazi

<sup>40</sup> E. Tonkin, Narrating our pasts: the social construction of oral history, Cambridge, 1992. C. Hamilton and J. Wright, 'Making Precolonial Histories in South Africa', unpublished paper, nd..

<sup>41</sup> JSA, KCM 24258.

<sup>42</sup> JSA, KCM 24319, KCM 24403.

<sup>43</sup> JSA, KCM 24317, File 62, he was interviewed in 1904. KCM24403, Ngidi kaMagambukazi version of izibongo zikaDingane.

<sup>44</sup> JSA, KCM 23485, and KCM 23486, the files of these public intellectual's historical narratives were accompanied by their own versions of Izibongo zikaDingane, some of these are published by Rycroft and Ngcobo, The praises of Dingane. See JSA, KCM 24403, for versions of Lunguza, Nduna kaManqina, Tununu, Sivivi, Ngidi, Mtshapi, Mbovu kaMtshumayeli, among others.

Owel'uBulinga, kwaMzilikazi;  
 Odabule uDedangendlale kwaMzilikazi  
 Oze noMhabulangwebu-isatshisa, kwaMzilikazi.  
 Weza noGolozana kwaMenaba  
 Weza noNozinhlwathi, inkosazana kaMzilikazi<sup>45</sup>  
 [uMgabadelo who stormed the courtyard of kwaBulawayo with tears  
 Hornless calf of the daughter of Donda  
 That went and kicked other calves nostrils  
 Kicked Nzwakele at Kwakutshwayo's place  
 The saviour  
 Who saved marriageable females and  
 uGabedele like a lion  
 Deep one like pools of the sea  
 Who abducted Mhabula from Mzilikazi's chiefdom?  
 Who abducted a row of women from Mzilikazi's chiefdom?  
 He crossed Bulinga at Mzilikazi's chiefdom  
 He devoured uDedangendlule from Mzilikazi's chiefdom  
 He abducted drinker of hot foam from Mzilikazi's chiefdom  
 He abducted noGolozana from Menaba's  
 He abducted Nozinhlwathi, Mzilikazi's daughter

It was possible to be both a relater of oral traditions<sup>46</sup> and praiser/imbongi because, as Sivivi testifies, protocol demanded that (when one visits the King) one would not "hamb' etulile (keep quiet) but would bonga inkosi (praise the king). I therefore when accompanied by Mpande (to meet the king) had to do bongaing... I had to do this even though I came on a secret errand and when one left the king one would go off bongaing him".<sup>47</sup> Probably they learnt izibongo from watching and listening to Magolwane and Mshongweni's performances.

Izimbongi and narrators of oral traditions of the calibre of those referred to above merit the description of public intellectuals- a term which I shall use henceforth. I use the term 'public intellectuals' in its widest sense to include people who did not necessarily receive formal education in missionary school or other existing formal establishments, yet who performed social functions of intellectuals - a function that is directive, organisational or educative. To call these people 'public intellectuals' defines their historical role in the production of historical knowledge in a given society. As far as this study is concerned, the term is restricted to public intellectuals who seek actively to think about the meaning and significance of social life, history, politics and culture among other things. They engage in

<sup>45</sup> JSA, KCM 24403.

<sup>46</sup> These traditions will be discussed late in the chapter

<sup>47</sup> JSA, KCM 24319, evidence of Sivivi

public discussions about such ideas including problems facing them as people and community. To take two examples Lunguza kaMpukane and Ndhlovu kaTimuni, qualify by these criterion for this description. Lunguza's reconstruction of Mgungundhlovu's architecture and every day life in the kingdom's headquarters is elaborate and educative (he seems to have had a photographic memory). He contributes to our cultural and intellectual heritage in as far as history of architecture and art is concerned.<sup>48</sup> The restored palace is now designated as a national heritage site and is a tourist attraction in KwaZulu-Natal. Lunguza is an example of a grassroot intellectual who was not an 'active' constructor of historical knowledge. He merely gave information according to the type of questions posed by Stuart. He was steadfast when he did not know the answers to some of the questions, mostly saying he does not know in his response. Lunguza was in his eighties and Stuart was very appreciative of his responses and intimated that, 'Lunguza seemed to me careful and accurate in everything he told me. The amount of detail he knows was suprising when compared with other various informants.'<sup>49</sup>

Ndhlovu kaTimuni could also see the bigger picture. He analysed the problems brought about by the deviousness of colonisation, land dispossession and subjugation of the indigenous Africans by the whites. According to him, 'whites entered the country very quietly and unostentatiously; now, however, having got a firm foothold, they are immovable (qiyeme)'.<sup>50</sup> According to Stuart, 'Timuni considered Sir T. Shepstone had on the whole deceived the people, for he told them it would come right and the times would come when they would laugh'.<sup>51</sup> Ndhlovu was of the opinion that advent of a New Kingdom of African nationalism including the power of literacy, understanding the past (including laws, customs), education and unity are important tools in the fight against colonisation:

What is necessary is to teach the boys wisdom (ukuqonda) and cause the land to *tomba*, that is, arrive at years of discretion. We have to qoqa'd ukulahleka, i.e. sought out all those things which disintegrate, and made them the instrument for governing...to gather everyone in one place, i.e. under the former laws and customs, and enforce education, compel everyone to learn to read and write. If this were done the land would mature; it will be in a position to work out its own salvation. By creating a national native parliament there would be no chance of natives becoming hostile from a consciousness of their strength...<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Evidence of Lunguza kaMpukane on the reign of King Dingane, *JSA*, and Vol. 1, p.297-353.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.345.

<sup>50</sup> Statement of Ndhlovu, *JSA*, Vol4, p.209.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p.201.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pp.208-209.

From izibongo we get the impression of King Dingane's image that was riddled with ambiguity. On the positive side, his reign unlike that of Shaka was benign. He was not harsh to his people. He was introvert and amicable, as indicated by the praise-words - 'uSingqungu ka kulumi, ka Na mlomo; AnjengaShaka, Yen' owaqeda umuzi ngokunkenkeza'<sup>53</sup> (uSingqungu the introvert, different from the extrovert Shaka, who destroyed homes by being talkative). At the same time he was unpredictable, particularly when he was of the opinion that his authority was being undermined and taken for granted. This brought to the surface his volatile, ferocious temper which was compared to that of a raging bull (isilo) and reflected in the praise-words, "iSilwan'esibang' izililo" (animal that caused lamentations) and 'uVezi ngimfunyene bemzila, ngafika ngamudla, kanti ngizifake isilo emlonyeni' (Vezi I came upon him being shunned by them, I came and partook of him, but I was stuffing my stomach with a raging bull). Tununu's version of izibongo<sup>54</sup> are characterised by his ambiguous perceptions of the king. As an example he referred to the king in positive, glowing praise-words as, "uMpankom' inamabele," (giver of cows with full udders) and "Ngokuba nhliziyonhl' emadodeni" (because he has good heart among men). But he also believed that the king symbolised death, comparing him to a huge burial site - a huge grave, a space that was needed to bury those he killed or murdered, thence the praise-word, 'uMancwaba, ongalizwe lamaphethelo' (Graveyard, without boundary).

In both oral traditions and izibongo, King Dingane is constructed by the public intellectuals as a complex and multi dimensional individual. His images range from the highly positive to extremely negative. In both izibongo and oral traditions, the king's archive is characterised by five main characteristics: the greater liberality of Dingane's regime than that of King Shaka; the political dynamism that characterised his reign; the consensual politics of the day; apparent weaknesses and lastly, King Dingane's turbulent relationship with the whites in general.

According to izibongi's view, the liberality, compassionate, open-minded positive character of King Dingane's regime stems from his decision to permit courtship and freedom

<sup>53</sup> Tununu (KCM 24403), Sivivi (KCM 24319) and Hoye's (KCM 53177) versions of izibongo.

<sup>54</sup> Tununu version of izibongo, KCM 24403.

of choice in terms of marriage.<sup>55</sup> This allowed the setting up of households by young women and men including amabutho when they had reached the appropriate age. Accordingly, in his izibongo King Dingane is portrayed as 'Owalamulela abafazi namadoda: walamulela izintombi namasoka',<sup>56</sup> (Saviour of wives and husbands, marriageable women and womanisers) and also as 'Vezi, uMalamulela, uSomnandi' (Vezi, the Saviour, the Sweet/Kind one).<sup>57</sup> Here '**uMalamulela**', refers to 'our saviour' from the 'tyranny' of King Shaka who used the amabutho system to 'control' and 'manipulate' his subjects. To reinforce the image of a judicious, caring leader who both empathised with and acknowledged the need of his subjects to establish households and sustain a 'normal' family life he is praised as 'Vezi, unoNyanda'.<sup>58</sup> The term 'unoNyanda' is linked to procreation, women's ability to reproduce, fertility or capacity to conceive. As Hamilton and Wright relate:

The amabutho system gave the Zulu state the means to divert the labour power of young men from their father's homestead and turn it to use for state purposes, and socialises young men to identify with the Zulu king as their ritual leader and source of welfare. At the same time the king assumed authority to decide when young men could set up households of their own... Forms of state control over young women were as necessary as those over young men for the continued dominance of the Zulu ruling line.<sup>59</sup>

This is one of the major reasons why King Dingane was referred to by his subjects as the saviour. King Dingane's izibongo provided evidence illustrating his good heart, generosity including liberality with cattle and food supplies to his needy subjects, in particular meat. This led to the coining of the following praise-names 'uMpankominamabele, ngob' uVezi ungipha izinkomo zifaka zonkana'<sup>60</sup> (Giver of cows with full udders, because Vezi gave me cows that yield [calves] abundantly), 'umoyamnandi ngokunuka inyama'<sup>61</sup> (the sweet/kind one who smells of meat). To some of his smitten subjects the king is 'uSimakade samakhosi, uSomnandi wami, woza ngangumlomo, ngingaze ngisale ngibenomngandeni'<sup>62</sup> (Long living one of the kings, My sweet-one, come let me kiss your mouth, I might have to get jealous). King Dingane is further depicted to as a kind and big-hearted man

Ogez' izandla zazomel' ebandla

<sup>55</sup> JSA, Volume 1, evidence of Jantshi, p.196. To infer on the ambiguous nature of the king's image, Jantshi talks about King Dingane ordering arbitrary deaths of individuals.

<sup>56</sup> JSA, KCM 24403.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, see also Lunguza ka Mpukane evidence, JSA Vol 1, p. 323.

<sup>58</sup> JSA, KCM 53177, Hoyo kaSoxalase version of izibongo zikaDingane,

<sup>59</sup> C.Hamilton and J. Wright, 'Traditions and transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries', in A. Duminy and W.R. Guests (eds.), Natal and Zululand: From earliest times to 1910, Pietermaritzburg, 1988, p.69.

<sup>60</sup> Tununu version of izibongo zikaDingane, Ngcobo and Rycroft, The praises, p.233.

<sup>61</sup> Tshingane kaMpande version of izibongo zikaDingane, Ngcobo and Rycroft, The praises, p.235.

<sup>62</sup> Sivivi version of izibongo zikaDingane, Ngcobo and Rycroft, The praises, p.230

Ngokuba nenhliziyo'enhli' madodeni<sup>63</sup>  
[Who washes his hands and they dried while in council  
Because he has a good heart among men]

An important aspect of the existing political order was its dynamism. The state of affairs within the Zulu royal house was forever changing as had been the case since Mandela's times as the following praise word suggests 'inhlabathi yoNdi noKhahlamba, Ngific[a] abakwaMandela beyihlela. Nami ngafika ngahlala phansi ngayihlela'.<sup>64</sup> (Soil of uLundi and Khahlamba mountains, I found the children of Mandela levelling it. And I too sat down and levelled it) In this regard and according to *izibongo*, King Dingane took appropriate initiatives in formulating new policies and strategies concerning matters of state. These strategies had to keep the Zulu state intact and safe from the threat posed by enemies within and without as the levelling metaphor suggests. The encroaching white settlers from the Cape required him to take immediate action, as they were a recognisable threat to the independence of the Zulu Kingdom. He did this by adopting new political strategies. Hence he was depicted as, 'inhlabathi yoNdi no Khahlamba' which formed part of the Zulu Kingdom. As a king, he was expected to protect himself, the land (including *izintaba zoKhahlamba*), his people, their customs, traditions, social systems and values from the unscrupulous white settlers. Like his forefathers and siblings from the House of Mandela, he either had to fight or lose his kingdom. King Dingane was conscious of the fact that both the voortrekkers and traders represented forces of change.

Whenever he had the opportunity he, as 'inhlabathi yoNdi noKhahlamba', had to strategise, 'ahlale phansi ahlele', and act as his praise-word suggests, as a vigilant statesman, "uMalunguz' indonga kad'ukuwela".<sup>65</sup> He kept asking the white settlers 'awkward' questions about their country of origin, technology (guns, literacy, wagons), their political systems, customs and religion. Like all those from the house of Mandela he had to show leadership qualities and conceptualise the danger that was facing him and act.

<sup>63</sup> Nduna and Tununu versions of *izibongo zikaDingane*, Ngcobo and Rycroft, *The praises*, p.223 and p.233.

<sup>64</sup> Hoya kaSoxalase version of *izibongo zikaDingane*, KCM 24199-24211. On the same theme on King Shaka, J.Guy, 'Shaka kaSenzangakhona-A reassessment', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, Volume 16, 1996, pp1-30.

<sup>65</sup> Ngidi and Tununu version of *izibongo zikaDingane*., Ngcobo and Rycroft, *The praises*, p.226 and p.233.

In most of izibongo the king's excesses and unpredictable character was questioned. Some of his subjects within the Zulu Kingdom queried his feeble behaviour, his pettiness and his jealousy as for example when he killed a warrior for showing impressive dancing skills. The latter was one of the greatest dancers of the time and was praised by an audience who, together with Dingane, had witnessed his dancing skills and prowess at uMgungundlovu. Other praises depict King Dingane as an unpredictable character likened to Phunga waseBulawini and Vuma, a sangoma, who were not consistent concerning the advice they gave to the Zulu royal court.

uVemvane olunamabal' azibhadu  
 Ngibe ngiyaluthinta lwahaqabala  
 LunjengoPhunga, waseBulawini  
 LujengoVuma kubangoma<sup>66</sup>

*[Butterfly with broad markings  
 Whenever I touched it, it frowned  
 Its like the one of Phunga of Bulawini  
 Like Vuma's one among the diviners]*

In izibongo, King Dingane is accused of being a treacherous, unpredictable, insecure and cruel sorcerer who was out to destroy his people and blood relations as 'uMthakathi osibindi esimyama nabakwayise'<sup>67</sup>, (The sorcerer whose liver is black even among his father's children). It is also worth noting that here black as imagery has negative, repugnant connotations but is not used as part of the racist discourse. This was also the case with animalistic imagery. Like the colour black as a metaphor, this imagery was used with both negative and positive connotations. For example, in most of the izibongo the king was described in positive animalistic terms as isilo or iNdlovu (this is still the case at present). These are powerful potent images symbolising power and strength as opposed to weakness. However he is also portrayed in negative animalistic terms as a snake, venomous and dangerous., "iMamb' eyath' iphansi yayiphezulu" (Mamba who when he was down he was up) and "iNyok' eqoph' umqala yashiy' isibili" (Snake that pecks at the neck only once). Izibongo also record his role in the killing of the following blood relations, the majority of whom were his brothers

Nithi izilo zikaJama zibulalene  
 NesakwaDukuza, nesakwaKhangaleka (uShaka)  
 Uze noMhlangana, ezalwa nguyise

<sup>66</sup> See Sivivi version, Ngcobo and Rycroft, The praises, p.230.

<sup>67</sup> See Ngidi's version, Ngcobo and Rycroft, The praises, p.226. All these praise words permeate izibongo zikaDingane.

Uze noNgqonjana, ezalwa nguyise  
Uze noMdugazwe, ezalwa nguyise  
Uze noSomajuba, ezalwa nguyise  
Uze noSophane, ezalwa nguyise  
Uze noMfuhlo, ezalwa nguyise<sup>68</sup>

*[You say the wild beasts of Jama have killed one another  
One from Dukuza and one from Khangaleka  
He came with Mhlangana, born of his father  
He came with Ngqonjana, born of his father  
He came with Mdungazwe, born of his father  
He came with Somajuba, born of his father  
He came with Sophane, born of his father  
He came with Mfihlo, born of his father]*

Here it is claimed that King Dingane played a key role in the death of his siblings, including Shaka and Mhlangana. That is why he is often referred to as 'uMgabadeli, owagabadela inkundhla yakwaBulawayo', referring to the killing of Shaka and the destruction of his royal homestead of kwaBulawayo. King Dingane is further described as a sly, schemer and likened to a poisonous and dangerous snake, as it is evident in the following praise names, 'uManyelela njengeVuzamanzi' (stealthy mover like a water snake). He was an introvert, quiet, withdrawn. People were warned of 'still water running deep' (Isiziba esinzonzobele...). He was dangerous, capable of destructive mood swings

Isiziba esinzonzobele  
Siminzis' umuntu ethi uyageza  
Waze washona ngesicoco  
uMkhwamude wangisik' isilevu  
Ngob' uCoco ngimbonile  
Obephuma lapha kwaSodlabela  
uNgama yena owasemaPhiseni angavuma  
*(Pool, dark, deep, still and overpowering  
That drowned someone intending to wash  
And he vanished with heading and all  
Long bladed knife that cut my chin  
Indeed I have seen Coco  
Who came from here kwaSodlabela  
Ngama of the emaPhiseni can confirm it).*

This latter incident refers to the death and ambush of one of his brothers Mhlangana who was wearing isicoco, a heading normally worn by kings, princes and senior married men. It is suggested that he was drowned whilst he was bathing in a river stream on orders of King Dingane and that Coco and Ngema were eyewitnesses. They happened to witness this

<sup>68</sup>

Ibid



incident by chance, as Coco was on his way from kwaSodlabela. But both eyewitnesses were threatened with violent death, if ever they ‘spilled the beans’; their throat would be slit with uMkhwamude, a long -bladed knife used to cut whiskers. As a result, they were forced into silence. These details on the death of Mhlangana leads one to ask questions, why is King Shaka's death accorded a single line or two in almost all of the izibongo by izimbongi? One would expect them to be much more detailed because of King Shaka's stature and probably because it was a controversial event that has divided people up to this day.

Izibongo are also indications of the public explanations of King Dingane's actions towards whites, and of the rationale for his extermination of Retief and his party. There are five different explanations from izibongo and oral traditions for this event. Hoye ka Soxalase's version has two stanzas on this issue, which are located at the beginning and end of his izibongo zika Dingane. These stanzas are a succinct commentary of the killing of Piet Retief, and also paint a picture of a leader who did not endure the threat posed by white settlers with placid passivity. They read as follows

Ihwanqa eladla amanye amahwanqa  
 Ngoba ladla aseMgungundlovu  
 Ngoba ladla oka Piti  
 Amahwanqa akhawula ukuganga...  
 Izibuko likaMenzi  
 Elimadwala abutshelelezi  
 Kutshelela uPiti nendodana  
 Wamudla uPiti kumaBhunu  
 Wamudla uMlom-gubu, kumaBhunu  
 Wadla uMazinyo ansasa, kumaBhunu  
 Wadla uJanesikaniso, kumaBhunu<sup>69</sup>  
*(The bearded one who devoured other bearded ones  
 Because he devoured those ones who were at Mgungundlovu  
 He devoured Piet and his party  
 And the bearded ones stopped doing wrong things  
 Ford of Menzi  
 That has a slippery rock  
 Which proved slippery to Piet and son  
 He devoured Piet on the Boers side  
 He devoured 'Mlomo-gubhu'<sup>70</sup> on the Boers side  
 He devoured 'uMlomo-gubu' on the Boer side  
 He devoured 'Janesikaniso', on the Boers side).*

<sup>69</sup> JSA, KCM 24199-24211.

<sup>70</sup> The words in inverted commas are nicknames for boers that were adopted by izimbongi.

The presence and the threat posed by the voortrekkers greatly influenced King Dingane's attitude towards whites in general. There are few variations between the versions of these praises. The king was likened to

Indiha lebebayo, enjengesibhaha,  
Sona simababa (kum) aMahashanga  
uMuthi wesilalo ingcaba madolo  
Esigcab' uMadlanga, eKuvukeni  
Esigcab' uManqondo, wakwaShiyabanye<sup>71</sup>  
*(Bitter medicine like the fever tree  
That which is bitter to Mahashanga  
Medicine for long lasting pain, knee-inoculated  
Which was inoculated into Madlanga of eKuvukeni  
And which was inoculated into Manqondo of Shiyabanye).*

Isibhaha here refers to a potent, bitter herbal plant used for medicinal purposes and aMahashanga refers to white settlers. (To be precise, amaZulu used this word to describe the sound made by the settlers' 'novel' trousers when walking). This potent medicine was used as a stomach and head ailment. It worked like a 'slow poison' causing one to feel somnolent to a point of helplessness. The bitterness as a symbol can be interpreted to represent a bitter person, seething with anger and who had a volatile temper. As a result, the king's response to the white settlers was likened to lightning and thus the praise-word, 'uJonono, ongantonga yezulu' (uJonono who was like lightning). He could erupt like a potent volcano when he felt his reign was undermined. In this respect he could be deemed as venomous and dangerous.<sup>72</sup>

As I have explained earlier, King Dingane, because of his social position, demanded respect from any person who paid tribute to him - this included the foreigners in his kingdom. He expected everybody to follow protocol and respect the laws, customs and traditions of his sovereign state.<sup>73</sup>

These, various African public intellectuals also provide to us with evidence that implicated King Dingane as cruel. One of his praise-names reads as follows 'uSilwan' uvukela abantu ekweneni' (The animal that ambushed people in the wilds). The Zulu monarchical state had to contend with rebels<sup>74</sup> referred to as 'amakhafula' and were fighting on the same side as white traders against King Dingane. This criticism of King Dingane implied that he was not an

<sup>71</sup> Mgidlane kaMpande version, Ngcobo and Rycroft, The Praises of Dingana, p.217.

<sup>72</sup> This image permeates all his izibongo.

<sup>73</sup> See evidence of Lunguza kaMpukane, Sivivi and Ngidi kaMcikiziswa.

<sup>74</sup> JSA, KCM 24319, evidence of Sivivi.

outstanding ruler on his own like King Shaka but was feeble-minded and lacking in character. The claim was that his advisors, Ndlela and Dambuza easily manipulated him. Consequently various izimbongi derided him in public and called him 'iMbuzi kaDambuza benoNdlela, abayibambe ngendlebe yabekezela'<sup>75</sup>(Goat of Dambuza and Ndlela, which they held by the ear and it was patient). It is possible that these praise-words were voiced during King Dingane's reign as it is almost impossible to intervene with izibongo. Freedom of expression and criticism was encouraged through satirical orations, izibongo, and ribaldry.

But it can also be argued that the praise word referring to Dambuza and Ndlela was positive in as far as highlighting the inclusive nature of the Zulu state. Accordingly, the Zulu kingdom was characterised by specific African traditions of governance and rights whereby decision making was by consensus. The King and his council of elders, Dambuza, Ndlela including Regent Mnkabayi, had jurisdiction over all matters within the Zulu territory.

A discussion of izibongo zikaDingane would not be complete without reference to the Regent Mnkabayi<sup>76</sup> since these serve as a tacit or explicit counterpoint to King Dingane during his entire reign. Her role is dwelt on by the historical novels that I will analyse in subsequent chapters of the thesis but is in important respect grounded in the izibongo. The following lines from Izibongo zikaMnkabayi provide us with the historical evidence concerning her life history.<sup>77</sup>

uSoqili!  
 Iqili lakwaHoshoza  
 Elidl' umuntu limyenga ngendaba;  
 Lidl' uBhedu ngasezinyangeni,  
 Ladl' uMkhongoyiyiyana ngaseMangadini,  
 Ladl' uBheje ngasezanusini.  
 Ubhuku lukaMenzi,  
 Olubamb' abantu lwabanela;  
 Ngibone ngoNohela kaMlilo, umlil' ovuth' inaba zonke,  
 Ngoba lumbambe wanyamalala.

<sup>75</sup> This standard version appears in almost all the various versions of the izibongo-including those presented by his izinceku.

<sup>76</sup> See also M. Genge, 'Power and Gender in Southern African History: Power Relations in the era of Queen Labotsibeni Gwamile Mdluli of Swaziland, ca. 1875-1921' unpublished Ph. D thesis, Michigan State University, 1999, S. Florakas Petsalis, The Silent Power: A Potrait of Nigerian Women, Meridian Press, 1990, L.M. Aurbach, 'Women's Domestic Power: A study of women's role in Tunisian Town', Ph.D thesis, University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, 1980, F. C. Steady, Female Power in African Politics: The National Congress of Sierra Leone, Carlifonia, 1975

<sup>77</sup> B. W. Vilakazi, 'The oral and written literature', Chapter 2 on 'Poetry concerning women' regarding his version of izibongo zika Mnkabayi.

Inkomo ekhal'eSangoyana,  
 Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz' izulu,  
 Iye yezwiwa nguGwabalanda,  
 Ezalwa nguMndaba kwaKhumalo.  
 Intomb' ethombe yom' umlomo,  
 Zase ziyihlab' imithanti ezawonina.  
 Umthobela-bantu izinyoni,  
 Bayazibamba usezibuka ngamehlo.  
 uVula bangene ngawo onk' amasango,  
 Abanikazimuzi bangene ngezintuba.  
 Umncindela kaNobiya,  
 Umhlathuz' uzawugcwal' emini.  
 Imbibizan' eyaqamba imigqa kwaMalandela,  
 Yathi ngabakwaMalandela,  
 Ithi yokhona bezoqanana ngazo zonk' izindlela.<sup>78</sup>

*[Father of guile!*

Cunning one of the Hoshoya people,  
 Who devours a person tempting him with a story;  
 She killed Bhedu amongst medicine men,  
 And destroyed Mkhongoyiyiyana amongst the Ngadini,  
 And killed Bheje among the diviners.  
 Morass of Menzi,  
 That caught people and finished them off;  
 I saw by Nohela son of Mlilo, the fire-that burns on every hill,

For it caught him and he disappeared.  
 Beast that lows on Sangonyana,  
 It lowed and its voice pierced the sky,

It went and was heard by Gwabalanda  
 Son of Mndaba of the Khumalo clan.  
 She who allays for people their anxiety,  
 They catch it and she looks at it with her eyes.  
 The opener of all gates so that people may enter,  
 The owners of the homes enter by the narrow side-gates.  
 Sipper for others of venom of the cobra.  
 The Mhlathuzi River will flood at midday.  
 Little mouse that started runs at Mandela's,  
 And thought it was the people of Mandela  
 Who would thereby walk along all the paths]

Through these praises Mnkabayi is credited with being able to listen and solve people's problems, including those of the commoners (uVula bangene ngawo wonke amasango...). The praises that describe the Regent's actions of actively dealing with problems posed by corrupt chiefs and diviners like Bhedu and Bheje, among others, indicate that she was offering

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, JSA, KCM 23478, 'izibongo zikaMnkabayi', Cope, Izibongo, the translations are from T.Cope.

solutions to existing political problems. In her izibongo she is depicted as a male figure through the praise name 'uSoqili' - the sly one, because the prefix (*so*) depicts a male figure instead of (*no*) which refers to a female.<sup>79</sup> Other women objected of her 'manly' behaviour and her lifelong spinster status-leading to the praise-name, 'Zaye ziyihlab' imithanti ezawonina'. Socwatsha asserted that

The question of (Dingane's) succession was referred to Mnkabayi. She was summoned to ...She dressed as a man, had an isidwaba not buqelwa'd ngomsizi, like others (women)...She also had imxezo i.e. amatshoba. When dressed her identity could not be detected... She had a white shield with a black spot, assegais, also inblendhla with which she dondoloza.<sup>80</sup>

Destructive powers are also attributed to Mnkabayi by the praise-name 'uBhuku lukaMenzi (morass of Menzi)'. It is alleged that she was involved in the events that led to the assassination of King Shaka, and the installation of Dingane. As Jantshi noted, 'Dingane was made king by Mnkabayi'.<sup>81</sup> The last line of her izibongo (Ithi yokhona) refers to the plots she hatched to determine the future trajectory to be taken by the clan. She assumed the Zulu throne for the young Senzangakhona (her brother)<sup>82</sup> and controlled the ebaQulusini region during the reigns of Shaka and Dingane. This area today constitutes of the Vryheid, Ladysmith and Newcastle regions. Mnkabayi was the doyenne of the royal household as she held responsibility for the continuity of the Zulu royal family, as well as success in social and political organisation - thus the praise names "Imbibikazan' eyaqamb' imingqa kwaMalandela, Yathi ngabakwaMalandela". She had power to enforce traditional, cultural practices and customs derived from her status as the elder state person within the Zulu royal family. King Dingane respected her authority as part of the political arrangement within his kingdom. Bhibi kaSompisi, Ndelela's sister was also one of the most important women at Mgungundhlovu.<sup>83</sup>

### 1.1 Oral testimonies and traditions permeating King Dingane's archive

Oral testimonies and traditions furnish another major component of the early African archive on King Dingane. They existed independently of izibongo, though to some extent have been

<sup>79</sup> SA, KCM 23478, File 28 'Izibongo zikaMnkabayi', For example the name Nobantu and Sobantu means 'of thepeople', but the former refers to a female and the latter to a male.

<sup>80</sup> KCM 24220, File 58 Statement of Socwatsha.

<sup>81</sup> JSA, Vol 2, p.196. Statement of Jantshi. Other traditions suggest that Mnkabayi preferred Shaka to Sigujana to succeed her brother Senzangakhona.

<sup>82</sup> P. Lamula, uZulu kaMalandela, p.110, see also Vilakazi, 'Oral and written literature', p. 46.

<sup>83</sup> JSA, Vol 2, statement of Mangati, p.206.

calibrated by them, as this section will show. Some of the later *izimbongi*<sup>84</sup> relayed oral testimonies or traditions that also serve as a measure of their stature as public intellectuals. They have been preserved in a number of forms. They continued to be relayed by word of mouth, and in some cases informed the historical rendering of later generations of African public intellectuals; they were written down by James Stuart in between the 1900 and 1920s; and they were embedded in the earliest written collection of African testimony and tradition on King Dingane, which were published under the title *Izindatyana zabantu*<sup>85</sup> in 1858 by William Ngidi and Bishop John William Colenso.

Both of the latter collections were at least in some measure facilitated by the intervention of white colonial intermediaries, James Stuart in the first instance, and Bishop Colenso in the second. The role of James Stuart in this process has been subject of critical scrutiny and scholarly debate, notably between Hamilton and Cobbing. Hamilton accuses academics such as Golan and Cobbing, among others, of dismissing white writings about Zulu history as distortions of the Zulu past, and furthermore diminishing the historical value of the collections of materials made by colonial officials like Stuart and missionaries. These academics, argues Hamilton, write off as mere propaganda or invention documentation sources on the precolonial history of southern Africa written by Europeans. She further elaborates that there is a far more complex relationship between indigenous narratives and colonial ones, and in the processes of representation in which they engage, than Golan and Cobbing allow.<sup>86</sup> The latter two fail to recognise the extent to which European colonisers' notion of African history was shaped by African public intellectuals like Sivivi, Magolwane, and Lunguza among others. This study adopts a more qualified position. It recognises the way in which public intellectuals like Tununu actively shaped the history which Stuart collected, but it also identifies areas of shaping and distortion by Stuart himself. The most active agents in the construction of these accounts were African public intellectuals themselves, such as Lunguza, Tununu, Ngidi and Sivivi. Nevertheless even though independent authorial orientations are apparent, the latter personally related these traditions according to the questions posed by Stuart.

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<sup>84</sup> James Stuart's 12 page collation of the public intellectual's *izibongo zikaDingane*. These included Sivivi, Socwatsha, Tununu, Lunguza and Ngidi versions among others, JSA, KCM 23486.

<sup>85</sup> Church of England Mission, *Izindatyana zabantu*, Bishopstowe, 1858.

<sup>86</sup> Hamilton's, 'Authoring Shaka'.

A further crucial formative influence over the intervening seventy years was between the writing down of the traditions and the events they describe including the different historical experiences of different groups in that period. Different groups had different images of King Dingane. Unlike izibongo, their traditions on King Dingane would therefore vary.<sup>87</sup> For the great majority of the people in the Zulu kingdom, the most meaningful group identities continued to be those provided by their neighbourhood community, their chiefdom and their descent group.<sup>88</sup> These factors, along with independent authorial orientations, were very important in the construction of a particular image, and portrayal of King Dingane by public intellectuals. Qwabe images of Dingane, for example, are informed by their own ambiguous status within the Zulu state, Sivivi noted that

When Mnkabayi kaJama died she left amabodwe at her kraal eBaqulusini-Dingane told us the Kokoti regiment all to go and fetch them. We went-amaLala and amaQwabe were picked out of the regiment and told not to come as only abokuzalwa KwaZulu [real Zulus] were required. The Qwabe were secluded on account of being namacebo, that is, because they gwaza'd Tshaka-this however is untrue-it is slander pure and simple. The Mtwetwa were people also excluded on the ground that Tshaka had learnt ubuqili bokubulala abantu from them. The amabodwe were then carried by amaNtungwa (i.e. Hlubis and Zulus) and took them to Mgungundlovu.<sup>89</sup>

Tununu kaNonjiya wakwaQwabe<sup>90</sup> who was interviewed by James Stuart on the 28th of May 1903 exhibits similar ambiguities, in this case informed by his direct experience. At that time

<sup>87</sup> See Hamilton's, 'Authoring Shaka', on the established archive on King Shaka. On the Afrikaner dominated settler traditions of King Dingane see among others G. Preller, 'Die Retief-Dingaan Traktaat' in Sketse and Ostelle, Pretoria, J.L. van Schalk, 1928, pp. 166-217; G. Preller and W. Blommaert, Die Retief-Dingaan-Oorekoms, Cape Town, National Pers 1924; A. Du Toit and L. Steenkamp (eds.), Bloed Rivierse Eeufees Gedenboek: 16 Desember 1938, Pietermaritzburg, Natsale Pers, 1938; J.H. Malan, Boer en barbaar, of, Die geskiedenis van die voortrekkers tussen die jare 1835-1840: en verder van die Kaffernasies met wie hulle in aanraking gekom het, Bloemfontein, Nasionale Pers, 1918; B. Thom, Die lewe van Gert Maritz, Kaapstad, Nasionale Pers; N. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa: descriptive of the Zoolus, their manners, customs, etc., London, Edward Churton, 1849; A.F. Gardiner, Narrative of journey to the Zoolu country in South Africa, undertaken in 1835, Cape Town, C. Struik, 1966 (reprint); D. J. Kotze (ed.), Letters of the American Missionaries, 1835-1838, Cape Town, The Van Riebeck Society, 1950; G. Champion, The journal of the Rev. George Champion, American Board Missionary in Zululand, 1835-1839, Cape Town, C. Struik, 1967, A.R. Booth (ed); J. Bird, The Annals of Natal, 1495-1845, Pietermaritzburg, P. Davis and Sons, 1888; W. Wood, 'Statements respecting Dingaan'; Bird, Annals, Vol 1, pp.376-387; F. Owen, The diary of the Rev. Frances Owen, missionary with Dingaan in 1837-8, together with extracts from the writings of the interpreters in Zulu, Messrs Hulley and Kirkman, G.E. Cory (ed), Cape Town, Van Riebeck Society, 1926; Fuze, aBantu abamnyama; A.T. Bryant, Olden times in Zululand and Natal, London, 1929; J. Stuart, uBaxoxele, London, 1924.

<sup>88</sup> C. Hamilton and J. Wright, 'Ethnic and political change before 1840', in Morrell, R, (ed), Political economy and identities in KwaZulu-Natal: Historical and Social Perspectives, Pietermaritzburg and Durban, 1996, Chapter 1; 'The making of amaLala: Ethnicity, ideology and relations of subordination in precolonial context', South African Historical Journal, 22, 1990.

<sup>89</sup> JSA, KCM 24221. The underlines are from the original text.

<sup>90</sup> JSA, KCM 24259, evidence of Tununu.

he was living at Ndulinde hill, north of the Thukela River. From his testimony it is apparent that Tununu was another active intellectual and a constructor of historical knowledge through his descent group-amaQwabe- who for political reasons were pro-King Shaka and anti-King Dingane.<sup>91</sup> Through his life history, Tununu used Stuart to construct his own version of the king. According to Tununu, when it was apparent that King Senzangakhona preferred Sigujana to take over from him, Dingane decided to go and live among the Qwabe.<sup>92</sup> Tununu's life story provides reasons why the latter viewed the king ambiguously, both positively and negatively. For the negative images he concentrated on the antagonistic relationship between his descent group- the Qwabe- and the king. For positive images of the king he focussed on the relationship between him and Dingane which he alleged dated back to the time they were both teenagers in his neighbourhood community. Tununu records

I am Qwabe man. Dingana came to us. Dingana was given to my father Nongiya - given to him by Pakatwayo... Dingane fled away the same time as Tshaka - Dingane stayed a number of years with the Qwabe. The name of the kraal eBuqoloqolweni where Dingane stayed.<sup>93</sup>

Tununu claims that he knew Dingane well and was born whilst Prince Dingane was still at his family homestead. Furthermore the prince gave his name Tununu to him. At the time when he was born there was drought and famine

Izitonunu (people with large buttocks) went about belambile (hungry) to various parts of the country carrying food. They hlupekad (struggled/were poverty-stricken) One morning my fathers wives were laughing, Dingana emerging from his ilawu (asked) what was the matter. They said one of the women had a child - a boy. That boy was myself and Dingana thereupon gave me the name Tununu... I am his inceku he caused me to wear this headring... as inceku I milked, hlinzad at Mgungundhlovu<sup>94</sup>

Tununu further confirmed that he witnessed the killing of Retief and that he was among those who killed Retief and party. He presents a complex image of the King as an unpredictable character, an image which is both negative (murdered his siblings) and positive (liberal with cattle and clothes). This manifested itself in relation to Tununu personally. As he went on:

Dingane had a temper. He once beat me all over with a stick for sleeping with isigodhlo esikoteni in daytime. He killed about 20 of his brothers. Dingana gave me 30-

<sup>91</sup> Wright and Hamilton, 'The making of amaLala'; Wright, 'The dynamics of power and conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and 19th centuries: A critical reconstruction', unpublished Phd thesis, Witwatersrand University, 1990.

<sup>92</sup> Another version proposes that Shaka and Dingane were escaping their father's wrath because they were caught having intercourse with girls ['hlobongaing'] against existing rules.

<sup>93</sup> JSA, KCM 24259, evidence of Tununu.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.



izinsimango\_skin (loin skins) for vunulaing (dressing up)... Dingana has given me as many as 40 cattle. He used to be at our kraal as already stated.<sup>95</sup>

Tununu ended up siding with Mpande at Maqongqo and reconciled this move by claiming that King Dingane murdered his (Tununu's) mother<sup>96</sup> and some of family members for no apparent reason even though they raised him. He also claimed that 'Mpande liked me. He had given me cattle' (note that King Dingane did likewise). It is probable or possible that he ended up spying for Mpande but did not want to mention this fact to Stuart. He was an insider who worked within the royal household as a personal attendant and was trusted by the king. Therefore the information he had at his disposal about the state of affairs within the royal household was crucial to Mpande and the boers. But in his testimony he claims that he had

come to Mpande to (x)ay' my mqubula and was then advised not to return to rejoin Dingana as I would be killed at Mhlatuze before I could join him. I consequently threw in my lot with Mpande.

A positive image of King Dingane is that of a careful and practical statesman, a realist whose strength was to govern his subjects through consensual political arrangements. From Tununu's oral testimony we learn that 'uDingana wabusa ngesigodlo, nangompakathi namabutho' (Dingane ruled with grace from isigodhlo, subjects and amabutho). His government functioned through consultation concerning serious matters of state like the 'land question'. He held the land in trust for his subjects and in practice, land was distributed at his discretion. He had prominent chief advisors and izinduna like Ndlela ka Sompisi, Nzobo (Dambuza) and Hlambamanzi.<sup>97</sup> The latter, the King's perceptive political advisor was instrumental in divulging to the King the problems and the powers behind colonialism, settler capitalism, including the 'land question'. Accordingly, Tununu's assertion of the king as a person 'owabusa ngesigodhlo, namabutho nagomphakathi'. Thus King Dingane tried to employ strategies to counter the threat posed by white settlers by sending some of his subjects to acquire relevant knowledge; that is, technological knowledge, as well as craft and material culture from them. These efforts are discussed in the testimonies collected by Stuart. As an example, he sent Tununu with a team of two men and seven women to Reverend Grout of the American Board Mission to learn about guns and how to sew clothes. The king gave them strict instructions to avoid lessons on religion whilst at the missionary school:

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> In another section Tununu claims that she died in Natal after his marriage. KCM 24259.

<sup>97</sup> On Hlambamazi see N. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, pp. 276-278.

I was sent by Dingana (together with) two boys, seven girls at esigodhlweni to Rev. Grout at Mvoti in order to learn the use of the gun and also how to drive a wagon whilst the girls were to learn to sew clothes...The girls were not to learn Christianity etc...<sup>98</sup>

A more clear cut example of the way a particular descent groups and negative perceptions on the king, is that of Mtshapi kaNoradu kaMagwaza.<sup>99</sup> The latter's forefathers were of the line of Magwaza chiefs whose chieftdom was destroyed by King Dingane. As a result, Mtshapi's adopted anti-King Dingane position and was pro-Shaka. Mtshapi observed that King Dingane 'said that he killed Tshaka for troubling the people when in fact it was he who finished off the country'. Additionally, '(King Dingane) had ordered the house of Senzangakhona to be killed off for the vultures as they were hungry'.<sup>100</sup>

Those who backed King Dingane were renamed Hlomendhlini, 'those who armed at home', probably referring to the role they played in killing Shaka. They became the agents of King Dingane's terror. Dingane cut a swathe through a generation of pro-Shakan leadership. King Dingane's lieutenant, Sikota, massacred Ndwandwe at Maphingisweni on the Black Mfolozi. Phakade's Cunu fled into southern Natal where they rejoined Macingwane Cunu who had fled from Shaka. Shaka's Qwabe ally, Nqetho, refused to konza King Dingane and moved to Mzimkhulu. Zihlandhlo and Sambane of the Mbo were hunted and killed and the majority of the Mbo fled into Natal and settled on the Mlazi in Thuli territory near modern Pietermaritzburg. Shaka's Thuli ally, Matubane, also lost his life in the inferno of the early 1830s.<sup>101</sup>

The negative images abound among earlier rebels in the service of white traders. King Dingane is depicted as a cruel barbarian who acquired the throne by treacherous methods. He is demonised as the murderer. He is presented as a one who stuns and paralyses his victims. As Baleni kaSilwane notes, 'we use to say that Tshaka was the king because he did not kill

<sup>98</sup> JSA, KCM, 24258, statement of Tununu, 60. See also J. Guy, 'Making words visible: Aspects of orality, literacy, illiteracy and History in Southern Africa in Southern Africa', South African Historical Journal, 31, 1994, pp.3-27 and 'King Shaka kaSenzangakhona-A reassessment', Journal of Natal and Zulu History, 16, 1996, pp.1-30.

<sup>99</sup> JSA, Vol 4. Mtshapi was interviewed by Stuart in 1918.

<sup>100</sup> JSA, Vol 4, evidence of Mtshapi, p.94.

<sup>101</sup> This paragraph on the 'cruelty' of Dingana is largely based on J. Cobbing, 'A tainted well. The objectives, Historical fantasies and working methods of James Stuart with counter-arguments', Journal of Zulu History, X1, 1988. p. 51.

his father's son. Dingane was a bad king for he killed his own relatives'.<sup>102</sup> This issue became a major debate between ethnic and African nationalists in the 20th century, an issue I will discuss later in subsequent chapters of my thesis.

There are various versions published on the death of King Shaka. The Natal Papers authored by John Chase and published in the 1840s note that 'the atrocities of Chaka, which had become unendurable, and the ambitions of his brother, at length produced the destruction of that sanguinary chief. During a conversation with his council Dingaan treacherously stabbed him in the back, and was almost immediately afterwards proclaimed his successor, to run through a career even more deeply stained with human blood than that which had preceded it'.<sup>103</sup> The Annals of Natal published by John Bird in the 18th century also provide a completely different narrative on the death of the king. It reads

Chaka has been dreaming. He dreamt that he was dead, and that Umbopo was serving another king. On waking he told his dream to one of his sisters, who within an hour mentioned the circumstances to Umbopo. He, knowing that in consequence of the portent he would not have many hours to live, urged the confederates to take the first opportunity to assassinate the king; and this shortly occurred. Some Kaffirs arriving from remote parts of the country with crane's feathers, which the king had sent them to procure.....Chaka, seeing them run, asked Umbopo what they had done to deserve being driven off in this way. Amaclangana and Dingana had hidden themselves behind a small fence near which Chaka was standing, and each had an assegai concealed under his kaross. The former seeing the people run off, and the king by himself, stabbed him through the back on the left shoulder. Dingana also closed upon him and stabbed him. Chaka had only time to ask: "What is the matter, children of my father?" But the three repeated their stabs in such rapid succession, that he died after running a few yards beyond the gate of the kraal.<sup>104</sup>

In his 1856 publication Izindaba ZaseNatal (Ten Weeks in Natal) that was published as parts of Izindatyana zaBantu in 1858, Bishop Colenso narrated the following:

But notwithstanding that Shaka was so powerful, he was killed by his brother Dingane. The army had gone to make war at a far distance. Shaka remained behind his capital, Dukuza. He was seated in the cattle kraal towards the upper part, talking to his headmen and watching the cattle returning in the afternoon. Then came his two brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana, with an official (inceku), Mbhophha and others saying, 'We have just returned from a hunt'. When they had come close to the king, Mbhophha said to those present, "Do not worry the king with your lies". He went amongst them and disturbed them and dispersed them. He spoke a few words, and the king also spoke briefly to his brothers. Mbhophha then rushed forward and stabbed him

<sup>102</sup> JSA, Vol 2, evidence of Baleni kaSilwane, p. 19.

<sup>103</sup> J. Chase, The Natal Papers, p.33.

<sup>104</sup> Bird, Annals of Natal, p.97

in the back. The king tried to escape, but his brothers pursued him and stabbed him to death with spears. But others say he was first stabbed by Mhlangana, for Dingane used to complain at the constant killing of people. They came together and prepared a plot to kill him, and chose Mhlangana as the one to stab him. Mhlangana, in determining to stab him, said he would select a particular place for the wound where he would stab him to instant death. He chose the place below the armpit, but he stabbed him in the arm.<sup>105</sup>

From the Diary of Henry Francis Fynn we have the following variation of Bird's viewpoint:

On the 24th September, 1828, Shaka, while taking his usual sleep at midday, dreamt that he was killed and Mbopa's sister, one of the seraglio, knowing the result would likely to prove her brother's death, told him what had transpired, to give him an opportunity of killing a cow as soon as possible, to invoke his spirit. The information induced Mbopha to urge his accomplices. Some Bechuanas arriving with crane feathers, which Shaka had long expected.... They ran away instantly.....Shaka asking why (Mbopha) he had struck them, Mhlangana embraced the opportunity and, from behind the fence, stabbed at the back of his left shoulder. Shaka had only time to look round and, seeing the two brothers, exclaim: "What is the matter, children of my father?" when Dingane stabbed him. He then threw the blanket from him and, taking the assegai from his side with which Dingane had stabbed him, fell dead near the kraal gate.

A.T. Bryant<sup>106</sup> questioned accounts about the assassination of King Dingane. He argued that there was no European eyewitness of Shaka's death; our only information is from conflicting Native reports. Thirty or forty years ago, accounts were still plentiful among old Natives of Natal who had been young men and women in the neighbourhood at the time of the occurrence. All accounts differed in detail, as indeed those written by European pioneers. 'Some versions gave Mbopha as striking first and Mhlangana as administering the *coup de grace*. Some denied that Dingane took any hand in the actual assault; while others attributed to him the actual death-stab. Some placed Shaka inside the cattle-fold, others outside; some, standing, others sitting-and other such divergent statement'.<sup>107</sup>

The African oral traditions collected by James Stuart about Dingane's role in the killing of King Shaka are also inconsistent. One account of King Shaka's death was provided by Dinya ka Zokozwayo who was interviewed by Stuart in 1905. The latter notes that Dinya gave an account of Tshaka's death which corresponds with Fynn's. Dinya said that Dingane,

<sup>105</sup> Quoted from Fuze, aBantu abamnyama, p. 71.

<sup>106</sup> A.T. Bryant, Olden Times, Chapters 66 and 67 on the full account regarding the reign and the death of King Dingane.

<sup>107</sup> J. Pridmore, 'Henry Francis Fynn: An assessment of his career and an analysis of the written and visual portrayals of his role in the History of the Natal region', unpublished Phd thesis, University of Natal, 1996, Chapter 7.

Mhlangana and Mbopa aroused the anger of the king by being confrontational to the Pondos who had come from Faku with a small drove of oxen in order to tender their allegiance. In his account Dinya is not specific about the actual culprit who carried out the act of stabbing the king. But Stuart provides us with the following evidence about Dinya's testimony (with the italics provided by Stuart)

Tshaka said when stabbed, '*Is it the sons of my father who are killing me? How is this, seeing I never put to death any of my brother ever since I became king? You are killing me, but the land will see locusts and white people come*'. He then fell. True enough, locusts and Europeans subsequently came. This is evidence of Shaka being a prophet.<sup>108</sup>

Although Jantshi ka Nongila was specific about who stabbed King Shaka when interviewed by Stuart in 1903, he also admitted that he could not 'speak accurately on this matter'.<sup>109</sup>

Jantshi commented:

My father told me about the death of Shaka, though it was what he heard from others, for he was not present. Dingana, Mhlangana, Mpande, Ngqojana, Mfihlo, Mqubana and other brothers of Tshaka decided to assassinate him. Mbopa too joined the 'brothers'. The plan decided on was that Mbopa should stab him. Tshaka was stabbed by Mbopa. He was seated outside at the time of assassination. I cannot however speak accurately on this matter.<sup>110</sup>

The story of King Shaka's death-bed prophecy about the swallows (and locusts) illustrate both the conscious and unconscious shaping of opinion and tradition. The first interpolation to this story is to be found in Stuart 1902 interview with Ndhlovu kaTimuni. In his 1902 interview with Ndhlovu kaTimuni, both a traditionalist and royalist, Stuart imposed his viewpoints on the latter and recorded the following:

He (Ndhlovu) frequently conversed with his father Timuni as to the far off past. Timuni said that before he expired, Tshaka uttered words to the effect that 'even though he had been treated in that way (killed), he was glad they would meet his friends the white man: the country would now *be bright with the light of the stars and swallows* would fly about' What Shaka said has come true.... (Ndhlovu) considers that *kolwas* and others are corrupted by newcomers from England and elsewhere who know nothing about the native. It is not mere education that alienates young men etc. But he (Ndhlovu) was prepared to retract these words when I advocated the governing in accordance with old laws and customs. He approves the policy of 'repression'. I (Stuart) told him of the comparatively recent possibility of crossing large seas, of the Spaniards coming in conflict with the Incas in Peru, of the comparatively recent period within which the European has come into contact with coloured and other races etc.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Evidence of Dinya ka Zokozwayo, *JSA*, Vol 1, p.96.

<sup>109</sup> Evidence of Jantshi ka Nongila, *JSA*, Vol. 1, p. 187.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *JSA*, Vol 4, Evidence of Ndhlovu kaTimuni, p.201. This disclosure by Stuart provides us with evidence

The standard and subsequently elaborated form of this tradition is that the dying King Shaka uttered the words that the conspirators would never rule this land but that it would be ruled by whites. But the pro-conquest myth / prophecy about swallows who will rule Zulu land is completely absent in the 19th century 'texts' of *Izibongo zika Dingane* and archives on the Zulu kingdom composed, together with those of King Shaka, by Magolwane kaMakhathini, amongst others.

A double shift took place in this tradition. Firstly, the swallows became white and harbingers of white rule; secondly the prophecy profoundly disabled King Dingane by producing a pathology by which he was overthrown. How did this occur? The latter part of Stuart's interview with Ndhlovu may provide the key. Stuart was conscious of pro-conquest abetting prophecies in other colonial situations, and this may have coloured his own understanding of what Ndhlovu was saying or implying. Specifically he was aware of the history of the conquest of the Americas by the Spaniards. This historical myth about swallows is strikingly parallel to the pro-conquest 'prophecy' permeating archives compiled by Spanish settlers when they invaded the Americas during the 16th century.<sup>112</sup> This 'prophecy' is attributed to the Aztecs in relation to the arrival in the Americas of the 'vicious' Spanish settler leader Cortes. The latter was supposedly caricatured as a long awaited god who had come to rule the Aztecs as his subjects. It is claimed by Spanish chroniclers that Montezuma, the Aztec emperor, welcomed Hernan Cortes as if he were the god Quetzalcoatl-the Aztec god of crossroads.

In comparative terms, both Montezuma and Shaka's pro-colonial conquest prophecies are analogous and function in a similar fashion as far as understanding the process of the colonisation of consciousness in both Latin America and South Africa. It is telling that the main protagonists who promoted this prophecy cut across the racial divide. They include Afrikaner nationalist oral traditions, Stuart, and the publications of John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo.<sup>113</sup> The latter as Africans, representing the god-fearing missionary educated elites.

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that the latter was well versed with history about the conquest of the Americas and Amerindians by the Spaniards and the destruction of their empires that included both the Incas and the Aztecs.

<sup>112</sup> For the historiography of this 16th century prophecy see, T. Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, New York, Harper and Row, 1984, Chapter 2, among other texts.

<sup>113</sup> This theme will be discussed in the next chapter

This fact corresponds to Hamilton's argument regarding the invention of tradition by both indigenous intellectuals and colonisers alike.

The ambiguous role of both Ndlela and Nzobo as part of the consultative and dynamic political arrangements by which King Dingane governed permeates both the oral traditions and izibongo. On one level, the king is depicted as an accessible 'democrat' always in consultation and governing with an appointed body of councillors. This did not consist of just blood relations, but also people selected on a basis of particular qualities like Ndlela and Nzobo. Thus Sivivi describes imbizo, a formal gathering of umkhandhlu-council held at Dingane's royal court, in the following terms

The people will meet the King in the cattle kraal enhla nenhla near the isigodhlo; esibayeni enkundhleni where the grass has been centa'd away. People would not come without this invitation or summons. This calling out took place every time Dingane wanted his umpakati. All matters, including proposed laws were discussed, the way in which Senzangakhona, Punga and Mageba [did]... the induna who says what the king states, to the umpakati was Ndhlela... the word umKandhlu was the proper name for a council, the old Zulu word; but when Shaka came he brought with him the word umpakati which means the same thing... no giyaing took place when affairs of state are discussed only when impi is soxwad [discussed] ... Nzobo alias Dambuza kaSobadhli used to sit in the gate...<sup>114</sup>

On another level, both his subjects and sworn enemies also depicted King Dingane's belief in consultation and consensual politics as a form of weakness. They emphasise how reliant he was on his paternal aunt the Regent Mnkabayi<sup>115</sup> and his two principal advisors and izinduna, Dambuza and Ndlela.<sup>116</sup> Jantshi recalled that:

Dingana said, '*I do not want an isigodhlo. That is what is destroying the people*'. Nzobo said, 'You can't be called a king if you have no *isigodhlo*. How, without one, can you be a king?' Dingana replied, 'It is the *isigodhlo* that is the cause of people always being pushed to death. It is bad institution. 'Nzobo said: 'The killing of people is a proper practice, for if no killing is done there will be no fear.' Dingana then concurred and the *isigodhlo* continued to exist.<sup>117</sup>

The council was charged with the maintenance of law and order. On both Ndlela and Nzobo, Lunguza, had the following opinions

Ndhlela was the supreme *induna*... was a kindly man. He could speak well, was a good orator, clear-headed... Ndhlela was the supreme induna, older than Dingana. Next to

<sup>114</sup> JSA, KCM 24320, evidence of Sivivi.

<sup>115</sup> JSA, KCM 24317 evidence of Ngidi, Socwatsha, JSA, KCM, 24220.

<sup>116</sup> JSA, V. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p.330 and Jantshi, p.196.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

him were Nzobo (Dambuza) and Mapita ka Sojiyisa.... Ndhlela seemed to me the great or principal induna. All affairs seemed to centre in him. Mapita came and consulted him. I cannot discriminate as to what class of affairs the one induna attended to, and what the other, for they dealt with them in their own quarters.<sup>118</sup>

But the devolution of power to members of the council to maintain law and order was open to abuse by some of the powerful members of the council of elders, in a way fuelling the viewpoint that the king lacked character and was manipulated by these members of the council. Lunguza provided us with some examples of the abuses

Ndhlela and Nzobo used to try cases, and when they found anyone had *done wrong* they would have him killed without reference to the king, though the king would be told afterwards what they had done... Our chief Jobe put many people to death. He did this frequently, even more than Ndhlela. Jobe killed them for *takataing*, as he said. He made reports of those he killed to Dingana. Where any death had occurred under strong suspicious circumstances, doctors would be called together to *bula and smell out*, then Jobe would kill that smell out...<sup>119</sup>

Another theme in the oral traditions is that of the political dynamism and pragmatism of the king emerge from the king's relationship with the voortrekkers and white settlers in general. They suggest that during the first three years the king was tolerant and established a working relationship with the white traders and settlers. Ngidi kaMcikiziswa testified that

I was once sent to 'Port Natal' by Dingana to fetch goods from Collis, Kamungana (Capt. Gardiner) and others. I was one of a number of regiments. This happened before the outbreak of the hostilities with Boers.<sup>120</sup>

Sivivi confirmed this attitude pointing out that 'Mnkabayi bought dishes from Europeans at Port Natal with elephant tusks'. Only after 1831 did the relationship become antagonistic.<sup>121</sup> Even during the early period of his reign, when he was unaware that they were not official representatives of the British crown, the king was adamant that white traders, missionaries and settlers did not deserve special treatment. He 'treated' them as his subordinates because he did not recognise the existence or was unaware of the concept of 'Port Natal' as a separate territory or political region from the Zulu Kingdom. The king never recognised the sovereignty of the area called 'Port Natal' a point Ngidi corroborated when he observed that,

<sup>118</sup> JSA, Vol 1, evidence of Lunguza, p.329-330.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> JSA, KCM24316, evidence of Ngidi.

<sup>121</sup> JSA, KCM 24320, evidence of Sivivi. Cobbing is also of the opinion that during this time Dingane was involved, together with the white trade, in slave and ivory trade. See, J. Cobbing, 'A tainted well'.



'Port Natal' was known as isibubulungu or as the country of Ntaba kaMyebu, thus 'aBambo babehlala enhla noTukela ngapezulu kuka Ntunjambili-aBambo kanye nama Swazi badabuka nabo. There was no name for the whole of Natal - Districts were called after their various chiefs'.<sup>122</sup>

King Dingane attitude only hardened after witnessing threatening action by the Boers. The oral traditions reveal five major points of friction. There are five different interpretations concerning the 'troubled' relationship with the voortrekkers. The first centre on the seized first seized by Mzilikazi from the Boers and then captured by amaZulu from Mzilikazi. What angered King Dingane was the voortrekkers' claim to his cattle by right of conquest. Lunguza asserts that

I remember the Boers coming to Mgungundhlovu after their cattle; they said these were their fruit...and therefore the cattle, which were in Mzilikazi possession, were theirs. The Zulus replied, 'You say these are your cattle? No cattle ever left Zululand after once getting here', thus refusing to give them up.<sup>123</sup>

Another issue that precluded an amicable relationship between the Boers and amaZulu was the perceived deceitful conduct of the voortrekkers are the issue of Segonyela's cattle.<sup>124</sup> The Afrikaner archive claims that during a visit by Retief to Dingane's kraal, Mgungundlovu, in November 1837 the Zulu king declared himself willing to discuss the granting of land to the voortrekkers, but not before Retief returned the Zulu cattle raided by baTlokwa under their king, Segonyela. According to the Afrikaner archive, Retief fulfilled this precondition. But during his second visit to Dingane in February 1838 the Zulus killed Retief and his expedition of 70 whites and 30 blacks after they signed an agreement with Dingane in which he granted the land between the Thukela and Umzimvubu Rivers to the voortrekkers.<sup>125</sup>

Zulu accounts present a different perspective. From the testimonies of African public intellectuals we learn that the relationship and trust between the two groups depended on the success or failure of the Segonyela expedition. These testimonies were silent about the

<sup>122</sup> JSA, KCM 24318, evidence of Ngidi.

<sup>123</sup> JSA, Vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza kaMpukane, 1, p. 318. See also Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p.318.

<sup>124</sup> Bird, Annals of Natal, p.367. H.J. van Aswegen, Geskiedenis van Suid Afrika tot 1854, Pretoria, 1989, pp. 261-277; G. Preller, Piet Retief, Lewensgeskiedenis van die grote Vootreker, Pretoria, 10<sup>th</sup> issues, 1930; C. Fuller, Louis Trichardt's Trek across the Drakensburg, 1837-1838, Cape Town, 1932; H.B. Thom, Die lewe van Gert Maritz, Kaapstad, 1947; G.B.A. Gerdener, Sarel Cilliers die Vader van Dingaansdag, 1919; E.A. Walker, The Great Trek, London, 1938.

<sup>125</sup> Preller, Piet Retief; Van Aswegen, Geskiedenis, p.277; Gerdener, Sarel Cilliers;

existence of the signed land agreement. They contend that the cattle issue involving the baTlokwa and their king was cunningly used by King Dingane to test the Boers' integrity. According to the King's intelligence officers, the voortrekkers did not return all the cattle belonging to the King when they were sent to recapture them from Segonyela. This was one of the major reasons used by the public intellectuals to explain the king's confrontational stance towards the Voortrekkers. According to them, Piet Retief behaviour was tantamount to high treason and any person, army general or induna accountable to the Zulu kingdom knew that capital punishment might be exacted for such a deed.<sup>126</sup>

Another different interpretation on the confrontation between the voortrekkers and amaZulu is offered by Sivivi. The latter believed that King Dingane massacred Retief and his party because they showed scant respect of sacred sites of amaZulu-kwaNkosinkulu (nearby uMgungundlovu), for their protocol, their customs and their traditions. As Sivivi put it:

Piet Retief and party halted on the burial place of the Kings. They thus sat down where no one was allowed to sit... This place where the Boers outspanned, was known as kwaNkosinkulu, quite close to Mgungundhlovu, so close that the calves might go and graze there... No one may hurl a stick at a bird on this locality, nor a buck is killed if it has taken refuge there. Nor may a person dondoloza with a stick, ungabulawa, kuthiwa uhlab'inkosi. Nor was a person, who has been ordered to be killed, killed if he managed to escape there.<sup>127</sup>

Meshack Ngidi's<sup>128</sup> testimony about the killing of Piet Retief confirmed this view. He also believed that the king had to act against the voortrekkers whose activities, at night, around uMgungundhlovu created real apprehension about their intentions. The proponents of this viewpoint (who include Mtshayankomo kaMagolwane) which later became dominant among African nationalist thought, claim that King Dingane's guards spotted the voortrekkers on a reconnaissance mission around uMgungundlovu

kwakuti nxa sekuhlwile, amaBhunu ahlome, ayokak'umuzi waseMgungundlovu... Oqgayinyanga baba bona. Basebetshela inkosi... Kwaze kwakabili loko, ekaka pakati amaBhunu... Sekubuduka izinyawo zamahashi... Inkosi yasitum' izinduna, iti azobona okutshiwo oqgayinyanga, ukuti kukona loko. Bakubona bayitshela inkosi.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup> See for example statement of Maziyana, JSA, Vol 2, p.294

<sup>127</sup> Statement of Sivivi, JSA, KCM 24319, 6/3/1907. Other traditions confirm the existence of the burial site and refer to it as eMakhosini and they also point out it was very near uMgungundlovu, on the northern site.

<sup>128</sup> From Stuart we learn that he was William Ngidi's nephew, KCM 24324.

<sup>129</sup> JSA, KCM 24324, 29/11/1921, statement of Meshack Ngidi. This viewpoint soon became dominant among African nationalists.

*(when it was dark, the Boers armed themselves and circled Dingane's royal house of Mgungundlovu... the sentries saw them. They reported to the king... This happened twice, whereby the boers circled the royal homestead... The footprints of their horses were there for everybody to see...The king sent for izinduna, to come and ratify what had been said to by the sentries, that it was the case. They confirmed the report and told the king)*

The fifth version is the eyewitness account of Tununu. It differs markedly from the other four versions on two aspects. Firstly, he claims that the decision to execute the voortrekkers was taken only after King Dingane had been given first hand experience of the technological advantages of the guns at their disposal. He saw them stage a mock battle during their first ever visit at uMgungundhlovu. He became alarmed about the technological power of the gun and of their intentions. Secondly, Tununu claims that the king was 'tipped' off by Reverend Owen of the possible threat of the voortrekkers who had Captain Gardiner's interpreter (Thomas Halstead?) in their midst. This suggested to the king that both the Boers and English settlers were acting in tandem, conniving to set up a united front against his authority. Tununu also repeated both the 'reconnaissance' and 'Mzilikazi's cattle' story

On the day of arrival 50 Boers hlephukad and went this way and 50 went another way. They tshonad (disappeared) on one side of the kraal and also on the other and they fired their guns. After this they called indawo yokungenisa (entry point)...We also took two brown oxen to them. We no sooner got to them with these that they fired and killed them (oxen)... the boers hambad umuzi baze bawuqeda (reconnaissance). Izintub'esigodhleni zaze zavalwa emini... Inkosi isiye yambiza-ke (umtshumayeli-Rev Owen)... (He came) and said 'Do you see these abalungu? Bahamba nekumutsha lakiti. Hlakanipha'... The fight arose out of the Boers having come to landa izinkomo (cattle). This fact caused them to be regarded suspiciously from the outset.<sup>130</sup>

According to these five traditions on the killing of Retief and party, the king never took the voortrekkers on face value. He used different strategies to find out what they were up to, living up to his praise- word of 'umalunguza izindonga', mentioned in the earlier section on izibongo. Repeated incidents of suspicious behaviour were the main reason for their annihilation. Tununu notes that 'Beer and amasi came from different sides. He told them to come, as he wants to see all'.<sup>131</sup> This correspond to izibongo as they acknowledge that the king supplied the voortrekkers with a potent, spiked 'drink' which might be compared to isibhaha, to weaken their knees, and impair their senses making them feel sleepy; hence the praise-word 'uMthi wesilalo ingcaba madolo'.<sup>132</sup> The symbolism represented by this

<sup>130</sup> JSA, KCM 24258, statement of Tununu.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> The majority of his izibongo have this praise-word. See Sivivi's version.

medicine was its poisonous effect (uMthi-medicine, also means poison). This medicine was given to enemies like the Boers, and on different occasions to other unsuspecting enemies like uMadlanga and Manqongo as izibongo suggest. This 'drink/beer' was usually offered during a formal reception at uMgungundlovu. Retief and party, like others before him, might have tasted this medicine, mixed with traditional beer, after they had been invited to witness spectacular dance and song performances at the royal kraal. When the potent medicine took its effect, they were attacked and killed.

The significant of this incidence is that the king was cunning and careful in his dealing with the voortrekkers. However King Dingane was not hostile to white people as such. From the eyewitness accounts of Tununu, we see a king who was concerned with the safety of the missionaries like Grout, Owen and other missionaries who did not threaten his kingdom. He sent Tununu to forewarn them about pending battles with both the voortrekkers and English settlers, 'Dingana advised the missionaries to go to a safer place as an impi had begun to hlasela. He (the white missionary) was to go to his own people'.<sup>133</sup> It is therefore not a coincidence that the missionaries are never mentioned in izibongo zikaDingane as enemies of the king. Tununu testified that '(as surbodinates) Grout was sent to eMvoti after the Boers were killed being placed there by Dingana... Gadeni (Capt. Gardiner) had a place at oTongati ogoqweni where Dingana had placed him'.<sup>134</sup>

Another example reflecting the political flexibility and dynamism characterising King Dingane's reign is provided by the events surrounding the so-called 'Blood River' Treaty, supposedly agreed upon after impi yase Magabeni. This battle is described in the next section. The 'Blood River' treaty, like the 'Retief Dingane' treaty, is also one of the controversial events in South African historiography. The conventional, Afrikaner interpretation is that the treaty meant that King Dingane was no longer in charge or 'busad'. Among other things it instructed King Dingane to tunga and thereby disband his standing army, since the heading conferred the right to marry and settle down.<sup>135</sup> This meant in effect that King Dingane was not allowed to keep a standing army without the permission of the new landowners-the voortrekkers. The issue therefore was one of power between the

<sup>133</sup> JSA, KCM 24259, statement of Tununu, File 60.

<sup>134</sup> JSA, KCM 242 59, evidence of Tununu. JSA, File 75, KCM 24403, Tununu version of izibongo zikaDingane.

<sup>135</sup> P. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The evolution and dissolution of the

Boers and King Dingane and who exercised it after the battle of 'Blood River'.<sup>136</sup> No documentary record of the treaty survives. It is also attested to by Afrikaner oral traditions and Stuart's 'informants' like Ngidi ka Mcikaziswa. Ngidi seemingly confirmed this point although his use of the term 'Blood River' raises suspicions about Stuart's intervention with the archive. He testified that

We were tunga'd by order of the boers... they said kasizwa, asitshaya singafi, sibuye sivuke (they said we are stubborn because no matter how vicious they assaulted us, we would always come back from the dead and offer stiff resistance). Dingana complied with this order because he was tatazelain... and because his amadoda had been killed at Income. We were told to tunga after fighting at Blood River and oPate<sup>137</sup>

It is questionable that Ngidi kaMcikaziswa would have referred to iNcome River as 'Blood River' - a term constructed and used by the white historians after the defeat of King Dingane in 1838.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore his claim seems to be contradicted in the next paragraph where the same Ngidi describes how immediately after iNcome battle the badly defeated boers were sent packing by the rampart Zulu warriors at impi yaseMagabeni. As he recounts it 'the boers in their flight managed to seize some of our cattle that were near Ntabankulu. They left their wagons behind on the Mtonjeni. These Dingana had seized'<sup>139</sup>. This would suggest that even after his defeat at iNcome-King Dingane was still in control of the Zulu Kingdom until his death in 1840. According to Ndukwane

(The king's) secret purpose (in ordering his regiments to tunga) was to continue to defy the power he pretended formally to have tendered submission to (through the Blood River Treaty). Dingane always felt that he had and could ahlula the Boers. He never really feared them. What he really wanted was time and opportunity to increase his fighting forces.<sup>140</sup>

In Ndukwane's account this was part of a wider plan to conquer Southern Swaziland, so that even if the Boers attacked and conquered one of the kingdoms, King Dingane could still

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nineteenth-century Swazi state, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.42.

<sup>136</sup> A comparative analysis is long overdue of the historiography of the battle of 'Blood River', and such battles as that at Plassey in 1757, when Clive defeated the Nabob of Bengal and established British supremacy in India, the battles of the Spanish conquistadores in the 'New World', for instance Cortes and Pizarro against the Aztecs and Incas, or the French against the Iroquois and the Mohawks in 1667. The circumstances may have been different but the context is much the same, namely white expansion and rule.

<sup>137</sup> Evidence of Ngidi kaMcikaziswa, KCM 24259.

<sup>138</sup> J. Naidoo, Tracking down Historical Myths ; 'Was the Retief-Dingane Treaty a Fake?', History in Africa, 12, 1985, pp.187-210. S. Pheko, 'The Battle of Blood River', and '(King Dingane) A True Friend of civilisation', in Apartheid-The story of the dispossessed people, London, Maram Books, 1984, Chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

defend and hold the other. In order to occupy the Swazi kingdom, it was necessary to cause extra number of men to marry in order to populate and fortify the conquered Swazi kingdom.<sup>141</sup> In turn, a much more resilient, assertive, as well as devious picture of the king emerges from these events as contrasted to the orthodox Afrikaner rendition.

## 2. Izindatyana zabantu, William Ngidi and earliest African oral histories of Zulu land: 1850s - 1880s.

An important collection of Zulu oral traditions, which anticipated Stuart's exercise by four decades, was Izindatyana zabantu.<sup>142</sup> It was published in 1859 barely twenty years after King Dingane's death. The study, written in isiZulu, emanated from Bishop Colenso's mission at Bishopstowe, and Colenso must have acted in some way as instigator or midwife to this exercise.<sup>143</sup> As a result it cannot be viewed in any sense as more pristine than the testimonies collected in Stuart. Christian precepts and Christian prejudices must also be considered at least potentially to have exercised a role, particularly the (second) section on 'Izindaba zaseNatal', which is translated from Colenso's published work, Ten weeks in Natal. The first section of the book is organised around isiZulu izinganekwane, myths, legends and fables using historical figures and events. Then after the first two sections, the book becomes a collection of historical record, eyewitness accounts- testimonies, oral traditions, izibongo, and songs. Most of these are based on the reign of the first two Zulu kings, Shaka and Dingane, particularly the latter.

The following are some of the historical events narrated in the book, 'Ukwenza kuka'Tshaka', 'Indaba yokubulawa kuka Piti', 'Ukuma koTshaka no Dingane noMpande izelamani', 'Ukuketwa kuka Qwabe, eketwa uTshaka', 'Izindaba zika Dingane', 'Ukufa kukaDingane', 'Ukweqa kuka'Mpande'. Military encounters between the white settlers and amaZulu are described under titles such as 'Ngempi yaseNcome oBalule', 'Ngempi

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p.43.

<sup>142</sup> Church of England Mission, Izindatyana zabantu:kanye nezindaba zaseNatal, Bishopstowe, 1858.

<sup>143</sup> When one examines the copy of Izindatyana zabantu available at the Killie Campbell Library, it becomes apparent that Colenso's name is added/written by one of the librarians, using a lead pencil probably because the book was published by Church of England Mission at Bishopstowe. However Colenso had a limited knowledge of isiZulu when this book was published in 1858. Therefore William Ngidi can be regarded as the co-author if not the first author of this book, which is divided into two parts and the second part of which focuses on History. The opening chapters in this section are a translation of Colenso's 'Historical sketch of the colony of Natal' in his publication Ten weeks in Natal, Cambridge, Macmillan, 1855, pp.iii-xxxii.

yas'Etaleni kwaCwezi neyasemaGabeni', 'Ngempi yas'Emshezi', 'Ngempi yas'emaGabeni neyas'enCome'. Additionally, Ngoza kaLudaba, Mfokazana, Mkungu kaMpande, Nongalaza, Fokofiya and Mfulatela related oral histories and eyewitness testimonies recorded by the authors. These were captured under the titles, 'Indaba kaNgoza', 'Indaba kaMfokazana', 'Indaba kaMkungu kaMpande', 'Indaba kaNongalaza' and 'Indaba ka Mfulatela', 'Indaba kaFokofiya'. The book also records an earlier short version of *izibongo zikaDingane*. It also includes songs under the titles 'Ingoma kaSenzangakhona' and 'Amagama akwa'Zulu'.

These oral testimonies reflect a startlingly positive image of King Dingane, and a hostile view of Retief and the voortrekkers that is remarkably close to the accounts offered by Tununu, Sivivi and Lunguza to James Stuart. For example, in one of the earliest recorded oral testimony on the troubled relationship between King Dingane and Piet Retief reflected in a section titled 'Indaba yokubulawa kukaPiti', the following account is provided.

Bafika abalungu...Wati(uDingane) bayolala lapaya kwaNkosinkulu ngaphandle esangweni....Kwati ebusuku abalungu bathi abawuhaqe uMgungundlovu. Babeyate abawuhaqe, bawuqeda, wasala isinkeke, basebeyela kona kwaNkosinkulu lapa belele kona.<sup>144</sup> (The whites arrived...Dingane ordered them to sleep outside the gate nearby kwaNkosinkulu...In the evening the whites circled uMgungundlovu on a reconnaissance mission, and returned to kwaNkosinkulu as soon as they completed their mission).

An important influence shaping the character and content of the book is the role-played by William Ngidi. Although Ngidi's name figures nowhere prominently, the combination of Ngidi and the relayers of testimonies contained in this volume qualifies them jointly as public intellectuals. William Ngidi was one of the first Christian converts in the Zulu Kingdom (later referred to as *amakholwa*). He first worked and received his basic education with the American Board missionaries in the late 1840s and early 1850s, learning to write and translate basic isiZulu and English in the process. He was proficient in this respect by the time he joined Colenso in 1856. By 1858 he had become Bishop Colenso's *inxusa* (confidant and advisor), playing an important role in the latter's dealings with the Zulu royal family.<sup>145</sup> Ngidi also acted as official translator for Colenso. There is ample acknowledgement in Colenso's papers<sup>146</sup> of Ngidi's role of translating, collating and collecting data/life histories of

<sup>144</sup> *Izindatyana zabantu*, p.cxvi

<sup>145</sup> J. Colenso, *Three native account of the visit of the Bishop of Natal in September and October, 1859, to uMpande, king of the Zulus*, [3rd ed.] Vause, Slatter, Pietermaritzburg, 1901.

<sup>146</sup> As an example see W. Rees, *Colenso letters from Natal*, Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1958, pp. 69 and 96.

African subjects and of translating both the Old and New testament into isiZulu, as well as of helping Colenso with the publication of English-isiZulu dictionary because of the latter's limited knowledge of isiZulu at that point. As Bishop John William Colenso wrote at the time

[Ngidi my Kaffir teacher] a very pleasant, bright, intelligent fellow, and a very short acquaintance with him satisfied me that he was the very person I needed for my purpose, as a help to my acquiring the (spoken and written) Zulu language.<sup>147</sup>

The language issue is the main ground for believing that Ngidi was co-author of *Izindatyana zabantu* for it was published entirely in isiZulu. All the books published by Colenso at Bishopstowe bear his name including the book published on public health and in isiZulu by both Colenso and Ngidi in 1881.<sup>148</sup> Yet the first one published in isiZulu is 'authorless' or has 'ghost authors' and only carries the name Church of England Mission. I suspect that Colenso was ambivalent about putting his name as sole author because he felt a moral obligation not to claim credit for himself at a time when he was still learning to write and speak isiZulu proficiently. For economic reasons it was also unacceptable for Africans during the 1850s to be book editors/authors, that is, if a person wanted his book to be prescribed as a reader/primer in missionary schools. I therefore conclude that in one way or another William Ngidi certainly made a contribution to the book that contains a section focussing on oral traditions, testimonies and oral history collected from Africans - in their own idiom and language.

William Ngidi was born in the Zulu Kingdom around 1830 and was a subject of the Ngcobo chiefdom. He was about eight or nine years old when he first heard oral accounts of the arrival of the voortrekkers. He was to witness the subsequent contretemps that led to the killing of Retief and party and remembered seeing bodies of both black and white associates of Retief near his homestead.<sup>149</sup> In 1840 his family left the Ngcobo chiefdom and settled at emaQadini, near what is now called iNanda where he in all likelihood came into contact with traders and hunters settled at 'Port Natal' (emaQadini). He herded his family cattle and

<sup>147</sup> J.W. Colenso, 'William the Kaffir Teacher', *The Mission Field*, 11, 1857. As a result Colenso's Zulu-English Dictionary was published in 1905.

<sup>148</sup> J.W. Colenso and W. Ngidi, *Umzimba ozwayo*, Bishopstowe, 1881.

<sup>149</sup> This paragraph is based on the following two articles. Interview statements of Ngidi, 'The Black Philosopher', n.d. Colenso Papers, A207, Vol [Box] 72, Miscellaneous Letter Box 111, Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg and J. Guy, 'Class, Imperialism and Literary Criticism: William Ngidi, John Colenso and Matthew Arnold,' seminar paper presented to History and African Studies Series, No 28



occasionally visited a mission station in the vicinity. When he expressed his wish to attend mission school regularly his parents refused, so he and some friends ran away to the American Missionary Board establishment, Itafamasi, run by Samuel Marsh. Here William learnt to read and write isiZulu and was converted to Christianity. He also learnt to work with draught oxen, to plough and when he was sixteen, to drive a wagon as far as Pietermaritzburg. When Marsh died in 1853 Ngidi was left without means of support - beyond the capacity to sell his skills. For a time he worked for Marsh's widow but then he learnt of the arrival of a new missionary, 'a great uMfundisi' (teacher) who had established a large mission station on the hills which formed the eastern border of Pietermaritzburg. This was Bishopstowe, Bishop John Colenso's Mission Station. Here he got a job as a wagon driver for a pound a month. Later he became an advisor, publisher and translator for Colenso. Ngidi subsequently became disenchanted with Christianity; left Colenso in 1869 and as a Zulu nationalist became a staunch defender of the Zulu kingdom, its traditions, culture and customs.<sup>150</sup>

Most of the life histories recorded in izindatyana zabantu explore sensitive themes in pre-colonial African societies. Power and authority, control and domination, conquest and rule, dissent and suppression define these themes amongst others. These were the same issues that were to pre-occupy William Ngidi later in life. After leaving Colenso, he settled in Msinga to 'live like my (ancestors) fathers did... and make a home for myself according to the custom of my fathers'.<sup>151</sup> Like King Dingane, the African nationalist who frustrated the American Missionary Board, voortrekkers and white traders, he soon developed a form of African nationalism and negative attitude towards missionaries

[If] your government cared for us and our welfare the thing it will do would be to take all the missionaries and put them in a prison with high walls where no man can converse with them, they could do no more harm.<sup>152</sup>

The book Izindatyana zabantu is based on Ngidi's personal experiences and those of other public intellectuals, such as Mfulathela and Ngoza. Mfulathela's life<sup>153</sup> to a certain extent, parallels that of William Ngidi and his life history may have been filtered through Ngidi's

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of 1996, 18/11/ 1996, University of Natal, Durban.

<sup>150</sup> Guy, 'Class, Imperialism and Literary Criticism'.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 'The Black Philosopher', p.41.

<sup>152</sup> 'The Black Philosopher', p.42.

<sup>153</sup> The binding of this book leaves much to be desired, pages do not follow the usual ascending order and some of the pages are missing.

experiences in life. Mfulatela asserted that (like William Ngidi) he was a young boy when the voortrekkers first arrived in the Zulu Kingdom. He remembered the death of Piet Retief and party. Unlike Ngidi, he was captured by the Boers after the destruction of the Zulu king's capital Mgungundlovu following the Zulu-Voortrekker conflict, impi yaseNcome, in 1838 and put to work as a child labourer at Pietermaritzburg. Later he escaped from his captors and again like Ngidi, ran away with two friends to work for a white 'mfundisi' -one of the missionaries in the vicinity. As he explains

Ngatatwa amaBhunu, ngisemcinyane, asiketa tina sonke, sibancinyane, abulal, abadala, abayek'abafazi. Safika konalapa eMgungundhlovu Pietermaritzburg)...(after escaping from bondage as a child labourer) Kwafika uMfundisi, waka,waqeda ukwaka, ngaya kuyena ngati, 'Mfundisi ngiyatanda ukusebenza kuwe, wati umfundisi, 'Ngiyesuka, ngiy' lapha ngapheshey', yaphela indhlu yakhe, ngaya kuyena, nabafana ababili, kuyimina wesithathu...sasebenza kumfundisi. Bahlala inyanga ingakapheli bahluleka, bagoduka, kwasala mina ngedwa...Abanye abantu, ababesebenza kuye, babengatandi ukusebenza kuyena, beti uyahlupha. Kodwa mina bengingaboni uma uyahlupha, bengiti mina ungipate kahle...Ngahlala ke kuyena, ngabesengasatandi ukusebenza komunye umlungu.<sup>154</sup>

*The Boers abducted me. I was still young, they chose all of us, the young ones, they killed grown up men, but spared the women. We arrived at Pietermaritzburg ... [after escaping from bondage as a child labourer] a Reverend arrived, he built, finished building, I went to him and said, 'Reverend I like to work for you', 'he said, 'I am moving over to the other side', he finished building his house, I went to him, with two boys, I was the third one...We laboured for the reverend. The other lasted barely a month, they left, and I remained behind alone... Other people who worked for him, did not like working for him, they said he was treating them badly. But I was not aware that he was treating people badly, I thought he treated me well... I stuck with him, and did not like working for any other white person].*

A close analysis of Mfulatela testimony about King Dingane's reign and its aftermath reveals a complex picture. Through Mfulatela, we get a chance to explore the socio-economic and political contexts that helped generate different images of the king. Mfulatela mixes his early life history with that of the King, much like the other relayers of oral traditions in the book Izindatyana zabantu. In addition his narrative highlights his 'fatal' meeting with the voortrekkers, their ascendancy, and his consequent emigration along with William Ngidi to the colony of Natal where they converted to Christianity and work for a 'great uMfundisi'. But Ngidi later rebelled against this regime and white domination during the later part of his life. As a result he left Bishopstowe.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Izindatyana zabantu, pp. clvii-clix.

<sup>155</sup> 'The Black Philosopher', p. 41,

Ngoza kaLudaba<sup>156</sup> is another important public intellectual whose testimony on impi yaseNcome sharpens our understanding of the relationship between amaZulu and the white settlers. The eyewitness accounts by Ngoza kaLudaba concerning the various battles between amaZulu and the white settlers described in Izindatyana zabantu provide an alternative perspective on the outcome of the Battle of “Blood River”/ impi yaseNcome and by implication of the wisdom of King Dingane's act in killing Retief. It is interesting to note that most, not all, South African history texts and other forms of literature, including those of white historians, characterised this battle as the first ever-official encounter between King Dingane and the settlers. This official discourse silenced and censored alternative historical accounts based on testimonies by Zulu narrators like Ngoza kaLudaba. The testimonies discussed in Izindatyana zabantu bring various military encounters between King Dingane and the white settlers into a new perspective. These include a view of successful wars of resistance waged against a united front set up by both the English and Boer settlers referred to in the archives as impi yas’ Thukela.<sup>157</sup> Under the title, Indaba ka’Ngoza, Ngoza kaLudaba described the strategies adopted by the white settlers to form a united front between the Boers and English. This united front advocated a form of co-operation to meet a common enemy in the form of King Dingane. He also described the first-ever-military encounters between victorious Dingane and the joint English and Boer military formations. King Dingane easily defeated this united front during the 'little-known', Impi yasoThukela.<sup>158</sup> This battle is little known because the official history textbooks, for ideological reasons, avoided giving it

<sup>156</sup> Colenso Collection, Natal Archive Depot, Vol (Box) 95, Pietermaritzburg. Ngoza's photograph is displayed in page nineteenth of the photographs section of J. Laband's book on the Zulu Kingdom, Rope of Sand, Johannesburg, 1995.

<sup>157</sup> See also P Lamula, uZulu kaMalandela: A most practical and concise compedium of African History combined with geneology, chronology, geography and biography, Durban, 1924, pp, 56-58.

<sup>158</sup> Ngoza thought that these were not punitive expeditions, as some historians believe, but strategic actions against disrespectful imperialists and unscrupulous men. Some of these battles are described in the Afrikaners' archives. For Ngoza as a warrior and a loyalist to the then King Dingane, it was about winning or losing the various battles as a person who participated in some of them. He was content with the fact that they upstaged the white settlers as they won more of the battles (five out of six, eMgungundlovu, eTyezi, eTalení, oThukela, eNcome and emaGabeni) because they were only beaten once by them, at iNcome. This defeat was reversed immediately at emaGabeni through heroes like Bongoza kaNgcobo. In a way his testimony contests other interpretations particularly those of Afrikaner nationalist and settler historians. Through the battle of oThukela, he described how the settlers attempted to enrich themselves at the expense of the indigenous population who were robbed of their cattle and land, had their women and children abducted and later used for forced labour under the pretext of being 'willing refugees'.

prominence and never articulated the battles in which amaZulu were victorious. The following is Ngoza's version of the first ever battle between the two warring groups:

Ati amaBunu esahambile ukuya'kulwa noDingane, kwasale kwapuma impi yamaNgisi lawo ay'incozana ay'ehlezi eTekwini. Enza loko ngezwi lamaBunu... yafumana zimizodwa (izinkomo); yazidhla eziningi, yatumba isifazana abantwana... Leyompi yamaZulu kwaku izinkulungwane eziyishumi. Yatokoza ngokwahlula amaBunu katatu, ngokubulala uPiti emGungundhlovu, nanokuwabalala emTyezi, na ngokubulala uPiti-Uys nendodana yakhe eTalen, yacita abantu bake. Manje-ke uZulu way'esetukutelele ukuba kwapangwa izinkomo nabafazi nabantwana kwaNtunjambili...wafika (uZulu oThukela) evela endaweni zonke, walihaqa lelo'viywana eliseleyo, walinqoba, walibulala... abaningi (the English and black supporters) baziphonsa emanzini... Ngaloko uMpande waduma, oway'es'e induna kaDingane ngalesosikati, way'elungisa izinto zaleyo 'impi ngentelezi.<sup>159</sup>

*When the Boers went to fight Dingane, the small English regiment at Thekwini went out on an expedition. They did this on the advice of the Boers... they found the cattle unattended, they captured many, including women and children... The Zulu army consisted about ten thousand warriors... They felt elated after beating the Boers three times, by killing Piet at uMgugundlovu, at emTyezi, and when they killed Piet Uys and his son at eTalen, including the dispersal of his followers. And now amaZulu were very angry when they heard that their cattle were stolen, and women and children were abducted at Ntunjambili (by the English)... (After defeating the Boers at impi yasoThukela) amaZulu emerged from all directions, they destroyed the small (English) regiment, defeated and killed them... because of this victory Mpande became famous, he was now Dingane's army commander, and he used 'muti' to prepare impi.*

Another important battle discussed by Ngoza is impi yaseNcome. Ngoza's eyewitness account, though not necessarily unimpeachable,<sup>160</sup> is one of the earliest accounts representing an African viewpoint as they were recorded some twenty years after the late 1830s. Ngoza was an active participant in this battle and provides us with a testimony that challenges two stereotypes that permeate conventional South African history texts, particularly academic and school textbooks. The first stereotype that he challenged concerns impi yaseNcome as a defeat of the Zulu forces. The second one is the viewpoint that the battle was strictly on racial lines, between whites and blacks.

Ngoza does not see impi yaseNcome as a total defeat of the Zulu regiments, of which he was a member during the actual battle. This is because immediately after this battle these regiments inflicted defeat to the Boers at emaGabeni. Ngoza explained how that some of

<sup>159</sup> Izindatyana zabantu, Statement of Ngoza, pp.lxxx-cxiv.

<sup>160</sup> Like all eye-witness accounts and oral traditions they do not serve as a 'gospel truth' or sacrosanct.

amabutho, including himself, faked death by remaining underneath the water at iNcome, as the Boers pursued other escapees. These regiments resurfaced, escaped and re-organised themselves. Whilst this was taking place, Bongoza, one of Dingane's intelligence officers, was captured by the marauding Boers. But as they were unaware of the location of the Zulu army, he led them to a trap where they were ambushed at emaGabeni (oPate). Thus Ngoza referred to this event as the battle of emaGabeni. After impi yaseNcome, King Dingane remained in power and simply moved his headquarters from then destroyed uMngungundhlovu. He withdrew the royal homestead to the north at 'Maqekwini, built it to a large size, and there ruled', <sup>161</sup> only to abdicate after his defeat by his brother Mpande in 1840. Thus the narrative of Ngoza<sup>162</sup> and other African informants argue for continuity between impi yaseNcome and eyaseMagabeni:

Kwasekuhlala inhlamvu emakandeni abantu:sasiyabaleka-ke sebesiziponsa emanzini emfuleni; sesingena sicutya kona pakati emanzini emfuleni; kuti ubu busabalalele qede-ke bahamba, sasale savuka-ke, sahamba uba kuhlwe-ke ubusuku; sesiya eluPata uDingane elele kona...Sitit siti seusa umfula, kwazis'ukuti nat' kasiy'azi impi yakiti lapa ifihlwe kona; kanti impi islaliswe umfula wonke. Setuka sasitelek' pez kwayo impi; yabuza yati, 'Abelungu b'emise-pi na?' Sati, 'B'emise lapaya pezulu em'tonjeni; kepa basibulele nati izolo... nani nisizwile isibhamu. 'Yabuza-ke yona impi, yati, 'Abezikwehla, yini, namhlanje na?'. Sati-ke tina, 'O! kasazi; banyakaza nje kulo lonke izwe leli!'. Sesibuza-ke, ukuti, 'Inkosi ipi nezinduna na?. Bati-ke bona, 'Nazi izinduna lapaya, ngapetsheya, nenkosi, kona nayo ngapetsheya kwomfolozi', Sesiyasuka, siyehla... siti siza emahlatini lawa apezulu koTukela, sihamba ubusuku-ke, kuzwakale-ke ngas'emuva, kutiwa, amaBunu ambambile uBongoza inhloli enkulu eyona eyayihlola impi kaDingane. Ati uma ayibambe qede abuze ati, 'upi uDingane lapa ekona na? Impi ingakanani ahlezi nayo na?' Ati-ke yena, 'Impi ipelile, iqedwe yini, n'abelungu, us'hlezi yedwa nomdhlunkulu wakhe wake. Kete nempi eb'sindile ekufeni yasal' isi'hle icitekele nezwe leli; isingene emahlatini.' Bati-ke ungasiyisa, yini-ke, lapa ehlezi kona yedwa nezinkomo nabantu bake na?'...avume-ke ukuba-ke es'azi ukuba impi seipakwe yalal' yonke imifuyana le az'uvela ngayo; ahamba-ke ngayo indhlela-ke, 'azi ukuti kulele amabandhla... Bahle bati ume beqala ukuwela, kuhle kuvuka uDhlambendhlu na oziNyosi njalo, na oziXlebe-ke njalo, avuke kanye onke amabuto, atye-ke yena uBongoza ati, 'Bapakati, mabandhla ka'Mjokwane, kaNdaba', atyo-ke esepunyuka, es'engena pakati kweyakubo... Seiti ke impi, lapa ihambayo, ihamba ibulala konke kwamaLau, nokwabantu abamnyama, abahamba neloyimpi yamaBhunu.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>161</sup> JSA, Volume 2, p.91, evidence of Magidigidi.

<sup>162</sup> Izindatvana zabantu, evidence of Ngoza, cxli-cxlvii.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

*When bullets lodged on people's heads, we escaped and threw ourselves into the river; we hid underneath the water inside the river; after annihilating us they left, we emerged from our hiding place, we travelled during the evening, our destination was oPata where Dingane was hiding... After we crossed a river, we did not know where our impi was stationed; only to find out it was occupying and manning the river. We were surprised to come across impi; the warrior asked us, 'Where are the whites stationed?!' We said, 'They are up there by the well, they destroyed us yesterday... we are of the opinion that you also heard the gunshots'. The warriors asked, 'are they not coming down after you today?' We replied, 'O! We do not know; they are all over the place!' We then asked, 'Where is the king and izinduna?' They said, 'Izinduna are over there, the king is also across the UMfolozi River'. We left, descending... when we came across the forest near uThukela, during the night, we heard that, the Boers have captured Bhongoza the chief intelligence officer who was in charge of Dingane's impi. When they seized him, they asked the following, 'where is Dingane hiding? How big is his standing army?' He replied, 'You whites have destroyed the entire army, he is left alone with his royal family, even those who escape death have deserted, they are all over the kingdom; others are hiding inside the forests'. Then they said, 'can you take us where he is hiding with cattle and some of his subjects?' ... He agreed, as he knew that the army has regrouped all over the terrain where the boers were going to emerge. He used the terrain knowing that the army was hiding... They went down a stream and when they started to cross, there emerged uDhlambendhlu, oziNyosi and other regiments, oziXlebe - and so on, all the regiments and amabutho emerged, and Bongoza said, They are inside, warriors of Mjokwane of Ndaba, he then escaped and joined his fellow warriors... And when they attacked, they killed everybody including the Khoi-San, and other black people who were part of the Boers' army.*

Public intellectuals like Ngoza are adamant that it was Prince Mpande who achieved what the Boers failed to achieve in 1838. He ended King Dingane's reign and deposed him in 1840, at the battle of Maqongqo. Ngoza points out to us that Prince Mpande, Dingane's brother, was a commander of amabutho in one of the king's regiments at the battle of Thukela in 1838. He succeeded in dethroning King Dingane in part because he knew the weaknesses and strong points of the standing army. He also understood and manipulated existing political divisions to suit himself. It is worth pointing out that interpretations found in Afrikaner Nationalist history texts confuse the end of King Dingane's reign with his defeat at impi yaseNcome by the Boers in 1838. The fact that Mpande achieved the status of a regiment commander under King Dingane is also understated. We have to acknowledge that this was a very important position. It required military acumen, an astute grasp of strategy, responsibility and foresight.

These are the attributes Prince Mpande used to depose King Dingane and effectively to hold the Zulu Kingdom together for the next thirty years. He kept the white settlers and colonists at bay for a longer period than any other Zulu King in the 19th century.

An important theme that features in Izindatyana's characterisation of King Dingane is that of race discourse. Elsewhere in the oral archive, the word 'black' was used differently than in the praises of King Shaka and other leaders- hence one of King Dingane's praise name read as follows, 'uDingane umnyama ngabomu'<sup>164</sup> - meaning - 'Dingane is intentionally black'. This praise needs to be read in conjunction with the war song on King Dingane recorded in Izindatyana zabantu. It extols the king as a black hero, an African nationalist whose unfortunate death on the Lebombo Mountains robbed black South Africans a capable leader

Siyakushona kuleziya zintaba  
Washona ngentaba lashona (izwe lethu)  
Yebuya Vezi Omnyama  
Uvezi yiNkosi emnyama  
UMalamulela<sup>165</sup>  
*[We will go beyond those mountains (to look for you)  
You disappeared over the mountain and (our land)  
disappeared  
Come back black Vezi  
Vezi is a black King  
Our saviour].<sup>166</sup>*

This war song can be interpreted in millenarian terms. It can be interpreted as a call, a need and a longing for an effective, powerful black African leader who will save the entire 'black nation' from colonial conquerors. This point is also explicit in Stuart's translation of the song. Hence a call to raise King Dingane - the black king from his grave (Yebuya Vezi omnyama, uvezi yiNkosi emnyama), uMalamulela (our saviour from white domination). Black people longed for his return because since he passed away, people suffered at the hands of whites who dispossessed them of their land and Kingdom (washona ngentaba lashona izwe lethu). This song, recorded as early as 1858 in Izindatyana zabantu strikes a resonance with the second battle song recorded a century later. This was a 1964 version by Princess Magogo on King Dingane:

Sunduza amaBhunu ahambe

<sup>164</sup> Hoye kaSoxhalase version, KCM 24199-24211.

<sup>165</sup> Izindatyana zabantu, p.cxxiv;and JSA, KCM 24403, File 75.

<sup>166</sup> My translation, see also Stuart's translated version of the song that more or less corresponds to my translated version, JSA, KCM23618.

Hoshoza!  
Bati "uyalon' izwe"  
Ingani uyalungis' abafo<sup>167</sup>

*[Drive out the Boers, make them go!  
Poke them out (like the snake from its hole)  
Some say "he is ruining the country".  
But at any rate he is 'fixing' the foreigners!]*

It calls for the driving out of the Boers (Sunduza amaBhunu ahambe), 'fixing up' the foreigners (ingani uyalungisa abafo), from his kingdom at all cost and by an intensified, relentless force (Hoshoza). Even though others accuse him of ruining the kingdom for carrying out such an act, the majority of his subjects regard this as an empowering process by calling them to order, 'ingani uyalungis' abafo'.

### CONCLUSION

The various testimonies provided by public intellectuals should not be accepted blindly but they do take readers back some time before the arrival of whites in the Zulu Kingdom. These soon evolved and were transmitted as historical material that was recorded by the Ngidis', Colenso's and Stuarts' of this world. Izibongo and oral traditions mutually influenced each other because they were usually from the same source because Ngidi kaMcikiziswa and Tununu kaNonjiya, as an example, were relayers of oral traditions and also capable izimbongi in their own right. As izinceku, they shared the same life experiences in a specific cultural milieu and a given society. They were shapers and framers, together with Stuart, of the oral traditions on King Dingane. During Ngidi's interview by Stuart he said the following 'I know Tununu well. I knew him at Mgungundlovu. I am the same age as he. He was also inceku'.<sup>168</sup>

The oral traditions have their limitations, as they are selective on the type of information they provide us. Probably this had to do with the interests and biases of James Stuart himself and this includes the type of questions that he asked his 'informants'. Because of this, the James Stuart Archive language of discourse is about power and authority, control and domination, conquest and rule, dissent and suppression, rebellion and destruction or flight. One can hardly 'squeeze' important themes on how was life during peace-time, 'democracy', human rights, personal freedom, transparency and accountability out of these volumes because James Stuart thought that these phenomenon did not exist in African culture, philosophy, cosmology,

<sup>167</sup> The source of this song is Princess Magogo, see Ngcobo and Rycroft, The praises of Dingane, p.2. It was recorded in 1964.



knowledge domain and societies. The archives are loud on chiefly authority but muted on the questions of people's participation and 'democracy' within and without the Zulu Kingdom. But by combining both izibongo and oral traditions I have tried to address this issue.

This chapter also raises particular questions connected with the construction of historical knowledge and power - the construction of historical sources to be specific. A good example is the relationship between Ngidi and Colenso on the production of historical sources and other texts written in isiZulu and targeting African audience. Colenso receives all the credit but sufficient evidence exists that Ngidi both as the translator and collator of data was a co-author and editor. The question is then why is that the construction of historical source like Izindatyana zabantu is attributed to Colenso alone? Who took those decisions and on whose behalf? Is it because of the powerful position that Bishop Colenso held in a society that saw Ngidi sidelined and only mentioned in Colenso memoirs as worthy contributors in valuable historical texts? Therefore if Ngidi was the sole or co-editor of Izindatyana zabantu, it means that the first historical text to be published by a black South African in isiZulu was this text, not Fuze's aBantu abamnyama in 1922, a text that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Sooner in the 20th century people like Magera Fuze, John Dube, Rolfes Dhlomo, Petros Lamula and Isaiah Shembe and other members of the African intelligentsia grappled with the same question of how to interpret the Zulu past, including the representations of King Dingane, and how to write in a society where Africans were becoming increasingly marginalised, dispossessed, displaced and the death of King Dingane celebrated. Like William Ngidi they continued the political criticism and political polemic on an ethnic nationalist scale.

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<sup>168</sup> Evidence of Ngidi, KCM 24316, File 62.

## CHAPTER 2

### The image of King Dingane and Zulu Nationalist Politics.

#### 1. Introduction

From the late 1910's/1920, a stronger sense of Zulu ethnic identity and nationalism, first vividly enunciated by William Ngidi in the mid 19th century, took hold and spread. This sense was multi-dimensional, complicated and cut across sharpening class divisions.<sup>1</sup> The royal and chiefly order had an obvious interest in any ideology that might sustain and revive its status and power. But Zulu ethnic nationalism was also finding support amongst the workers. Hence the Zulu king, Solomon, openly associated with ICU yaseNatal.<sup>2</sup>

The work of Shula Marks, Paul Maylam and Nicholas Cope, suggests that the Union government was wary of a revival of Zulu nationalism under Prince Solomon kaDinuzulu. During 1916 the prince resuscitated one of the traditional ukubuthwa cultural ceremonies following of the death of his father King Dinuzulu. The Native Affairs Department mistook this as another form of nascent nationalism manifesting itself through cultural ceremonies, particularly the important cleansing ceremony that has to take place immediately after the death of each king.<sup>3</sup> Concerned white officials accused the king of conniving with mysterious Germans and local Boers in order to reassert the Zulu royal authority.

Cope believes that the use of King Dinuzulu's name as part of the ukubuthwa ceremony suggested a reawakening of memories of the 1906 Bhambatha rebellion (in some sections of rural Zulu society). As in the case of King Dinuzulu in 1906, there was no evidence that Prince Solomon in 1916 associated himself in any way with the prospect of rebellion. Yet the high incidence of rumours implicating the Zulu royal family in a plot to liberate the Zulu people from the yoke of white rule had a more general significance: it was as clear an index to the existence of civil unrest arising

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<sup>1</sup> See P. Maylam, 'The changing political economy of the region, 1920-1950' in R. Morrell ed, Political economy and identities in KwaZulu Natal, Durban, 1996, Chapter 4; Shula Marks, The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism and the state in 20th century Natal Johannesburg, 1986; P. Maylam and I. Edwards, The people's city: African life in 20th century Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Portsmouth, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> P. Maylam, 'The changing political economy', pp.110-111.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

from deteriorating social and economic conditions as it had been in the months preceding the 1906 rebellion and in the wake of the Land Act of 1913.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1920s, Solomon, now the Zulu king, began to assert his authority in Zulu politics. He insisted that he was the king of amaZulu regardless of the attitude of the Union Government, the British crown and whites in general. He forged a royal political culture that drew from the cultural worlds of both Zulu traditionalism and the mission station.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, amaZulu recognised Solomon as their king, and in retrospect, the latter was convinced that he did not need to be affirmed by white authorities as far as his claim to the Zulu crown was concerned. This became apparent during the visit to Zululand by Edward, Prince of Wales and British heir apparent on the 6th of June 1925. The various reports of the meeting between Solomon and Edward describe the former's initiative to assert his royal status.

On arrival at the meeting/indaba place at Eshowe, King Solomon received the massed royal salutes from those already encamped and thereafter assembled all the clan leaders and chiefs. The agenda for the indaba was divided into two parts: first, the formal exchange of greetings and gifts between the two royals and second the festivities, including a less formal display of Zulu dance during the afternoon. In his address, King Solomon declined to restrict himself to the customary expression of devotion and great joy of being subject to the British crown. Rather he made a direct political appeal from 'king' to 'king' expressing his concerns that, together with his subjects, he should have the opportunity to take part in framing the laws that applied to them.<sup>6</sup> Later he would repeat this point, complaining to South Africa's governor-general about not having been accorded the recognition befitting him as a king, during the latter's visit in 1930.

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you here for I am a person of royal blood. The people at my back recognise me as a Chief of the Royal House of Zulus. Each country has its own King. We are loyal to the King of England but he has many countries and it is difficult to understand how he administers them all. Some people they can rule a country by their cleverness but we know that only people of royal blood are fitted to rule. Things in this country will never be right

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<sup>4</sup> Cope, N, To bind a Nation: Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu Nationalism:1913-1933, Pietermaritzburg, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.128. This section of the thesis is based largely on the Maylam and Cope studies.

<sup>6</sup> Cope, To bind a nation, pp.134-135.

until I am recognised as the head of the country.<sup>7</sup>

Maylam argues that it would be wrong to see the rising Zulu ethnic nationalism as simply something promoted from above and imposed on the passive, unwitting, gullible masses. Certainly Solomon and other members of the royal house played a key role in the founding of the early Inkatha which had among its principal aims the revival of Zulu unity and the resuscitation of the Zulu kingship as the centre of the 'Zulu nation'.<sup>8</sup> It is also worth noting however that at the close of the morning's proceedings with Prince Edward, King Solomon was granted a private interview to which he went accompanied by John Dube and two clerics. One can therefore conclude that Zulu ethnic nationalism was also finding support in other less likely quarters from the 1920s, among a loose grouping made up of amakholwa, the intelligentsia, and small scale entrepreneurs. This grouping has been variously labeled as the 'educated elite' and disparagingly as the 'petit bourgeoisie'. Changing circumstances in the 1920s and 1930s forced this group to reassess the situation and embrace a Zulu and African identity<sup>9</sup> just like William Ngidi before them. Why did this grouping come to express ethnic nationalist sentiments? Their predicament was that from the 1920s their prospects for advancement and self-improvement were steadily diminished. It was becoming increasingly clear that the state policy was directed towards denying entrepreneurial opportunities for Africans. Moreover, the growth of segregationist legislation served to block even further their incorporation into civil society.

This era ushered in the Union of South Africa, and the South African Party's programme that extended segregation in areas where it already existed, and imposed it in others where it had never existed before. In the 1911 session it shackled African labour by prohibiting strikes by contract workers, and in regulations promulgated under Mines and Works Act it reserved certain categories of work for white people, following a precedent in Transvaal law. Its Defence Act of 1912 provided for a white Active Citizen Force. Before this government fell from power in 1924, it also restricted access to skilled trades safe to the white community by insisting on minimal age-linked educational qualifications for entry to apprenticeship, which youths of

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<sup>7</sup> Marks, S, *The Ambiguities of Dependence*, p.17

<sup>8</sup> Maylam, 'The changing political economy', p.109.

other race groups could not easily attain (1922) and passed the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924, which restricted the use of new collective bargaining machinery to unionised white and coloured people. Other laws, which left their mark on South Africa and stamped the Botha-Smuts period as the most formative until the era of Verwoed, were the Natives Land Act of 1913, the Native Affairs Act of 1920, and the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923.<sup>10</sup>

The situation for the christian African elite, if anything, deteriorated further under the successor Pact government, above all because of its 'civilised labour' policies which steadily evicted Africans from better jobs.<sup>11</sup> Frustrated and embittered by the steady erosion of their privileges by the white authorities, the African elite turned to the political arena and the cultural symbolism of the Zulu royal house to gain redress for their grievances. By the end of the 1880s the Zulu Kingdom had only a notional existence. Its military power had been destroyed, its leadership fragmented, its social cohesion and administrative capacity broken. But this decline in the political power of the Zulu monarchy did not denote the end of its cultural and symbolic importance. Nor did the increasing power of the colonial state ensure that a new and uniform loyalty towards the colony emerged, nor to the union government.<sup>12</sup>

In these circumstances, Zulu ethnic nationalism began to take on a stronger appeal to the African elite through various institutional forms - one of which was the Zulu Society that was formed in 1930. One of the society's major aims was to preserve and promote the culture and customs of the 'Zulu nation'. Important to this whole process of ethnic mobilisation was a growing pre-occupation with history. During the 1920s the newspaper *iLanga laseNatali* fostered a consciousness of the glorious Zulu past, centered on the 19th century Zulu king.<sup>13</sup> John Dube and Rolfe Dhlomo, both important members of the Zulu society who published historical novels of the Zulu

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 110.

<sup>10</sup> T.R. H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, London, 1991, Chapter 10.

<sup>11</sup> H. Bradford, *A taste of Freedom: the ICU in rural South Africa, 1924-30*, Johannesburg, 1988.

<sup>12</sup> See R. Morrell et.al; 'Colonialism and the establishment of white domination, 1840-1890', and J. Lambert and Morrell, 'Domination and subordination in Natal, 1890-1920' in Morrell, *Political Economy*.

<sup>13</sup> P. La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the careers of two Zulu Nationalists: Petros Lamula (c.1881-1948) and Lymon Maling (1889c.-1936)', Phd thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1992.

past in isiZulu.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, Zulu ethnic consciousness transcended the old division between the traditionalist, the educated and amakholwa.

### **1. The established archive of King Dingane: Images of King Dingane in published text of the 1920s**

By the 1920s the existing archive on King Dingane is made up of documentary sources written by both Europeans and Africans. They show vividly the extent to which Europeans' (like Stuart and Bryant, for example) notions of history were influenced and shaped by perceptions of African oral traditions articulated by public intellectuals like Tununu, Sivivi and texts authored by missionary educated amakholwa represented by Fuze, among others.<sup>15</sup> This archive also reflects how amakholwa were influenced by historical sources on precolonial history of southern Africa written by Europeans.

But as my work on Johannes Nkosi will show later in the next chapter, other inventions on King Dingane, unlike that of King Shaka, were not totally constrained by this particular archive-invented by both Europeans and Africans. The established archive on King Dingane was reflected in Fuze's isiZulu text aBantu abamnyama, first published in 1922. Fuze's chapter on King Dingane is divided into two sections. The first section reflects his personal recollections, eyewitness accounts and oral traditions (under the title 'Kuse awami, M.M. Fuze'-my personal views), some sections drawing heavily from Izindatyana zabantu.<sup>16</sup> The second section draws on sources on the history of southern Africa written by Europeans. The chapter on King Dingane is aptly titled; 'Izindaba zikaDingane (ngokutsho kwabelungu), literally meaning 'The history of Dingane as written by whites/Europeans'. Magema Fuze ka Magwaza explained to the reader that his personal viewpoint on the king was reflected within the brackets and to some extent differed from those perspectives provided by European writers. He contended that history to him involves more than

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<sup>14</sup> See amongst others R. Dhlomo, uDingane (Pietermaritzburg, 1936), Izikhali Zanamuhla Pietermaritzburg, 1935; P. Lamula, uZulu kaMalandela: J. Dube, Insila kaShaka, Marianhill, 1930; The three plays on Dingane by H. I. E. Dhlomo, Dhlomo papers, JSA, KCM 8281/2, file 4; See also S. Skikna, 'Son of the sun and son of the world: The life and works of R. R. R. Dhlomo', M.A. dissertation University of the Witwatersrand, 1984; P. La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and history in the careers of two Zulu nationalists' and B.W. Vilakazi, 'The oral and written literature' Sections 3 and 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Fuze, aBantu abamnyama, see p.vii on his relationship with William Ngidi and Colenso.

viewpoints and represents a debate.<sup>17</sup> This book drew heavily from the oral traditions discussed in chapter one of the thesis and whatever historical knowledge he attributed to European historians is also influenced by these traditions.

The dominant themes in Fuze's archives are mainly defined by the negative images resulting from the killing of King Dingane's siblings and supporters of King Shaka, and the king's turbulent relationship with white settlers. The section on King Dingane begins with the murder of King Shaka and the conspiracy hatched by the latter's siblings including Mhlangane and Dingane. Fuze sees the Regent Mnkabayi as the main instigator. The section continues by discussing what he perceives as King Dingane's vicious streak as he killed all his siblings, barring Mpande and Gqungqu. Fuze is of the opinion, 'Wanela ukungena nje uDingane ebukosini wababulala bonke abafu wabo, washiya uMpande yedwa wakwaSogiya, owab'e nomzimba omubi esitweni, noGqungqu owab'ese ngumfanyana engakabi' nsizwa'.<sup>18</sup> (As soon as Dingane assumed the throne he murdered all his brothers, except Mpande who was physically deformed, and Gqungqu who was still a small boy).

The book then proceeds, in twenty pages, to discuss race relations, the king's relationship with white settlers in which he puts the blame squarely on King Dingane's shoulders for the bad blood between the two groups.<sup>19</sup> To Fuze, Captain Gardiner, Piet Uys and Piet Retief, amongst others, were innocent victims of the capricious king whose ingrained cruelty could be compared to that of a butcherbird. To Fuze, King Dingane stood for barbarism, savagery and anti-white demagoguery. Accordingly, like the white settlers, Fuze perceived King Dingane as an uncouth barbarian:

uDingane uqobo lwakhe wayemubi edhlula umfowabo uShaka...uDingane umuntu ngokubunjwa, innja ngenhliziyo, umtakati ngesimilo...umuntu onenhliziyi embi osangati indhlula abatakati. WabulalauPiti namaBhunu ake, emyisele izinkomo zake ezase zimi enqabeni ku'mfo wakwaMolife uSigonyela. Kepa amaBhunu, angemesabi wona uSigonyela njengaye...wawabulala (amaBhunu), engenzang'lutho olubi, ukupela ukuba enze okuhle kodwa kuye ngokumhlonipha. uDingane, umuntu onesibindi esibi...owabe eqinisela efana nenyoka elumayo.. Awukho nowodwa umkuba omuhle owake wenziwa nguDingane, njengobangingabhala imikhuba emihle

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.115-135.

kaTshaka.<sup>20</sup>[Dingane was cruel compared to his brother Shaka...He was a human being by birth by a dog by heart, a witch by behaviour, cruel hearted than the latter. He killed Piet and his Boers whose only crime was returning cattle from Sigonyela Molife impregnable fort. But the Boers were not afraid of Sigonyela and also were not guilty of any bad deeds, but very kind and respectful towards him. Dingane had a misplaced courage easily likened to a venomous, lethal snake. There is no single good deed that can be attributed to Dingane when compared to Shaka whose good deed I have already mentioned and written about].

In this passage Fuze portrays King Dingane as the cruelest savage he had ever known. According to him, he was a dog, a snake and a witch, given to bloodlust and a madness to kill. He suffered from a 'divine madness' that led him to violence that would sicken 'civilised people like Fuze himself'. He also accused the king of being a racist who committed atrocities against whites if he had the opportunity; hence the 'wanton' killing of the 'innocent' Piet Retief and party. Fuze was not hostile to the Zulu royal house; he simply had his preferences regarding its leaders. He preferred Shaka to Dingane<sup>21</sup>. This was the case at least partly because Fuze belonged to the Magwaza chiefdom that was pro-King Shaka. Fuze's forefathers were of the line of Magwaza chiefs whose chiefdom was destroyed by King Dingane. Also amakholwa like Fuze began to doubt their culture and the philosophical foundations of their existence, and perceived Western civilization as superior to theirs. As Magema Fuze ka Magwaza commented

Lelolizwe lakw'Magwaza y'lona uMpande alinika uSobantu (Colenso); ngokuba uSobantu wayekw'Zulu ukuba ayocela izwe, kwake kona uMfundisi, abafundise labo bantu bakwaZulu abangaziyo, andise izwi lenkosi uDio-Nkulunkulu. Ngokuba bangabantu abangaziyo.<sup>22</sup>[The area allocated to Colenso by Mpande belonged to the Magwaza chiefdom; this was done because Sobantu, as a preacher, went to kwaZulu and asked for a land so as to build in order to teach and spread the word of God to these ignorant people.

In contradistinction to King Dingane, Fuze extolled the virtues of white settlers and the voortrekkers and represented them as the path-breaking bearers of a common past that exposed African to the virtues of western civilisation, achievement, enlightenment and christianity. Fuze proclaimed

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 138-139. The theme of Dingane and Shaka being mirror images of one another permeates this thesis, see particularly the next chapter.

<sup>21</sup> Fuze, aBantu, pp.138-39. Fuze supplies us with the reasons why he preferred King Shaka over King Dingane, pp.140-143.

<sup>22</sup> Colenso, Three native accounts, p.10.



kwafika uGadeni (Capt. Gardiner, 1835) isazi esikulu, oway'enza izinto zokwazi ezazimangalisa abantu. Wati ngesinye isikhathi waya kwa'Zulu ehambela kuDingane. Wafika wahlala noDingane enkudhleni; wambonisa izinto eziningi zokwazi zabelungu. Wanxusa kakulu ku'Dingane, ukuba abize umuntu wokufundisa abantu bake ngezinto zika'Nkulunkulu. W'ala uDingane nga'lesosikati, ukuba amaZulu afundiswe.<sup>23</sup>

[The knowledgeable Capt. Gardiner arrives and did many miracles that left people appreciative. One day he went to KwaZulu and visited Dingane. He sat in the courtyard together with Dingane, informing him about many things that the knowledgeable whites were capable of. He also advised him to enlist the help of a person to teach his people about God. Dingane refused and dismissed the suggestion.]

The testimonies collected, articulated, and published by both Fuze and Stuart in the 1920s began feeding into historical research by both professional and amateur historians writing in late 1920s, beginning with A. T. Bryant's publication, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal.<sup>24</sup> Bryant's perceptions of King Dingane are reflected in chapters 66 and 67 of this study. His impressions of the latter focus on his supposed timid, lazy nature<sup>25</sup> and savagery. His views are expressed as follows:

Dingane was gifted neither with the intellectual ability nor the physical activity of his brother, Shaka; but he was not less brutal. His disposition was neither bellicose nor ambitious; so he possessed no martial capabilities and made no conquest. Tall and obese of build, and indolent and luxurious by nature, he rather preferred to while his days at home in the genial company of a few selected courtiers and a host of pretty concubines... (After the arrival of the voortrekkers) The state of savage vendetta, accompanied by acts of mutual perfidy, butchery, and heroism, that hereafter ensued between Zulus and Whites, has been so frequently described as to need no further repetition. Immediately after his crippling defeat, on the 16th of December, 1838, by the Boers at eNcome (Blood river), Dingane came to realise that, with the recent formidable increase of strength among the White settlers in Natal, his sovereignty was virtually ended in that direction.<sup>26</sup>

Before long, Zulu nationalists like John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo absorbed Fuze's, Stuart's and Bryant's images of the king. These are portrayed in isiZulu historical novels that were published by Dube in 1930 and Dhlomo in 1936.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.115

<sup>24</sup> A.T. Bryant, Olden times in Zululand. On Bryant see Wright, 'The dynamics of power'; 'A.T. Bryant and the wars of Shaka', History in Africa, 18, 1991, pp.409-425.

<sup>25</sup> See a drawing/portrait of the king in Stuart's, that fits this particular image portrayed by white settler artists, Hlangakhula, London, 1924.

<sup>26</sup> Bryant, Olden Times, pp.674-679.

## **2. John Dube: Dismissive views of King Dingane by conservative Zulu Nationalists.**

John Dube was born at the iNanda station of the American Board Mission on 11 February 1871. Dube, as a member of the missionary educated amakholwa elite, was strongly influenced by the writing of the African American, Booker T Washington. Additionally, Amakholwa stressed and accepted white cultural and socio-economic norms, as they were products of missionary schools. The activities of the missionaries had helped to create an African intelligentsia that had a common language (English) and common religious beliefs (christian). Few had the capital to set themselves up on their own as storekeepers or artisans, while white employers were reluctant to employ them. Frustrated and embittered by the steady erosion of their privileges, amakholwa began to form vigilance and welfare societies to protect their interests, and turned to the political arena to gain redress for their grievances.

In 1900 they founded the Natal Native Congress (a forerunner of the ANC) which was open to all Africans. They also sought to express their aspirations through journalism. To accomplish this goal Dube established the African newspaper iLanga laseNatali, in 1903.<sup>27</sup> The primary objective of this newspaper, which is still in existence, was to disseminate education and to spread the doctrine of self-reliance among Africans. It soon became a useful training ground and nurtured the talent of Zulu writers including Rolfes Dhlomo. Dube was to become the first ever president of the South African Native Congress (later to become the African National Congress in 1923)<sup>28</sup>, formed soon after the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Confronted by a barrage of repressive legislation such as the Native Labour Regulation Act (1911) which made it illegal for African mineworkers and those in industry to strike, and the Land Act (1913 which reserved 91.3% of the land in the Union for whites, many Africans were galvanised into establishing a national organisation that would take lead in uniting African people to struggle against white rule and oppression. It was with this in view that Pixley Isaka kaSeme's called

<sup>27</sup> Lambert and Morrell, 'Domination and surbodination'.

<sup>28</sup> On Dube biography See T. Karis and G. Carter, From Protest to Challenge: a documentary history of African politics in South Africa:1882-1964, Stanford, 1977, Vol 2. p.24.

Africans to jettison ethnic nationalism and replace it with the all-inclusive African nationalism

The demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa-Fingo feud, the animosity that exists between the Tongas and the Zulus, between the Basutos and every other Native must be buried and forgotten, it has shed among us sufficient blood! These divisions, these jealousies, are the cause of all our woes and all backwardness and ignorance to-day<sup>29</sup>

In similar vein, John Dube took up national issues affecting Africans. He inveighed in particular, against the Land Act, drawing attention to

the tales of misery caused to hundreds of my compatriots by the recent Native Land Acts... compels me to force myself on the public notice. It is only a man with a heart of stone who could hear and see, and yet remain callous and unmoved. It would break your hearts did you but know, as I know, the cruel and undeserved afflictions wrought by the harsh enactment on numberless aged, poor and tender children of this, my and their only native land. Forth from the ashes of their burnt out kraals, kicked away like dogs by christian people from their humble hearts from dear old scenes where their fathers were born and they grew up in simple peace, bearing malice to none and envying neither European nor Indian the wealth and plenty they can amass for themselves from their land, these unfortunate outcasts pass homeless, silently suffering along the highways and byways of the land, seeking in vain the most unprofitable waste whereon to build their hovel and rest and live, victims of an unknown civilisation that has all too suddenly overtaken and overwhelmed them<sup>30</sup>

Veit Erlmann contends that one of the first published collections of a reformulated Zulu musical heritage is Amagama Abantu, a collection of African secular songs, published in 1911 by Dube and his wife Nokuthela. This booklet contains thirty isiZulu wedding songs, love songs and umqumqumbelo dance songs.<sup>31</sup> Dube used ethnic consciousness and traditionalism for populist reasons, that is, to promote and popularise acceptance of indigenous art forms and traditional power structures. The fact that royal political manoeuvres became topics of songs such as ‘iNkosi bayibizile Eshowe’, meaning, (the King has been summoned to Eshowe) defines the ideological nature of some of the songs. This particular song commemorated King Solomon kaDinuzulu's challenge of the white administration in Eshowe, the administrative capital of Zululand.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Imvo Zabantsundu, 24 October 1911.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted from S. Marks, Ambiguities, pp.64-65.

<sup>31</sup> Veit Erlmann, ‘But hope does not kill: Black popular music in Durban, 1913-1915, in P. Maylam and Edward, I (eds), The people's city: African life in 20th century Durban, Pietermaritzburg, 1996, pp.67-101.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Notwithstanding Dube's nationalist aspirations, Jordan Ngubane defined him as a 'Nominalist' who was born and grew up in the shadow and age of defeat that included the Anglo-Zulu War<sup>33</sup>, the civil war between Zibhebhu and Prince Hamu, and the Bhambatha Rebellion. He argued that Dube's generation were a defeated lot who had traumatic experiences of these events which ushered in poverty, oppression and squalid living conditions to the average African.<sup>34</sup> Ngubane argued that the logic of defeat required Dube's generation to co-operate with the White man; that they should surrender themselves to God and accept deculturation. They thus launched a great crusade to convert their 'heathen' brothers, built schools of all sorts and established newspapers for their people. Ngubane drew here on the personal experiences of his own grandmother who had grown up towards the end of the Zulu empire. She had enlisted in the army and belonged to the Ingcugce regiment. Her way of expressing the trauma into which the Zulu were thrown by the defeat was to claim that one could smell gunpowder on every mountain and in every valley in the land of the Zulu. For her, the world had come to an end when Cetshwayo's uLundi capital went up in flames on January 4-5, 1879. His grandmother, like many people of her generation who grew up near white settlements (including Dube), became a christian. Those whose world had been destroyed believed that Jesus Christ, 'the saviour', would restore to them that which they had lost. Ngubane believed that amakholwa identified themselves with the white man on his terms as christianity was a proselytising religion which had behind it the military, economic and cultural power of the conqueror. The demands of survival required that people should embrace it.<sup>35</sup>

Dube sought to resolve some of the contradictions inherent in his ambiguous position by an emphasis on self-reliance. He was, for example, initially willing to accept the principle of territorial segregation, as embodied into the 1913 Land Act, provided there was a more equitable distribution of land. In more specific localised contexts

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<sup>33</sup> On the re-interpretation of the Anglo-Zulu War including the call to analyse its impact as far as amaZulu were concerned, the disruption and the suspension of fundamental processes of existence, and suffering to all, see J. Guy, 'Battling with Banality: Tourism, Historians, and the killing fields of Zululand', Paper presented at the History and African Studies Seminar Series, No 13 of 1998, University of Natal, Durban, 3/6/1998.

<sup>34</sup> This paragraph is based largely on J. Ngubane, Conflict of Minds, New York, 1979. p.175.  
<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

this often led him to appropriate and adapt elements of traditional Zulu culture and tradition.

Drawing from the cultural traditions of performance, songs, dance and ukubonga, as practised during King Dingane's time, Dube organised music and dance songs performances as part of a symbolic articulation and collective identification with his pre-colonial past.<sup>36</sup> Dube's competitions featured songs such as 'umfazi umaqeda isikhwama' meaning 'it is difficult for one's wife to be spendthrift wife'. This song is a critique of 20th century consumerism and wasteful life-style of amakholwa. Instruments that included African drums and reed flute accompanied the songs.<sup>37</sup>

In the 1930s, conservative Zulu nationalists like Dube and Dhloomo were to extend their repertoire and for the first time include historical novels published in isiZulu only, and dealing with past Zulu kings. John Dube was related to the Ngcobo line of chiefs from emaQadini, and throughout his life he maintained close ties with Zulu traditional leaders, including the Zulu royal house. John Dube wrote historical narratives about amaZulu before whites became their overlords, yet he was himself a christian with predominantly Western values. These conflicts and tensions are apparent in his writings-including his historical novel. Dube was torn between his enthusiasm for the traditions of his community, and admiration for 'progress', Christianity, and 'civilisation'. As Marks argues, christian Africans like Dube recognized both the meaningfulness of European 'progress' and the fearful price that had to be paid for it. It was surely this tension that had led to "the complex interplay between the poles of rejection and co-operation" that characterised the politics and ideology of John Dube and the christian African community of which he was the most outstanding representative in Natal.<sup>38</sup>

This eventually led to the publication of the first ever Zulu (historical) novel, Insila kaShaka by Dube in 1930. It is through analysing these novels that we gain insight into Dube's viewpoint and perceptions of the various Zulu kings, including King Dingane. By 1917 Dube

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<sup>36</sup> Veit Erlmann, 'But hope does not kill'.

<sup>37</sup> iLanga, 12/11/1915;24/12/1915 and 22/11/1922.

<sup>38</sup> S. Marks, The Ambiguities, Chapter 2.

Seems to have turned to the Zulu Royal family and to the rich history and ritual it provided for ethnic nationalism. The recent memoirs of conquest and dramatic quality of the Zulu past and royal symbolism provided a ready source of material for an indigenous "refurbishing of tradition"<sup>39</sup>

Extremely negative images of King Dingane predominate in Dube's historical novel. Here, King Dingane is the villain of the story, because his own brand of cruelty, when compared to King Shaka is ingrained; it does not represent courage and greatness but mere violence. As Sikunyana wakwaButelezi confides to his son Jeqe

Asihlale kahle lapa kwelakwaZulu Jeqe. Sikumbula uTshaka noma wayesikataza ngokuhlasela ezizweni, uDingane usebaqedile abantu ngokubabulala. Sewababulala bonke abakayise uSenzangakhona. Sewabulala abafowabo oGubhuzela, oMhlangano, oMatambo, oMacapashiye, oMpansi, oNtsikalende, noMbulali.<sup>40</sup>

[We are oppressed here in the Zulu kingdom. We remember Tshaka regardless of the fact that he always sent us to military expeditions, Dingane has destroyed people by murdering them. He murdered his siblings within the house of Senzangakhona. He murdered his own brothers, Gubhuzela, Mhlangana, Matambo, Macapashiye, Mpansi, Ntsikalende and Mbulali]

John Dube also contended that King Dingane did not have the military acumen of his brother Shaka for 'kwamanye amakosi konke loku kwakungadingeki, ngoba ayehlala ekaya, impi ihambe nezinduna. Kodwa ekusukeni kwake pansi, ukuqala kwake ukunqoba izizwe, uTshaka wayezipatela matupa impi yake, nezinduna zake zitshelwa uye ukuti impi izobambana kanjani'<sup>41</sup>(other kings did not need to be in the forefront in the battle field. They remained behind in their courtyard and izinduna would lead the battle. But from the beginning, the victorious Shaka personally led from the front, instructing his battalion and izinduna about battle strategies). Furthermore, King Dingane was not dynamic because he lacked Shaka's vision of building the great African Empire.

To Dube, King Shaka was both a Zulu and African nationalist, a great, if not one of the greatest nation-builders. John Dube lamented the assassination of King Shaka before he could realise his dream of unity amongst Africans. As far as Dube was concerned, both Prince Dingane and Prince Mhlangana were jealous of King Shaka's achievements as a statesman and military strategist. They conspired behind his back

<sup>39</sup> Marks, *The Ambiguities*, p. 67.

<sup>40</sup> Dube, *Insila kaShaka*, p.70.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

to assassinate him. Therefore Dube was among the Zulu writers to confirm this as a fact and that King Dingane stands out as a sly schemer of Machiavellian proportions

Wati ehlezi nje engazelele luto uTshaka, kanti uDingana nabangane bake usehlose ukumbulala. Wayengazi ukuti aseyuwudhlala umkosi lo ayeselungiselele abantu ukuba bawuhlelele, sekufunyelwe nezwi enyangeni yake ukuba ilungise imiti yokunyatelisa inkosi. uDingana usehlangene noMhlangana noMbopa ukuba bamzume bambulale. Nembala ute ehlezi yedwa bamgenelela bamgwaza. langxuma iqawe elidala, lati, 'Nibulala minanje ngeke nilibuse, lohanjwa zinkwenjane ezimhlophe'. Ebikezela ukuti lobuswa abelungu<sup>42</sup>

[Whilst Shaka was relaxing and content with life in general, Dingane and his friends were conspiring to murder him. He was unaware that he was going to participate in the forthcoming umkosi ceremony that was being organised by relevant people, by then his medicine man had received word from him that he should prepare relevant medicine for the ceremony. But Dingane had already joined forces with Mhlangana and Mbopha to assassinate him. Accordingly, they took him by surprise whilst he was relaxing alone and they stabbed him. The old hero responded by jumping and said, 'Though you will succeed in killing me you will never rule this land, it will be ruled by white swallows, meaning that this land will be ruled by whites].

Thus when Dube selected a Zulu King about whom to write he had to choose a king who was diplomatic as far as race relations were concerned. He settled for King Shaka as opposed to King Dingane. To him Shaka was a 'progressive' and intelligent leader. Shaka, unlike Dingane, welcomed white people into the Zulu Kingdom. He did not confront them but was diplomatic, accommodating and courteous as he tried to devise an effective strategy of containing the threat that they posed. Because of this personal interest Dube was always going to question the manner and circumstances that led to King Shaka's death.<sup>43</sup> As King Dingane was implicated in this act he was therefore ready to denounce him.

As a member of the African elite, entrepreneur and wealthy landowner, John Dube supported gradualist, reformist policies that concentrated on fighting for the franchise of educated Africans at the expense of the black peasants and working class. He was also dismissive of other forms of protest like stay-aways and strikes by workers, especially those organised by the communist party and the ICU, which was controlled

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> He was instrumental in the unveiling of the king's monument at kwaDukuza (Stanger) in

by his political enemy A.W.G. Champion. Dube explicitly repudiated the pass-burning campaign of the Communist Party<sup>44</sup>, which took place on the 16th of December 1930 and led to the brutal killing of Johannes Nkosi by the police. In a December 1930 editorial *iLanga* urged African workers to boycott the 16 December pass-burning campaign which the newspaper believed was being manipulated by communists

'AmaKomunisi eGoli ayivivile impi yawo kanhloko kayivutwa ukuze ukuba kulahlwe amaPasi ngosuku luka Dingane December 16. Kepa bonke abantu bamiqondo izothile abayi ngeni leyondaba. Abasebenza ezitolo, nasemahofisini, nasezinkomponi abayingeni. Asaziiyozala nkomoni'.<sup>45</sup>

*In Johannesburg the Communists have prepared for their 'stupid' war as they want people to throw away their passbooks on the 16th of December. But the intelligent people will not do so. Those who work in shops, offices and mines will not comply. We do not know what will be the consequence (of this campaign).*<sup>46</sup>

On 19 December 1930 an editorial in *iLanga* suggested that the only way to resolve the pass issue and other repressive legislation be through negotiations with the state (as Shaka did with whites?). It dissociated itself from the confrontational (Dingane?) protest action adopted by African workers and blamed it on the influence of white Communists. It called on its readers to respect the laws of the country and the sovereignty of the South African state. The heading of this article was 'Obani Abaholi?' meaning 'Who are the leaders?' It questioned the commitment of white radicals

Nako-ke lapo sifike sahlukane kona kulabab'alisa abafuna ukuhamba ngezindhlela ezinqamulayo zokuwaqeda (amapasi). Imiteto yonke yezwe ibekwa iParlamende eCape Town futi ilona elinikezwe amandhla okuyiguqula nokuyibulala...ngako umteto osuke sewamiswa yiParlamende ngamandhla elawatweswa yizwe lonke elivotayo, usuke umi uze upendulwe noma uqedwe ngawo lawomandhla futhi.

*This is where we differ with these men who want to take short cuts in their quest to abolish pass laws. All these are enacted through the parliament in Cape Town and it is the only body that has the powers to change or reject any law... therefore any law which is enacted by the parliament through the powers conferred to it by the constitution of the country will always stand and will only*

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1932 and subsequent commemoration which is a national event today.

<sup>44</sup> See an article published in *iLanga*, 1 Jan, 1932, titled 'The Communist propaganda' and the among Natives', also see chapter 3 of the thesis on this issue.

<sup>45</sup> *iLanga*, 12/12/1930

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 16/12/1930. John Dube retained editorial control even though Ngazana Luthuli was the official editor of *iLanga*, this remained the case even though this newspaper was absorbed by *Bantu Press* in 1934. L Switzer, *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of protest and resistance, 1880-1960*, Cambridge, 1997, Chapter 2.



*change through constitutional means.*

In a 1933 editorial of *iLanga laseNatal*,<sup>47</sup> the relationship between King Dingane and the voortrekkers is discussed. The article, which focuses on the commemoration of “Dingaan’s Day”, is both highly selective and partisan. Although this article purports to be about King Dingane, the ‘spirit’ of Shaka dominates it and his so-called prophecy that ‘blacks will never rule this country but the whites’. Its gist is similar to the plot of Dube’s historical novel on *Insila kaShaka*. The ghost of King Shaka haunts and paralyzes King Dingane, renders him ineffective and ultimately overshadows him. He becomes impotent and is incapable of making informed decisions. The king becomes an obsessive ‘psychopath’ and blunders throughout his reign committing atrocities like the murder of Retief and party. The latter is deemed to represent the white men in Shaka’s prophecy.

Dube, unlike African nationalists<sup>48</sup> who cast their net wider when analysing the actions of King Dingane, failed to contextualise Dingane’s action within the threat posed by both colonisation and imperialism. His dependence on pro-conquest ‘ghosts and prophecy’ theories is ahistorical and trivializes the politics of the past. This theme was to influence writers like the Dhlomo brothers whose subtexts were characterised by both the conspiracy hatched by Regent Mnkabayi and Dingane including the pro-conquest ‘prophecy’ attributed to King Shaka. This prophecy was the central theme in Rolfes Dhlomo historical novel on King Dingane.

## **2. 1 Rolfes Dhlomo: ‘one dimensional’ negative view of King Dingane**

Rolfes Dhlomo, one of Dube’s eminent protegees, also played a crucial role in the re-appropriation of King Dingane’s image. In 1936 he published an historical novel in isiZulu titled *uDingane*,<sup>49</sup> probably the first major work on the Zulu King. Rolfes Reginald Raymond Dhlomo was born in 1901. He was educated at Dube’s Ohlange Institute and at the American Board Mission School in Amanzimtoti, where he obtained his teacher’s certificate. In the early 1920s he became a regular contributor (under various pen names) to Dube’s *iLanga laseNatali*. Dube’s *Insila ka Shaka*, published in 1930, must have awakened him to the potentialities of using isiZulu for

<sup>47</sup> *iLanga*, ‘Usuku lukaDingane’, 15 December 1953.

<sup>48</sup> This will be discussed later in the study.

<sup>49</sup> R. Dhlomo, *uDingane*.

written literature as well as the suitability of pre-colonial history as a topic for modern writing. John Dube was one of the most influential people in Rolfes Dhlomo's life. He was often honoured in Bantu World and iLanga laseNatali during Rolfes's tenure as editor. In his book Izikhali Zanamuhla, Rolfes included a brief and appreciative chapter on Dube.<sup>50</sup> In short Dhlomo was an unflinchingly staunch Dube-ite.

Rolfes published a series of semi-biographical narratives about the Zulu dynasty for Shuter and Shooter in Pietermaritzburg. They include the following: uDingane kaSenzangakhona(1936), uShaka(1937), uMpande(1938) and uCetshwayo(1958).<sup>51</sup> Unlike his younger brother, Herbert, he deliberately published most of his text and articles in isiZulu. In iLanga laseNatali of 28 December 1923, he wrote, 'our folklore and historical records must be preserved from dying out, anything of racial pride, by means of literature, otherwise these will be lost forever and our connection with the past forgotten'.

Rolfes's journalistic skills and experience had given him the necessary background to write this kind of popular history. His main sources seem to have been published and unpublished oral traditions but also include Bird's Annals of Natal as well as Fuze's and Bryant's publications. Rolfes was at pains to explain that his work, although historical fiction or a fable, should be regarded as striving to represent a true historical account of King Dingane's reign. Yet, as he admits, he personally constructed the dialogue that cannot be accounted for in history texts

Lencwadi ngiyilobe ukuze sisibone kahle kalula isimilo sika Dingane, ngiyilobe njengenganekwane kodwa yona iyiqiniso lonke. Noma amazwi engiwafake emilonyeni yabo angekho ezincwadini zezindaba zezwe, ngifanekisile ukuthi kwakufanele ukuthi kwakufanele abe njalo'.<sup>52</sup>

*I have written this book in order for us to become aware of Dingane's behaviour; I have written it as fiction but it also a true story. Even though I have implanted words into the mouths of the different characters which were not recorded in history books, but I am of the opinion these words were supposed to be like that*

In the preface Dhlomo says that his book will discuss King Dingane's 'mind' and

<sup>50</sup> R. Dhlomo, Izikhali Zanamuhla, p. 55.

<sup>51</sup> A. Gerard, Four African Literatures Chapter 3, and S. Skikna, 'Son of the sun'. The published version of uCetshwayo is a censored version, see C. Dlamini's comments in this section. See also Vilakazi, 'The oral and written literature', Sections 3-4.

<sup>52</sup> Dhlomo, uDingane, p.iii.

'thoughts'; 'ngenze ukuba uDingane nezinduna zakhe, oNdlela noDambuza baphimise amazwi aveza imqondo yabo ngezinto ezenzeka bezibona',<sup>53</sup>(I have tried to attribute to Dingane and his two izinduna words and testimonies that reflect their perceptions regarding events that they witnessed).

The elder Dhlomo lamented the propensity of the present generation to misunderstand past societies remembering them by their mistakes or 'bad deeds'. He emphasised the relation of the past to the present problems. Rolfes acknowledged that knowledge of the past reflects the present interests of any person writing about historical events. In other words, the production of history is conditioned by present preoccupations. He argued that every generation rewrote its past in terms of its understanding of the world.<sup>54</sup>

As an author he believed that we should learn from our forefathers and try to look at their world through their eyes. Still, Rolfes failed fully to heed his own warning by taking cognisance of only one side and voice of the existing archive on King Dingane as reflected, for example, by Fuze in his publication aBantu abamnyama. Giving voices to characters is an interesting technique which Rolfes younger brother Herbert Dhlomo, another prolific writer and poet, picked up a later. Judging by their works, it seems that the two brothers agreed to disagree on their images of King Dingane. To Rolfes, Dingane was a villain; to Herbert he was a hero, and a freedom fighter. It is also noteworthy that the two brothers produced the two differing manuscripts in the same year, 1936. Rolfes felt that King Dingane had a 'small mind' as compared to King Shaka. He described the king as a villain who committed many atrocities. His project was to address this aspect of Dingane

Ziningi izenzo zikaDingane ezimbi engiziveze lapha ezisishaqisayo thina banamuhla...uDingane wayenganayo ngempela inhliziyo kaShaka, nokuthi kuzo zonke izenzo zakhe kakukho ubukhulu bomqondo obabukhona ezenzweni zikaShaka'.<sup>55</sup>

*I have highlighted many bad deeds by Dingane and these are shocking by today's standards... Dingane was not kind-hearted as compared to Shaka, besides his deeds do not measure up to Shaka's intellectual capabilities.*

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.i.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p.i.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.ii.

There are similarities between the works of public intellectuals, ‘historians’ like Bryant and Stuart and that of Rolfes Dhlomo on King Dingane. These include the belief that the king gained the throne by treachery; and that he was an unpredictable, insecure and cruel barbarian.<sup>56</sup> Like Dube, Rolfes believed that King Shaka’s ‘prophecy’ overwhelmed King Dingane. Dingane was a bad king, an animal and a psychopath from whom he recoiled with disgust because as a king he presented an unfavourable image of the Zulu monarchy. Shaka’s image or ghost is forever lurking in the background, as it is too powerful to be exorcised, ‘phela labeselikhala igazi likaShaka, selibizwa kuye’<sup>57</sup> (Indeed Shaka’s blood was crying, calling inside him). In confirmation of Stuart’s pro-conquest prophecy he elaborated, “Kasazi noma wayesengenwe uvalo ‘Iwezinyoni zezulu’ yini lezo athi engena nje ebukhosini zaziqhamuka, zamenza ukuba aphenduke isilwane”.<sup>58</sup> (We are not sure whether he was afraid of the ‘swallows’ that turned him into a monster after he assumed his reign). Dhlomo claimed

... that Africans have their own versions and interpretation of the Dingane story. The motivating force or central theme is not the Voortrekker. The motivating forces are Shaka’s assassination and prophecy, the plotting and defection of Mpande and the power and influence of Mkabayi.<sup>59</sup>

As a result he wrote the following in his historical novel , uShaka

Ngenzeni Dingane? Ngenzeni Mhlangana ningibulala nje? Konje nithi nizolibusa leli ngingasekho? Ha! Niqambe nishilo! Nazi izinyoni zezulu zilizulela lelizwe. Kaniyikulibusa sengifile. Sebefikile abelungu.<sup>60</sup>[What have I done Dingane, what have I done Mhlangane to be killed by both of you? You think you will rule after my death? You won’t! The swallows are on the horizon gunning for this land. You won’t rule this land after my death. Whites have arrived].

Rolfes subscribed to the view that King Dingane was a stooge, a powerless weakling easily manipulated by his aunt Mnkabayi, among others.<sup>61</sup> As a ruler he governed by fear and ended up committing unwarranted atrocities by killing people unnecessarily<sup>62</sup>, particularly his siblings.<sup>63</sup> King Dingane was a traitor to the Africans by killing King Shaka. Through this act he destroyed what was to become one of the

<sup>56</sup> See Fuze, Stuart, Bryant publications mentioned earlier.

<sup>57</sup> Dhlomo, uDingane, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.ii.

<sup>59</sup> iLanga, 8 May 1954

<sup>60</sup> Dhlomo, uShaka, p.145.

<sup>61</sup> Dhlomo, uDingane, ‘Indikimba III (Chapter 3) titled ‘Isu likaMkabayi’.

<sup>62</sup> Dhlomo, uDingane, pp.55 and 60.

greatest 'civilisations' in Africa. The author depicts King Dingane as **'the native who caused all the trouble'**.

The cover of uDingane the historical novel is suggestive. It is black, probably symbolising doom and the word 'Dingane' is written in red, symbolising blood while the letter "I" is represented by an assegai, dripping with blood. Like Dube before him, Dhlomo completely absolved the whites of any atrocities, and in the process blamed the King for the killing of Retief, an act that was both shocking and unwarranted. This was also the sole cause of the existing conflict and tensions between blacks and whites. The king's defeat at impi yaseNcome ushered in oppression and subsequent loss of land to foreign invaders, that is, white settlers.<sup>64</sup> Rolfes Dhlomo further claimed that blacks lost their land, sovereignty and were still oppressed because of King Dingane's 'hideous' deed.<sup>65</sup>

Rolfes Dhlomo also lamented King Dingane's unrepentant, anti-Christ stance and believed he was beyond redemption. He accused the king of opposing the introduction of the Christian ethic in the 'heart of darkness', that is, kwaZulu.<sup>66</sup> He lacked the intelligence and noble qualities of King Shaka. It is clear that both John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo saw King Dingane as an inverted image of King Shaka. As far as Dhlomo was concerned

uShaka wayezonda amagwala, efuna ukwenza abantu ukuba babe ngamaqhawe bonke ngoba ubuqhawe ebuthanda, ebuxoshisangezinkomo. uDigane yena wayesababmqhawe, ewabulala. Wayengabathandi abendlu yakwabo. Kuthiwasebebonke abafowabo babulawa nguDingana, babe ngamashumi amabili. Kazange ayenze into enjalo uShaka. (*Shaka rewarded people with cattle for this trait. Dingane, on the other hand, was suspicious / afraid of heroes and killed them. He also hated his siblings. It is said that he killed all of his brothers, twenty in total. Shaka, however, did not do anything like that*).

At this point it is important for one to ask a key question- why did conservative African intellectuals perceive King Dingane as a villain? In part their response was influenced by white versions, but it is also important to understand that they were rooted within the politics and history production of the Zulu royal house. The origins

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, indikimba 1-4, and 9[parts 1-4, and 9], pp.124-125.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, indikimba, viii, x, and xv.

<sup>65</sup> Dhlomo, uDingane, p.27.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

and background of the Dhlomo family are instructive in explaining Rolfes Dhlomo's social priorities and his interest, pride and explicit support of Zulu nationalism and culture as well as his allegiance within this. His family originated from eMakhabeleni and is therefore related to the Langeni of which Nandi, King Shaka's mother, was a member. This inclined him more to King Shaka than King Dingane. Hence, Rolfes Dhlomo's connections with the Zulu royal house may have had a significant influence on his historical writings.

Besides publishing historical novels on all the Zulu Kings of the 19th century whilst an editor of iLanga, in the 1940s, Dhlomo also immersed himself in the affairs of the Zulu royal house. This was apparent in the evidence he presented in 1945 to the commission on the succession dispute within the Zulu Royal house. This commission pitted Princess Magogo against her sister-in-law, oKaMatatela -Queen Christina, King Solomon's first wife and the mother of Prince Cyprian Bhekuzulu. Princess Magogo supported Prince Tandayiphi whose mother, oKaMbulawa, was the daughter of Mbulawa kaMnyamana wakwaButhelezi. Rolfes Dhlomo gave evidence on behalf of Prince Bhekuzulu and used one of the books he published as an authoritative, instructive source. Hence his claim at the commission

I am the author of the book Izikhali Zanamuhla (Exhibit No 1) published in 1935. At page 65 of that book there is a paragraph to the effect that Cyprian is the heir of the late Chief (King) Solomon. My authority for that paragraph was the leading article in the iLanga laseNatali of March 24th 1933, in which Cyprian's name is mentioned... I am not able to say who contributed that information to the newspaper. Other authority for the paragraph in my book was contained in a letter written by A.F. Matibela, published in iLanga laseNatali of the 31st March 1933... The authenticity of the Articles referred to was never disputed as far as I know... There was a second issue of the book... It is identical to the 1st edition except that the paragraph naming Cyprian as heir to the uSutu chieftainship has been omitted. I do not know why Cyprian's name was not mentioned in the new book. The alteration was not made with my authority or knowledge. The publishers did it... I have asked Messrs. Shuter and Shooter for their authority for change, but have no reply.<sup>67</sup>

Herbert Dhlomo's excellent, impartial tribute to his older brother clarified these issues

One of Dhlomo most humble books became famous as it precipitated a crisis in the Zulu Paramount Chieftainship controversy. Having received authentic information from some reliable source, Dhlomo divulged the secret he did not know it was secret that Cyprian kaSolomon kaDinizulu was the real Heir

<sup>67</sup> Evidence of Rolfes Dhlomo, Marwick Papers, "Succession Dispute", JSA, KCM 2761. All his books were prescribed in African schools.

presumptive to the Zulu Paramountcy. The revelation caused a sensation. Dhlomo was threatened with libel and worse, when at last, the matter came before authorities Dhlomo was subpoenaed to appear before the court. What happened is popular history. He was not exonerated, but lionised by many Zulu interested in the dispute.<sup>68</sup>

There are other reasons why Rolfes Dhlomo portrayed King Dingane as he did. These included requirements from his publishers. In a letter written to the editor of *iLanga* on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1938, C. B. Dlamini wrote a hostile critique of Dhlomo's historical novels save that one about King Cetshwayo. His review of *uCetshwayo* unedited manuscript was positive. He saw this historical novel as essentially African Nationalist in approach and empowering to oppressed Africans in general. Unlike the other historical novels by Dhlomo, it did not corroborate nor perpetuate Eurocentric views of the Zulu Kings. Because of this orientation Shuter and Shooter and others first turned down the novel for publication.<sup>69</sup> Dlamini felt that the other texts were not conversant with the history of indigenous people as they were vetted and censored by the publishers who imposed their own historical viewpoints on African peoples. Dlamini dismissed these texts as both disappointing and patronising for they could easily pass as historical texts written by whites on behalf of blacks

Ngoba ezinye zaleziNcwadi zakhe kazisusi usinga uma uzifunda kuba sengathi zilotshwe ngumlungu efilisa izenzo zamaQhawe akithi amaQhawe amakhulu, zijivaza yonke leyo nkathi yawo. Nangokulanda indaba kaPiet Retief, aziyibekile ngendlela yabantu kuba sengathi ibhalwe ngumlungu ezama ukujivasa nokufilisa uDingane. Kusobala ukuba lena kaKing Cetshwayo ibihlaba emhlohlweni...ngoba iKomiti yakwaShuter and Shooter yawo Mfundisi Shuter nabanye ithi ukuba iyalile angayi kwabanye abaShicileli kwase kuphele ngabo yini abaShicileli bako Shuter and Shooter..?<sup>70</sup>

*[Because one his historical novels do not inspire me when I read it is as if some of his works were written by a white person telling lies about great deeds of valour involving our great Heroes during their life times. By narrating the Piet Retief story, the account falls short in expressing the viewpoint of the indigenous people it is as if the story was written by a white person for white people trying to discredit Dingane. But this book on King Cetshwayo was to the point and impressive...because the Shuter and Shooter Committee of Reverend Shuter and others refused to publish it and discouraged him to submit the manuscript to other publishers, why was this the case, is Shuter and Shooter the only publishing company?]*

Elsewhere Rolfes younger brother, Herbert, amplified on this theme

<sup>68</sup> H. Dhlomo, 'Three famous African Authors I knew: R. Dhlomo', *Inkundhla yaBantu*, August 1946, First Fortnight.

<sup>69</sup> *iLanga*, 24/12/1938.

<sup>70</sup> Letter to the editor (Dhlomo himself) by Charles Dlamini, *iLanga*, 24/12/1938.

Like other vernacular writers he (Rolfes) was handicapped by the fact that no publisher could consider any but schoolbooks. Anxious to place his novels, he could not as this would mean watering them down to the tone required by the Selection Committee. One of his studies 'Cetswayo' caused a sensation when it was rejected by the dictatorial committee of 'experts' and linguists, not on literacy or aesthetic grounds, but on racial and religious ones. In spite of this Dhlomo has been able to publish two Zulu novels. Readers and patriots would be shocked to know what the Zulu author receives for books, and thousands are sold each year. This is a matter that needs immediate readjustment. In fact it needs official investigation.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps most important of all, Rolfes Dhlomo was a protégé of Dube and a child of the Joint Council generation. From the 1920 onward African politics bifurcated into two streams. The first comprised the christian elites who were strongly disposed towards co-operation with whites. James Aggrey and the Joint Council movement reinforced this current, to which Dube belonged, in the 1920s. The second stream was made up on increasingly aggrieved (sub) intelligentsia to whom the Independent Commercial Union (ICU) gave voice. This division meant that the African elite was split into two parts. In some cases it cut through single families, as was the case with the Dhlomo brothers. Whereas Herbert belonged to the latter stream, Rolfes belonged to the first.

Rolfes Dhlomo, along with many others of his generation was powerfully influenced by James Aggrey's<sup>72</sup> belief and faith in "white reasonableness", declaring that, 'these times call for concrete unity between white and blacks'.<sup>73</sup> In an article of 5 February 1926 in *iLanga lase Natali*, Dhlomo remarked that 'there are some foolish Natives who still think that they can do entirely without Europeans... that is bosh'. He supported joint collaboration with, in his words, 'proper white people', by joining the Joint Councils.<sup>74</sup> Skikna, in her master's thesis research on Rolfes, is of the opinion that the major reason for this stance was Dhlomo's notion of unity. It transcended the fields of language, culture, religion and politics. In fact unity is the force behind Dhlomo's entire range of beliefs. He would have liked to see all aspects of life operating in harmony. In his writings Dhlomo dealt with unity among blacks, unity as a token to universal brotherhood, the correct use of leadership to enforce unity, and

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<sup>71</sup> H. Dhlomo, 'Three famous African Authors I knew'.

<sup>72</sup> He was a black American who came to South Africa in the 1920s as part of an education commission.

<sup>73</sup> See S. Skikna, 'Son of the Sun', p.20.

<sup>74</sup> *iLanga*, 7/10/1927.



unity with whites.<sup>75</sup> It is apparent that, as regards unity, King Dingane failed dismally to meet Dhlomo's criteria.

His mentor John Dube who introduced him to Booker T. Washington's style of Ethiopianism influenced Rolfes Dhlomo's sense of unity. The influence of Dube is evident in the chapter about him in Dhlomo's book Ukwazi Kuyathuthukisa.<sup>76</sup> Both Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo used the basic tenets of Ethiopianism (amongst other tools) as a starting point for a reassessment of King Shaka's historical role. They defined him in terms entirely different from those they adopted and constructed when assessing King Dingane. They used King Shaka's image for the advocacy of African unity: social, political, and above all, cultural unity among black people of South Africa. To them King Shaka exemplified this trend of thought. He wanted all Africans to speak one language and be one strong united nation. In essence, King Shaka was a generator of national consciousness.

Accordingly, King Dingane was a villain, the antithesis of King Shaka. He threatened African unity by killing King Shaka, a deed that brought about the disintegration of African people in South Africa. This led to disunity, exploitation and oppression by the Boers who were obsessed with avenging the death of voortrekkers at his hands. The conservative Zulu Nationalists 1930s agenda for constructing Dingane as the anti-thesis of Shaka, found historical materials in the oral traditions of the 19th century which did much the same thing, although for different reasons.

### **3. Petros Lamula and Issaih Shembe -The Land and sympathetic views of King Dingane**

Most Zulu writers of the 1920s and 1930s were immersed in a world where racial segregation, social oppression and ethical demoralisation were omnipresent. This was reflected in various works of prose, novels, fiction, plays and songs / hymns in which they started questioning not only the legitimacy of white domination, but also the adequacy of the christian religion as taught by white missionaries.<sup>77</sup> As the Dube and Dhlomo's novels highlight, their publications were markedly historical and ethno-

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<sup>75</sup> Skikna, 'Son of the Sun', pp.99-102.

<sup>76</sup> On this theme on John Dube, Rolfes Dhlomo and Booker T. Washington, See S. Skikna, 'Son of the Sun', pp.13-19 and chapter 2 and R. Dhlomo, Ukwazi Kuyathuthukisa Pietermaritzburg, 1937.

<sup>77</sup> P. La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History in the careers of two Zulu nationalists'.

nationalistic.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, their viewpoint of history was deterministic. Their instrumental conceptualisation of history as progress was influenced by the belief that history can be used for the solutions of current problems, in order to plan for the future, while it is also of central importance in establishing collective and group identity by conceptualising it in nationalist terms. One of these Zulu writers was Petros Lamula.

Both Petros Lamula and Isaiah Shembe likewise appropriated a Zulu national past but in a markedly different fashion. Petros Lamula<sup>79</sup> was born at Qhudeni and was educated at the Lutheran Teacher Training College in kwaMaphumulo. He was ordained as a minister of the Norwegian church in 1915, but in 1926 he left to establish the Bantu National Church of Christ. In 1924 he published uZulu kaMalandela, a historical text based on oral traditions and evidence<sup>80</sup>. Lamula acknowledged that mainly his parents, particularly his mother, father and uncles as well as the material chronicled by Stuart, provided his evidence, material and sources on King Dingane. His father, Lutolini kaZacu kaZinyane wakwaLamula had belonged to one of King Mpande's regiment, uMdhlevenu. According to Petros his father was both a famous and brave warrior who was decorated for his bravery, 'eyisilomo senkosi uMpande, enezimendhlela esitiwa: ingxota, nemixhezo yezilomo namaqhawe'.<sup>81</sup>(He was Mpande's most popular warrior, with decorations: ingxota and imixhezo reserved for people of substance and warrior-heroes). His father died when he was twenty. He lamented his death, believing that he was intellectually immature when his father died, and regretting that he could not recall all of the oral traditions and stories that his father had related. Lamula believed that he could otherwise have written a 'better' historical text.

Petros Lamula's publications highlighted a complex and profound shift in his worldview and ideology. This involved a shift from a conservative christian-liberal to a radical militant nationalist worldview. Like Dube and Dhlomo, Lamula attempted to redefine their identity and cultural heritage outside the realms of christianity.

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<sup>78</sup> See Vilakazi, 'the oral and written literature', Sections 3-4. Gerard, Four African Literatures, pp. 182-193.

<sup>79</sup> On Lamula see La Hausse, 'Ethnicity and History'.

<sup>80</sup> Lamula, uZulu kaMalandela, p.35.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.156. He also admits that he relied on the secondary evidence from published historical texts of his time that might include Bryant and Stuart among others.

Commenting on the oral traditions provided by the elders within his community-including his parents,<sup>82</sup>, uncles<sup>83</sup> and James Stuart,<sup>84</sup> he wrote:

Njengoba nami ngikhule indaba isemlonyeni kwabadala, ngamakhosi nangazo zonke izindaba zakuqala ngizakuzama kafushana, ukulandela bona abadala...Kayikho into ebimnandi kakhulu kithi lapho sisakhula, kunokuzwa ngokuxoxwa ngezindaba zakithi ezindala, kakhulu ngamakhosi. Futhi sengathi izwe lalisenabantu abangamagagu okuxoxa izindaba. Uma kuxoxa ubaba, njengomuntu obekhona esikhathini samakhosi amadala,ubexoxa kakhulu ngoSenzangakhona...<sup>85</sup>

*I grew up aware of our elders' knowledge of our oral traditions, about kings and other past histories and briefly, I will follow the elders... There is nothing more fascinating than listening to our past being narrated when we were growing up, particularly concerning the kings. And it appears as if the land was full of talented storytellers. When my father narrates, as a person who was present during the reign of the old kings, he used to focus on Senzangakhona...*

Lamula's images of King Dingane are ambiguous. While not condoning his killing of his siblings and other atrocities, he was sympathetic to King Dingane. He believed that Dingane was more considerate and lenient to his subjects than King Shaka.<sup>86</sup> He defended King Dingane by suggesting that he had insurmountable difficulties to contend with during his reign, namely: the persisting threat of rebels like Mzilikazi, Soshangane and Nqaba who were all at loggerheads with the Zulu kingdom because of Shaka; the ever - growing presence of white settlers and traders who were given permission by King Shaka to settle in the Zulu kingdom; the arrival of voortrekkers in 1837 and lastly, the existence of the British -controlled Cape colony nearby.<sup>87</sup>

Lamula claimed that King Dingane was aware of King Shaka's diplomatic overtures to the Cape colony and (Lamula) posited that these were initiated because of the threat the colonists posed to the Zulu kingdom. Lamula asked his readers and audience to understand and analyse Dingane's reign against this background. Furthermore Lamula defended Dingane's disinterest in militaristic endeavours, arguing that as King Shaka had already defeated many chiefdoms and forced them to pay allegiance to the Zulu Kingdom, there was no strategic reason for the former to adopt an expansive, military

<sup>82</sup> P. Lamula, Isabelo sikaZulu, p.195.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. P. 223.

<sup>85</sup> P. Lamula, Isabelo sikaZulu, p.195.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p.54.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

policy. He put emphasis on Dingane's name-literally meaning - the wanderer - suggesting that it was a 'bad omen'.<sup>88</sup> Lamula claims that this was prophetic, as he was the only Zulu king buried outside the area of the Zulu Kingdom. He was killed and buried in an unknown area, after he was found wandering by amaSwazi:

'Igama lenkosi uDingana labayisigameko esibi, esayihlolela ukuba iyakugcina ngokudinga. Onke amakhosi akwaZulu embelwa kulomhlaba, kodwa yena kaziwa. NakwaNgwana kushiwo ngoba wabaleka waqonda khona, emva kwempi yase Maqongqo...'<sup>89</sup>

*The name of King Dingana was a bad omen that resulted in him becoming a wanderer. All the Zulu kings are buried within the kingdom, with the exception of him, as his burial place is unknown. Even at kaNgwana where it is said he escaped to after the battle of Maqongqo...*

When analysing the existing relationship between King Dingane and the white settlers, Lamula sharply asserted that King Dingane had no alternative but to believe that the white settlers and their African wards were conniving against him. He regarded the struggle between the King and the settlers as a struggle for **land**. As a king, Dingane did not recognise the existence of Natal as a separate (sovereign) entity from the Zulu Kingdom. The various battles between the two groups involved the killing of Retief and party at uMgungundhlovu, the Battles of 'Weenen' and Thukela whereby Dingane defeated a united front set up by the Boers and English settlers were in defence of the land.<sup>90</sup> Like Ngoza kaLudaba before him, Lamula saw continuity between impi yase Ncome and yasoPate (Magabeni) where Bongoza kaNgcobo, the famous, robust Zulu warrior, led the marauding Boers into a trap where they were annihilated by amaZulu.<sup>91</sup>

Lamula lamented that white foreign invaders celebrated the defeat of King Dingane at iNcome. Sympathising and condoling with the fallen Zulu warriors, he conferred on them the status of martyrs 'siyakala ngabantu bakiti abaqedwa ezweni lawokoko babo'<sup>92</sup> (We offer condolences to our people who were destroyed in their forefathers land). He vilified the so-called 'civilised', tyrannical and selfish white settlers who usurped his forefathers' land from the fallen warriors. This precious land was later transferred to the present white generation that utilised its riches to feed themselves:

<sup>88</sup> See Lunguza's testimony in JSA, Vol 1 on this issue.

<sup>89</sup> P. Lamula, Isabelo sikaZulu, p. 201.

<sup>90</sup> P. Lamula, uZulu kaMalandela, p.55 and 56.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, pp. 57-58 .

'Loku naku nabo abelungu abaziqayisa ngokuti baleta ukukanya, namhla basepuca wonke umhlaba wawobaba ukuba kusute abantwana babo. Yikupi okungeyiso isono? Ezinye izinto ezenziwa uShaka noDingana! Kunjani: eMapulazini, naseMobeni naseziNkomponi? Nako-ke bakiti, eNcome lapo yahlangana yasuka, baphela abantu...<sup>93</sup>

*Whites pride themselves of bringing light to us; today they have usurped our forefathers' land in order to feed their children. Which is not a sin? The deeds of Shaka and Dingana! How are conditions at farms, sugar plantations and mines? Here my fellow countryman, at Ncome where it all began, where (black) people were finished...*

Lamula argued that 'the wrongs' King Dingane and King Shaka did to their subjects were comparable to the atrocities committed by the white people against blacks, particularly employers in the white controlled farms, sugar plantations and mines. He saw King Dingane's defeat at iNcome as a major turning point in South Africa's history, leading to Africans losing their land and independence. The dreadful manner in which white people treated blacks in general and the conditions of existence of black people in Lamula's time were reasons why he interpreted King Dingane's reign as he did (in so far as King Dingane's opposition to white settlers was concerned).<sup>94</sup>

In later publications like Isabelo sikaZulu, which appeared in 1936, Lamula was less unwaveringly pro-Dingane. He believed that King Dingane's greatest mistake was killing Piet Retief and party, for it brought about the king's fall and the subsequent loss of land by Africans. As an intellectual, this shift could have indicated that he was responding to and acknowledging the criticisms put forward by John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo in their historical novels on King Dingane.<sup>95</sup> He now accepted that King Dingane should have adopted a more accommodating and diplomatic stance that would have allowed him to control white settlers. Nevertheless he was still sympathetic and sensitive towards King Dingane's actions. Unlike Dube and R. Dhlomo, he did not believe the killing of Piet Retief was '**the black man's burden**', and a catalyst for subsequent bad relations between the races. Dingane, as a king, Lamula said, was expected to protect himself, the land and his people from the white settlers. So:

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p.57.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> The general theme of his book reflects his opposition to white rule and domination.

<sup>95</sup> J. Dube, Insila kaShaka and R. Dhlomo, uDingane .

'uDingane ngib[h]jale ngaye ngokudatshukiswa yigama lakhe, elamhlelela ukudinga, bala wadinga indawo yokulahlwa phakathi kweze lakhe. Kufanele simtuse ngoba naye wayeqonde ukulwela izwe lakhe nesizwe sakhe, ayesiphethe njengeNkosi yaso'.<sup>96</sup>

*I am writing about Dingana because I am saddened by his name, which led him to become a wanderer, he did this after he lost his kingdom. We have to commend him because as a king, he had to fight for his land and people.*

Land dispossession was equally part of the living experience of Lamula's contemporary, Isaiah Shembe; leader of the Zulu based amaNazaretha Church. The Independent African Churches, of which the Shembe Church is part also commemorated the death of King Dingane and celebrated 'Dingana's Day'. Like Petros Lamula, their commemoration of King Dingane focused on **Zulu land** and the loss of it. Vilakazi asserts:

'The Shembe followers remembered this day also, but for them it was a day of national mourning... the sermons preached during Dingane's day celebrations always stressed the need for an African renaissance'.<sup>97</sup>

Isaiah Shembe was born at Ntabazwe in Harrismith, in Free State around 1867 into the family of an illiterate farm labourer who had great respect for culture and tradition of his ancestors. According to tradition, Isaiah Shembe heard a 'Voice' in a thunderstorm, which told him to leave his mother and four wives, to shun immorality, and to serve God. During the storm, he was burned by lightning, but obeyed the 'Voice', which told him not to have the lightning burns healed by medicine. Following this experience, Shembe developed the qualities of a seer (*oboniswayo*) within Zulu society and acted with great self-assurance. In 1911 he founded iBandla lamaNazaretha and in 1914 established the holy city of *eKuphakameni* at *iNanda* nearby John Dube's homestead and Ohlange School. He passed away in 1935. Shembe and Dube were very close friends and ardent Zulu Nationalists who supported the restoration of the Zulu royal house to its former glory.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Lamula, *uZulu kaMalandela*, p. 221.

<sup>97</sup> A. Vilakazi et al., *Shembe: The revitalization of African Society* Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1986, pp.18-19; See also A. Luthuli, *Let my people go: An autobiography*, London, 1982, p.156; See also J. Dube, *UShembe*, Pietermaritzburg, 1936. It is also possible that other independent black churches held commemorations during this day. See also Ngubane, *Conflict of Minds*, p. 200; Sundkler, B.G.M., *Bantu prophets in South Africa*, Oxford, 1961...

<sup>98</sup> I. Hexham (ed.), *The scriptures of the Amanazeretha of Ekuphakameni*, Alberta, 1994.

Shembe's church was both messianic and nationalistic.<sup>99</sup> This is understandable as resistance by black people was confined to such forms as separatist church movements where political and social grievances were articulated in religious and cultural terms. Shembe's church nationalism was specifically Zulu. It was believed by his followers that amaZulu could only be redeemed by a Zulu prophet - namely Isaiah Shembe. Thus in his teaching there was scant mention of or focus on Jesus Christ. The focus was on Shembe the prophet. His appeal was primarily to amaZulu's pride in their own cultural identity and historical past. He did this by restoring a number of customs that had been dismissed or condemned by the European missionaries despite amaZulu attachment to them.<sup>100</sup> Traditional dances were incorporated into religious worship while respect was paid to African Kings like Dingane, who were regarded as the very backbone of African societies. In 1936, in his autobiography on Shembe, Dube claimed:

'uShembe ukholwa ukuti abantu bafanele ukudumisa uNkulunkulu ngokug'ida nokusina. Ukug'ida kunesikundla esibanzi enkonzweni yamaNazaleta. Yonke imihlangano emikhulu, kugida izinsizwa nezintombi nezingane, kugwale izibukeli zaBantu nezaBelungu.<sup>101</sup>

*Shembe believes that people are supposed to praise the lord through song and dance. Dancing is very crucial in the Nazarite religion. All their worship is characterised by dancing males, females and children with a lot of black and white spectators.*

In this publication John Dube provides us with Shembe's pro-King Dingane hymns sung during the traditional dances ceremonies. These included official commemoration of "Dingaan's Day" on 16 December.<sup>102</sup> The following hymn laments that amaZulu are ruled by foreigners in their own land - the land of King Dingane and Senzangakhona which the invaders are destroying with impunity:

Lalela Zulu  
Lalela abantu bengipete  
Ngezwe letu  
Siyazizwa izizwe zivungama  
Zivungama ngawe

<sup>99</sup> See A. Gerard, *Four African Literatures*, pp. 182-193.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, see also, S. Simbandumwe, *A socio-religious and political analysis of the Judeo-Christian concept of prophetism and modern Bakongo and Zulu African prophet movements*, New York, 1992, Part 3.

<sup>101</sup> J. Dube, *uShembe*, see also a photocopy of a manuscript of Shembe's autobiography available at University of London, SOAS. It also includes all the hymns.

<sup>102</sup> See Simbandumwe, *A socio-religious and political analysis*, p.249 and Hexham, *The scriptures*, pp.13-14.

Njengezinyoni  
Sisho izinyoni, sisho amahloko  
Awacekeza insimu  
KaDingane noSenzangakhona  
Ayiqedile Mamo!  
Sizwa ngoMnyayiza  
KaNdabuko<sup>103</sup>

[Lend ears Zulu  
Regarding people ruling me  
In our land  
We hear nations grumbling  
Grumbling about you  
Like birds  
We are referring to weaverbirds  
That destroyed the garden of  
Dingane and Senzangakhona  
They have completely destroyed it, Mamo!  
We heard about this from  
Mnyayiza kaNdabuko]

The second hymn proclaims Dingane and Senzangakhona as founding fathers of the Zulu land and nation:

Mudedele angene  
Wo! Nangu uZulu  
Inzalo kaDingane  
NoSenzangakhona  
Livuliwe ngubani  
Lelisango?  
We, Mkululi weziboshwa!  
Wozani nina Zulu  
Wozani nizwe nonke  
Selivuliwe elalivaliwe  
Wozani nazo lezo zizwe  
Ziyadinga lona lelo lizwi  
Elopezu konke<sup>104</sup>

[Allow him/her to enter  
Wo! There is Zulu  
The progeny of Dingane  
And Senzangakhona  
Who left this gate ajar?  
Hey, liberator of prisoners!  
Come along Zulu

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p.53.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.55; Hexham, The scriptures, Introduction and page 13 and Simbandunwe, A socio-religious and political analysis, p.248.



Come all and listen  
The gate that was locked has been unlocked  
Come together with other nations  
They all also need to hear the voice  
Of the one above]

Shembe's hymns highlight his people's oppression and aspirations, anxieties and endurance, needs and hopes. The 'chanting' and dancing here enhance the prestige of the king and their own leader. The 'king' of the church, Isaiah, like Moses in the Old Testament, brings his people to their Promised Land. This land used to belong to the Zulu kings who held it in trust for the Zulu nation. Henceforth nationalistic church leaders like Isaiah Shembe brought followers onto church farms and established churches in their own land. A central theme of the Shembe doctrine was that the prophet should be brave and not afraid to immerse himself in the politics of the day. This bravery was tested in his struggle against white domination comparable to King Dingane's confrontations with the white voortrekkers. The political act constituted the great trial of the prophet's career and in this respect the leader emerged, conscious of being Moses freeing his people from slavery.<sup>105</sup> Hence the use of the metaphor 'uMkhululi weziboshwa', meaning the 'Liberator of prisoners', taking them back to the land of his forefathers, in this instance Senzangakhona and Dingane.

The Shembe Church was not the only church to commemorate the death of King Dingane. In various articles in the press there were calls and appeals by African Christians to observe this day during church sermons. In 1947, a reader of *iLanga*, mourned the loss of King Dingane-the African Hero. This reader possibly belonged to the African-based Methodist Church which sent a delegation to the government to lodge a formal complaint against the commemoration of 'Dingaan's Day', including the building of monuments to celebrate this day. In a letter to the editor of *iLanga lase Natali*, he wrote:

'Amadodana namadodakazi akwaZulu acela amaZulu nezizwe zonke ezinsundu zimkhumbule umfoka Senzangakhona, acela abafundisi babeke phambi kuka Mvelinqangi leliqhawe laseAfrica. Isonto lomhlaka December 14... Kakhulu nina bafundisi bamahlelo akithi umsebenzi wenu lona. Noma ubani akabe esontweni'.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> See A. Vilakazi, *uShembe*, and also G. Oosthuizen, *The Theology of a South African Messiah: An Analysis of the Hymnal of 'The Church of the Nazarites'*, Leiden, 1967.

<sup>106</sup> *iLanga*, 13/12/1947. 'Amadodana no-Dingane'.

*Men and women of kwaZulu we ask you and other black nations to commemorate the death of the son of Senzangakhona, we ask preachers to honour this hero before uMvelinqangi. The weekend of the 14th December should be designated as a day to be commemorated [by]... particularly you black preachers this is your task. Everybody must attend church (on this day)*

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter highlights that history was not the preserve of white intellectuals during the first half of this century. African intellectuals were not passive but actively involved in the making and writing of their own histories. A particular Africanist approach to history was beginning to take shape - it was underpinned by an ethnic nationalism. These Zulu nationalists used various methods, sources and languages to put forward their own version of history. For example, they used traditional and religious ceremonies, theatre, izibongo, hymns, oral traditions, newspapers, public platforms and isiZulu as a language to put forward their differing versions of histories. But what is common among all writers and intellectuals in this chapter is that they all used existing oral traditions to supplement the established archive of King Dingane. Accordingly, this archive was supplemented within the parameters and limits of invention set forth by Magolwane, Ngidi, Fuze, Stuart and other authors.

Both Dube and the Dhlomo brothers used their sources for a similar purpose: to dramatise - to give a voice and feelings to King Dingane. According to Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo King Dingane was a fearful, bad king. He feared a spiritual world, which had the power to bring the Zulu kingdom down around his errant head and thus their dependence on the pro-conquest prophecy to articulate King Dingane's fearfulness. Another issue, related to supposed royal cruelty, also leads us to ask questions regarding Dingane's strength of character. It is argued by both Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo that were King Dingane a truly outstanding ruler, he would not have needed recourse to bloody activities, however time-honoured they may have been. It is assumed that the Zulu kingship, by its very nature, was characterised by insecurity, and we must assume that King Dingane was not an outstanding leader since he felt compelled to rely on rather sanguinary displays of royal power. Because of their socialisation in mission churches they also claimed that he destroyed the rise of African nationalism by 'killing' King Shaka and that his aggressive behaviour

towards whites led to the bad race relations that have existed since that time

But for both Lamula and Shembe, King Dingane was a Zulu nationalist, and this is what attracted them to him. The king was not necessary either a hideous character or cruel. They maintain that men like King Dingane were not the brutes they were painted to have been. They were sane men fighting in defence of their sovereign kingdom, **land**, their way of life, and their principles. By using King Dingane as a tool we become aware that history serves ideological purposes and is integral to both the political and social struggles in any given society. This is made obvious because different viewpoints and images of King Dingane existed within the black community. These images underpinned the tensions and contradictions that existed at a particular given time. All these issues are highlighted by African workers in the late 1920s-and will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

### **“Remember Dingaan’s Day-the Passing of African Independence”: Public History and the counter-commemoration of King Dingane in 1928-1930.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the counter-commemoration of “Dingaan’s Day” in the late 1920s and early 1930s by African workers. It is thematic in approach rather than chronological because of the short timeframe it is reviewing. Additionally it also focuses on trade union politics. It shows that Afrikaner commemorations of “Dingaan’s Day”<sup>1</sup> were challenged through counter-commemorations of “Dingaan’s Day” by African workers aligned to the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and the different splinter groups of the Industrial Commercial Worker’s Union (ICU). The chapter also focuses on land issues as a sizeable number of Africans who, through their insistence in counter-commemorating “Dingaan’s Day”, perceived this day as a day that ushered in the loss of African independence and land.

The 16th of December, “Dingaan’s Day”, was a public holiday in apartheid and segregationist South Africa. It was the anniversary of events that took place at impi yaseNcome in 1838. It was first commemorated in the 19th century in the Boer Republics of Orange Free State and the South African Republic. The Boer Republic in Kruger’s Transvaal declared it a public holiday in 1864, ‘as a day of universal thanksgiving... dedicated to the Lord... to commemorate that by God’s grace Immigrants were freed from the yoke of Dingane’.<sup>2</sup> The Free State government also proclaimed “Dingaan’s Day” a public holiday in 1894.

In 1880, amidst the heightened nationalism of the first South African War, the ‘Covenant’<sup>3</sup> was renewed at Paardekraal (situated in the town of Krugersdorp). At this point it assumed the status of a popular festival and hence its ‘orthodox’ meaning was fabricated. By 1908 it had become a South African national holiday, and by 1916 - in a post-white rebellion world with a new Afrikaner political geography - the South

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<sup>1</sup> G.B.A. Gerdener, Sarel Cilliers die Vader van Dingaans dag, Pretoria, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> F. van Jaarsveld, ‘A historical mirror of Blood River’, in A. Koning and H. Keane, The meaning of History, Pretoria, 1980, pp.8-59. This is a brilliant article by an Afrikaner historian exposing the myth of Afrikaner Nationalist history including the commemoration of “Dingaan’s Day”.

<sup>3</sup> On the meaning of the Covenant and its relation to impi yaseNcome, see amongst others, L. Thompson, Political mythology of apartheid, New Haven and London, 1985, Chapter 5.

African Party managed to gain control of the organisation for the “Dingaan’s Day” festivities at Paardekraal. Much later through Act 5 of 1952 the name was rechristened to the ‘Day of the Covenant’ and again through Act 72 of 1980 it was changed again to the ‘Day of the Vow’.<sup>4</sup> This referred to a ‘pledge’ made several days before the battle by voortrekkers that ‘if God granted them victory in the coming struggle against King Dingane, they would build a memorial church and they and their posterity would always celebrate the anniversary of the victory, to the honour of God’.<sup>5</sup>

According to B.J. Liebenberg, Afrikaner nationalists repeatedly voiced a number of myths about the Battle of ‘Blood River’ and the vow which preceded it in public speeches and in articles. Among other things they claimed that the battle saved the ‘Great Trek’; that it represented the birth of the Afrikaner nation; that the voortrekker victory symbolised the triumph of christianity over heathendom; that all Afrikaners were irrevocably bound by the vow for all time; and that the battle itself must be regarded as a miracle in the sense that divine intervention gave the voortrekkers the victory. Afrikaner nationalists and white supremacists further deduced that God would not abandon the Afrikaner nation and that God desired white supremacy in South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

These myths go back in many instances to the early 1880’s. The then Transvaal Republic President, Paul Kruger, in his “Dingaan’s Day” speeches articulated a view of history that was strongly theocentric. At a state festival on 16 December 1881, which commemorated ‘Blood River’ and the restoration of the Transvaal’s independence after the battle of Majuba, he declared that the nation’s leaders had been used by God as instruments to achieve that independence. God had granted the victories at ‘Blood River’ and Majuba - he had bestowed this freedom, and the country, on his people - ‘God’s people’. At the unveiling of the Paardekraal monument in 1891, Kruger again warned that “Dingaan’s Day” must not be observed as a secular celebration, but as a religious one. Boer history demonstrated that God still dealt with

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<sup>4</sup> The name Dingaan’s was dropped because it ‘conveyed the impression to the uninitiated that it involved esteem for Dingaan, or that it could rouse antipathy among Bantu against Whites. The Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, Cape Town, 1972, p.562.

<sup>5</sup> On the history of “Dingaan’s Day”, See I. Hofmeyr, ‘Popularising History: The case of Gustav Preller, in S. Clingman (ed.), Regions and Repertoires, Randburg, 1991, p.60; L. Thompson, Political mythology of apartheid, and B.J. Liebenberg, ‘Mites Rondon Bloedrvier en die Gelofte’, in South African Historical Journal, 20, 1988, pp.17-32; A. König and H. Keane (eds) The meaning of History.

<sup>6</sup> Liebenberg, ‘Mites’.

his people in accordance with the Old Testament. His hand was a punitive instrument that brought deliverance. Because the covenant of 1838 had not been honoured, the British annexation and war had come as punishment, for that covenant had been contracted with God.<sup>7</sup>

Prominent among the Paardekraal festivities' committee members was Gustav Preller who had already made efforts to popularise the ceremony. Preller's newspaper, De Volkstem periodically carried "Dingaan's Day" articles on the life of Piet Retief and his immensely successful book on Piet Retief was a compilation of these articles mainly written in 1905-06. Eight editions of his book subsequently appeared. As the 20th century wore on and particularly after 1912, "Dingaan's Day" increasingly became a platform of Afrikaner Nationalist oratory. F. Van Jaarsveld is of the opinion that Preller saw the 'Great Trek' as the 'birth of the Afrikaner nation' and Piet Retief as the first Afrikaner to give utterance to his 'nationality', thereby helping to found 'a free and independent people'. He considered that without the 'Great Trek' there would have been no Afrikaner nation. In Piet Retief's Manifesto he saw revealed 'the clearly defined awareness of a separate Afrikaner Nation, of a separate people with its own language, religion, moral code, history and tradition'. In Preller's book Retief is depicted as the first and only great Afrikaner of his time. His significance and importance are exaggerated. His actions are always vindicated. Preller sees no wrong in his hero and waxes lyrical in adulation, in such phrases as, 'faithful, valiant Retief, honest upright Afrikaner, soul of the future Afrikaner nation'. The book contains anti British and anti Zulu sentiments. He cannot conceal his distaste for 'the pot-bellied barbarian', (Dingaan), his 'devilish treachery' and 'refined cruelty'.<sup>8</sup>

This popular history included Preller's script of the 1916 movie *De Voortrekkers* that was produced by the American movie-mogul Schlesinger. Hofmeyr notes:

Preparations for shooting near Germiston had been costly and time consuming. Alongside an artificially constructed river stood a laager of handmade wagons. On the Sunday (16th of October) that filming began, Heidelberg, Elsburg and Germiston Boer commandos took their places in the laager, dressed in Preller - designed trekker costumes and armed with an assortment of historical musketry filled variously with blank and live ammunition. Some distance away (3000) ERPM workers had congregated, but while they awaited orders from their

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph is largely based on F. van Jaarsveld, 'A historical mirror of Blood River' in Konig and Keane, The meaning of History, pp 8-59.

<sup>8</sup> On this analysis of Preller's contribution in Afrikaner's historiography see F.A. van Jaarsveld, The Afrikaner's interpretation of South African History, Cape Town, 1964, p.79.

'*indunas*', the Boers took matters into their own hands and with shouts of 'Shoot the devils', opened fire on the mineworker '*impis*'....In the face of this firing some workers fled. the majority however continued to bear down on the laager which by some accounts included mine and compound officials dressed as Boers. When the fracas died down, one worker, "Fanuk" had drowned, 122 were injured and 35 lay in hospital....Advance publicity made much of the 'lifelike' battle scenes. 'Die Oubaas' was apparently moved to tears by the production and 15000 people a week queued to see the movie.<sup>9</sup>

At more or less the same time as the movie was set to roll, Preller's newspaper fuelled a mild controversy on "Dingaan's Day" dates something that kept the issue in the public view. He was also sending suggestions to local organising committees on how they could observe the festival, often advocating that they link it to concentration-camp-victim commemorations and monuments. As with the 'Great Trek', "Dingaan's Day" had Preller as a significant 'inventing author'.<sup>10</sup>

On "Dingaan's Day" 1929 General Hertzog, the Prime Minister in the Pact government, spoke on the 'significance of the Battle of Blood River' and projected the political views of his time as he proclaimed, "Dingaan's Day 1838 was decisive for the European race from Cape to Nyasa". Hertzog was convinced that 'the victory of those few trekkers on the Banks of Blood River achieved more than securing a fatherland for a few thousand expatriate farmers from the Cape. Beyond that 'barbarism yielded before civilisation. The 'power of the assegai' was superseded by the authority of law, of the newborn Afrikaner nation'.<sup>11</sup>

In the late 1920s Hertzog maintained that 'Blood River' was equally important to the Africans since it heralded a turning point in their history. Despite the 'unfavourable outcome' for the Zulu people, the arrival of the white man and the native's subjection to his authority was an event of cardinal significance for the well being of all tribes south of the Zambesi. Mzilikazi's disappearance beyond the Limpopo of the Zambesi had meant their deliverance from barbarous tyranny. The whites had come to put an end to plunder and carnage, had saved and protected lesser tribes and had stopped internecine strife and extermination.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hofmeyr, 'Popularising History', p.60.

<sup>10</sup> This paragraph is largely based on Hofmeyr, 'Popularising History'.

<sup>11</sup> F. van Jaarsveld, 'A historical mirror of Blood River', pp.31-32. This section is based on the latter's judicious and critical analysis of Hertzog's perspectives on "Dingaan's Day".

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

For Hertzog, the ideal of a white South Africa survived because the Afrikaner wanted South Africa to remain what it became on “Dingaan’s Day” 1838, namely a white country under white supremacy. Hertzog was convinced that forces were at work to alter the outcome of ‘Blood River’. The ‘native and the Negrophile’ were intent on changing South Africa to a native territory under Black rule. The struggle for equal rights was in fact a campaign of enfranchisement. According to van Jaarsveld, Hertzog did not perceive ‘the native question’ as a matter of equality, but whether ‘Blood River’ was to be negated and its fruits - sovereignty over South Africa - were to be taken from the white man and entrusted to the native. In Hertzog's view native agitators and their communists friends should be given timely warning that the Afrikaner would not be dictated to by agitation and fanaticism. He affirmed that the same courage and perseverance that had secured the victory at ‘Blood River’ would still be asserted in maintaining the power acquired by that victory. He posed the question: Who would decide the future of South Africa - the white man or native?<sup>13</sup>

### **1. Issue of land for the CPSA: ‘Blood River’ as the quintessential land grab**

Johannes Nkosi, Albert Nzula, Mtolo and other trade unionists from CPSA and the ICU yaseNatal answered Hertzog’s question as they reacted to the intensifying mobilisation of Afrikaner nationalism based on the symbolism of “Blood River” and “Dingaan’s Day” by portraying the image of King Dingane in a positive, empowering, liberatory and African nationalist stance.

From late 1927 to 1930 and to a lesser extent thereafter, “Dingaan’s Day” was chosen by African workers as a day of counter-commemoration, a day of ‘our liberation’.<sup>14</sup> In the course of this, these workers adopted passive resistance strategies and used the 16th December for nation-wide pass - burning defiance campaigns. This strategy was first employed by the ANC in 1919 in Johannesburg but was effectively suppressed by the state. Ten years later in late 1927, and in opposition to Afrikaner nationalist socio-cultural and political ascendancy under the leadership of Hertzog, both the African trade unions and CPSA were to revive this strategy.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>

Statement attributed to K. Mote in E. Roux, Time longer than Rope, London, 1948, p.255.

<sup>15</sup>

Report on Native Agitation, Correspondence from 4/12/1930, CAD, NAD. Pretoria, File No JUS 1/18/26, Vols 29-31, Department of Justice report dated 17/12/1927, Hereafter JUS 1/18/26. Some members of the state intelligence unit went as far as London as part of their surveillance of ‘native agitators’.



Exactly why the CPSA chose to focus on this issue at this point is obscure. A likely answer lies in the CPSA's decision to recruit African workers and peasants directly into its ranks. During the early to mid 1920s it had found it difficult to strike a chord with and reach out to an African membership and had preferred to operate and recruit through the intermediary of the ICU. After the expulsion of party activists from the ICU ranks in 1926 it was forced to find an independent appeal. "Dingaan's Day" counter-commemorations was one of the vehicles it chose.

The central issues concerning the organisers of "Dingaan's Day" meetings were slave laws, especially those relating to the colour bar, pass laws and passes, organising African trade unions and liberation. Opposition to pass laws was common cause to all Africans in South Africa at this time although their impact was most sharply felt north of the Orange River. In the final years of the 1920s "Dingaan's Day" became increasingly associated with the demands for the abolition and burning of passes. A sense of how all encompassing the pass issue was is given in a speech delivered in late 1930 by the Bloemfontein communist S. Malkinson. This listed as many as 12 passes Africans might be compelled to carry. The following are some of the passes:<sup>16</sup>

1. Six days pass to search for work
2. Monthly Pass Service Contract
3. Daily labourer Pass
4. Special day Pass
5. Curfew Pass after 9 p.m.
6. Trek Pass
7. Location Permit
8. Lodgers Permit
9. Poll Tax
10. Exemption Pass for the Goodboys (the educated?)
11. Inward Pass
12. Ordinary Pass

The three issues, pass laws, organising trade unions and struggle for emancipation were combined in different permutations over the remainder of the decade. The first recorded "Dingaan's Day" counter-commemoration occurred in December 1927. It took place under the auspices of the ANC but communist party member John Gomas chaired it, and it had a pronounced communist flavour. Certainly the police<sup>17</sup> charged with monitoring it believed this was the case. The file dealing with the event was titled, 'Bolshevism in the Union; described it as follows,

<sup>16</sup> Speech by S. Malkinson, report on Meeting held at Batho Township in Bloemfontein, 23/11/1930, compiled by Sgt. T.A.P. du Plesis, Department of JUS 1/18/26.

<sup>17</sup> JUS 1/18/26. Detective Head Constable E.A. Evans was submitting his eleventh report for 1927 (to the Commissioner of Police in Pretoria) on the subject, including the various planned rallies during "Dingaan's Day".

### African National Congress

A meeting was held yesterday the 16th instant at the Grand parade, Cape Town, under the auspices of the ANC. One John Gomas acted as Chairman. He addressed the meeting, and informed them that they would proceed through the town, headed by a band, and in order to celebrate the 91st anniversary of Dingaan. The procession proceeded from the Parade along Darling Street, Adderley Street, Bree Street, Wale Street, Darling Street, Hanover Street, Ashley Street, Caledon Street and back to the Parade. They had a crowd of approximately 300 to 400 natives and coloured. A horse drawn wagon was used as a platform, on which the undermentioned placards were exhibited

1. Remember the Slaughter at Bullhoek, Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein
2. Down with Anti-Native Slave Laws
3. **Remember Dingaan's Day - the Passing of African Independence**
4. Unite for Freedom and Liberation
5. Africa's Religion has not helped you. Help yourself
6. Forget not the merciless bombardment of the Bondelswarts
7. **Away with the oppressive Colour Bar and Pass laws**

In their efforts to curb the growth of militant action by African workers, the Department of Labour convened a conference in October 1927 to investigate the possibilities of amending the Industrial Conciliation Act (ICA) so as to include pass bearing Africans as 'employee'. This important step was disregarded by the Hertzog's Native Administration Act of 1927 and the state poised itself to unleash its repressive instruments with full vigour as it put all those who opposed its policies under surveillance.

In 1927-8 the CPSA also embarked on the organisation of African trade unions. The first industrial union for Africans was founded on the initiative of the party. The latter turned to organising African workers after the majority of white workers were partly co-opted and controlled by the government following the enactment of the Industrial Conciliation Act (ICA) in 1926. The third International Congress (Comintern) also ratified the CPSA's new initiative in 1928. Jon Lewis<sup>18</sup> asserts that the 1927 African industrial unions included the following: the Native Bakers' Union, the Native Laundry Worker's Union, the Native Clothing Workers' Union and the Furniture Worker's Union some of which were affiliates of the Non-European Trade Unions. Workers organised into CPSA trade unions provided many foot soldiers for "Dingaan's Day" counter-commemorations, particularly in Johannesburg.

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<sup>18</sup> J. Lewis, 'Industrialisation and Trade Union Organisation in South Africa, 1924-1955: The Rise and Fall of the South African Trades and Labour Council, London, 1984, p.62.

The mobilisation of workers against the pass laws continued to constitute the central ingredient of “Dingaan’s Day” demonstrations through the late 1920s and 1930. However from 1928 another issue began to intrude. In 1928 the CPSA, at the insistence of the Commitern adopted the Native Republic programme and slogan. The Native Republic programme advocated an independent Native Republic as a stage towards a workers and peasants government. The programme put the **agrarian question** at the centre of South African politics. The issue was easily assimilable to Dingaan's Day demonstrations since it could connect to the loss of land by the indigenous peoples including the existing perception that King Dingane was a staunch defender of his sovereign Kingdom and subjects. In amplified form the slogan called for a “South African Native Republic as a stage towards a workers’ and peasants’ Government, with full protection and equal rights for all national minorities”<sup>19</sup> and involving ‘the return of land to the land-less population and those with little land’, revolutionary liberation from British Imperialism the “organisation of a revolutionary workers’ and finally peasants’ Government on the basis of the Soviets”.<sup>20</sup> What was critically new about the Native Republic Programme was that it foregrounded land and peasant issues more than those of the working class and trade unions which had till that point had been the central pre-occupation of the CPSA. Once that shift of emphasis had occurred, African peasants and workers rather than the black and white working class now became the central dynamo of the struggle. The 1928 Commitern Congress, which launched the Native Republic programme, formulated a critical resolution on the land question in South Africa. It reads as follow:

In the Union of South Africa, the Negro masses, which constitute the majority of the population, are being expropriated from the land by the white colonists and by the State, are deprived of political rights and of right of freedom of movement... The Communist Party which has already achieved definite successes among the Negro proletariat, has the duty of continuing still more energetically the struggle for complete equality of right for the Negroes, for the abolition of all special regulations and laws directed against Negroes, and for confiscation of the **land** of the landlords (white colonists)....South Africa is black country, the majority of its population is black and so is the majority of the workers and peasants. The bulk of the South African population is the black peasantry, whose land has been expropriated by the white minority. Seven eight’s of **the land** is owned by whites. Hence the national question in South Africa, which is based upon the agrarian question lies at the foundation of the revolution in South Africa...(this calls for) an independent native South African republic as stage towards a workers’ and peasants’ republic.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> South African Worker, 30 November 1928.

<sup>20</sup> South African Worker, 12, December 1930.

<sup>21</sup> B. Bunting, Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary, London, 1986 pp.32-33.

This departure gave to “Dingaan’s Day” an added appeal since Income/Blood River could be and was interpreted as a symbolic moment of African land dispossession, while the 1920s was the decade par excellence when the labour tenants were being stripped of their remaining possession as opposed to ownership of land. The Native Republic programme combined with the land issue provided a congenial framework within which a common front could be mobilised by the SACP. This took shape under the name of the League of African Rights (LAR) formed in August 1928. As both the ANC and ICU stumbled, the CPSA took up the running in 1928-1929. It founded the League of African Rights, under the mistaken impression that the Commintern has given the requisite authority. The League of African Rights- was a United Front from below-which aimed to collect a million signatures to petition for civic rights and to organise an anti-Pass demonstration on “Dingaan’s Day”, 16 December 1928.

Among the cultural appropriations of the LAR was the Mayibuye motif. The phrase Mayibuye iAfrica coined much earlier by the ANC was now revived. The political tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century war songs was continued into the twentieth century as Africans composed similar songs. Their lyrics were based on the land question and were sung during protest marches and mass meetings - in this instance, “Dingaan’s Day” protest marches and mass meetings. The songs include Nkosi Sikelela iAfrica, which the various police reports mention as the “Africans’ National Anthem sung at the beginning and end of various (mass) meetings which (we) monitored”. Another song, which fits this description, was Mayibuye that appeared in isiXhosa and Afrikaans versions in the 12th December 1930 edition of Umsebenzi. The following are the lyrics of the song that can be compared to the war songs mentioned in the first chapter and sung during the annihilation of Retief and party: It was sung with a degree of cultural dissonance to the tune of Clementine

#### **GEE ONS LAND TERUG!**

Ons bruinmense, seuns van slawe  
 Vra ons eie land terug,  
 Wat gesteel is van ons vaders,  
 Gee dit t’rug nou!  
 Weg met al slawey!  
 Pirow kan ons nie ophou nie:  
 Afrika sal vryheid kry.

#### **MAYIBUYE!**

Tina sizwe esi ntsundu  
 sikal’ I Afrika  
 eyahlutw’obawo betu  
 beses bu’ mnyameni  
 Mayibuye, Mayibuye  
 mayibuy’ iAfrika!  
 Makapele namapasi  
 Sitoli inkululeko  
 Mayibuye, mayibuye  
 Mayibu’ I Afrika  
 Mazipele nezirafu  
 Sifumane izwe lethu

The shift in political orientation of the SACP was matched by a similar shift in the ANC and in the Independent ICU. Late in 1928 Clements Kadalie acquiesced in being squeezed out of the ICU by its orthodox trade union wing led by its Scottish advisor William Ballinger. The latter antagonised Kadalie, who broke away to form an Independent ICU in March 1929. Kadalie looked for new allies and a new line. Both were provided by the League of African Rights and the ANC who elected J.T. Gumede as its president at its 1927 Congress. As he too looked for allies against the more conservative wing of Congress, he threw the ANC's support behind the LAR.<sup>22</sup> The ANC's and Independent ICU's (IICU) attitude to King Dingane will be discussed later in the chapter.

The LAR was wound up in 1930 having been stigmatised by the Comintern as reformist.<sup>23</sup> But it had, in the meantime, tapped into a powerful cement of popular disaffection which was surging to the surface all over the country. On "Dingaan's Day", December 16, 1929, a column of marchers 5-9 000 strong in which the CPSA, the ICU and the ANC were all well represented wound its way through the streets of Johannesburg in mass protest against passes. This was the biggest demonstration of Johannesburg's African population to be undertaken for many years before or thereafter, and was staged with a minimum of preparation. The high hopes, which it raised, were dashed by the Comintern's decision but the national executive responded simply by side-stepping the Comintern's instruction. The LAR was dissolved, but the IICU, the CPSA and the ANC formed a Joint Committee of Action (JCA). Its major function was to organise the burning of passes and a general strike on December 16.<sup>24</sup> The rising tide of public concern is reflected in newspaper coverage of the time. On the 17th of December 1929, the Rand Daily Mail reported that, 'while General Hertzog

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<sup>22</sup> This paragraph is based largely on P. Bonner, 'Division and Unity in the Struggle', p.34. See also S. Jones, Raising the Red Flag: The International Socialist League and The Communist Party of South Africa: 1914-1932, Bellville, 1995, Chapter 9.

<sup>23</sup> S. Jones, Raising the Red Flag, Chapter 11.

<sup>24</sup> Bonner, 'Division and Unity in the struggle: African Political organisations on the

was addressing a crowd in Bloemfontein on December 16, 1929, approximately 4000 Blacks marched through the streets of Johannesburg singing the Red Flag’.

Two CPSA leaders, Edwin Mofutsanyana and John B. Marks also implemented the JCA programme of action. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1929 they organised a pass-burning campaign and a general strike in Potchefstroom. One man was killed at a Potchefstroom meeting by a bullet intended for trade union leaders Marks and Mofutsanyana. Editorialising on the confrontations and tensions that flared during the “Dingaan’s Day” commemorations, the 21st December 1929 editorial of the newspaper Umteteli wa Bantu noted that

A large number of Europeans in Johannesburg made preparations to do battle for the preservation of their civilisation on Dingaan’s day. It was freely rumoured and widely believed that Native “rising” had been planned and that the day would be wild and gory. The white public is always nervous, afraid of black retaliation, and it only needed Mr Pirow’s absurd demonstration at Durban to fix the conviction that the case was desperate and that European courage and fortitude would be tested on Dingaan’s day. Mr Pirow had led the public to believe that the Natives had hatched a plot, and that with Communist direction and assistance there would be bloody doings on Dingaan’s day; and the advertisement by the Natives of their intention to meet and parade their grievances on Dingaan’s day gave to the timid the final assurance that they would be called to defend themselves... Europeans of a jingoistic temper, including possibly the police, were sorely disappointed last Monday when after polishing up their pistols and smoothing their pick handles they found no use for them. There was no Native truculence, no excuse for white belligerence. It is true that at Potchefstroom there were mentally defective Europeans who would not be denied; fools who shot because they had their guns ready and were loath to let local notoriety escape them. These aggressive imbeciles nearly precipitated trouble and should be dealt with as though they had.

The following week’s edition of Umteteli reported that Hermanus Lethidi, one of the ‘Natives’ shot a Potchefstroom on Dingaan’s Day was dead. The murderer, Joseph Henry Weeks has been arrested and charged with the murder of Lethidi. He had been released to bail of 1000 pounds, this being paid by the Mayor of Potchefstroom, Mr W.B. Bernard.<sup>25</sup>

As part of these counter demonstrations subordinate groups used media such as; newspapers, posters, open air courts, community halls, and public spaces/sphere such as squares where they utilised the spoken word, produced community narratives and ‘ritualised’ expressive speech forms to produce popular memories and counter-

<sup>25</sup> Umteteli waBantu, 28/12/1929.

memories on King Dingane. As an example, On December 16, 1929 about 500 Africans gathered at the African Catholic Church in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, in 'prayer and humiliation' to commemorate "Dingaan's Day".<sup>26</sup>

Unquestionably the most climatic "Dingane's Day" demonstration took place on December 16 1930 on Cartwright Flats in Durban. The protest was part of a national campaign co-ordinated by the CPSA operating behind LAR. On the 26th of October 1930 fifty delegates from all parts of South Africa, attended a conference in Johannesburg and resolved that on the 16th of December 1930, passes should be burned.<sup>27</sup> On the 20th November 1930, the National Executive of the Anti-Pass Conference issued the following multi-lingual pamphlet:<sup>28</sup>

**HA LI FELE LIPASA! KA TSATSI LA DINGAAN! HA RE LI BATLE!  
Rekhathetse ke Tsona!**

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**Makatshabalale Amapasi Ngomhla ka Dingaan! Asiwafuni! Asidinile!**

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#### **AWAY WITH THE PASSES**

*Fellow Africans, fellow workers, on this Dingaan's Day the National Anti-Pass Committee issues a call to action to the Bantu race against the Pass Laws and other oppressive measures. General Hertzog, flushed with victory from the Imperial Conference, having secured British agreement to his slave policy in South Africa, returns to force through his anti-native Bills and to fasten yet heavier chains of slavery upon us. The time has arrived for every African to down tools, on mine and farm, in factory, store and kitchen, right through the country.*

#### **ALL OUT ON THE STREETS ON DINGAANS DAY!**

*On every market place and location square thousands must assemble on that day to demonstrate our hatred of all oppression.*

#### **MAKE A BONFIRE OF OUR PASSES!**

*This will mark the commencement of a gigantic campaign which will grow in intensity until the whole South Africa is drawn into the struggle. Let every African resolve to*

#### **REFUSE TO TAKE OUT A PASS AGAIN!**

*And to boycott every Boss who demands one and every Worker who accepts one.*

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<sup>26</sup> Potgieter, A.J. 'Die swartes aan die Witwatersrand, 1900-1933', unpublished Phd Thesis, Rand Afrikaans Universiteit, 1978, p.416.

<sup>27</sup> JUS 1/18/26, statement of Albert Nzula. Report for the Commissioner of Police in Pretoria, signed by R.H. Arnold, the officer in charge, C.I. Department, Durban, 15/12/1930.

<sup>28</sup> Meetings were organised to be held at Western Native Township, Benoni, Springs, Boksburg, Brakpan, Prospect Township, Eastern Native Township, Randfontein, Krugersdorp, Germiston, Klipspruit, Newton Market Square. JUS 1/18/26 report of the Commissioner of Police to the Minister of Justice, 18/12/1930.

## REFUSE TO PAY TAXES

*as the heroic Indian masses are doing!*

*Away with slavery!*

*Away with the Riotous Assemblies Act!*

*Down with the brutal police raids!*

*Down with the Poll tax!*

*For equal rights, universal education and free speech!*

*The Land for the People!*

*For the emancipation of all workers and oppressed races!*

**MAYIBUY' AFRIKA**

Elsewhere, both the CPSA and other trade unionists used public platforms and spheres for mass meetings and protest actions. A CPSA Handbill advertising a mass meeting in early November 1930 and written in isiZulu, English and seSotho read as follows:

### MAKAPELE AMAPASI!

HA LI LIFELE LIPASA

AWAY WITH PASSES ON DINGAAN'S DAY

-----  
A MASS MEETING will be held at BELL STREET: POINT.

On Sunday the 9th. Nov. 1930. Open 2 o'clock  
-----

Banna Tlong Kaofeela Ke Ka Kopano Feela le Ka Fumanang Tokoloho

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*Inhlangano yohlangana ePayindi ngeSonto ntambama ngomhla ka 9 kuye  
uNovemeber lo. Kovulwa ngo 2. Pelelani nonke.*

*Yitina abenu*

COMMUNIST PARTY DURBAN BRANCH

Corner Hospital Rd. And Shepstone St. Point.

The 12th of December 1930 edition of Umsebenzi, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) newspaper, carried the following editorial with the heading, '*Mass Demonstration of Protest against African Slavery*'

Dingaan's Day is the day on which the white oppressors celebrate the establishment of their domination over non-Europeans in this country. For white slave drivers it is a day of rejoicing, feasting and triumph, but for oppressed black slaves of Africa it must be a DAY OF PROTEST, struggle and awakening. Down tools on Dingaan's Day! Refuse to work on this day! Remember how you are oppressed under the colour bar laws of a tyrant Government!...

<sup>29</sup> Nzula was the first black general secretary of the CPSA. On the CPSA debates over colour see S. Jones, Raising the Red Flag, Chapters 8 and 10.

<sup>30</sup> iLanga ambiguous views on this issue, December 1930 and January 1931, including letters to the editors, one of them was John Dube.



Although the protest fizzled out in most part of the country, it gained widespread support in Durban and caused a major collision. The leader of this initiative was Johannes Nkosi. It was here that police stabbed Johannes Nkosi to death.<sup>31</sup> Johannes Nkosi was born on the 3rd of September 1905 to a peasant family in a rural area of KwaZulu-Natal. He spent his formative years at Pixley kaSeme's farm in Standerton where he attended St John's Missionary School up until standard 5. In his short life history he became a farm labourer, then a 'kitchen boy'. He migrated to Johannesburg early in his life and at fourteen years of age took part in the pass burning campaign organised by the ANC in 1919. Later he became an ICU official. In 1926, he joined the CPSA and attended their night school to educate himself. He moved back to Durban (to organise a CPSA branch) soon after the beer hall uprisings in 1929<sup>32</sup> and soon made real progress. Nkosi was able to advance his political career in this way because of the conscious decision in 1926 by the CPSA to train African leadership and draw them into top ranking positions. Also the banishment and extradition of ICU yaseNatal leader, A. W. George Champion, from Natal created a political vacuum which was ably filled by Nkosi.

The major reason for Champion's banishment was the state's anxiety about the rapprochement between the Zulu king Solomon, and trade union leaders like Champion. The state perceived such a relationship as dangerous since it threatened to unite urban and rural based Africans. Johannes Nkosi's relationship with Champion is also worth mentioning as it provides us with a reason why the former ended up being influential in Champion's stronghold. In 1930 Champion's ICU was still powerful in Durban and its surroundings and Nkosi had to negotiate his space to manoeuvre. Champion usually addressed mass meetings every Sunday at Cartwright Flats in Durban. Nkosi, now deployed to Durban by the CPSA, attended these meetings. One of his missions was to sell the CPSA mouthpiece, Umsebenzi, to Champion's audience. First, however, he had to negotiate with the latter for permission to sell. He would sometimes be given permission or sometimes refused depending on Champion's

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<sup>31</sup> On the death of Johannes Nkosi, see F.A. Mouton, 'Die dood van Johannes Nkosi: Rewolusionere Martelaar', South African Historical Journal, 1984, p.143.

<sup>32</sup> On these issues see P. La Hausse, 'The ICU, the Labouring Poor and the Making of Popular Political Culture in Durban, 1925-1930', in Holding Their Ground: Locality and Conflict in 19th and 20th Century South Africa, ed. P. Bonner et al., Johannesburg, 1989, p.19; Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts: A History of Liquor in South Africa, Johannesburg, 1988; 'The struggle for the city: Alcohol, the Ematsheni and popular culture in Durban, 1902- 36', M.A.

feelings. Champion was astute enough to use “Dingaan’s Day” to mobilise support and would not accede to Nkosi’s demands during such important occasions.<sup>33</sup>

As might be expected in a Zulu speaking area of the country, “Dingaan’s Day” already had some significance. During the 1929 commemorations of “Dingaan’s Day” Champion was quoted in Umteteli waBantu:

When the voortrekker boers were opposed to Dingaan and before the battle of Blood River, they held a prayer meeting and promised to dedicate a church to God if he gave the Zulus into their hands. What we intend to do this afternoon is the same. We intend to offer to dedicate a church to God if he delivers us from oppression... Our prayer to God to relieve us from oppression means that we desire to live side by side on a basis of equality with the white man.<sup>34</sup>

In September 1930 Champion was ordered to leave Natal under the newly amended Riotous Assemblies Act. The exiled leader spent the next three years, while the ban was in force, first in the Cape and later in Johannesburg, where he worked for a bank.<sup>35</sup> Johannes Nkosi filled the political vacuum and a convergence took place between the CPSA and the ICU yaseNatali officials. A police report commented:

Agitator No 0.97 Johannes Nkosi has been seen in close conversation with leaders of the ICU in Durban at various places during the past week. Again he was in attendance at the ICU meeting held yesterday afternoon at Cartwright Flats where he sold some hundred copies of the Communist newspaper Umsebenzi (a copy of which I attach).<sup>36</sup>

Another police report went further:

It is significant that when I attended a Communist Party meeting about this time last year (1929), convened by the same Johannes Nkosi, Nkosi was unable to obtain a hearing, and the few natives present drove him away from the meeting place. At that time the ICU (yaseNatali) leaders and speakers were advising their followers to have nothing to do with Nkosi and his Communist Party. Today the ICU speakers are supporting the Communist party and speak from the latter’s platform, and a huge crowd of natives, many of who are ICU adherents, attends the Communists meetings. It is a regrettable fact the doctrines of the Communist

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Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984; H. Bradford, “‘We are now the men’’: Women’s beer protests in the Natal Countryside, 1929’, in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Class, Community and Conflict, Johannesburg, 1987.

<sup>33</sup> E. Roux, Time longer than rope, 254.

<sup>34</sup> Umteteli waBantu, 21/12/1929.

<sup>35</sup> P.L. Wickins, The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1978, p.194.

<sup>36</sup> JUS 1/18/26, CID officer in charge, R.H. Arnold, 17 November 1930 to the Commissioner of Police in Pretoria who in turn forwarded the various reports to the Minister of Justice.

Party in Durban appear to spreading among the natives. Det.Sgt Arnold interpreted the speeches of the natives to me..<sup>37</sup>

The police report (by one of the white 'Zulu linguists') of this gathering indicates that Johannes Nkosi, was the main speaker.<sup>38</sup> It noted that 'the very vehement and excited' Nkosi incited the crowd of approximately three hundred to

remember and not forget the 16th of December next month. All Natives, it does not matter what work they do, must not work that day, it is the day we must destroy all our passes... Pirow can go to hell with his Pass Law. Why should we be afraid of him, he is only one man. Smuts, who is a snake in the grass can go to hell with his laws,.... and Hertzog who is in England... his ship must get buried in the sea with his laws and his soul goes to hell..

Despite signs of a growing convergence between the ICU and the CPSA, senior police dismissed the possibility of serious disturbances on December, 16th. A few days before the commemorations, for example, the Acting Commissioner of Police reported to the Minister of Justice that

taking all sources of information and enquiries made by me from all sections of the native population of Durban, I do not anticipate any great following to the Communists movements of pass destruction etc on Dingaan's Day. I compute that if any passes are destroyed in Durban the number of natives actually destroying their passes will not exceed 300 and these will mostly be Basutos of the low type. There is bound to be a very large crowd of curious natives watching... the danger in such a following is excitement by a sudden mad act by some interested infuriated native... I would advise that no street processions by natives be allowed.... My observations are that should there be no fresh movement to excite the native generally between now and Dingaan's Day, nothing very material will happen..<sup>39</sup>

Regardless of the wishful thinking of the Commissioner of Police however, "Dingaan's Day" was serving as a focus and trigger to Zulu nationalism. This the authorities themselves tacitly recognised when they embarked on a campaign of demonisation and harassment of Nkosi. Their first endeavour was to portray Nkosi's as a rabid racist, an anti-white demagogue whose speeches were inflammatory, regardless the CPSA's anti-racist, multi-racial stance. Police regarded the proposed pass-burning defiance campaign as a pretext for workers to indulge themselves in violent activities. They claimed that the workers' programme of action included violent attacks against whites in general, and the police in particular. They reported

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<sup>37</sup> Report of the Officer in Charge, R.H. Arnold, File 1/18/26, Durban, 15/12/1930 to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>38</sup> See JUS 1/18/26, CID reports of the 18, 19th of December 1930, R.H. Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, report by R.H Arnold, C.I.D. Durban, 12/12/1930, to the Commissioner of Police.

Nkosi to have said, 'we do not want the government to send the police there to cause trouble, if the government sends them, their blood will be split'.<sup>40</sup> During the 14th of December meeting Nkosi noted, 'last Sunday at Point, Chaka (Detective Sgt. Arnold) called the natives together. He told the natives to throw stones at us. I speak in front of him now. He is the one that is stirring up blood'.<sup>41</sup>

Another strategy adopted by the state was to harass and abuse Nkosi prior to the 13th of December 'Dingaan's Day' meeting. Whilst addressing the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, Nzula asked Nkosi to relate his experience to the crowd. The latter first responding by proclaiming, 'Look my young men, today I may be speaking for the last time. I am not afraid of death-death is nice. I want to speak this in the presence of detectives'.<sup>42</sup> He proceeded and gave the audience a detailed account of his unlawful detention by uniformed police who took him to the Chief Magistrate prior to the meeting. It is alleged in the police report that Nkosi accused the Chief Magistrate of threatening him, as the Magistrate warned him, "you have been called here so that I can warn you that if you natives fight on Dingaan's Day, which will be on your shoulders alone. The government will not only gaol you (correctly prophesied that) they will do something else to you".<sup>43</sup> Nzula however was undeterred, observing to the meeting

It is a very funny thing, here we are, we say we want to burn the passes, and there are the detectives who are saying that natives are preparing to fight against the white man. This morning the police called this Comrade (Nkosi)... they know they are going to send their detectives in order to create the trouble...We all know these tricks, we know that the capitalists class, the ruling class of the present time, its whole power is based on lies, and when the Government bases its power on lies, then they come with force.<sup>44</sup>

Both the 13 and 14th of December police reports of the CPSA meetings are invaluable historical sources about ordinary workers involvement in public spheres and mass meetings that elicited and generated strong audience participation to the broader range of African politics in the late 1920s.<sup>45</sup> Public involvement was for most part not limited to listening to the leadership and then approving by applauding or withholding

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<sup>40</sup> JUS 1/18/26, meeting of the 13th December 1930, report by R.H. Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, meeting of the 14th December 1930.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>45</sup> Bonner, P, "'Home truths' and the political discourse of the ICU", unpublished paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society, University of Western Cape, 11-14 July 1999.

support as the response of one member of the audience referred to as 'Native Washington by the police' emphasised. The latter demanded the platform and to be heard:

I have come to this meeting to hear what you (the leadership) have to say. I have been sitting down and listening, and I have now come to speak. Some will never hear what is said, but the day is coming, the day to which we are marching. Things are not done in one day. I do not like the pass. The person who runs the Communist party down over the passes does not know what he is talking about. It is better for the truth to be spoken ...,on should not do without speaking. I am not afraid-I will speak.<sup>46</sup>

The audience became ever more involved during the proceedings of the CPSA's 14th of December meeting a point which the police report emphasised. At one stage 'a native in the crowd stood up and shouted something to the speaker and there was some confusion for a few minutes'. The speaker responded by pointing out, 'You see what the mention of a strike has done already, it has already brought one man to his feet. And that is the most powerful weapon you possess'. The report further gives prominence to the fact that "an unknown native then addressed the gathering as follows-I want to speak to this gentleman here (D/Sgt. Arnold). This name Chaka is the name of a Chief. Where did he get this name? I make my greetings to Chaka our Chief, but not to a European who comes from overseas". The police report continues, (Here the speaker recited what I am informed is a Zulu War Chant, which was enthusiastically received) "Chaka, it comes to where I have to stop as my heart is full. If Pirrow has strength on Tuesday (December 16th), I will die that day. On Dingaan's day at Cartwright's Flats we will burn our passes". The audience was by now highly charged and sent full support. The police report conveys the prevailing mood where it notes, "another native spoke whose name was not known, 'I suggest that we burn our passes now!' Uproar then followed".

Like Bonner on the politics of the ICU and African politics in general, I propose an alternative role for the spoken word in public meetings and the politics of the Durban Branch of the CPSA. Organisers of the 13 and 14th of December meetings valued the properties of words. For these to be realised in all their rich potential they had to be heard. The speakers and leadership were consciously aware of the diverse nature of their audience. It was made up of workers, detectives, informers and members of rival organisations including non-aligned members of the public. The CPSA leaders not

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<sup>46</sup> JUS 1/18/26. Report dated 15/12/1930, by R.H. Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

only tolerated but also welcomed the presence of policeman like Sgt. Arnold.<sup>47</sup> Nkosi made this point quite clearly, 'I want to speak this in the presence of the detectives here and other officials of the Government here. You detectives here and others go into the corners. I am going to speak and say what we intend doing (on the 16th of December)'.<sup>48</sup> During the 14th of December meeting, Mtolo also remarked, 'I see one Detective here who searched my place at Pinetown. He is the one who searched our place for isitiyama'. During the same meeting, Makubi again directed his comments explicitly to Sgt. Arnold:

Are you afraid of being burned in hell? I am speaking to you Chaka...we have the strength and power, and if we want to do a thing we will do it...It does not matter how things are, we are going to get free. If you think you can stop us you are trying to stop a stream that comes from eternity-you cannot stop it. We have nothing to do with Europeans who have oppressed us. We will do as we like. What have we gained by Europeans being here? We have gained nothing from them...If I had my pass here today I would burn them today in front of Chaka. All we want is our freedom...Do not you know that the start of everything is done by detectives?<sup>49</sup>

The agents of surveillance were consciously used to relay sentiments of dissatisfaction, grievance or outrage to their political masters. Using these agents of as channels of communication, Nkosi proclaimed

(Pirrow) is a sheep herd-a dog... I am hiding nothing, I am telling you in front of Hertzog and anybody. His is a rotten government-a putrid Government. What truth do you want from me now? Look here, for these pass Laws we have fought in 1919, the trouble was over passes in 1921. I say burn your passes, burn everyone of them....(In 1929) Natives died and were buried over the beer, and you go back to the filthy, dirty place and drink it! If I had my way I would close the beer halls and you would not drink at all there. I say let us contemplate this and close them...On the 16th of December we will collect the bibles and collars of Native Ministers and burn them.<sup>50</sup>

Johannes Nkosi criticised both the ANC and Kadalie's ICU for not supporting the pass burning campaign. On this account Nkosi added

there are many of our natives who have taken their bundles and have gone home. I want to are know whether you are still under servitude, taking your bundles and going home. If we who placed here as our leaders preach certain things, you must

<sup>47</sup> This section depends largely on Bonner, 'Home Truths'.

<sup>48</sup> JUS 1/18/26, Nkosi addressing the audience during the December 13th mass meeting. Report by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police 15/12/1930.

<sup>49</sup> JUS 1/18/26, 14th December meeting organised by the Durban branch of the CPSA. Report by Arnold to the Commissioner of police.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13th of December meeting.

not go and leave us alone... who is Kadalie? He is in the same company as Hertzog and Pirrow and others.<sup>51</sup>

Albert Nzula, the main speaker at the 13th of December 1930 meeting likewise remarked

This morning, for instance, when I took up my paper, I discovered that Kadalie has spoken against the burning of the pass Laws. What are his reasons for opposing the burning of the passes? he has no reasons except that the time is not yet ripe. Comrades the time will never be ripe until you make it ripe. The time is ripe to day because in every corner of South Africa - as many comrades said here, even the little children know that passes are going to be burned on Dingaan's Day.<sup>52</sup>

The Durban branch of the CPSA, which had grown into a powerful force under the able and devoted leadership of Johannes Nkosi began its 'Dingaan's Day' demonstration in 1930 at eight o'clock in the morning. After four hours of speech making and the burning of 3000 passes<sup>53</sup>, the cavalcade of demonstrators proceeded from Cartwright Flats to the city of Durban, in defiance of a police command. A large contingent of policemen barred the way and, when demonstrators bore down on them, the police attacked them with clubs and assegais. The results were calamitous, as Nkosi, and three other Africans, were stabbed to death and horribly mutilated by African constables. Various reports of this incident appeared in the major newspapers. The Durban based Natal Mercury reported

An ugly position developed in a few seconds. As described below, the gathering had conducted itself entirely to the satisfaction of the police, but soon after 4.30, when passes and tax receipts said to be 2,000 had been burnt, a procession began to form. The main speaker, Nkosi, was still near the table upon which he had been standing. Chief Constable Whitsitt, who had had been present throughout the day, went forward to the bearer of the large red banner and informed him that the procession could not be held. Mr Whitsitt then called for Nkosi to come forward, but this request was not heeded.... About 70 European constables and 50 Native constables, armed with pick handles and kierries rushed in among the Natives. The yelling rose to tumult, and for some time there was resistance to the police attempt to clear the Flats. Then began the general flight... Johannes Nkosi was found unconscious. He had been a prominent speaker throughout the day, and had received the passes which were burnt. It is understood that he was the author of a pamphlet predicting "Hell on Dingaan's Day", and had been called before the Chief Magistrate, Mr Maynard Page, and he is described as Organiser of the Durban Branch of the Communist party of South Africa.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> JUS 1/18/26, statement of Nkosi during the December 13 meeting, report submitted by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> The Natal Advertiser, 22/12/1930, 'Burning of Native Passes'.

<sup>54</sup> The Natal Mercury, 22 December, 1930.

Other angles and biases emerge from a further report in The Natal Mercury

At 8.30am there was a crowd of about 160 listening to two agitators, who exhorted them to burn their passes, as a "Christmas box to the Government". A few yards from the platform there was a notice board draped with a red flag and inscribed "Down with Pirow slave laws. Away with the passes on Dingaan's Day. Shisani ama passi<sup>55</sup> (Burn Your Passes)". From that time onwards a steady stream of Natives came to the meeting and they were immediately button-holed by a bearded Native, wearing a fez and a flowing red robe, who endeavoured to get their passes from them... he Natives present were mostly of the 'rag and bobtail order'. It was noticed that there were very few kitchen boys and town workers present. It appeared that the ICU order to its members to boycott the pass burning was respected... the rain which fell frequently during the day did not lessen the crowd which gradually increased until at mid-day there were more than a thousand present... The speaker brandished a huge wad of passes and poll tax receipts which had just been given to him. Three hats were being passed around and into these Natives put their passes... the speaker produced a cigarette box and from it produced his documents "I am going to burn all these", he exclaimed, as he handed them to his companion in the platform. "One - my pass; two - my transfer pass from Basutoland; three - my poll tax receipt; four - my dog tax receipt. I am going to destroy them all. I call upon you to destroy all your passes. Let us give the Government a big Christmas box... He was loudly applauded, but not all the Natives saw eye to eye with him. One venerable Zulu very disgustedly elbowed his way out of the crowd. "I paid good money for my pass... I am not going to give it to you"... The pass burning was not the awe-inspiring ceremony it had been intended to be... Large numbers of Natives in regular work and living in compounds in Durban have been leaving the town during the last few days and going back to their kraals on the North and South Coasts. Many of them declared that there was going to be big trouble in Durban on Dingaan's Day, and they wanted to be far away from it as possible. This attitude of a large section of the Native population, representing the genuine working type, is significant in that it shows the more responsible class of Natives have no sympathy with extremist agitators.<sup>56</sup>

As a consequence of Nkosi's death, the Durban Magistrate's Court instituted a criminal case early in January 1931. The case was against those who were arrested during the 16th of December protest march and debacle. The accused were charged with public violence.<sup>57</sup> During this trial police, mostly white constables, gave evidence that to a large extent vindicated their action. They placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the African workers, particularly their leadership, for what took place. The chief constable of the Durban borough police for example claimed that

convinced that if I had not acted as I did a great many of the public force would have been killed, and also many Europeans in the street of town. It was to save

<sup>55</sup> my emphasis

<sup>56</sup> Natal Mercury, 17/12/1930, 'Workers of the world unite'.

<sup>57</sup> The Natal Mercury, 10/1/1931. "Court story of Native riots".



lives of other persons that I took up the attitude I did. Had I hesitated for a split second they would have been on top of us.<sup>58</sup>

Another prominent state-witness was Detective-Sergeant Arnold of the Criminal Inspectorate Department (CID) who stated that he was a 'Zulu linguist' and therefore an expert who understood their 'behaviour, thought patterns, psychology and war-mongering tendencies'. He explained that one of his official duties was to attend native meetings on behalf of the CID. As a matter of routine, he attended the December 16th meeting at Cartwright Flats in company with Detective Sergeant Lourens and a number of Native detectives who 'carried pick-handles and sticks, the usual weapons'.<sup>59</sup> During the trial, the Magistrate, a Mr G.P. Stead revealed his bias by asking another state witness and self proclaimed Zulu linguist, Sergeant Board, the following question, "They (the protesters) were not all Zulus, were they?" to which Sgt. Board replied, 'No, a lot of them were mongrels'.

Parallel to the court case, in January 1931, the state set up an official inquest to investigate Nkosi's death.<sup>60</sup> The state coroner at Nkosi's inquest, cynically commended white police including Whitsit-the chief constable, Arnold and Board for their self-restraint, and put the blame squarely on the African constables, who were accused of having 'used more force than was requisite'; notably in 'the use of assegais was not necessary'. In addition the accused 'had failed to exercise reasonable restraint'. Although several witnesses testified that they had seen constables stab the murdered men, the police were strangely 'unable to identify the killers'. Similarly, seven African witnesses swore that they had seen the chief constable shoot at Nkosi, who was stabbed, after being taken into custody, but the court rejected the allegations and evidence.<sup>61</sup> By contrast, twenty-six demonstrators were convicted of public violence, four being sentenced to six months' hard labour.

The CPSA in Durban and elsewhere associated the "Dingaan's Day" burning of passes with the loss of independence and the loss of land. This is reflected in Johannes

<sup>58</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>

Both the court case and the inquest are beyond the scope of this study and need to be researched separately. The official court records are available as part of the evidence, see NAB, Durban Criminal Records, A Court, 1927-1927, including the various newspapers of the day.

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J and R Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa: 1850-1950, IDAFSA, 1983, p.435. Natal Mercury, 'Wild statement at Inquest', 28/1/1931, 'Shot fired by accident', 30 Jan 1931, 'Chief Constable vindicated', 11/2/1931.

Nkosi's 'Dingaan's Day' speech during which he proclaimed, 'I am native, I am standing in my country of my birth. This country of ours has been stolen. These people have stolen our country and are ruling it. Some people dread Smuts, Hertzog and Pirrow, they are nothing but thieves preaching sedition'.<sup>62</sup> This speech besides calling for national consciousness among Africans regarded the **land question** as the most important problem that affected the working class in South Africa.

There was nevertheless a latent contradiction between the CPSA's programme of a Native Republic and its endorsement of King Dingane. From the late 1920s if not before the CPSA was stridently anti-chief. They proposed a direct correspondence between the positions of the Czars in Russia<sup>63</sup> and that of chiefs in South Africa. Many African communists endorsed this position. Grassroots supporters were a good deal more ambiguous. The party had to negotiate a potential contradiction when it came to King Dingane. It viewed chiefs as feudal despots-the equivalent of the Russian Czars. The Communists of European origin, in particular, regarded monarchies as quintessential representatives of the ruling class and the privileged.

This attitude contrasted with the belief of most members of the ANC National Executive and its Council of Chiefs. The latter condemned the fraternisation between Congress and the Communist Party since Josias Gumede had taken over as President of the ANC in 1927. They accused the Communists of being interested in fostering disunity of the 'Black and White races' of South Africa. They further argued that 'the Communist Party has brought Russia to the stage it was at then; the Czar was a great man in his country, of Royal Blood like us, and where is he now? Kadalie has driven the Communists out of his ranks. If the ANC fraternises with them we chiefs cannot continue to belong to it'.<sup>64</sup>

A sizeable number of the black Communists, contrary to the beliefs of the white leadership of the Party, were also vocal in their support of various African monarchies. Nkosi and other African colleagues in the Communist Party, supported monarchies to the hilt. They were in the forefront in their support of the Zulu Kings like Shaka and Dingane including chiefs like Bhambatha kaMancinza. These leaders symbolised their

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<sup>62</sup> JUS1/18/26, CID Report, 15 December 1930, submitted by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>63</sup> On the fate of the Czars in Russia see W. Kirchner, *Russian History*, New York, 1991.

<sup>64</sup> P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, Los Angeles, 1971, p.175-77.

struggle for freedom, land and justice in a country dominated by white settlers. More than any other group they celebrated King Dingane as the key symbol for resistance. As Nkosi put it

Dingaan was a Communist, and he will be there on the day of Dingaan, the 16th December will be the day of our freedom in Africa. This is the day when we will not forget those who will put them (whites) in hell... Dingaan was a man, and was clever... This Dingaan's Day is the day that we must think of those that died in the fight. On that day old men died who had hearts bigger than your...<sup>65</sup>

Nkosi believed that 'the cause of justice has always won since time began, and we will always win. It's the same thing in this country, it is either you - the black man of this country - are going to have a Black Republic of Africa, or that you are going to be exterminated, a thing out of question'.<sup>66</sup> Extermination is another recurrent theme in the various speeches presented during workers' mass meetings.

This powerful sympathy in support of the Zulu royal house emerges in other ways. Nkosi and his supporters took exceptional offence of a white Detective- Sergeant, R.H. Arnold, whose nickname was 'Chaka'. To them unlike King Shaka, he was a charlatan who represented evil. Charles Dansa, one of the guest speakers suggested to the mass meeting that the impertinent Sergeant Arnold should change his nickname and call himself, "Mbulali", literally meaning 'the Killer'.<sup>67</sup> The fiery Mtolo continued,

That European sitting here, Chaka.... Is called by the name of Chaka, one of our ancestors. Are we giving the names of our ancestors to Police and detectives? These are the people and the Ministers who are misleading our people. This country will never get freedom outside our ranks. If we do not burn our passes we will be slaves forever.<sup>68</sup>

In an interpreted speech that was delivered at a Communist Party mass meeting in Durban, the Afrikaans-speaking Ndawuni likewise commended Shaka

We do not go to Europe and worry them (the white people) they came to this country and worried us. God put the black people here and the white people came here and asked Chaka for food and he gave them and looked after them and told them 'You can stay'. And what did they do? The white man buries a stone in one place and buries a stone in another and says 'That is mine'! And then Chaka

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*; Some 'Togt' workers, fearing violent police were reluctant in participating in protest action. See police report of a CPSA meeting held at Bell Street in Durban, 23/11/1930, JUS 1/18/26. Report submitted by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>66</sup> JUS 1/18/26, CID Report, 15 December 1930 submitted by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, JUS 1/18/26, Speech by Dansa.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, JUS 1/18/26, speech by Mtolo

woke, but then it was too late, and I say today the white men took our land and they are still treating us like dogs. We have never done that to the white man.<sup>69</sup>

Mtolo, another abrasive speaker in this "Dingaan's Day" meeting, and an apparent supporter of the monarchy emphasised that until the present king called them into arms as amabutho, they would not use violent means against white people. Rather, like 'true Zulu warriors', they would maintain discipline, follow existing war protocol and guard against being provoked in their just struggle for justice, land and freedom as workers

I want to tell you here present (including Det. Serg. Arnold and spies) that we are not here to fight. Natives under King Chaka were fighters. King Chaka himself was a fighter, but today we are under Solomon, a descendant. We would never fight without the command of Solomon whom we look upon as our king.<sup>70</sup>

Mtolo, who was not a member of the Communist Party added that he would 'follow a snake if its doctrine is good', and that the Communist Party, 'was speaking on behalf of the black man of South Africa who have been robbed of their country'.

To the leadership of the African working class and their supporters, the two kings were neither inverted image of each other nor violent, harsh enemies of the people. What was important to the members of the working class and their leadership was that as "Communists, the kings were protectors of their own peoples' welfare and land against the tyranny of the white settlers". Johannes Nkosi reiterated this point.<sup>71</sup>

Listen, Dingaan was a Communist,<sup>72</sup> Chaka was a Communist. I am not talking of this dog of a white man (Sgt. Arnold, a policeman), I am talking about Chaka the Chief. This white man has got the name of your king. What right has he got to have it? Chaka! Who is Chaka? What is he? King Chaka was a Communist, Bhambatha was a Communist...Today where we are? Today we have a white man calling himself Chaka. Where did he get his name from?<sup>73</sup>

The same report also noted that the event was addressed by a multi-lingual group of speakers, among whom were some from the Rand. The latter spoke in English, Afrikaans, isiZulu and isiXhosa as guests of the organisers. The crowd was also multi-lingual and included Basotho and amaXhosa migrant workers. We can then conclude -

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., JUS 1/18/26, speech by Ndawuni, CID Report by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.; Speech by Mtolo.

<sup>71</sup> The national meetings and accompanying protest action took place at various venues. The newspapers of the day reported these various events taking place in Cape Town, Johannesburg, East London, Bloemfontein among other places. See various reports in JUS 1/18/26 file.

<sup>72</sup> The implications and analysis of this statement will be fully explained in the next section.

<sup>73</sup> JUS 1/18/26 speech by Nkosi CID Report of the 18th/12/1930 submitted by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police.

that, like any multi-lingual communities the majority of the members in the audience understood one of the spoken African languages, and in this instance (basic) isiZulu. On this account all the police reports state that all interpretations were in isiZulu. Their compilers like Sgt. Arnold were fluent in both spoken and written isiZulu. There was no need to present different versions of King Dingane for different ethnic groups.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, both King Dingane and Shaka represented a unifying symbol to members of the black working class and across ethnic lines.

The police reports, written in English, provided to a large extent, a record of what was taking place. This raises similar issues as the James Stuart Archives and sources that were used in chapter one regarding the veracity of this historical evidence. Like Carolyn Hamilton<sup>75</sup> on the James Stuart Archives and Phil Bonner's<sup>76</sup> viewpoint on these police reports, I am of the opinion that provided one subjects these sources to the normal canon of historical enquiry and careful linguistic and close textual analysis, they provide an exceptionally illuminating window into the past.<sup>77</sup> Police informers and constables like Sgt. Arnold as agents of surveillance, were welcome and conspicuous by their presence in most of the workers' mass meeting because, according to Bonner, they were used as a channel for refracting police surveillance back to its authors. They were consciously used by the workers to relay sentiments of dissatisfaction, grievance or outrage to their political masters.<sup>78</sup> From the official stamps in all the police reports used as historical evidence in this study we can reach the conclusion that the workers' messages eventually reached the offices of the Minister of Justice, Police Commissioner and Native Affairs Department.

Another important issue to note is that Nkosi and colleagues' perceptions of the king are unique for the fact that they are not archivally thick. These avoid established, dominant oral traditions and archive on the king that was established by the 1920s.<sup>79</sup> This cuts across Carolyn Hamilton's argument about limits of historical invention,<sup>80</sup> the fact that once an archive is made and established, all inventions and historical accounts are done in terms of that particular established archive. This is not

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<sup>74</sup> JUS 1/18/26, see CID Report by Arnold to the Commissioner of Police, 17/11/1930,

<sup>75</sup> Hamilton, 'Authoring Shaka'.

<sup>76</sup> Bonner, P, 'Home Truths'.

<sup>77</sup> Beinart, W and Bundy, C, 'The Union, Nation and Talking Crow', in Beinart, W and Bundy, C (eds), *Hidden struggles in rural South Africa*, Johannesburg, 1987.

<sup>78</sup> Bonner, 'Home Truths'.

<sup>79</sup> See chapter one and two of the thesis on the established archive on King Dingane.

necessarily the case with Nkosi's perceptions of King Dingane. The latter deliberately avoids King Dingane's established archive constructed by both the colonisers and colonised in their interpretation of the king's reign. His perception of King Dingane the "Communist" is produced outside the limits and parameters of the established archive. Johannes Nkosi, as an African and born in a rural family of labour tenants, **was** steeped in oral traditions of his community including King Dingane's established archive. Nkosi decided to consciously ignore the established archive on King Dingane so as to take cognisance of his own interests and particular everyday experiences personified by landlessness, poverty, racism and oppression.<sup>81</sup>

## **2. Political organisations and the contending commemoration of "Dingaan's Day" in the late 1920s and 1930s**

The year 1927 marked a notable shift in the CPSA relationship with the African National Congress which was noted for its conservative views.<sup>82</sup> In its convention in June of that year, it elected J.S. Gumede as President general. Gumede was probably born in the 1870s, and was a teacher by profession. For some time he worked as a land agent for a white firm in Pietermaritzburg. With John Dube, Martin Luthuli, Saul Msane and others he helped to form the Natal Native Congress in 1900-1901, serving at different times thereafter as its secretary and vice-president under Dube. He also edited *iLanga*, Dube's newspaper, during the first world war. Later in the mid-1920s, Gumede and Dube had a falling out, in part over Dube's desire to keep the Natal Native Congress independent of the national ANC. Gumede then formed a separate Natal African Congress, affiliated to the national body. Gumede helped draft the ANC constitution in 1919. The same year he accompanied the SANNC (later the ANC) deputation to England and Versailles, a disillusioning experience that may have accounted in part for his increasing inclination towards political radicalism and working class sentiments thereafter. He was one of the ANC leaders involved in encouraging the African mine strike on the Rand in 1920.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See C.A. Hamilton, 'Authoring and *Terrific Majesty*.

<sup>81</sup> JUS 1/18/26, see particularly Nkosi's speeches during the 13th and 14th of December 1930 mass meetings in Durban. These were compiled by Sergeant Arnold for the Commissioner of Police in Pretoria.

<sup>82</sup> See Jones, *Raising the Red Flag*, pp.188-194.

<sup>83</sup> Carter and Karis, *From protest to challenge*, Vol. 2. p.34.

In the early to mid 1920s the ANC relapsed into relative inactivity. In February 1927, Gumede attended the International Congress of the League against Imperialism at Brussels, Belgium, together with James La Guma, representing the CPSA.<sup>84</sup> Speaking of communism, Gumede acknowledged

I am happy to say that there are Communists in South Africa. I myself I am not one (ten years before he had strongly opposed Bolshevism), but its my experience that the Communist Party is the only party that stands behind us and from which we can expect something.<sup>85</sup>

Gumede's election seemed to re-invigorate the radical wing of the Transvaal African Congress, and moved it closer to the CPSA. Gumede's orientation towards the CPSA produced a growing political polarisation both within the Transvaal wing of the ANC and in the ANC nationally. According to Bonner, Gumede sought to revitalise both the ANC and its Transvaal Province, and in March 1928, after his return from a second visit to the Soviet Union, began to canvass an idea of an anti-pass campaign. To assist in the revitalisation of Congress Gumede drafted in two lieutenants, Samuel Masabalala and Theodore Mvalo. Neither proved to be the wisest selection. Nevertheless armed with this support, Gumede embarked on a series of meetings on the Rand aimed at whipping up support for pass laws and liquor legislation. The pass law campaign was at least partly in response to a grass roots upsurge in Pretoria around the same issue in March 1928, and coincided with a renewed interest in this and other 'popular' issues among the CPSA.<sup>86</sup>

During 1929 joint meetings of the CPSA, IICU, the CPSA and Gumede's section of the Transvaal ANC became increasingly common and these organisation gave focus and direction to a groundswell of popular dissatisfaction which was surging through the rural and urban areas alike. Bonner points out that police files for this period literally bulge with reports of meeting of protest in every corner of the country. However, Gumede's advocacy of direct action, and his association with such diverse demons as Mvalo and the CPSA, did little to endear him to the conservative wing of the ANC.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Lerumo, *Fifty Years*, p. 63.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> This paragraph is based largely on Bonner, 'Division and Unity in the struggle'. P.34.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

The divisions bedevilling Congress were now translated into the contestation for political space during “Dingaan’s Day” commemorations in the late 1920s and early 1930. Leaders like Selope Thema and Selby Msimang along with those in the Council of Chiefs opposed “Dingaan’s Day” demonstrations, pass burning campaigns and generally Gumede’s pro-Communist stance. These divisions came to a head in April 1930 during the ANC annual national conference held in Bloemfontein. The main issue during this annual general meeting was whether or not Gumede was to be re-elected as the President of the ANC. There were two major camps in this meeting and the various ANC constituencies supported each. The radical pro-Gumede camp included Albert Nzula from the Transvaal CPSA, and John Gomas, Bransby Ndobe and Elliot Tonjeni, who occupied leadership position in the western Cape ANC branch which they turned into the most militant section. Also aligned with this group was A. W. G. Champion from Natal, who was opposed to Pixley kaSeme, Gumede’s principal rival for office. On the other side, the pro-Seme group, were conservatives who included Rev Z. R. Mahabane, Selope Thema and Dube.

Gumede’s address to the conference was uncompromising and forthright. He advocated the defence of the Soviet Union, protest, demonstration and mass action whenever possible, refusal to pay taxes. He confirmed his support of pass burning campaigns and a struggle for a ‘Black Republic’. Immediately after his address pandemonium and consternation broke out among the conservative members who felt that Gumede had gone overboard. As a result, Seme was elected as President with thirty-nine votes against Gumede’s fourteen.<sup>88</sup> Subsequently the ANC repudiated the CPSA anti-pass burning campaign stance and withdrew into a state of passive acquiescence. The leadership adopted a position underpinned by the belief that liberation would come through political gradualism, reasoned arguments, appeals to Christians ethics, and moderate, constitutional protest. They accordingly refused to mobilise their supporters for mass struggle. In the December 1932 of the ANC influenced The Bantu World published the following reconciliatory commentary was written by Thema, which reduced King Dingane’s action against the voortrekkers to that of an uncouth, barbarian. Commenting on the position adopted by the CPSA, he noted

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<sup>88</sup> On this issue See, E. Roux, Time longer than Rope, p. 245 and Simons, Class and Colour, p. 427.



Indeed there are some Africans of the radical school of thought who hold that Dingaan's Day should be the day of strikes and the burning of passes and effigies of those politicians and statesmen who are responsible of the repressive laws operating against the progress of the Bantu race. It is needless to point out that the appeal to racial feelings on Dingaan's Day is depriving the day of its historical significance, and the lesson that should be learned from it by all sections of the community. The clash between Voortrekkers and the Zulus, was a clash of forces of light and darkness and not merely of human beings dissimilar in colour... It is this clash of ideas which is more or less responsible for the clash of arms that followed... There is no doubt that the whole intelligent Bantudom deplores the massacre of Piet Retief and his followers and the merciless slaughter of innocent women and children at Weenen; it deplores the treacherous and cruel acts of Dingane... But we of today we should remember the past with its cruelties and barbarities, not to perpetuate the ancient feuds, but to avoid their repetition by creating a new-spirit of inter-racial goodwill and harmony.

The election of Seme as the President of the bickering ANC also led to the radical and militant western Cape leadership comprising of Ndobe and Tonjeni (publicly 'sold out' by Kadalie) breaking away from the ANC. A special meeting of the ANC executive held in September 1930 dismissed Ndobe from the post of provincial secretary because of his advocacy of the Communist Party's policy. This meeting took a binding decision prohibiting 'leaders and propagandists with communistic doctrines' from addressing Congress meetings; and banned the sale of Umsebenzi on Congress premises.<sup>89</sup>

The beleaguered militants fought back with a view to gaining control of the organisation, but Thaele, the leader of the (Western Cape) ANC, defeated them by expelling Ndobe's adherents. The defeated group reacted by forming a splinter group, which they named the Independent African National Congress (Cape) and attempted to secure the affiliation of country branches. However the state beheaded the movement by deporting Ndobe to Basutoland and forcing Tonjeni to retreat to Port Elizabeth.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless it is worth mentioning the position of the Independent ANC as far as 'Dingaan's Day' is concerned. Their Manifesto, among other issues, reflected the following proposals (Proposal Number 2):

A militant struggle to be waged against the Government under the slogan of a Black Republic, by means of agitation and mass demonstrations and organisation aimed at securing a general stoppage of work and civil disobedience if our demands are not granted. Dingaan's Day to be observed as **African Liberation**

<sup>89</sup>

Ibid

<sup>90</sup>

Simons, Class and Colour, p.432.

**Day** throughout the Union and on this day the African people to be called upon to down and burn passes as a first stage in the campaign of civil disobedience.<sup>91</sup>

Seme's election as President of the ANC did not entirely snuff out the spirit of radicalism among its members on the Witwatersrand. The radical wing continued to promote radical action at "Dingane's Day" commemorations. In October 1930 they attempted to place the issue on the organisation's agenda once again. At a meeting both Selope Thema and Selby Msimang criticised what they perceived as a shortsighted pass-burning campaign driven by the CPSA. They depicted the latter as lackeys of the Commitern and the Negro Conference. Msimang rejected the call to support the pass-burning campaign in the following words

(We) are being told that on Dingaan's Day passes would be destroyed, but passes with all their evils were not worth the trouble they were urged to take on Dingaan's Day... there were more important matters to be tackled than the Pass Laws. If it was felt that the Pass Laws must be abolished they should come to Congress for advice. Foreign advice (from the Commitern) was not as clear as home advice, the Congress was very clear on this matter. The policy of Congress was that nothing should be done with violence. It was useless to burn passes on the Market Square in the name of Congress whilst those concerned were not members of Congress.<sup>92</sup>

Selope Thema endorsed this viewpoint. He argued that though he was against the pass system but felt it was wrong to tell Africans to burn their passes. To him, the salvation of the Africans did not lie with foreign theories including those propagated by the people of Russia, but in their own hands. As Africans they should stop being lackeys by thinking that Russians would set them free.<sup>93</sup>

## **2.1. The Independent ICU, Kadalie and the counter-commemoration of "Dingaan's Day" by African workers.**

By 1928 the ICU had broken into three different splinter groups operating from headquarters in various parts of the country.<sup>94</sup> There were three major fractions; Kadalie's Independent ICU, the Old ICU (ICU yaseAfrica) and Champion's ICU yase Natali formed in 1928. Champion's faction was anti-Kadalie and vigorously supported the pass-burning campaign that was proposed by the CPSA and other African worker organisations. There are various reasons given for the split and the major one was

<sup>91</sup> Umsebenzi, 28/11/1930.

<sup>92</sup> JUS 1/18/26, statement attributed to Msimang, 31/10/1930

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., statement attributed to Thema.

<sup>94</sup> On this theme, including the various reasons that led to the split see, Simons, Class and Colour, and E.Roux, Time longer than Rope.

corruption and embezzlement of funds by the leadership, particularly Kadalie and Champion.<sup>95</sup>

During this period and through the Independent ICU, Kadalie cemented his relationship with his new found allies in the League of African Rights. He also adopted a new line and supported the anti-pass campaign. In a meeting held on the 15th of December 1929 next to the Johannesburg pass office and organised jointly by the CPSA, ANC, LAR, Independent ICU, Ballinger's ICU faction, Kadalie observed that the united front was not necessarily anti-white. He lambasted whites for not sticking to their promises and referred to European civilisation as a civilisation of 'thieves and robbers. Pirrow is taxing the native for Poll Tax which is too excessive whereas the native is living under a small amount and tomorrow (December 16th) is going to be a strong day of speeches'<sup>96</sup> and protest action. The "Dingaan's Day" meeting was attended and addressed by black and white speakers. The police reports referred to it as an orderly anti-pass campaign meeting that was attended by a comparatively large number of natives rising from 5 000 to approximately 9000 in the afternoon. During the meeting, 'Europeans, men, women and children as well as natives retailed Communist literature, many of the gathering wore the red, green and black badge of the League of African Rights, which bore the inscription "Mayibuye" meaning Retain Africa for the Natives'. Kadalie's address referred to the political significance of "Dingaan's Day" and Africans to 'avail themselves of that occasion to declare their Unity in demand of fair treatment, etc.'<sup>97</sup>

In mid-1930 Kadalie was arrested for a strike action he initiated in East London in January. After his imprisonment he was, by his standards, relatively 'tame', except for few outbursts. It was freely rumoured that the state had threatened to deport him to his native Nyasaland if he became a thorn in the flesh again. This may explain his collaborative and accommodative stance towards the state. Kadalie became active and belligerent again towards the end of 1930 as he addressed meetings in various platforms around the country, particularly in the Eastern Cape, Orange Free State and the Transvaal. In these meetings he discouraged his audience against the CPSA. He

<sup>95</sup> Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, Marks, *The Ambiguities* and Bonner, 'Home Truths'.

<sup>96</sup> Police report in JUS 1/8/26. See also Bonner, 'Division and Unity' on the IICU and its collaboration with the LAR up to early 1930, p.34.

<sup>97</sup> JUS 1/18/26, report by J. Lebitsa, Native Detective Sergeant to the Detective Head Constable of Johannesburg who forwarded the report to the Commissioner of Police in Pretoria, December

now declared himself an opponent of the pass burning campaign, which was to culminate into a mass action in various areas on the 16th of December 1930. Kadalie proclaimed that the government was going to find space in jail for the lawbreakers. Mass action he insisted, was a futile exercise undertaken by unsophisticated people. The latter needed to be trained and organised for a number of years in order to become astute political practitioners.

Kadalie also warned workers against disturbing Europeans in their celebrations and urged his followers to let law take its course. In one of the police reports the imperious Kadalie was quoted as saying that he had the ultimate power to decide the fate of the pass-burning campaign. His speech reflected his character as a manipulative absolutist who collaborated with the state when it suited him

Many of you have heard the rumours in circulation regards what is going to happen on Dingaan's Day, you have that something big is going to happen. I denounced that policy of burning passes in Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and in the East London Press... Now I say this is all foolishness... as no matter what government is in power that Government will always be stronger than the people. The Government have a Law, they could prohibit all meetings and gatherings on Dingaan's Day... The policy of my union and which has been accepted by your leaders and Native Chief and headman, is, there is not going to be burning of passes on Dingaan Day... We must organise ourselves and send strong demonstrations to the Government, and in this way we will get rid of the Passes. I tell you nothing will happen on Dingaan's Day, Mandy (the Detective Sergeant who was attending the meeting and a compiler of this report), I have already told you that I control the Natives, the switch (pass burning campaign) is in my hand, I am not boasting, you will see I made a speech in Jo'burg and one in Bloemfontein and I have changed the whole situation.<sup>98</sup>

In a report compiled by Sgt. Mandy for the East London CID, the latter noted that after a mass meeting ended Kadalie came up to him and 'in the course of the conversation I had with him, he told me that the switch (meaning the Burning of Passes) was in his hands as he did not agree with the Communistic views and would not agree with his followers being exploited by the Communists to suit their own ends'. Mandy continued with the claim that Kadalie promised him that he would denounce the policy of burning passes and that there would be no trouble on "Dingaan's Day" in East London, Bloemfontein or the Rand. The trade union leader

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1929.

<sup>98</sup> JUS/1/18/26/ South African Police Report, 11/12/1930, East London CID offices to the Commissioner of Police.

confided that he was in a process of writing an article for publication in the East London Despatch and that this article would show clearly his views on the pass burning campaign. A police report confirmed that the newspaper published the article on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1930. Mandy further elaborated that on one of his visits to Kadalie's offices, the latter showed him correspondence from his Durban branch Secretary and from the contents it would appear that 'the Natives in Natal are in a state of unrest and that trouble may be expected there on the 16<sup>th</sup>'. A sizeable number of Kadalie supporters did not agree with his stance as far as the pass-burning campaign was concerned-including the significance of 'Dingaan's Day' as a day of protest. Thus Pofu commented, during a meeting organised by Kadalie, that he had serious problems when the chairman intimated that

The Independent ICU was not prepared to advise the people to burn their passes on Dingaan's Day. They had been told that this was the day for the freedom of the natives but now that the day was approaching they were told the Independent I.C.U. would have nothing to do with the burning of passes. I say we must be prepared to go to Hell and die on Dingaan's Day. If our leaders are now going to play a cowardly game with us, let them go... if these leaders cannot lead us let them step aside.<sup>100</sup>

Clements Kadalie was condemned by the other factions of the ICU and CPSA. They labelled him variously as a state agent, a traitor, coward and a 'good boy'. Umsebenzi published an article titled '**Dastardly Behaviour of Clements Kadalie**' and accused him of going delirious in order to appease his white paymasters

The government of white South African imperialism, aided by its hirelings and tools, the 'good boys' is doing its utmost to stem the tide of rising revolutionary movement of the Native workers and poverty stricken peasants in reserves... It is necessary to expose Kadalie's treachery before the Natives of this country. He has built up a certain reputation as a revolutionary by means of radical phrases... At the beginning of the year, in order to bolster up waning influence, Kadalie called a strike in East London. The Native workers responded nobly. But when Kadalie was arrested he called the strike off in the most cowardly way and told the workers to go back to work... Now he appears in public once more, this time not as a fire-brand and 'agitator', but as Mr "Good Boy" Kadalie, the friend of Pirow and the Government, advising the Natives not to burn their passes, and telling them to keep quite and wait until he (Kadalie) has organised them....<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> JUS 1/18/26 statement by Isaac Montoeli, Ind. I.C.U. meeting on 9/11/1930, Newtown Market Square, Johannesburg. See also Bonner, 'Home Truths'.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Umsebenzi, 12/12/1930.

## CONCLUSION

Why did “Dingane’s Day” counter-commemorations come to the fore in the 1920s? There are various reasons to explain this significance of the 1930 counter-commemoration of “Dingaan’s Day”. To show the workers’ commitment, from the police reports we are told that in the Durban area the meetings were well attended and averaged about a thousand attendants. Approximately 3000 passes were burnt on the 16th of December 1930 regardless of the fact that the weather was not conducive, as it was a rainy day. Additionally the reports focus attention on the fact that most of the mass meetings were ethnically and linguistically diverse with most of the spoken words and speeches being translated into isiZulu. As a result there was no need to dwell into ethnic politics but national issues that united the different ethnic groups.

One can therefore argue that the state was concerned that an Africanist national movement would take roots by utilising the images of the Zulu kings, particularly King Shaka and King Dingane as potent unifying symbols. Moreover, King Solomon had begun to assert his authority in Zulu politics regardless of the attitude of the Union Government and the British crown. He did this by mobilising different sectors and classes, including both the intelligentsia and worker movements, within the African community. To the white authorities, the resuscitation of the Zulu kingship was problematic as it could easily provide a unifying symbol to the disillusioned multitudes. The state’s attitude towards the latter was to discourage unity among the indigenous peoples.

There were also socio-economic factors that influenced the counter-commemorations. The first was the accelerated pace of land dispossession being experienced by Africans in the 1920s. Helen Bradford<sup>102</sup> traces the complexities of the land question as a country-wide problem and argues that between 1926 and 1936, particularly in Natal, the proportion of Africans on holdings owned or occupied by non-Africans remained almost static in absolute terms, and fell dramatically from 41 to 26 percent of the province’s total African population. Simultaneously, numbers in the reserves increased by almost one-quarter; on African owned holdings they doubled; and in town they more than trebled. Primitive accumulation in the countryside was clearly more than the infliction of misery on black tenants by separating them from land and stock. It was

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<sup>102</sup> Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, Chapter 3.

more, too, than a process whereby soil was incorporated into nascent capital. It was also a precondition for rapid industrial development, in so far as masses of Africans were suddenly severed from their means of subsistence and thrown onto the labour market as vulnerable proletarians.<sup>103</sup> In addition the Global Depression that began in 1929 heightened deprivation and further fuelled worker protest, the poverty stricken, unemployed and the oppressed. At one level, these workers articulated their anger by using history as an oppositional tool: hence we notice the adoption of both King Shaka and King Dingane as martyrs. At another level, this economic depression saw the government mounting a campaign of repression against the African working class, leading to the death of Nkosi during the anti-pass demonstration on the 16th of December 1930.

This chapter also highlights the idea that African worker's images of the king are produced outside the confines and limits of existing established archives on the king that was consolidated in the 1920s. It thus reflects the point that there exists dynamic, changing, multiple voices on the king trumpeted by the LAR made up of splinter groups from the ICU, the ANC and CPSA. The voices are unique because they do not conform nor confine themselves to reworking or refurbishment of the established oral traditions about King Dingane. Additionally, these voices are multi-cultural and multi-ethnic and are not affected by regionalism, as the struggle to commemorate "Dingaan's Day" was a highly contested national event. It resulted in unfortunate deaths, particularly among workers as victims of the state's brutality.

The workers' voices leading to an alternative archive on King Dingane were influenced by current circumstances and experiences that defines each orators' world view. This worldview is shaped by Industrial Revolution in South Africa that began with the establishment of the mining and diamond industries during the late nineteenth century. The mineral revolution brought into the fore particular problems as defined by poverty, landlessness, discrimination and racism as defined by the Group Areas Act, the Colour Bar and different forms of industrial legislation. It also facilitated formation of social movements like trade unions that soon championed the struggle for workers rights among the Africans. African workers appropriated the image of King as a relevant tool for strategic reasons that of a unifying symbol against white rule. The

new breed of worker leadership like Johannes Nkosi, and including their supporters, understood the political economy of land in South Africa in global perspectives. This, in return, enabled them to successfully harmonise the Soviet Union based Communist Internationalist policies and programme of action with indigenous discourses and practises of communalism as practised by African societies. This led to workers' transformation of the king into metaphors for contemporary politics as a communist during counter-commemorations of "Dingaan's Day". This transformation was done outside the confines of indigenous and white settler discourses and historiography on King Dingane. To conclude, this chapter represents an exceptional case study suggesting that the power of the image of King Dingane lies not in the historical limits and archival constraints attached to the established archive.

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<sup>103</sup> Quoted verbatim from Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, p.58.



## CHAPTER 4

### **African Intellectual Nationalists images of King Dingane: 1916 - 1980s.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on the African nationalists intellectual's differing images of King Dingane. They include Selope Thema, Herbert Dhlomo and Jordan Ngubane. Although these intellectuals present diverse images of King Dingane, African Nationalism is the common thread that stitches these images together. Thema, Dhlomo and Ngubane's perspectives are largely influenced by and are an opposition to the Afrikaner nationalist negative depictions of the king particularly the celebration and commemoration of "Dingaan's Day". They all use newspapers as a vehicle for articulating their viewpoints. These newspapers include iLanga, Bantu World and Inkundla yaBantu among others. In the 1940s the Dhlomo brothers and Ngubane worked under the tutelage of Thema as Bantu World assistant editors.

#### **1. SELOPE THEMA and HERBERT DHLOMO, AFRICANIST VIEWPOINTS OF KING DINGANE - 'THE PATRIOT': 1916 - late 1940s.**

Selope Thema was, during the early twentieth century, one of the first African nationalists consciously to attempt to re-appropriate the image of King Dingane. From his unpublished autobiography<sup>1</sup> we can construct a summary of his life experiences. He was born in 1886 at Mafarane in the then South African Republic. As a young boy he was a cattle herder and a child labourer for a Boer family. As an adult he worked as a cleaner and messenger, a 'nurse boy' looking after white children, a 'kitchen boy', a clerk at the Johannesburg pass office and a recruitment officer for mine houses. He also served as an auxiliary for both the English and Boers during the South African War. He qualified as a teacher at Lovedale in 1910 where History was his favourite subject. His classmates soon nicknamed him 'the historian'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Selope Thema, 'From cattle herder to the Editor's chair', unpublished autobiography, University of Witwatersrand Historical and Literary Papers Collection, AD1787.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.48. Thema claims that he liked to study [European] History for the purpose of comparing it with the history of South Africa, particularly that of African Race. A point which becomes apparent in his analysis and representations of King Dingane's reign, in particular his confrontational stance he adopted towards the voortrekkers.

He claimed that he was influenced by the works of Edmund Burke, William Pitt, Macaulay and Thomas Paine as well as Edward Gibbon's Rise and fall of the Roman Empire. He was a staunch Christian who believed he 'rose from barbarism to civilisation as the result of the indomitable courage of Roman Catholic Church Missionaries'<sup>3</sup> and that humanity owed a debt of gratitude to the missionary enterprise.

Between 1912 and 1920, however, he rebelled against the church and the missionaries and became increasingly anti-white. This was due to the experiences he had as a clerk at the pass office and recruitment office of the mine houses. He saw the brutal maltreatment meted out to Africans. He considered that they were treated as sojourners in their own land. This stirred his soul and fired his imagination. He was also disappointed by the formation of the Union of South Africa and the racial laws which underpinned its formation. These included the Pass laws, Riotous Assemblies Act, stringent Masters and Servant laws, as well as oppressive taxation and the fact that the white man's word was the gospel truth in South African courts.<sup>4</sup> He regarded white rule as an organised tyranny against black people and therefore felt that there was no alternative but to 'take up the assegai and declare war to wipe out the white race'.<sup>5</sup> Intellectuals like Thema were aware of the process of structural underdevelopment, aggravated by a series of natural epidemics and disasters, which undermined the economies of most Southern Africa's black reserves. They were also aware of existing contradictions between the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production in the reserves and the more permanent displacement of labour into the capitalist sector which fermented the desire of upward mobility in the mines, and corresponding resentment against the job colour bar.

In 1915 Thema was elected as general secretary of the South African Native Congress, and soon joined the Bantu Debating Union. Thema describes this group as full of patriotism and nationalism as they fought to resist in every possible way the oppression of the black race. Most of their lectures and essays dealt with African

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp.55-56 and 74.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.75.

leaders of the past: Moshoeshe, Shaka, Dingane, Sandile, Cetshwayo, Sekhukhune, Moroka, Ndlambe and Lobengula.

In 1916 the Debating Union entrusted to him the writing of a paper on King Dingane to be presented in one of their discussions. He commented on this exercise, 'In those days I was a rabid racialist, a radical writer who called a spade a spade'.<sup>6</sup> This paper was later delivered to an influential social gathering of Africans in Durban on the 16th December 1916. In his address he depicted the king as a 'great warrior and patriot'.<sup>7</sup> He went further than any other writer of the early 20th century in rehabilitating King Dingane's reputation. In his opening address he called Dingane a 'great man', a 'famous man' and as 'our noble ancestor'.<sup>8</sup> He conferred on Dingane the status of one of the foremost African freedom fighters who staunchly defended his people and land. Various themes underpinned his representation- including identity, nationalism, colonisation, equality, race and racism. He openly embraced African nationalism in this discourse:

I must congratulate the promoters of this function for having made the arrangement that on the eve of what is known in history as 'Dingane's Day' we should meet here to remind one another of the great deeds of our Ancestors who, like Romans of old, "faced fearful odds for the ashes of their fathers and the Temples of their Gods" and who for Bantu freedom "spared neither gold, nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life, in the brave days of the old".<sup>9</sup>

His 'historic sense' kept him aware of other societies that could be compared and contrasted with ours. He absolved King Dingane of any wrong doing by comparing him with other prominent 'European' leaders, and by selecting 'appropriate' epochs of European history. Moreover by adopting this position, Thema highlighted the way that history is a representation of the past in the present. According to him, King Dingane, in his very inhumanity belonged to a league of 'great white men' like Napoleon and Julius Caesar. To Thema, black people were not uniquely cruel, as cruelty and savagery knew no colourline or geographical boundaries and was common in all societies on earth. He challenged the existing viewpoint that

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Ibid.

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iLanga, 22 and 29 December 1916.

8

Ibid. (The full lecture is published in these editions of iLanga).

9

Ibid.

'European conquerors / land-grabbers' were inherently 'civilised' compared with Africans

It is evident at the outset that Dingane was ambitious, and of course ambition is often accompanied by cruelty. When Nebuchadnezzar's, the king of Babylon, became ambitious of making Babylon a great empire he did not hesitate to torture to death those who stood in his way. When Alexander the Great conquered the whole world of his time, he wept because there was no more country to add to his great empire and no human being to torture and kill. He had no conscientious scruples to destroy Thebes, the inhabitants of which he mercilessly slaughtered. The great Julius Caesar showed no mercy but inhuman cruelty to the inhabitants of Gaul after his conquest of that country. William the Conqueror kicked out of his way the Britons and deprived them of their land which he gave to his Norman followers. Philip II, of Spain, by his cruelty and tyranny, compelled the people of Netherlands to plunge themselves into a bloody struggle, which, although secured freedom for them, brought them misery and want. Napoleon Bonaparte devastated Europe for no other purpose than that of self-aggrandisement and to satisfy his ambition. These are some of the greatest men in the History of the World, and yet they are inseparably connected with cruelty. It is no wonder then that Dingane's ambition was closely associated with cruelty which sometimes amounted to inhumanity.<sup>10</sup>

In his autobiography he wrote that the history of the African people was often written with prejudice. There was nothing that was not severely criticised and stigmatised as cruel: the wars they fought against whites in defence of their country, were condemned as wars which were waged solely for plundering white farms. No good words were said about our rulers, they were as tyrants who ruled with iron rods'.<sup>11</sup> Selope Thema also considered King Dingane a patriot, and a founding father of African nationalism. He disputed the notion that the death of Piet Retief and party was an act of murder or an act of treachery but portrayed it rather as a positive strategy because 'national security' and land were at stake

'Like all great men he chose the latter course [kill Retief and party] and thus committed an act which in itself may be treachery and a serious crime but which was destined to save the Zulu nation from destruction and slavery... I hope your admiration of Dingane is not prompted by his merciless murder of the Emigrant Farmers, but by his patriotism'.<sup>12</sup>

Amplifying further, he notes:

Dingane is known in history as a treacherous savage who killed men to satisfy

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

his thirst for blood...But as to the meaning of treachery I am at sea, not that I think Dingane action was not treacherous but that all great men of nations and races have been inseparably associated with it under some form or other. The fact is where nations or races are concerned treachery must be resorted to. You will find in history that nations are only concerned with the safeguarding of their individual interests. Thus when Dingane ordered the slaughter of these unfortunate farmers, he did not consider their interests but those of the Zulu nation. There is no moral code recognised by nations in their relations with each other. The strong bullies the weak and annexes at its will [Germany, World War 1?]. The clever exploits and enslaves the ignorant. Treachery like war is justifiable where nations are concerned. We know that both Divine and Human Laws are strongly opposed to the killing of men, but the law of nations, in order to ensure 'national security, national interests, the preservation of the race etc., justifies war, murder and other treacherous acts.

Thema bestowed accolades on King Dingane as an astute, able and good leader who was neither self-centred or selfish. He claimed that the king fought for the 'freedom' and 'liberty' of all Africans by defending his sovereign state. King Dingane, as a patriot, safeguarded national interests at all costs for he had the interest of his subjects at heart. He fought for the preservation of the black race and black peoples and the land, as Thema put it, of 'the Bantu tribes north of the Orange River', against the tyranny of white people in general. By using the past to comprehend the present, he appropriated Dingane to understand the social, economic and political plights of the oppressed African majority, of which he was a member. Here the past is explained through the interpretation of the historical evidence but this is based on the interests of Thema, and the context in which history is produced.

Thema's radical stance during the **first world war** years was influenced by a variety of factors. In part, his 1916 viewpoint presented on behalf of the Debating Union, was a reaction to the now dominant Afrikaner nationalist orthodoxy and propaganda disseminated by Gustav Preller in Afrikaner newspapers and cultural circles, particular during the celebration of "Dingaan's Day". This anti-King Dingane view also permeated the various best selling historical texts that Preller published on the voortrekkers, including Piet Retief.

Other factors also radicalised African intellectuals and black politics during the war years. The obvious ones, which Thema's life history highlights, were the growing impoverishment of the reserves ( whether it is explained in terms of structural

underdevelopment or merely contingent effects of droughts); the growth of a concentrated black proletariat as a result of the secondary industrialisation promoted by the war; the concomitant shortage of housing and the emergence of the teeming urban slums; the steep rising cost of living during the war and the simultaneous pegging of black wages at pre-first world war years levels; various direct and indirect taxation on African earnings, and the continued inflexibility of the job colour bar.<sup>13</sup>

To explain the apparent changes in the lives of black intellectuals like Thema, Bonner, among others, suggests that the black petty bourgeoisie, lying between the two dominant relations of production, tended to swing according to pressures on it by the two contending classes. During the years 1916-1920 one is confronted by a radicalised petty bourgeoisie whose ideology was clearly articulated with that of the working class, a middle section which vacillated continually and experienced an identity crisis in response to the contradictory pulls of capital, state and black working class, and the more established, affluent, reactionary section who sustained, with occasional deviations, an ideology articulated with that of the ruling class. Each of these factors appear to have played part in neutralising the petty bourgeoisie and deradicalised this group as the 1920s wore on.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1930s, as one of the editors of The Bantu World, Thema pursued his interest in King Dingane. Although the 1930s articles remained nationalistic in approach, they were milder than his earlier articles, and conformed to the 'official' ANC position on the commemoration of 'Dingaan's Day' articulated by leaders of the ANC and described in the last chapter. Thema now tacitly regarded King Dingane as a 'cruel barbarian' as he adopted a deterministic approach to history. By 1933 he seemed to agree with most members of the educated African elite that the white men brought 'civilisation' the South African shores for which Africans should be thankful. He pointed out, however, that Mpande played a significant role in the defeat of Dingane and should be honoured for his role. He also highlighted the role played by other black

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<sup>13</sup> P. Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920', in Marks, S and Rathbone, R (eds) Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African class formation, culture and consciousness: 1870-1930, Longman, London, 1982, Chapter 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See also H. Bradford, A Taste of Freedom, Chapter 3 concerning the discussion on the African petty bourgeoisie in the 1920s.

people who helped the voortrekkers in their struggles against Dingane and thus suggested that their help should be acknowledged. He further suggested that 16 December should be purged of racism and racist elements and become a '**Day of Reconciliation**' (as it has become since April 1994) between blacks and whites. In short he argued that we can use history or look at the past for the solutions of current problems, and to plan for the future:

True, let us remember the past with its cruelties but not to perpetuate the spirit which prompted the commission of these cruelties... The message of Dingaan's Day to the people of South Africa both white and black, is 'avoid all that brings about conflict, misery and suffering. Work together in harmony for good of your common country and for civilisation you have established on this southern end of the African continent'.<sup>15</sup>

By proposing that the 16th of December be perceived as a 'Day of Reconciliation', Thema was championing a particular brand of historical discourse. The major question was not whether history should be patriotic but on what form of patriotism should it be adopted: should it be a story of achievement, advancement, enlightenment? Or should it emphasise a dark side - exploitation, suffering, poverty? Although he acknowledged the latter as relevant he seemed to prefer the former approach as a way forward. As patriots, he argued, black South Africans should focus on achievements, advances, civilisation and enlightenment for a better future. Hence his idea of Patriotic History saw history as progress. For this reason, Thema's idea of Patriotic History accepted that the Union of South Africa, as a member of 'modern nations', should use history to build a sense of national identity by structuring an image of a common past designed to cement group cohesion and build solidarity. Accordingly it undermined what King Dingane stood for, namely, 'uncivilised' traditional hierarchy.

Thema explained his change in attitude as an outcome of a meeting held in 1921 with the Education Commission from the United States sent by the Phelps Stokes Foundation and consisting of Drs Jesse-Jones, Hallenbeck and Aggrey. He was to

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<sup>15</sup> R. V. Selope-Thema, 'The celebration of Dingane must be purged of racialism', *The Bantu World*, 17/12/1932. See also the editorial on December 16, 1933, titled 'The meaning of Dingaan's Day'.

comment that 'they brought to this country the gospel of inter-racial goodwill'.<sup>16</sup> He was profoundly impressed that they represented 'the three dominant races of South Africa', Africans, Afrikaners and the English. Thema claimed that Dr Aggrey, as an African-American leader, advised and influenced Africans to work with their white counterparts.

So when an informal meeting between certain prominent Europeans and Bantu leaders took place at the Tin Temple; I attended and actually voted in favour of the establishment of what is known as Joint Council of Europeans and Africans. That night I discovered that the white man was human and not all wrong... It was an opportunity to purify ourselves.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the commentary and editorials found in the Bantu World,<sup>18</sup> (the paper that Thema established with two white men- D.G. Pare and Izaak le Grange in 1932) during the 1930s and **the second world war** years were similar to the 'new' Selo-pe-Thema viewpoint. They interpreted the past according to the idea of progress hoping that the moral and material improvement of society can be based on identifying the mistakes of the past, to avoid them in future.

There are additional reasons that can be provided to explain Thema's changing perceptions. An important reason was the decline of working class agitation from 1921 as deflation and unemployment set in. The petty bourgeois's experience of shared oppression were experienced differentially by the petty bourgeoisie, providing scope for reformist initiatives to detach them from a broader-cross alliance.<sup>19</sup> This is best exemplified by Selo-pe Thema's reformist initiative of becoming a member of the Joint Councils. Lamenting the changes in Thema's life, Jordan Ngubane was to write a grudgingly positive tribute in 1946:

To most people he is and rightly too a retiring intellectual giant, who spans the gap between our immediate past and our present... His writing today certainly reveal very little of the brilliant journalist who made and pull down Congress Presidents for a quarter of century. They have lost their virility, nationalistic force and are not, one might add, very convincing. He writes merely not to lag

<sup>16</sup> S. Thema, 'From cattle herder', p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.121.

<sup>18</sup> The Zulu, Sotho and Xhosa section of this newspaper ran features on Dingane. See the December 2nd and 23rd, 1933 issues. See also the Dingane section of the series 'The History of the Bantu' by 'Veritas', 25 November 1933. The writer of this series admitted that he depended on books by Theal and Cory, among others, for evidence.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



behind the main current he, among others, set in motion thirty years ago. There is neither disintegration nor decadence behind this; but a grievous national tragedy.... To me, Mr Thema is one of the greatest sons we, the African people, have produced.... he fought valiantly as Dingane's warriors at the battle of **Ncome**. When the fortunes of political war changed, he did not lose faith in the cause he had given life to advance, he laid down the old weapons, put on new armour even if some people did not like it - employed some new action to hold the fort.<sup>20</sup>

In this somewhat analogous tribute Ngubane captures key features of Thema, of inter-war African nationalism on the Rand, and of its perception of the African past. This was a nationalism imbued with mission christianity and its qualified racial tolerance. It was also a nationalism that recognised that it had lost the war of arms and had no option but to use the weapons of reasoned argument. It was a nationalism distinguished by high intellectual distinction and other political disempowerment. It was a nationalism and world that the likes of Herbert Dhlomo found impossible to accept or inhabit.

### **1.1 Herbert Dhlomo and King Dingane 'the assertive Patriot'.**

Another prominent nationalist writer who, like the young and radical Thema, maintained an unwavering and uncompromising pro-Dingane stance, was Herbert Dhlomo, the younger brother of Rolfe. He is a figure of great interest;<sup>21</sup> a playwright, journalist, author and power broker. He was born in 1905 in the village of Siyama near Pietermaritzburg. In the 1930s, he was appointed to the staff of the Bantu World and later in the 1940s he joined the editorial staff of iLanga laseNatali where he worked with his elder brother.

Herbert's reconstruction of some traditional Zulu plays,<sup>22</sup> of which izibongo were

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<sup>20</sup> Jordan Ngubane, 'Three famous African Journalists I knew', R.V. Selope Thema, Inkundla yaBantu, Second Fortnight, July 1946.

<sup>21</sup> See T. Couzen, The New African: A study of the life and work of H.I. E. Dhlomo, Johannesburg, 1985; T. Couzen and N. Visser, eds., H.I.E. Dhlomo: Collected Works, Johannesburg, 1985. He was widely respected and influential in the African community as an intellectual. To take one example-through his participation in the establishing of the Youth League of the African National Congress and through his decision to place iLanga squarely behind its policies, Dhlomo was instrumental in the rise to prominence and finally to power of Chief Albert Luthuli.

<sup>22</sup> In 1936 he completed the first script of his historical drama- uDingana, subsequent to this

alleged to be small remaining parts, was both creative and an exercise in writing an alternative, empowering history in the Union of South Africa. He traced the origins of African drama to the 'rituals' performed in 'pre-contact' times and argued that these dramas were 'national' and formed part of the social struggles of the community, particularly its desire to have much food, many children and to conquer in battle.<sup>23</sup> He argued that drama was a social art and 'bantu' society was social and communistic. Functions such as religious festivals, death rites, hunting and dancing ceremonies were in a way, the counterparts, the beginnings of a theatre. Here one could find 'models of dramatic expressions - some people joyful, others sad; now all were expectant and restless, anon all were happy and indifferent, according to the vagaries of Fate or the commands of the chiefs'. In these festivals the people freely used their powers of mimicry, emotion, gesticulation, simulation. All this made the 'tribal' African an accomplished performer. Dhlomo further argued that a life of oppression, uncertainty and varying shades of fortune had made the African a skilled actor

How often one hears people say the African is happy and carefree because he smiles - ignorant of the fact that behind those smiles and calm expression lie a rebellious soul, a restless mind, a bleeding heart, stupendous ambition, the highest aspirations, grim determination, a clear grasp of facts and situation, grim resolve, a will to live.<sup>24</sup>

In an article published in Bantu Studies in March 1939, Herbert informed his readers that the preservation of archaic traditional art-forms by grafting them into modern works was a crucial necessity, 'just like what scholars have done for Hebrew, Egyptian and Greek literature.'<sup>25</sup> He therefore deployed these traditional art-forms in the modern works of isiZulu literature. This is evident in the manuscripts of his popular historical drama / play on Dingane<sup>26</sup> written in 1936 and various articles

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script he further produced two more revised scripts. But only Dingana one and three are available in Killie Campbell Library. These scripts form part of his personal papers. All my quotes will be from the 1936 scripts.

<sup>23</sup> This paragraph is based largely on H. Dhlomo, 'Drama and the African', Literary Theory and Criticism of H. I. E. Dhlomo, N.W. Visser ed, English in Africa Vol 4, No 2 (1977), pp. 3-8 and is quoted **verbatim**. See also B. Peterson, 'The Black Bulls of H.I.E. Dhlomo: Ordering History out of nonsense', English in Africa, 18, No 1 (1991), p.28.

<sup>24</sup> H.I.E. Dhlomo, 'Drama and the African', p.4. See also 'Nature and Variety of Tribal Drama', pp.23-36.

<sup>25</sup> See H. Dhlomo, 'Nature and variety of tribal drama', in N. Visser, ed, H.I.E. Dhlomo literary theory and criticism, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> For the scripts of the plays see the H. Dhlomo papers, KCM 8281/2, File 4, See also B.

published in iLanga laseNatali.<sup>27</sup>

After a stint with the Bantu World in the 1930s Herbert went back to Durban as an assistant editor to join his elder brother Rolfes-the then editor of iLanga (in the early forties). Rolfes was four years older than Herbert and somewhat more conservative politically. Herbert was more radical and was associated with the formation of the ANC Youth League, whilst the older brother was a stalwart of the main movement. Writing in the 1930s and 1940s the younger Dhlomo perceived King Dingane as a hero and a leader with a vision as he led the struggle against the tyranny of the white settlers who wanted to usurp the land that belonged to Africans. He chose to represent Dingane in a historical drama for populist reasons. He believed that 'Drama reaches the masses. Even people who are not well educated can appreciate dramatic representation'.<sup>28</sup> He further argued that modern drama was not a mere emotional entertainment but a source of ideas, a cultural and educational centre, an agency for propaganda, a social institution and literature.<sup>29</sup> Herbert Dhlomo's 'rehabilitation' project on King Dingane can thus be interpreted as a consolidation of the 'new era' in which he believed.

Dhlomo's project(s) on King Dingane was an empowering, overtly nationalistic enterprise - reclaiming parts of the past, ancestors and historical heroes which had been disregarded by the dominant white culture, indoctrination and ideology. He argued that 'we want African playwrights who will dramatise and expound a philosophy of our history. We want dramatic representations of African Oppression, Emancipation and Evolution'.<sup>30</sup> This project addressed itself to the continuities and divergence between the past and present. Herbert Dhlomo acknowledged that the

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Peterson, 'The Black Bulls'.  
<sup>27</sup> After a stint with the Bantu World in the 1930s he went back to Durban to join his elder brother Rolfes-the then editor of iLanga as an assistant editor in the early forties. They wrote the entire paper between the two of them. The two brothers developed somewhat differently. Rolf was four years older than Herbert and became somewhat more conservative politically. Herbert was more radical and was associated with the formation of the ANC Youth League whilst the older brother was a stalwart of the main movement. T. Couzens, 'The continuity of black literature in South Africa before 1950, English in Africa p.14.

<sup>28</sup> See. H. Dhlomo, 'Drama and the African', p.6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> See H. Dhlomo, 'Why study tribal drama forms?', p. 40.

African dramatist could not delve into the past without first grasping the present.<sup>31</sup> He postulated that black artists should not 'discard the great virgin fertile fields of our Tribal heroes, Kings and gods, our rich mythology, our great and glorious scenery'.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, Herbert believed that the task of the educated African like him was a great one. He had to interpret African culture to the world, graft the old to the new, lead his people, be the interpreter between black and white. On him lay the burden to prove that the African is as good as anyone else in all walks of life.<sup>33</sup> To do this he had to de-emphasise the negative images of King Dingane and create a new image of a good king (as 'the new African') who battled against the oppression of Africans by whites and fought for their emancipation by engaging the white settlers in various military conflicts. To him the king represented the 'new Africa' as he was an assertive 'patriot'.

We can best describe Herbert's historical drama and articles as a critique of his brother's historical fiction, his beliefs and attitudes or as a counter-narrative on King Dingane. As we have seen, Rolfe, unlike Herbert, treated Dingane's reign, or role in history, as troublesome and was inclined to dismiss it as barbaric. Herbert completely disagreed with such demeaning and destructive judgements. This was realised in his representation of King Dingane in the play. Here Dingane was accorded the status of a martyr - a hero because of his resistance to white encroachment and his uncompromising attitude towards whites overall. Herbert Dhlomo's play revolved around the importance of unity between Africans if liberation were to be achieved. Strongly inferred as well is the rejection of any alliance between Africans and whites since the latter could not be relied upon.<sup>34</sup> He rejected the European's image of Africa and its inhabitants, an image that he believed was rooted in arrogance, ignorance, misunderstanding and prejudice

The European historian was handicapped by preconceived ideas and existing prejudices. He could not enter into the mind and the aspirations and the feelings of the black people of whom he wrote... In South Africa the activities of the great African geniuses and heroes such as Dingane, Moshoeshe, Shaka, Nongqause and many others are treated superficially and dismissed as barbaric.

<sup>31</sup> See H. Dhlomo, 'Drama and the African', p.7.

<sup>32</sup> *iLanga*, 10th April, 1943.

<sup>33</sup> 'Busy Bee', *iLanga*, 21 May, 1949.

<sup>34</sup> See B. Peterson, 'The black Bulls', pp.38 and 39.

The social, psychological, every day life of the people is shamefully neglected or misconstrued. Therefore constant research, frequent revision, open-mindedness and industry are required if we keep our historical facts up to date.<sup>35</sup>

He lambasted European historians for 'worshipping at the shrine of Colour and "Science" and for only succeeding in producing colourful and pseudo-scientific race doctrines for which they (were) prepared to lay (down) their lives'.<sup>36</sup> Dhlomo believed that behind our action stands a complex human mechanism. What one saw on the external screen of exterior human behaviour was but a shadow, a reflection which was ephemeral and deceitful. The real human drama lay deep in human fears and hopes, desires and inhibitions, thoughts and emotions.<sup>37</sup> In his view, this was the key to understanding King Dingane's actions towards the white invaders, a point which influenced the script that Dhlomo wrote on King Dingane.

What separated radical African Nationalists from conservative Zulu nationalists is their uncompromising if qualified support of the stance adopted by King Dingane towards white settlers in general. In the script of Dhlomo's historical drama, the king is depicted in subtle terms as a martyr who had to fight the threat posed by the sly land grabbers.<sup>38</sup> During an emergency meeting called by the king, Nzobo, one of the king's Prime Ministers succinctly noted:

Ndabezitha! I do not see clearly into this matter, this strange boer request for land. They speak as if when it is given to them the land will actually be theirs. They seem not to realise that the king holds the land in trust for the nation, for the great ancestors, for the generations to come, and that he may allot it to any person who in turn holds it for the nation.<sup>39</sup>

The famous and robust warrior Bongoza kaNgcobo's comment on the same issue were much in the same vein:

'Boers have one aim only - land and cattle, the very things that are the soul of our race. They have also come in great numbers like invaders. I smell dust, sister

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<sup>35</sup> H. Dhlomo, 'African Drama and Research', *Native Teachers' Journal*, xxviii, 1939, pp. 129-132.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> H. Dhlomo, 'uDingane', Dhlomo papers, KCM 8282, File 4, pp. 31-42. All the references to the play refer to the first script published in 1936.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.43.

of my father!<sup>40</sup>

to which the king responded:

'I will do what any other king would do. I mean that if the Boers are after land and power, I will resist them.'<sup>41</sup>

Herbert Dhlomo, Selope Thema and Petros Lamula's (in chapter 2) representations and appropriations of King Dingane questioned conventional depiction of colonial conquest and showed the importance of African resistance for liberation to be achieved. Nationalists like Dhlomo claimed that the events that led up to the Battle of 'Blood River' were based on suspicion and the fear of conquest by the Africans. Accordingly, the radical nationalists argued that King Dingane was intelligent enough to know that the voortrekkers enslaved, ill-treated and disregarded other peoples' cultural practices because they claimed to be a 'chosen' race in search of the 'promised land'.<sup>42</sup> Nzobo notes in the play 'they seek the very freedom and independence they are out to destroy among us! They seek freedom to enslave, independence to subjugate, honour to dishonour'.<sup>43</sup>

The 1940s witnessed a further change in Herbert Dhlomo's that coincided with the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944. During the day, after the inaugural meeting of the Natal Youth League branch he wrote an editorial in iLanga laseNatal entitled "Let Africans speak for themselves". He took up the old theme of criticising white 'experts' who monopolised African art and claimed to produce knowledge on behalf of Africans. This time he went further and argued that the idea of uBuntu proclaimed by Anton Lembede (the then leader of the Youth League and also together with Ngubane, his great friend) had become th the African philosophy of

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> See W.A. de Klerk, The Puritans in Africa: A story of Afrikanerdom., 1976.

<sup>43</sup> H. Dhlomo, 'uDingane', p. 32; Peterson, 'Black Bulls', and see also points 5 and 8 in Piet Retief's Manifesto in W.A. de Klerk, The Puritans in Africa. Point 5 reads as follows, 'We are resolved, wherever we go, that we will uphold the just principles of liberty; but, whilst we will take care no one shall be held in a state of slavery, it is our determination to maintain such regulations as may suppress crime, and preserve proper relations between master and servants.' Point 8 highlights their determination and arrogant intention to permanently settle in the interior with or without the permission of the rightful owners of the land, hence 'We purpose, in the course of our journey, and on arriving at the country in which we shall permanently reside, to make known to the native tribes our intentions, and our desire to live in peace and friendly intercourse with them.'

life. Herbert produced an ideology of art identical to that of the Youth League - which presumably partly determined the Leagues approach.<sup>44</sup> For too long, he contended, the image of King Dingane had been claimed by white intellectuals and 'foreign authorship', a group which stood outside the existential location, personal desire and social perspectives of the African intellectuals. As he put it,

The Africans always feel that the Europeans, no matter how qualified they are to express learned opinion on these subjects, do not and cannot reveal the Soul of the Africa. This can only be done by Africans themselves... only Africans themselves given opportunities and means enjoyed by European experts can reveal the soul of the African to the world.. the African whose Soul yearns to translate the glorious Past into the Present - the African who longs to reveal the cravings of his soul in creating - can only be discovered by himself.<sup>45</sup>

During the 1940s, Herbert, as iLanga laseNatali columnist 'Busy Bee', continued writing about King Dingane. He was by then on the editorial staff together with his elder brother, Rolfes. In an article written in February 1947 edition of iLanga, he argued that the production of history was a process of negotiation between evidence and interpretation where many questions were susceptible to a variety of conclusions. He stressed that there was more than one perspective concerning King Dingane's reign, and his article entitled the "Zulu Kings" deliberated this point:

European journalists are reaping a huge harvest by their articles on the Zulu kings. The subject seems to fascinate the European public judging by the number of articles that appear every now and again in the white Press. Dingane alone has a large body of literature written around his episode with the Trekkers. The old story is told repeatedly. The country has come to believe in it as told from this one point of view. But Africans have their own version of the great epic of the Zulu kings. They maintain that these men were not the brutes they were painted to have been. They were sane men fighting in defence of their country, their way of life, their principles. Africans have another story about the events that led to the death of Retief, for instance. And it is foolish to suppress their version of the story.... But the truth is that progeny will - for the Africans are writing down their version, and what is written will remain written.<sup>46</sup>

The younger Dhlomo postulated the need to engage in both historical and cultural retrieval and reconstruction, a process essential to African resistance and liberation. He, just like the radical Selope Thema - his mentor, therefore represented King

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<sup>44</sup> See Couzens, 'The New African', p.556.

<sup>45</sup> iLanga, 27 May 1944

<sup>46</sup> iLanga, February 22, 1947.

Dingane as one of the foremost freedom fighters and liberators and as a hero just like Napoleon and Hannibal. To a greater extent than any of his intellectual predecessors, he insisted it was a task only Africans could do. He wrote.

The task of interpreting South African history still remains to be done. It will be done by and when African writers and thinkers give their point of view. Historical events mean nothing and can be distorted unless they are given the right interpretation. So far it has been the European who has been the interpreter. And conditions being what they are in the country - the traditional attitudes and stereotypes, the prejudices and the philosophy of inferior and superior races - it is no wonder that Europeans have given us one sided view of history. Take the story of Dingana for example. Here is a mighty epic of nationalism. Dingana stood for African nationalism and for an African Empire that his illustrious brother, Shaka, had built. He did what any other person in his position would have done - to fight the forces of invasion and disruption... To anyone who knows the facts there was no treachery at all. It was a question of self-preservation. Dingana's reign in many ways shows the Zulus at the height of their tribal culture. Zulu decorative art was seen in the great, immaculately clean huts whose pillars were decorated with beads. Zulu cattle were divided according to their colour and horn-formation schemes. So were shields. Zulu architecture had devised an underground system of shelter. Mgungundlovu, the capital, was a great city with underground houses, a public swimming pool, civic and military industrial (iron foundries, shield, clay and grass designers etc.) and residential centres. Zulu folk poetry had reached its acme in Magolwana kaMakatini... Dingana was defeated and he had his weaknesses. But so were Napoleon, Hannibal, and other great soldiers. And that does not mean they were not heroes.<sup>47</sup>

The public responded with many letters, both dissenting and appreciative of the King. Walter B. Nhlapho of Johannesburg, taking a pro-Shakan stance, vilified and dismissed Dingane. His sentiments were similar to Rolfe's Dhlomo's position and it ended declaring:

To the Africans, Dingane's Day marks the first step of the downfall of the greatest empire that might have served Bantus better. This day marked the beginning of oppression, segregation and other woes - the lot of a defeated people'.<sup>48</sup>

By contrast, 'Zulu Macansi' (Jordan Ngubane) writing in Inkundhla yaBantu<sup>49</sup> was critical of 'traitors' like Nhlapho as he cogently extolled the greatness of King Dingane. Elsewhere, "X" (H. Dhlomo) writing in the same issue of iLanga as Nhlapho

<sup>47</sup> iLanga, December, 13, 1947.

<sup>48</sup> iLanga, December 16, 1944.

<sup>49</sup> Inkundhla yaBantu, 30/12/1944, see next section on Ngubane.



doubted all that had been written and said about the king by white writers and historians and cried, 'but, we repeat, who shall say he knows what really took place in those far - off tumultuous times?'<sup>50</sup>.

An obvious question to ask is why Herbert's depiction of King Dingane was so much at variance that of his brother Rolfes. Only four years separated them and both experienced the tutelage of Dube and Thema, yet each subscribed to radically different views. There is no conclusive answer to this question, but it is possible that in addition to differences in individual personalities, the slight difference in age, led them to respond differently to a transitional decade in South African politics and society. The decade 1925-1935 witnessed the accession of the Pact government implementation of the civilised labour policies which progressively squeezed educated Africans out of many spheres of white collar and self-employment, accelerated dispossessions in white farming areas and the ravages of economic depression. The new nationalist government under J Hertzog elected on a 'black peril' platform could hardly be accused in general of adopting a kid glove approach to "native agitators". It was obsessed at this time not only, with ICU, but with increased activities of the communists and the radicalisation of the ANC under Gumede. The mid 1930 African intellectuals, who had witnessed the passage of repressive legislation and brutal crushing of black protest were in no mood for uncritical reliance on the Joint Council of Europeans and Africans and other 'friends of the natives' as Herbert's brand of radicalism highlights.

It is important to recognise that radical nationalist like Herbert Dhlomo and Petros Lamula<sup>51</sup> did not have a one dimensional view of King Dingane. Like the conservative Zulu nationalists, such as John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo among others, they disagreed with the manner in which he usurped the crown from King Shaka.<sup>52</sup> They criticised what they perceived as the wanton and senseless killing of his siblings. Herbert Dhlomo in particular blamed the king's paternal aunt, Princess Mnkabayi, as the chief conspirator who had too much power and influence within the

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<sup>50</sup> *iLanga*, December, 16, 1944.

<sup>51</sup> See P. Lamula, *uZulu kaMalandela*, p.59.

<sup>52</sup> On this issue see the oral traditions already discussed in chapter 1.

Zulu royal house. In one of Dhlomo's scenes, Mnkabayi, after the killing of King Shaka, advises Dingane:

You are not wise enough if your hut still remains unguarded and you can be overheard. What is good and where is safety when Mhlangana is dissatisfied and waiting to plot against you; when Mbopha acts suspiciously, and when Jeqe has not been found? Need I say more? Attend to that - then you might speak of safety. Yet heed my warning. Kingship and greatness do not go with safety... Mhlangana goes to the river to bathe tomorrow morning. At the same time I'll send Mbopha (king Shaka's right hand man who sold him out) on a trifling errand - alone - to Mpande. I hope you will see to it that the errand and the bathing are not accomplished.<sup>53</sup>

From this passage one gets the impression that King Dingane was to some extent a weakling who was easily manipulated and too reliant on his paternal aunt and his advisors like Nzobo and Dambuza. It is also noteworthy that Herbert Dhlomo's play uses a major theme of John Dube's historical novel as a sub-theme. This theme is based on Shaka's alleged curse and prophecy, supposedly made on the day he was murdered.<sup>54</sup>

Herbert Dhlomo's intention in writing the play was to try and make sense of his own life as an uprooted black person in a country ruled by a white minority. He fought fiercely against the differential rate of taxation for blacks. He was critical of attempts to include the Protectorates in the Union, and deplored contemporary efforts at repression or segregation. He condemned the effects of the 1913 Land Act in which 'whole families were swept out of existence; homesteads were ruined; social and tribal fabrics were torn to fragments' and inveighed against the general political system which made of blacks 'vagabonds and castaways in the land of their fathers'. Herbert Dhlomo believed that a "new era" was at hand and progress was evolutionary and inevitable. He accepted the model that Africa was emerging from "the sleep of ages" and that "the old, dark continent" had been transformed into a "new, glorious Africa of today". He did not totally reject the old world, particularly the 'pre-contact'

<sup>53</sup> H. Dhlomo, 'uDingana', Scene 3, p. 24 and 25.

<sup>54</sup> Dhlomo was influenced by John Dube's historical novel *Jeqe, Insila kaShaka*. See the script on 'Dingana' Scene 2 and Scene 9. See also P. Lamula, *uZulu kaMalandela*, pp.53-54. See the discussion of Dube's novel in the present writer's manuscript, 'Contesting images of Dingane kaSenzangakhona'.

world, believing that it must be preserved where it is not antagonistic to progress.<sup>55</sup>

## **2. Jordaan Ngubane, African Nationalism, ANC Youth League ideology and King Dingane - "the greatest man the Zulu ever produced".<sup>56</sup>**

During 1930s and 40s era Jordan Ngubane developed an historical paradigm diametrically opposed to the deradicalised Thema, Dube and R. Dhlomo as far as race relations and reconciliation with whites were concerned. He disagreed with this group's belief and support of the view that the 16th of December commemorations were celebrating the overthrow of barbarism. Ngubane's unwavering attitude to King Dingane echoed Herbert Dhlomo's radical 1930s stance. Unlike Dube and the elder Dhlomo, Ngubane's and Herbert's position personified a fractured national identity. Ngubane saw historical discourse as subjective, confrontational and devoid of consensus. This permeated the many articles he wrote in various newspapers, including Inkundla yaBantu, which he edited in the 1940s.

Influential and controversial as a politician and journalist, Ngubane played an active role in Natal and national politics for nearly two decades. In the late 1940s he helped found the African National Congress Youth League, and in the late 1950s he became the highest ranking African in the Liberal Party. He was born in 1917 near Ladysmith in Natal, the son of a policeman. After receiving his early education in Ladysmith, he entered Adams College in 1933 where he became friends with Anton Lembede. On graduating from Adams in 1937, Ngubane was offered the assistant editorship of John Dube's newspaper iLanga lase Natal. From that beginning, he established a distinguished career in journalism.

Ngubane moved to Johannesburg in the early 1940s. There, while working with Selope Thema on the Bantu World, Ngubane's early interest in politics intensified. He renewed his acquaintance with Lembede and through the latter met A.P. Mda. The three subsequently became political architects of the Youth League's emerging ideology, and Ngubane co-authored with Lembede the Congress Youth League Manifesto in 1944. Later that year he returned to Natal to take up editorship<sup>57</sup> of

<sup>55</sup> This paragraph is largely based on T. Couzens, 'The new African: Herbert Dhlomo and black South African Literature in English', Ph.D thesis, Wits University, 1980, pp.314-317.

<sup>56</sup> Statement by Ngubane, iLanga, 30/12/1944.

<sup>57</sup> He succeeded Govan Mbeki, among others.

Inkundla yaBantu, the country's only newspaper owned entirely by Africans. He made this paper the country's leading forum for the expression of African political opinion and African nationalism.<sup>58</sup> Through Ngubane's political portraits of African leaders in Inkundla yaBantu and Drum magazines in the early 1950s,<sup>59</sup> Masilela believes that Ngubane was defining the New African political intellectual as an African Nationalist.<sup>60</sup> Elsewhere A.P. Mda, gave similar accolades to Ngubane and emphasised the fact that 'the intellectual formidableness of Ngubane comes from his combining and synthesising four critical positions: political analyst, scholar, thinker and first rate journalist'.<sup>61</sup>

We can also locate Ngubane's radical nationalism in his earlier days as the of Inkundhla yaBantu. Some of this newspaper's editorials and features 'viciously' attacked the role in politics of the educated African elite who were deemed of selling out the African dream of freedom from white rule and domination. For example in he chastised Z.K. Mathews and his peers for daring to oppose the ideology of African Nationalism

'Public life has no little attraction to most of his clique, and even if it had they could never be prepared to walk the thorny and stony way of truth...the very fact of stressing highly educated leadership will be a brake to our progress for many years.'<sup>62</sup>

Regarding King Dingane, Ngubane's position was fundamentally opposed to that adopted by Dube-ites like Rolfe Dhlomo. His pro-King Dingane's stance is not surprising for he was a bosom friend of the latter's younger brother, H. Dhlomo.<sup>63</sup> Their appropriation of King Dingane as a positive symbol of African resistance against white domination and supremacy, permeate their viewpoints and perspectives. Ngubane's pro-King Dingane stance, was consistent throughout his lifetime. In the 1930s he expressed the opinion that the king 'had to choose between independence

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<sup>58</sup> This paragraph is based largely on Carter and Karis, From protest, Vol 2. p.115.

<sup>59</sup> Manoim, I., 'The Black Press 1945-1963: The growth of the black mass media and their role as ideological disseminators', masters dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1983; Switzer, L., South Africa's alternative press: Voices of protest, resistance, 1880s-1990s, Cambridge, 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Masilela, N, 'New African Intellectuals: Theorising a structure of Intellectual and Literary History: The central role of African newspapers', unpublished paper, nd.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid and A. P. Mda, 'Jordan Ngubane,' Drum, May 1954.

<sup>62</sup> Inkundla yaBantu, Nov. 1940.

<sup>63</sup> See chapter 2 on Dhlomo. They were also protégés of Thema

and slavery, and he chose the former'.<sup>64</sup> In the December 1944 issue of *iNkundla*, using the pseudonym 'Zulu Macansi', Ngubane commented positively about the image of the king and wrote that 'Dingane was one of the **greatest men** the Zulu ever produced',<sup>65</sup> and in the 1970s referred to him as King Dingane 'the Magnificent'.<sup>66</sup> In the December 1944 issue of *Inkundla yaBantu* he noticed

with great satisfaction, that Dingane is becoming a subject of interesting discussion among Africans - as witness some of the things written about him in a section of the Natal Press. Dingane was **one of the greatest men the Zulu ever produced**. Our so called thinkers are poisoned by dirty propaganda from prejudiced white pens which suggest Dingane was a treacherous beast in human form and these poisoned Africans yell with the whiteman that Dingane was an evil man. He was not of course... When Piet Retief came over to Mgungundhlovu he came armed to the teeth on all occasions. Could your readers tell me which head of State would tolerate a body of strangers fully armed, demanding land while at night they conduct exercises, in preparation for the encirclement of the capital... But as with Dingane, he merely came into an unfortunate set of circumstances, whose history forced him to act as he did.<sup>67</sup>

It is evident from this that Ngubane was conversant with existing oral traditions on King Dingane and the voortrekkers. Considerably later Ngubane reviewed his own intellectual quest in the following words

In my search for a satisfying vehicle through which I could tell at least part of the tragic story behind the vicious power struggle between African and the Afrikaner in my country, I eventually turned to the patterns of story-telling which my missionary teachers had condemned and rejected as heathen and barbaric. In the pages which follow I have adapted the *umlando* form of narrative as used by the ancient Zulus when they talked to themselves about themselves. *Umlando* was a vehicle for developing the collective wisdom or strength of the family, the clan or nation; it is the form of narrative the Zulus employed to translate into principles that *inkosi yinkosi ngabantu* and *injobo ithungelwa ebandla* (the king rules by the grace of the people, and that the collective wisdom of the citizen leads to the truth... The narrator or *umlandi* is a witness of history. As a rule, his authority rests on the fact that he was present at the critical moment when history took a new turn. His audience expect him to landa (narrate) what he knows and to do that according to rules cherished down

<sup>64</sup> Paper presented by a team of experts to the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and technology on the reinterpretation of the Battle of Blood River/Income. University of Zululand, 30/10, 1998, p.1. The experts who compiled this paper included among others, C. Hamilton, S. Maphalala and J. Laband.

<sup>65</sup> See *Inkundhla yaBantu*, December 1944 whereby he used the pseudonym 'Zulu Macansi'

<sup>66</sup> See the quote below

<sup>67</sup> *Inkundla yaBantu*, 30/12/1944

the centuries. But *umlandi* must not be confused with neither the European historian nor reporter. Where the historian and the reporter are supposedly objective and concern themselves with bare facts and where the historians seek to deal with events and their causes and effects, the *umlandi* is creatively subjective.<sup>68</sup>

On a different issue, and like Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo, Ngubane commented on the relationship between Kings Shaka and Dingane. Ngubane dismissed the assassination of King Shaka as common to other societies. He reached this conclusion by comparing the assassination of King Shaka to the murder of Julius Ceasar by Brutus. Ngubane disparaged King Shaka's diplomatic and accommodative policy towards white settlers as futile. He also referred to King Shaka as 'the Englishmen's best friend'. The poor treatment of King Shaka's diplomatic envoy, Sotobe, by the British settlers - representative of the British imperial crown in the Cape Colony - convinced Ngubane that whites subverted existing African polities. For Ngubane this was enough evidence for King Dingane to stop the rot and he condemned Piet Retief to death. As Ngubane remarked.

Before Dingane, Shaka had extended the hand of friendship to the whitemen, giving them the right of occupation of land around Bluff, but when he wanted to establish the hand of friendship with the King of England, the Englishmen who had received nothing but kindness from him betrayed him in the coldest manner possible. His envoy, Sotobe went as far as somewhere about Port Elizabeth where, Zulus say, he was arrested by the Governor as a Zulu spy and subjected to all forms of insults and humiliation. When this man returned to Zululand, he told this story to Dingane.<sup>69</sup>

In 1946 Ngubane's *Inkundla yaBantu* published Lembede's article on the 'Policy of the Congress Youth League'. This text vehemently castigated African intellectuals who dismissed Nationalism and African Nationalists as a group and power brokers in the political field. This critique drew heavily on Ngubane's 1944 article on King Dingane, which in similar veins denigrated colleagues poisoned by what he referred to as 'dirty propaganda from prejudiced white pens which suggested King Dingane was a treacherous beast in human form and an evil man'. Lembede, in words which had overtones of whites views of King Dingane insisted

The history of modern times is the history of nationalism. Nationalism has been tested in the people's struggles and the fires of battle and found to be the only effective weapon, the only antidote against foreign rule and modern

<sup>68</sup> J. Ngubane, *uShaba: The Hurtle to Blood River*, Washington, 1974.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

imperialism. It is for that reason that the great imperialistic powers feverishly endeavour with all their might to discourage and eradicate all nationalistic tendencies among their alien subjects (e.g. Africans) ; for that purpose huge and enormous sums of money are lavishly expended on propaganda against nationalism which is dubbed, designated or dismissed as 'narrow', 'barbarous', 'uncultured', 'devilish' etc. Some alien subjects (Africans) become dupes of this sinister propaganda and consequently become tools or instruments of imperialism for which great service they are highly praised, extolled and eulogised by the imperialistic power and showered with such epithets as 'cultured', 'progressive', 'broadminded...'

On heroes of the past - the policy document proposed that

Africans must honour, venerate and find inspiration from African heroes of the past: Shaka, Moshoeshe, Makana, Hintsa, Khama, Mzilikazi, Sekhukhuni, Sobhuza and many others .

As already mentioned, Ngubane's overtly nationalistic perspectives were influenced by the Youth League's basic position of African Nationalism. These stated, unflinchingly, that the starting point of African Nationalism was the historical or even pre-historical position. As a result, Africa has been and still was the "Blackman's Continent".<sup>70</sup> For this reason, and unlike Thema, Ngubane did not recognise the 16th of December as a 'Day Reconciliation' but as a day to claim the lost land and therefore a '**Day of Confrontation**'. In his 1970s historical fiction uShaba: The Hurtle to Blood River he discusses the viewpoint that

Africans prepare quietly for the moment of confrontation; the day of decision (December 16?) for which they have waited for more than three hundred years. In the view of most of them, the coming confrontation has a profounder significance than a mere clash of colour; it is a conflict of worlds; history is taking a new turn - the black South Africans prepare to enter the international community. The world of white man is at last on trial, the Africans say. It has been built on arrogance, larceny, lying and hatred for the African... The white man projected himself as a model of human perfection; he could plunder and rape and kill in the name of civilisation and Christ. The trail of iniquity stains the history of Europe and spilled out to Africa, the Americas and Asia. The Zulus say their land died when the white man stole it from them; its children cried out, mourning the death; their tears were the soft moisture which would one day summon to life the germ which will reactivate the land... for more than hundred years now, (amaZulu) have been a swearword in most white homes while their achievements were dragged in the mud. Their history could not be taught in their schools; to do that was treason, heathenism and communism all sandwiched into one. Zulu children were taught about Herodotus, Julius Ceasar, Metternich and Washington. What on earth, the Zulu protested, do we have to

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<sup>70</sup> Carter and Karis, From protest to challenge, Vol 2, p.327.

do with these white men? We want our children told about the revolution which Shaka the Great led; about the problems which forced **Dingane the Magnificent** to execute Piet Retief and his band of land-grabbers...<sup>71</sup>

Consequently for Ngubane, each side begrudgingly took up emotional arms and fought the 'Battle of Blood River' all over again. The Zulus and Afrikaners emotionally dug up the bones of their dead and bludgeoned each other's political skulls with them. They hurled defiance at each other, bombarded each other with the humiliations and glories of the past, gloated on each other's defeat and bared to winds the painful, bloodcurdling wounds which they cut into each other and stoke history's accumulated hatreds.<sup>72</sup> On these occasions, according to Ngubane, both sides put aside the callous master-servant relationships and treated each other as real human beings who could be very dangerous to each other. No compliments were paid in these exchanges, except obliquely in the forms of bitter denunciations and mutual insults.

In the 1940s, Ngubane's and Lembede's audience and ardent supporters in all probability included both the young Nelson Mandela and Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Impressed by Ngubane's power with the pen and Inkundla yaBantu's intellectual content and uncompromised political commitment to African Nationalism, Alfred B. Xuma, then President of the ANC, attempted to buy and transform the newspaper into an ideological organ of the ANC after Seme's paper, aBantu-Batho which had been the party's official organ had folded. Unfortunately he did not succeed. Xuma also began consulting with him on critical matters affecting the ANC. In turn, Ngubane brought H. Dhlomo with him into the inner confidential circle of the organisation. Xuma's respect of Ngubane may well have emerged from his reading of his critical appraisal of D. Jabavu's All African Convention and P. Mosaka's African Democratic Party, in Inkundhla yaBantu of January 17, 1944.<sup>73</sup> The success of Dhlomo and Ngubane in participating in the defeat of Champion and subsequent triumph of Albert Luthuli, as well as assuring the hegemony of African Nationalism of the Youth League against Communism within the ranks of the ANC, must have confirmed this belief.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Ngubane, uShaba, pp.10-11

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.12. The next two paragraphs is based largely on Ngubane, uShaba.

<sup>73</sup> Inkundla yaBantu, Jan. and Feb. 1941.

<sup>74</sup> This paragraph is based on Masilela, 'New African Intellectuals'.



Ngubane and his version of the African past represented from the new wave of African nationalism. This is much clear from Inkundla yaBantu editorial of January 1942 titled "Marching Youth". Here the old guard of the ANC are dismissed as 'old men of Victorian liberalism sadly lacking in the full appreciation of the dangers of dealing with forces of modern power'<sup>75</sup> To remedy these grave circumstances, the editor argued the fact that 'it is necessary, nay very urgent that the African youth must obtain greater control of the present moribund African National organisations, and turn them into working concerns'.

## CONCLUSION

Unlike the negative portrayal of King Dingane by the Dube-ites there was a sizeable number of African nationalists who perceived the King in positive, empowering imagery as one of the foremost African Nationalists by challenging white invaders. To some extent both the Thema and Herbert Dhlomo portrayals are to some degree ambiguous, Ngubane's stance is unflinchingly pro-King Dingane and thus as far as he was concerned, the king was a greatest man the Zulu ever produced. They also use existing and established oral traditions including their knowledge of world history and thus their comparative analysis of the reign of the king.

Where this chapter has focused on the production of history by the 'New African' intellectuals as journalists, novelists and men of letters like Selope Thema, Herbert Dhlomo and Jordan Ngubane. Their portrayals powerfully influenced and interacted with those of African academics including Bhambatha Vilakazi,<sup>76</sup> Sibusiso Nyembezi and Mazisi Kunene writing in the late 1930s, 40s and 50s. This again reinforces a major contention of this thesis that production of history amongst Africans people was multi-faceted and involved people from various backgrounds and classes.

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<sup>75</sup> Inkundla yaBantu, January 1942.

<sup>76</sup> On H. Dhlomo and B. Vilakazi, see also Bhekizizwe Peterson, 'Monarchs, Missionaries and the African Intellectuals: Redemption and Revolution in South African Theatre, 1900-1940, Phd, University of Witwatersrand, 1997.

## Postscript: The Silent Years

The African press played a critical and instructive role in the enunciation of particular images of King Dingane in the 1920s to the late 1940s. Like the various community halls used by the worker movement, the press represented public spheres, a liberated space where people such as Thema, Dhlomo and Ngubane through iLanga, Inkundla yaBantu and the Bantu World were able to say things regarding King Dingane and the commemoration of “Dingaan’s Day” publicly and without fear. But with the advent of the 1950s the black press, particularly Inkundla yaBantu and the Bantu World ceased to be in the forefront in the debates regarding the meaning of “Dingaan’s Day”. Inkundla ceased publication about five months before the launching of the Defiance Campaign in 1952 and thus a radical mouthpiece of African intellectual nationalist was lost. Thema as the editor of the Bantu World remained on the ANC national executive committee until 1949. Fearful of communist influence and opposed to co-operation with Indian militants, he became critical of the ANC, formed a splinter group called the Nationalist Minded Bloc and together with followers left congress in 1950. He refused to support the Defiance campaign and retired as editor of the Bantu World in 1952. Another voice representing intellectual nationalists lost. This again led to muted counter-commemorations of “Dingaan’s day” and the depoliticisation of African nationalist news texts. This press was subordinated to white control and commercialised during the 1950s. Entrepreneurs like Jim Bailey launched Drum and Golden City Post and the major Afrikaans language press groups aided by the state gained a monopoly over the black magazine and photo comics market. The Argus Company took full control of the Bantu World that was re-titled the World in 1956. It was re-launched as a daily tabloid modelled on London Daily Mirror.

The New Age,<sup>77</sup> a Congress Alliance mouthpiece that in 1954 became a successor to the Guardian was to some extent an exception. In 1955 it carried out an editorial on the December 16<sup>th</sup> holiday and dubbed this day as a 'Holiday for Racialists'. It declared that 'the Day of the Covenant was not a national celebration. It was essentially a celebration of the subjugation, dispossession and oppression of the African peoples, celebrated with the appropriate religious trappings, the institutions of

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<sup>77</sup> Switzer, South Africa's Alternative Press, pp.276-278.

white supremacy, and helping to perpetuate it through a blatant distortion of history'.<sup>78</sup> According to the New Age editorial, there could thus be no room for this sort of celebration in a free South Africa. On the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1958 issue of the New Age, Lionel Forman, a white lawyer and journalist, published an essay titled, 'Why did Dingane Kill Retief'.<sup>79</sup> It was critical analysis of the conventional viewpoint on King Dingane. He used, as the article posits, MacMillan's, Bantu, Boer and Briton, Bird's Annals of Natal, Gardner, Journey to the Zoolu Country, Skota's, African yearly register, Owen's Diaries, Mguni's Three Hundred years and Theal's The Boers in South Africa as his sources. In his conclusion, Forman argued, 'but just as there was nowhere a black man could go and be left in peace by the white man, so there was nowhere a Boer could go and be left in peace by the British. Within a few months of the establishment of the Boer Republic in Natal, reports reached London that there was valuable surface coal in the territory. At the same time awareness was growing of the value of Port Natal as a naval base. In 1842, after a short battle with the Boers, the British took over, for the Zulus nothing changed'. Seven Days later, the New Age of the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1958 published an article on 'Johannes Nkosi: Honour his Memory'. The article included a picture of Nkosi and concluded, 'the name of this young Communist leader will always be remembered and honoured by the liberatory movements'. Again, during the following year, in 1959, the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1959 issue of the New Age published an article on 'Blood River'. The article explained to the readers that December 16 is celebrated as one of the landmarks, if not the landmark, in the triumph of White civilisation in South Africa. It claimed that Retief and the Boers used trickery to get King Dingane to fit in with their plans of acquiring more and more land belonging to amaZulu. It was only when the king discovered what he intended doing to him after he had given them a grant of land that they attacked them. The Zulus won a series of extremely costly victories. The newspaper article continued, 'after that Dingane believed he had shown his superiority to the Boer-British alliance and that he could now go back and live unmolested, in peace in his own territory. But he was wrong. On December 16, 1838, the Boer-British front exploited Dingane's politeness, regrouped and killed 3000 Zulu soldiers'. The same

<sup>78</sup> New Age, December 1955 issue.

<sup>79</sup> This article was subsequently published in uMkhonto weSizwe newsletter, Dawn. It will be discussed in the next chapter.

article also reminded readers that they must 'also commemorate on Dingane's Day, December 16, the murder of Johannes Nkosi'.

Following the banning of the ANC and the PAC and their publishing organs any oppositional political voices were suppressed. It was left to scholars like Bhambatha Vilakazi, Sibusiso Nyembezi and Mazisi Kunene to fill the void, to carry out research and to produce African nationalist texts, including texts on King Dingane in the late 1940s and 50s. Until the publication of Kunene's seminal book on King Shaka in 1979 a period of 17 years elapsed between the time when Eliot Zondi wrote his book on Ukufa kukaShaka. This is the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### **African Academics and African Nationalism and the Image of King Dingane in the late 1930s to late 1950s.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on African academics' image of King Dingane. It analyses erstwhile African academics versions of history. They include B.W. Vilakazi's, S. Nyembezi's and Mazisi Kunene's perceptions and portrayals of the king between the late 1930s and the late 1950s. The chapter will also discuss the image of King Dingane as reflected in historical novel on King Shaka by Eliot Zondi, among others. The reason why African writers chose historical novels as vehicle to express their everyday experience was two-fold. First history enjoyed a disciplinary pre-eminence in South Africa. Secondly, African scholars by using historical novels bypassed restrictions censoring what African academics, artists and intellectuals articulated in more narrowly historical texts.<sup>1</sup>

#### **1. Bhambatha Wallet Vilakazi on King Dingane: citizenship as history.**

One of the academics who took an interest in the reign of King Dingane was the erudite Bhambatha Vilakazi. The New African intellectuals like the Dhlomo brothers influenced most of the African academics – and Vilakazi attributed his interest in pursuing academic endeavours by reading African newspapers

It is very interesting to study the trend of thought espoused by Native papers and sometimes to discover how editors (Dhlomo brothers, Thema etc..) hold together the minds of the writers of their papers... I have always studied the style of thought of this wonderful journal (I call it wonderful because it is an unsurpassed effort of a single-headed Native, edited and supported by the Natives and thus proving native capacity and genius when given a chance)...Then comes R.R.R. Dhlomo who has long patronised the paper and whose writings up to this day still hold good. One thing I like with this writer is that he is that he is by reading a novelist with an open eye to everything that happens round him. He is good in political reports and criticisms. There is one thing he has not done for the *iLanga*... his short stories have so far not been there published... now I can say the *iLanga* is dominated by the opinions of Mr Josiah Mapumulo... many a time have I envied his quotations and wished to turn a burglar to search his library of old books of history... His work should be continuous; he must pioneer for the journal that is a living symbol of black man's ability... We are now engaged in an age wherein we begin to want to know the why and wherefore of everything... let us observe for ourselves and examine all facts and find their laws, and try to express them in our own ways to meet the demands of our concepts within this changing Africa.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There exist historical novel on King Dingane published in other African languages, the first one is published in Lesotho in seSotho, see Hlalele, J. *Dingane* Lesotho, nd; see also the xiTsonga booklet Rikhotso, T.M. *Dingane: King of the Zulu*, Braamfontein, Sasavona, 1982 published locally. Both books need to be analysed separately in order to take into account the development of historical novels in both languages.

<sup>2</sup> B.W. Vilakazi, *iLanga*, 17 March 1933.

B.W. Vilakazi and other African academics relied completely on established oral traditions and archives in developing their perceptions of the king.. They interpreted variously the meaning of these traditions in which exercise they were influenced by existing circumstances at a particular time. A prime example of this was Vilakazi's ambiguity expressed by the positive images of the king in his 1930s journal article and the negative images of the king in his 1940s doctoral thesis.<sup>3</sup> On both occasions he used the established 19th century oral traditions to advance his viewpoints, suggesting that his views changed according to shifting historical and personal contexts.

Bhambatha Wallet Vilakazi<sup>4</sup> was born on the 6th of January 1906 of christian parents at Groutville Missionary Station. He attended St. Francis College at Marrianhill, where he obtained a teacher certificate in 1923. He began to teach at the age of seventeen. In the 1946, September 2<sup>nd</sup> fortnight 's edition of Inkundla yaBantu, Ngubane wrote the following tribute on Vilakazi's research efforts that would influence him in the upcoming struggle against Afrikaner Nationalism:

...at the time of the Bambata upheaval a boy was born at Groutville Station. Later he was known as Benedict Wallet Vilakazi. But his 'home name' as the Zulu saying is, was Bambata. Now, according to Zulu tradition, one's name shapes one character and destiny. However that may be, the boy Bambata was told not only the glorious saga of his namesake, but many other stirring historical and mythological stories of his people. Young Vilakazi, like most Missionary station children attended school as a matter of course. In those days education meant almost inevitably a teacher's course, a segregated inferior course improved by 'experts' on Education and African Affairs. Vilakazi followed tradition and became a teacher. At this time he was not aware of the divine smouldering fire in him that was to burn his soul out and give him fame and fortune. Like other young men of his day he delighted in acquiring a good physique, dressed well, played football, and coming from a musical family... he conducted choirs and played organ music. the changes came late when he was called to decide on two teaching posts offered... He decided on the rural post. It was the turning point - it was Ixopo - he was reborn. He began to take interest in private studies and oral traditions and his specialisation in African studies at University. Some people thought this foolish as the fashion then was to major in traditional' subjects such as English, History, Ethics<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> B. W. Vilakazi, 'Oral and written literature in Nguni'.

<sup>4</sup> See B. Peterson Ph.D. thesis on Vilakazi, 'Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals'.

<sup>5</sup> J. Ngubane, Inkundhla yaBantu, 'Three famous authors I knew-B.W. Vilakazi'; 'Imbongi yesizwe ilele, Dr Benedict Vilakazi', Inkundla yaBantu, April, First Fortnight, 1946.

By the 1930s and 40s Vilakazi was a fully-fledged 'teaching assistant' at the University of Witwatersrand Department of African Studies. He became the first African to lecture at a predominantly white university when he was appointed to his post in 1936. He was also among the first African academics to undertake research in African literature that placed amaZulu oral traditions at the centre. In 1945, in his path-breaking doctoral thesis on 'Oral and Written Literature in Nguni', Vilakazi challenged the stereotype that African oral traditions and *izibongo*, were inferior (as tools of analysis) to documents and the written word. He turned to the past to make sense of life in a divided society. He did this in order to democratise the production of (historical) knowledge against the background of political repression, and possibly domination by white academics, including liberal, settler, and Afrikaner nationalists historiographies. His maltreatment as 'teaching assistant' at Wits seemed, at first, to radicalise him. As an African 'teaching assistant', a scornful and demeaning term for qualified African lecturers. Vilakazi never received a full lectureship because he was of the 'wrong race', undermined, marginalised and ostracised at this predominantly white institution.<sup>6</sup> Vilakazi's appointment provoked a storm of criticism and controversy within the University and from the public. As a result, C.M. Doke, the Head of the Bantu Studies department at Wits commented that, 'I have to report that we have received several letters on the subject from political and other bodies and that I have had a conversation with Dr. H. Pirow, who asked to discuss the question as a representative old student'.<sup>7</sup> In order to remove various misunderstandings that had been voiced in the Press concerning the appointment of Vilakazi, Wits University clarified his conditions of employment as follows:

- (a) in regard to status: that this post of Language Assistant, decided upon by way of experiment, is not equivalent to the position of a Lecturer, either in status and privileges or in emolument.
  
- (b) in regard to authority and discipline: that all formal instruction in regular classes in which the Language Assistant is called upon to demonstrate, will be conducted by the Head of the department. Whilst the Language Assistant will also be available for giving informal assistance to students in the use of Zulu and Xhosa, no student will be compelled to avail himself for such assistance; nor will the Language Assistant have any disciplinary authority in virtue of his position over students who make use of this informal help.<sup>8</sup>

Vilakazi was one of the scholars who contributed an article for the 1938 centenary of 'Great Trek' at the request by the Institute of Race Relations. His article was titled 'Bantu views of the Great

<sup>6</sup> B. Peterson, 'Monarchs, Missionaries and Intellectuals', p.106.

<sup>7</sup> University of Witwatersrand. B.W. Vilakazi File Misce. C/17/35 on "Appointment of Native Language Assistant-Department of Bantu Studies".

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Misce.S/48/35.

Trek". This article was never published in the centenary, September 1938, edition of the Race Relations Journal because of its radical views on race-relations and citizenship. In this article, his views of King Dingane were diametrically opposed to that of the Dube-ites. Vilakazi characterised whites as invaders who had no inherent rights to citizenship as South Africa belonged to the indigenous African populations. He saw the arrival of the voortrekkers in the Zulu Kingdom as a movement driven by racism and imperialism. Consequently, Vilakazi at first, and like Ngubane, argued against reconciliation between the different races. He favoured confrontation instead.

there is no place for a black man in the Voortrekkers scheme save when the black man prefers to lose his self. The same spirit has coloured the whole political situation of South Africa so that any measures at suppressing the black man we ascribe them the Voortrekker spirit. Perhaps today the word Voortrekker has changed into "Afrikaner" and sometimes we say "Dutch", for everything adverse to Bantu progress and interest.<sup>9</sup>

Vilakazi contended that King Dingane was a ruler of a sovereign state recognised throughout 'Natal' and across the 'Drakensberg'. Citizens of the state had to respect his authority. Accordingly, 'any offences committed by foreign strangers (which included the voortrekkers) in these areas would be reported to him'.<sup>10</sup> When they invaded and unlawfully occupied present day Colenso and Weenen areas then occupied by the followers of Mchunu, the abasemaMbedwini and the scattered remnant of Qwabe, and proceeded to hunt both in places that were taboo and in forbidden season, these clans went to the king to complain against the unlawful intrusion of the aliens.<sup>11</sup>

To Vilakazi's forefathers the unwritten and existing Zulu national law permitted the voortrekkers to make their permanent homes south of the uThukela river and by this permission they had to remain loyal to the Zulu nation, and were admitted into the communion of amaZulu as honorary citizens. As far as Vilakazi was concerned, voortrekkers could not sell Zulu land or admit any other alien 'tribe' on to it. Their chiefs like Gert Maritz could always settle the minor land questions arising in localities. But the Zulu king would have the right to allow other 'tribes' to settle among the voortrekkers just as he wished. To Vilakazi, it was a privilege for the voortrekkers to use and live on Zulu land but not a cession of territory that belonged to what he referred to as the Zulu nation.<sup>12</sup> Here Vilakazi had in mind the kind of relationship spelled out by Socwatsha in an interview with Stuart about land rights. During arguments and discussions with peers he elaborated

In old days it was customary for very large kraals to be constructed. This was done for mutual protection against sudden attacks. These kraals were called amanxuluma. hence they were

<sup>9</sup> Vilakazi, 'Bantu views of the Great Trek', p.4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.6.



really villages. Thus people lived together in large numbers, and although the district was a small one it supported a large population. The district said to be formerly occupied by amaNgogoma, amaNyuswa, and amaQadi, which I know well, could not nowadays [in the 20th century] support all the members... When I argue with members of our tribes they point out that formerly there were no small kraals, there were these great amanxuluma... A feature of that Zulu government is that the abamnumzane living under a given chief all exercised property rights over the land they occupied so much that if a newcomer applies to live under the chief and gave him his alliance, the chief is obliged to make special arrangement with the particular headman on whose and main land wishes to live. the headman in question will object to accommodate the newcomer unless he submits and konza the headman himself... The land as a matter of fact, all belongs to the king, but the headman of each tribe has rights which in practice is respected. It is very rarely that a chief gives counter to his headman's wishes and forces a newcomer to live on a piece of land not already his own or nominally his own... there used to be serious quarrels about land and these will be referred to the king if people had got hurt. in course of enquiry, the king might ascertain that a headman acted as a dog in the manger, or as the king put it ulah! isihlangu sami na? Ati ikon' indoda at'ifika kumuntu itelw'umtvalo, ihlom'isihlango sayo, iti 'Ngetuleni' besekutiwa "Dhlula na?". Kungatiwa "etula" na "yakalapha" na. Kanti wena ungambula ingubo ngiyembetayo na? Ngoba izwi lakwaZulu ukuthi" amadoda ingubo yokwembatha". Abese uyaka njalo, ukuba sekupendula inkosi.<sup>13</sup>

Vilakazi mixed existing oral traditions to explain the conflict between King Dingane and the trekkers. Along with John Dube and R. Dhlomo before him, Vilakazi believed that King Dingane was haunted by King Shaka's 'prophecy' and that, 'the approach of white people in such numbers horrified him and in them he saw his death-warrant'.<sup>14</sup> Because of this, Vilakazi regarded King Dingane's reign as a 'rule of fear' as his reign lacked the dignity of kingship which transcends the king's person. Vilakazi blamed the clash between the king and Piet Retief on the latter's misunderstanding of universal rules, customs and traditions that governed the Zulu Royal Palace. He emphasised that the voortrekkers were treated with hospitality. However they were not allowed to enter the king's palace by any other gate save the main one and were required to leave all their weapons outside. On the first day they entered unwittingly with their weapons and guns and horses. They were then told the laws of amaZulu, which they had to observe as foreigners. However when drunk at night they forgot to use the main entrance. A further problem arose with the trekkers' horses. The horse was an animal that was feared since it had no horns and its hoofs were not cloven like those of the cattle. At night the voortrekkers horses were left unguarded so that they roamed about - a forbidden practice - for example, cattle were kept in their kraals at night. The king's bodyguards began to complain about the uncontrolled and insolent behaviour of the strangers and

<sup>13</sup> JSA, KCM 24221. The underlines are from the original text.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5, see Chapter 2 of the thesis on this theme.

even to suspect them of sorcery.<sup>15</sup> In her seminal book on Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine, Harriet Ngubane discusses the differences between a night and day sorcerer and says of the former:

The first type is a night sorcerer, who in many respects approximates to the conventional concept of a witch. (Ama)Zulu believe that a sorcerer was “created or moulded with an evil heart” (Wabunjwa ngenhliziyo embi). The stereotype is as follows: He harms people for no apparent reasons. He keeps baboons as familiars. When he visits homesteads at night to perform his evil acts, he rides naked on these baboons, facing backwards. Because he is thoroughly evil-hearted, on such nocturnal visits he also scatters medicines along pathways to harm anyone who may pass by. He is a danger to the community at large and is feared....<sup>16</sup>

The earliest tradition of comparing the voortrekkers to witches or night sorcerers is an old tradition that was first deployed in Izindatyana zaBantu, first published in 1859. It was also repeated in the James Stuart Archives in the early 20th century by Meshack Ngidi.

In the 1938 journal article, Bhambatha Vilakazi argued that when the amabutho sang in resonant voices a war song he termed ‘The song of Blood and Cruelty’ (to be discussed later in the section) and slowly confronted what he referred to as ‘listless voortrekkers in the big arena of the Zulu Royal Kraal-uMgungundlovu’, they were doing all that for the broader community of Africans, defending their land (as rightful owners, citizens) against foreign invaders. Hence, his notion of citizenship was exclusive, Vilakazi echoed Emerson when he wrote, “A blow was struck for us by King Dingane as we ourselves in that place would have done or applauded”.<sup>17</sup> Vilakazi without compassion and in contrast to the Dube-ites, proclaimed that this ‘kind of undisciplined activity was mainly responsible for the massacre of Retief and his followers’.<sup>18</sup> Hence to Vilakazi, the history of South African race relations was one of confrontation not reconciliation or striving for consensus. Bhekizizwe Peterson argues that in essence, Vilakazi contested the universal significance of the ‘Great Trek’ since the valorisation of Afrikaners as ‘God’s chosen children’ was predicted on the denial of the humanity and rights of Africans, including citizenship.

In the 1938 journal article, Vilakazi uses the past in order to understand the present. Simultaneously and conversely his present concerns influence the ways in which he looks at the past. He does this by arguing that South African blacks have paid the penalty in the Battle of ‘Blood River’, and a

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> H. Ngubane, Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine: An ethnography of health and disease in Nyuswa-Zulu thought, 1977, pp. 31-32.

<sup>17</sup> Vilakazi, ‘Bantu views of the Great Trek’, p. 7. From Peterson we have the full quote which Vilakazi cited from Emerson’s “Essay on History”, it reads as follows, “we sympathise in the great moments of history, in the great discoveries, the great resistance, the great posterities of men, because the law was found, or that blow was struck for us, as we ourselves in that place would have done or applauded”, See Peterson, ‘Monarchs, Missionaries’, p. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

heavy one too, for even to that day, particular on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, they still suffered for the events on whose issues they had no controlling hand.<sup>19</sup> The defeat at 'Blood River' ushered in the subjugation of black people under white rule, imperialism, and the scramble for Africa and its colonisation;

every year on Dec.16th Dingaan's Day there are demonstrations in South Africa, showing the prowess of the white man over the black man. We are told that this is a holiday, a day of worship.... We know that the Voortrekkers have done very little or nothing for the Bantu in South Africa. They cannot take up a stand and pride themselves over our country as the purveyors of civilisation in Africa. We know that other bodies came along with altruistic and philanthropic motives at the background for African penetration. We know too that there have come other bodies with the dominant motives of predatory profits. Germany occupied East and West African areas for their minerals, diamonds and stock raising potentialities. France took North Africa with her eyes upon zinc, iron, and agricultural lands. Belgium seized the Congo for its rubber and ivory. And Britain seized upon Egypt and the Sudan for their cotton and minerals, and occasion for the seizure of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal was furnished by diamond fields and the gold. The interpretation of the word "Voortrekkers" today has finally changed in a Bantu-man's mind. It means all those who prey upon and exploit us because of our ignorance and lack of opportunities to advance.<sup>20</sup>

Vilakazi denounced all those who viciously and physically attacked Africans during December 16 as cowards who were as ignorant as the voortrekkers of the past. Hence, he accused white South Africans whom he described as 'Voortrekkers of today' as being intellectually dishonest in supporting racist laws that said, 'Bantu must be displaced by their conquerors, driven from their reproductive soils to inhospitable swamps, or debased in compounds near cities to bear the burdens of the western civilisation'.<sup>21</sup> He argued that South Africa had to find a policy of living together where there would be no place for racial discrimination against the blacks and had to wrestle for universal brotherhood. Vilakazi acknowledged that South Africa had capable leaders in Smuts and Hofmeyr, among others, who could drive this process through. He further contended that a strong African leader was needed to promote the cause of African Nationalism as General Hertzog did for Afrikaner Nationalism. Additionally, this leadership 'must be a leadership which is not unmindful of the genuine needs and just demands of every man and woman in this sub-continent of ours'.<sup>22</sup>

By the time Vilakazi wrote his 1946 Doctoral thesis on King Dingane, he had completely changed his pro-Dingane stance. One can attribute the changing stances to the fact that Vilakazi, as an academic, had to be rigorous and thorough when interrogating conflicting historical evidence. One

<sup>19</sup> Vilakazi, 'Bantu view of the Great Trek', p.7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* Probably these included his peers like L. Fouche who submitted articles to the journal and this was subsequently published. L. Fouche, 'The Historical setting of the Great Trek', *Race Relations*, November 1938, p.71.

<sup>21</sup> Vilakazi, 'Bantu view of the Great Trek', p.8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

could also sense the difficulties for Vilakazi maintaining an anti-‘Great Trek’ stance as influential white academics at Wits supported this trek to the hilt. This was apparent in articles solicited by the South African Institute of Race Relation, and subsequently published in their journal dedicated to centenary celebrations of the ‘Great Trek’. For example, Leo Fouche, a Professor of History and Vilakazi’s colleague at Wits University, believed the voortrekkers defeat of King Dingane’s army at iNcome, was a triumph

over their cruel enemy. Blood River was clearly the climax... They had no sooner destroyed the Zulu menace, than out of a hundred hidden kloof and crannies, thousands of Natives - the broken remnants of tribes destroyed by the Zulu tyrants - came running to them, to share the peace and security which the Whites had bought. The Trekkers could not wash their hands of the Native. They had repudiated him as a brother. They would not be his keepers. Nevertheless there he was. Something had to be done with him. So the Trekkers decided to segregate their Natives.<sup>23</sup>

It was probably not coincidental that Vilakazi’s Wits University doctorate seemed to support the deradicalised Selope Thema’s concept of patriotic citizenship and reconciliation between Africans and whites. He now viewed King Dingane as an inverted image and against the stature of King Shaka. He extracted this view from oral traditions and izibongo

the real literature of people inspired by imagination and ecstasy is to be found. A people without a written literature would normally develop a laudable capacity for memory work, and where the test of this memory might be made is in listening to the praise poetry singer reciting line after line of verse, dealing with different phases of national history, as embodied in the exploits of kings and heroes.<sup>24</sup>

Vilakazi ranged far and wide in his pursuit of oral traditions and materials:

The investigation of izibongo and myth lore was not done in districts where the Nguni live under primitive conditions only, but the detribalised man in town was also studied. Durban offered fertile ground for the Zulu, Cape Town for the Xhosa, and Johannesburg, though the majority is Zulu among the Nguni tribes, offered a very good comparative study of both Zulu and Xhosa under contact with the Sotho tribes... I owe much to Mr C.J. Mpanza, secretary of the Zulu Society who placed the library of the Society at my disposal for use, and also introduced me to many chiefs of Natal and Zululand, to the Headman Daniel Vilakazi of Zululand and accompanied me to Chief Bokwe of the Mandlakazi, Amos kaMaseni Gumede who took me to uMthandeni, the Qwabe royal kraal, Mr A.B.C. Xaba who was the Headmaster of the Paulpietersburg Government School rendered me very valuable service among the abaQulusi of Mnkabayi. Mr Xaba is responsible for all records made, of the poetry of womenfolk.... I am indebted to the late S. Mqhayi for assistance concerning the Xhosa lore... William Somana and Edward Mthwana of Tsolo supplied me with most of the information concerning the Mpondomise. D. Mbanjwa of Ixopo organised my informants among the Baca... The headman of the Swazi Royal House in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, was very helpful with information concerning the Swazi.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> L. Fouche, ‘The Historical Setting of the Great Trek’.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.23.

<sup>25</sup> B.W. Vilakazi, ‘Oral and written literature in Nguni’, pp. vii-viii.

Because this was a scholarly exercise, Vilakazi now adopted a 'different' viewpoint that was not only responding to the 1938 centenary celebration of the Great Trek. The publishers of the Race Relations journal required this focus. The traditions he collected from the field trip included accounts of King Dingane whom he now dismissed as an irresponsible coward by killing Piet Retief and party. They also portrayed the king as a weakling who was easily manipulated and susceptible to influence by female members of the royal house. As a result, Vilakazi now came to believe that it was the powerful doyen of the Zulu Royal House, the Regent Mnkabayi, together with Bibi-Ndlela kaSompisi's sister, and not King Dingane, who orchestrated the massacre of the voortrekkers.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Mnkabayi assumed a status of a 'supernatural' manipulator as the decisive mono-causal agent in King Dingane's career as she

Organised (Dingane's reign and life, including) the massacre of the Voortrekkers. (The war song-discussed below) reminded the warriors of how this famous woman persuaded Ndlela who was then Prime Minister to stand in the arena and shout "Bulalani abathakathi"<sup>27</sup>

Contrary to other existing oral traditions and histories written by white historians, Vilakazi exonerated the king completely and asserted that he did not play any major role during the massacre. Like John Dube before him, Vilakazi believed that the king was incapable of ruling. His rule was a 'rule of fear' as he was still under the spell of King Shaka's prophecy<sup>28</sup>. This left it open to Princess Mnkabayi to pull the strings in the background and assume the leadership role<sup>29</sup> and organising, among other things, and together with Bibi-the sister of Ndlela the assassination of Piet Retief.<sup>30</sup>

Vilakazi used his knowledge of the social system of amaZulu to substantiate his arguments. He asserted that the king was powerless to take decisions because during the killing of Retief and party, the he was confined in his sacred room, undergoing the process of rejuvenation and doctoring as Ukweshama ceremony was taking place. Vilakazi deflected the blame on the prominent women who (as the custom demanded) were in charge of Ukweshwama ceremony. He based his argument on the lyrics of the following war-song which are completely different from the one discussed in the first chapter, which he proposed was sung during the annihilation of Retief and party.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 21

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>28</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis on this issue

<sup>29</sup> C. A Hamilton unpublished honours thesis, 'A Fragment of the jigsaw: Authority and labour control amongst the early 19th century Northern Nguni', Wits University, 1980, pp.11-12. See also Vilakazi, 'Oral and Written Literature', p.49.

<sup>30</sup> Vilakazi, 'Oral and written literature', p.21.

<sup>31</sup> See chapter 1 of this thesis on the discussion of the original and famous war-song.

Zwan' isidumo sempi  
 Inkos' inqab' ukuphum' ekhaya  
 Ndaba yempi,  
 Mababoboz' igazi  
 Hlab'abezizwe, Ho yaye!<sup>32</sup>  
*Hear thou the battle cry*  
*The king won't come out of his hut*  
*O for the glory of war*  
*Let them spill blood,*  
*Stab thou the aliens, Ho yaye!*

Additionally, Vilakazi postulated a different motive for the killing of Retief and party. He argued that women in the royal palace, annoyed with the behaviour of some of Retief followers, and fearing the horse, which they saw for the first time and therefore linked with bad omens, urged and commanded the regiments to destroy the voortrekkers. He further claimed that after the death of King Dingane, the regiments responsible for this 'hideous' deed were expelled from Zululand to the area occupied by abaQulusi of Mnkabayi in the area now comprising the Ladysmith-Newcastle and Vryheid district. According to him, the expulsion of this regiment was carried out because their hands were thought to be 'unclean, and soiled with bad blood'.<sup>33</sup> It is suggestive that these contaminated warriors should be sent to the remote, peripheral area of ebaQulusini, which was the domain of Regent Mnkabayi.<sup>34</sup>

There are elements of continuity in Vilakazi's portrayal of King Dingane particularly in his view that he was governed by fear. There is nevertheless an even more radical shift. Why this is so? The wider milieu Vilakazi found himself at the Wits Department manned by the linguist C. Doke as the Head of Bantu Studies may well have influenced him. Doke was Vilakazi's supervisor. His expertise was in Zulu grammar and he was also a respected linguist. He published works such as The Grammar of the Lamba Language, and another publication was The Phonetics of the Zulu Language. Both publications were accepted as his Masters and doctorate degrees respectively. In addition he published the Zulu-English Dictionary (together with Vilakazi), the Lamba-English Dictionary and the Textbook of Zulu Grammar among other publications.

Vilakazi's doctoral dissertation also deals with both linguistics and the Zulu grammar in detail and this part of it must have been supervised directly by Doke. But did he apply the same attention to the

<sup>32</sup> Vilakazi, 'Oral and written literature', p.22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.21.

<sup>34</sup> This does not necessarily mean Vilakazi was a male chauvinist- he had a positive attitude towards women, see chapter 2 of his doctoral thesis titled, 'Poetry concerning women'.

historical section? We cannot tell. The principal question at issue in this context is how much as directed by Doke influenced Vilakazi in his doctoral research. He may have prompted and must have endorsed Vilakazi's forays into Zulu oral tradition. Less clear is whether he inhibited or foreclosed on some of Vilakazi's more radical intuitions either consciously or unconsciously favoured the endorsement of less confrontational renderings of King Dingane.

It is also important to highlight that the lineage of the oral traditions Vilakazi collected would have provided an anti King Dingane perspective particularly from the Qwabe and the Mandlakazi as traditional rivals of the Zulu royal house. On the other hand members of the Zulu society, a majority of whom were 'learned' intellectuals' who consciously set up this organisation to promote ethnic nationalism- 'Zuluness', culture, history, customs and traditions would in all probability have supplied him with radical intuitions that rationalised the killing of Retief and party within the framework of Zulu nationalism.

Vilakazi relied completely on the oral traditions that he collected on his field trips. These tilted him towards a different interpretation about the fate of Retief and party. Thus in one of his footnotes he comments, 'a well known theory is that Dingane plotted the death of the Voortrekkers, but investigations from old people (that he interviewed) have shown that women in the royal palace (were solely responsible)'.<sup>35</sup> He used R. Dhloomo's historical novel as part of his expanded archive and cites the pro-conquest King Shaka's prophecy as instilling fear -influencing the king to adopt a confrontationalist stance towards the voortrekkers.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere in his dissertation it becomes apparent that Vilakazi read the Zulu Primers published by Stuart,<sup>37</sup> and the work of Bryant on amaZulu.<sup>38</sup> among others. In his bibliography under the section titled, 'History and Ethnology', Vilakazi listed books authored by Africans including those by M.Fuze, W. Cingo, P. Lamula, A.I. Molefe and T.Z. Masondo, W. Rabusana, S. Mqhayi and A.Z. Zungu.<sup>39</sup> The combination of all these sources shifted in some respects his analysis of the king's reign. <sup>40</sup> As a result, his dissertation was marked by a high standard of academic rigour compared to his 1938 journal article which might be easily be regarded as a reaction to the demeaning status at Wits University.

<sup>35</sup> Vilakazi, 'Oral and written literature' p. 21, footnote 30.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p.21

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p.275.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p.424

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p.432. Most of the texts he used are not readily available and are out of print as I have experienced difficulties in getting access to P Lamula text *uZulu kaMalandela* analysed in the previous chapter.

<sup>40</sup> Vilakazi, 'Oral and written literature', See the chapters 12 and 13 on 'Nguni Writers-The age of intellectual advance', pp.288-357.

We also need to take into cognisance the fact that Vilakazi was writing during the times when the South African government, while rejoicing at the defeat of fascism in Europe, was refusing to bring an end to racial discrimination at home and implement the Atlantic charter. Black people were not only confronted by a hostile government but also by Afrikaner nationalists movement who were obviously both anti-black and negative towards King Dingane. Hence when African academics like Vilakazi tried to rationalise the intensity of anti-black rhetoric of the Afrikaner nationalists (and a sizeable number of the Anglo-Saxons) in a historical sense, they may have found themselves unable to exonerate the perpetrators of the deed, but still unwilling to recognise it as an unambiguous coherent and authoritative act of state policy. Hence the exercise of displacement towards Mnkabayi. Thus it was Vilakazi, late in his life, similar to the Dube-ites and Selope Thema, who now disputed King Dingane's reign as an antithesis of barbarism.

## **2. Sibusiso Nyembezi, oral traditions as historical testimonies: Domestic policies of King Dingane.**

Sibusiso Nyembezi was born on the 5th of December 1919 at Babanango in Zululand. He trained and qualified as a teacher at Adams College, Amanzimtoti and in 1946 he obtained an Honours degree from the University of the Witwatersrand. His pathbreaking dissertation, entitled 'The Historical Background of the Izibongo of the Zulu Military Age' was also published in the 1948 edition of African Studies. Nyembezi was appointed to the post of Dr B. W. Vilakazi at Wits when the latter passed away in 1948 and obtained his M.A. degree from the same institution in 1950. He lectured at Wits from 1948 to 1954. After his resignation he took the chair of Bantu languages at Fort Hare University College. In 1958 he published an important book on Izibongo zamakhosi, in isiZulu.

In the preface of this book he highlighted the role of his mentor B.W. Vilakazi in developing his interest in African (Zulu) literature, izibongo and other forms of oral traditions. Like Vilakazi before him, he undertook a field trip to various areas in Zululand in 1946 for his research and to collect oral traditions and izibongo. His contacts were with all sectors of this community, from commoners to members of the Zulu royal family.

Kuthe sengiphumile esikoleni, sengifundisa, ngaba nesifiso sokuba ngiphenye indaba yezibongo. Kodwa akukho lutho engalwenza kwaze kwaba ngunyaka ka 1945. Ngalowomnyaka ngangiseGoli, eWitwatersrand University. Kwathi sixoxa noMufi uDr B. W. Vilakazi, ngafumanisa ukuthi naye wudaba olwalusenhliziyweni yakhe lolu... Kuthe ngonyaka ka-1946, ngahambela ezindaweni ezithize kwaZulu, ngifunda ngoZulu....Ukufika kwami



kwaNongoma ngafica umfundisi uShange...Ngasuka kwaNongoma ngaya kwaSokesimbone kuMufi uMshiyeni kaDinuzulu.<sup>41</sup>

*After I had finished my formal schooling, during the time when I was employed as a professional teacher I had a wish to pursue research on izibongo. Nothing transpired until 1945 when I was at the Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg. It was during a conversation I had with the late Dr. B.W. Vilakazi that I discovered that the latter had a keen interest and was committed to this issue...In 1946 I visited certain areas in kwaZulu, researching on amaZulu...When I arrived in kwaNongoma I met the Rev. Shange....From kwaNongoma I proceeded to kwaSokesimbone to meet the late (Prince) Mshiyeni kaDinuzulu...*

Nyembezi's 1946 honours dissertation argues that King Dingane's reign was organised around three major events, namely, the king's rise to the throne, the arrival of voortrekkers into the Zulu Kingdom and his fall from the throne. Through these events Nyembezi identified what he believed to be the major characteristics of the king's personality. Nyembezi described the king's character as complex and multi-dimensional. To him the king was an enigma who was cunning and ruthless, cautious, anxious, introvert, weak, deceptive and unpredictable.<sup>42</sup>

Nyembezi, like others before him, was of the opinion that King Dingane was aided by Regent Mnkabayi to become king. The latter was also perceived to be the driving force behind the purges within the royal family. These resulted in the death of King Dingane's siblings.<sup>43</sup> Nyembezi believed that the king's rise to the throne was made easier by the prevailing lack of consensus on traditions and customs regarding succession within the Zulu royal house. This theme is portrayed through the King Shaka's alleged fear of 'imagined' usurpers of the throne and his insistence that his siblings to be part of amabutho during a taxing, demanding war itinerary - hoping that they would meet death on the battlefield and thus cease to be a threat.

Nyembezi was the first scholar to judiciously used izibongo to sketch the life history of King Dingane, amongst others. The praise-word 'uVezi, uNonyanda, uMgabadel, owagabadela inkundla yakwaBulawayo' (Vezi the huge one, the daring one who dared the courtyard of Bulawayo)<sup>44</sup>, refers to King Dingane's accession to the throne and to the death of King Shaka who was assassinated at

<sup>41</sup> S. Nyembezi, Izibongo zamakhosi, Pietermaritzburg, 1958.

<sup>42</sup> Nyembezi, S, 'The Historical Background to the Izibongo of the Zulu Military Age' pp. 160 & 161. His path breaking analysis of izibongo zikaDingane largely corresponds to my analysis found in Chapter 1 of the thesis. This might be because izibongo zamakhosi were part of our vernacular curriculum during my primary education in Soweto. I still have vivid memories of talented praise-singers within our class-they used to be highly regarded by introverts like us who were dismal and incompetent when it came displaying our skills -as far as performance poetry-like izimbongi. I used to dread those parades as our teachers had a discretion of asking any student to parade his or her skills in front of the class, probably guys like Mzwakhe Mbuli were brilliant during such occasions. I used to admire my colleagues who were talented in this respect.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.123.

<sup>44</sup> Nyembezi, 'The Historical background', all the translation are by Nyembezi.

kwaBulawayo, (his royal homestead- note that other traditions propose that King Shaka was assassinated at kwaDukuza where his grave can be located). Nyembezi argued that King Dingane was regarded as the producer - **uVezi** - because he killed the 'vicious' King Shaka and so 'produced' the people. Nyembezi points out that the enormity of his crime was portrayed in the following praises

Obuz' amanz' eMbozamo and' ukuwela  
Amanz' eMbozamo asal'ebabaza  
Owel' iMbozamo umntakaJama  
Wawel' iMbozamo kwash' isiziba  
*Who asked the waters of the Mbozamo before crossing?*  
*The waters of the Mbozamo will remain wondering*  
*Who crossed the Mbozamo, it is the son of Jama*  
*He crossed the Mbozamo and the pool dried*

However Nyembezi believed that King Dingane was by no means a better king than his predecessor in regard to the killing or slaughtering of the very people it was claimed he had 'produced'.<sup>45</sup> He cited the praise-words, 'Umvuso omnyama wawo Sikhakha, Ovusela abantu ukuhlatswa' (The black awakener of the kraal of Sikhakha, Who awakened people for slaughtering) as evidence. Nyembezi sees the praise-names as highlighting the dangerous path which King Dingane had to travel in order to rule the Zulu Kingdom, notably 'Odonswwe ngezintaba ezimakhelekethe' (Who was dragged through precipitous mountains).

Nyembezi regarded King Dingane's and King Shaka's images as similar since their respective reigns were both permeated by unnecessary bloodletting. Consequently, for a different reason to that of the Johannes Nkosi and African workers in the late 1920s. Nyembezi disputed the notion that the kings were inverted images of each other as they were both accused of killing their subjects without convincing reasons. Nyembezi proposed that if King Shaka had been a killer, Dingane was in no way better. Moreover, King Dingane had a 'lack-lustre' military career when compared to King Shaka. Nyembezi was of the opinion that King Dingane's praises and deeds of valour were not as numerous as Shaka's because of what little there was left for the king was beyond the frontiers of Zululand.<sup>46</sup> This was unavoidable as King Shaka 'had done almost all the fighting at home and what little fighting there was left for King Dingane was beyond the frontiers of Zululand', by attacking among others, Mzilikazi and the amaSwazi.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 123. See chapter 1 of the thesis for a slightly different viewpoint.

<sup>46</sup> Nyembezi, 'The historical background of izibongo', p.121.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121

Nyembezi believed that King Shaka was to some extent responsible for his fate. He argued that his long-suffering siblings were not hideous by nature and had no choice and to act against what they believed to be an oppressive and unjust rule. Nyembezi based his argument on what he perceived as King Shaka's 'narrow minded' and cruel behaviour of exterminating perceived opponents.

To him the (male) children represented trouble. Whenever a child was born to one of his 'sisters' it was killed. Sometimes the woman was killed even before she gave birth. Thus it does seem strange that a man so careful of what may prove his own undoing should have spared some of his brothers. He little knew that his final exit would be engineered by these selfsame brothers (Dingane among them)... His brothers too did not seem to be over happy. Perhaps it was because of the thought that Shaka being a man of such uncertain temper and doubtful humour, might perhaps 'sign' their death warrant any day. And so they decided to strike first...<sup>48</sup>

Another factor contributing to his downfall was the 'dictatorial' manner in which he used to control the army-amabutho. The final straw came when King Shaka ordered the worn out, physically drained, army to proceed to fight against King Soshangane immediately after they had returned from a battle with amaMpondo. His brothers, who were part of the battalion, rebelled and decided to disobey the king. They suspected that this was the king's plan to kill them, as Soshangane was a formidable enemy. The princes then deserted the army and went back to kwaBulawayo (other oral traditions claim that King Shaka was assassinated at kwaDukuza) - the royal homestead and carried out their plan to murder King Shaka. Because of this deed, Nyembezi proclaimed that Prince Dingane, as one of the generals, was accorded the following praises, 'uMashiya impi yakhe' literally meaning the deserter of his army. It is worth noticing that other writers and historians used a different event to explain the meaning of this praise-word. They interpreted the praise-name to mean that King Dingane was a coward who left his army in dire straits, wandering (as Petros Lamula claimed his name suggests) after being defeated by his brother Mpande in 1840.

Nyembezi also depicted King Dingane as being extremely cautious, as is revealed in the praise-name, 'uMalunguza izindonga kade ukuwela' (He who peers into 'dongas' before crossing). Having conspired against and effected the death of King Shaka, he decided to take greater precautions and avoid his predecessor's mistake. He continued to kill his brothers whom (with the exception of Mpande) he regarded as a threat For this deed he was referred to as 'Ithole elinsizwa lakoka Donda, Elihambe liwakhahlela amanye amathole' (The hornless calf of the kraal of Donda, Which went on kicking other calves).

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

The slyness that was characterised by the killing of his siblings, and chiefs who sympathised with his predecessor complemented this cautious behaviour. King Dingane's cunning behaviour was compared to still water in the following praises Isiziba esisemavivane Dingane, Isiziba esinzonzo sinzonzobebe, Siminzise umuntu *ethi* uyageza, Waze washona ngesicoco' (The pool at Mavivane Dingane, the deep pool is still, It drowned a person when he attempts to wash, And sunk even with his heading); 'Ibaka lamanzi lawoNdikidi, Lisibikela izinkomo zamaSwazi zanyamalala' (The pool of water of Ndikidi and others, It covered the Swazi cattle and they disappeared); 'Inzima eyiwukwe nakoMkhumbane, Khona kungafakwa lunyawo' (The black one which is the rich growth of the Mkhumbane, where growth becomes so thick that no foot can be put in). Nyembezi identified the first praise words in this paragraph as referring to the death of King Dingane's brother Mhlangana.<sup>49</sup> He asserted that the latter had a large following and to kill him openly might have led to serious bloodshed. Therefore a more cunning way had to be implemented with the approval of Regent Mnkabayi.<sup>50</sup> According to Nyembezi's account, Dingane and Mhlangana had to go to the river and bathe before one of them was appointed to be Shaka's successor. Mnkabayi met with them but none of their followers were there. As pre-arranged Mnkabayi's men drowned Mhlangana and a story was told that whilst swimming, Mhlangana had been seized by cramp and by the time they dragged him out of the water he was beyond all help. Thus King Dingane was part of the conspiracy as the above-mentioned praise words suggest.<sup>51</sup>

Nyembezi also portrayed the king as an introvert whose thinking and ideas were difficult to fathom. In this regard he was the 'mirror image' of King Shaka, as is disclosed in the following praise words, 'Singqungqu kakhulumi, kanamlomo, kanjengaShaka, yena owaqeda *umuzi* ngokunkenkeza' (The reserved one he does not speak, he has no mouth, He is not like Shaka, Who used to finish a kraal speaking). This softness could be easily interpreted and likened to a goat, as showing a weakness in character that could be easily manipulated by advisors like Ndlela and Dambuza, 'Imbuza kaDambuza, Ayibambe ngendlebe yabekezela, Ayinjengaka Mklaka ngase Ntshobozeni, yena ayimbambengendlebe, Yadabula yaqeda amadoda'.<sup>52</sup> (The goat of Dambuza that he held by ears and was patient, unlike Mklaka's from nearby Ntshobozeni which though it was held by its ears it escaped and finished off men). He was unpredictable and his external character could easily deceive one. He gave people a false impression of himself and hence the following praise word 'uVezi bathi umoya mnandi ngokunuka inyama' (Vezi they say is sweet breathed by smelling meat).

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 1 of the thesis on this issue

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, including the section on the Regent Mnkabayi

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 1 of the thesis

<sup>52</sup> See chapter 1 of the thesis

Nyembezi suggested that this praise-name implied that the king's external appearance was deceptive in as much as the smell of meat will temporarily suppress the bad breath that one might have. But the smell of meat was something that did not last long but faded away after a while when the bad breathe again reasserts itself.

Nyembezi caricatured King Dingane was in a state of constant anxiety and always ill at ease. This could be verified from the following praises, 'Indlovu lekulala kuNgqwayimbayiya, ezinye ziyalala ziyathokoza' (The elephant whose sleep is fitful, Others sleep, they are happy). Among other things, the arrival of the voortrekkers in his kingdom contributed to this state of mind.

Izibongo zamakhosi<sup>53</sup> published in 1958 revised his interpretation of King Dingane. In this book he sided with King Dingane as far as the issue of succession is concerned. He was the first person (openly) to voice the opinion that, according to African traditions and customs, the throne rightfully belonged to King Dingane. He based his argument on the fact that Mpikase, Dingane's mother, was King Senzangakhona's eldest wife. To Nyembezi, it was surprising that the king favoured his eldest son, Sigujana, over Mpikase's eldest son, Dingane who was younger than Sigujana. Dingane became a disillusioned, bitter young prince<sup>54</sup> believing his mother, and Bhibhi, Sigujana's mother, to have engineered Sigujana's elevation as is revealed in the following verses:

ngazo zombili izindlela  
Niyobikela uNsimbini noMahlekeza  
Ukuthi abazi yini ukuthi  
uVezi yisizwa kubi?  
Angahl' athath'isihlang' asihlom' umgobo  
Ame ngas' emnyango kwaMpikase  
NakwaBhibhi, kuze kus'evevezela  
Engasalalanga nabuthongo?<sup>55</sup>

Nyembezi, like Ngubane and the radical Vilakazi before him, believed that the king had no choice but to adopt an abrasive diplomatic policy towards the voortrekkers because of the threat they represented. The first major bone of contention between the Boers and amaZulu involved cattle,

<sup>53</sup> S. Nyembezi, Izibongo zamakhosi. In 1988 the University of Natal Press and the Killie Campbell Library published a book on the praises of Dingane (a) and they considered it the first of its kind by claiming that 'Dingana eulogies or praises have not been published in the major collection of Zulu poetry. See A.B. Ngcobo and D. Rycroft, Izibongo zikaDingana. One differs with this view considering Sibusiso Nyembezi's important work in the 1940s and 50s. Unlike Nyembezi's work, this book fails dismally in contextualising King Dingane's reign by using izibongo as a tool as far as history is concerned.

<sup>54</sup> It is claimed in oral traditions that Senzangakhona banned both the young princes Dingane and Shaka from the royal residence after being found guilty of 'indulging in sex' whilst still teenagers against strict moral codes and customs. They escaped the wrath of their father by running away and were raised by other clans/chiefdoms.

<sup>55</sup> Nyembezi, Izibongo zamakhosi, p. 61.

which were captured by King Dingane from King Mzilikazi. Here Nyembezi questioned Stuart's objectivity since the latter took sides and claimed that these cattle belonged to the Boers. Nyembezi sympathised with King Dingane and exonerated him as for the killing of Retief and party. Additionally, in the 1958 publication of *Izibongo Zamakhosi*, we notice a change in Nyembezi's analysis of the voortrekkers intentions and motives, including the king's role in the killing of the settlers. He adopted Ngubane's African nationalist stance and was unashamedly pro-King Dingane. Using the same established oral traditions as historical testimony he was now adamant that the voortrekkers came to the Zulu Kingdom for the **land** thus 'afire amaBhunu waqonda uDingana ayocela umhlaba'.<sup>56</sup> (On their arrival, the Boer went to King Dingane and asked for land). In this publication Nyembezi asserted that King Dingane actively planned the killing of Retief and party in consultation with his advisors, as the kingdom's military and domestic policies required.

Like the radical Vilakazi, he challenged the assertion that the king gave the final order for the killing of the Dutch, using the same argument that at the time, the king was being treated in preparation for the first fruits ceremony- *ukweshwama* which kept him confined to his royal hut. This interpretation is not present in the other oral traditions, mostly eyewitness testimonies mentioned in chapter 1, although they might have been deliberately left out by Stuart and others because of their implication. Nyembezi also refuted that the order and statement for killing the voortrekkers was '**bulalani abathakathi**' (kill the wizards). He insisted that the signal was but a mere whistle.<sup>57</sup> He then cited Vilakazi's assertion that it was the women in the royal palace that influenced Nzobo kaDambuza to order the killing of the voortrekkers. Finally, he contested the view that the king was anti-white and ruled in fear because of King Shaka's prophecy. He asked the question: 'why was Rev Owen and the white settlers in Port Natal spared?'. To him it was only when the latter began attacking his subjects, enslaved and abducting women and children that war ensued.

Nyembezi believed that if the king was suspicious that the Dutch were the pro conquest swallows prophesied by King Shaka, this was exacerbated by their suspicious behaviour. Guards had reported seeing the voortrekkers on a reconnaissance mission around the royal palace of uMngungundlovu. And to Nyembezi, the only people who had horses were the Dutch and the question was, what were they doing around the king's palace in the middle of the night? This convinced the king and his advisors that the voortrekkers were up to no good; hence their fate, because in Zulu folklore, only people with bad intentions, particularly witches engage in such 'hideous' deeds.

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<sup>56</sup> S. Nyembezi, *Izibongo Zamakhosi*. p. 56. See chapter 1 of the thesis on this issues

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Also influencing the attitude of the king was the first hand information provided by Hlambamanzi, Matiwane Sotobe kaMpangalala wakwa Sibiya, among others. The latter had experienced the might of the white settlers, and was aware of destruction they had inflicted on various African societies in the Cape Colony. Because of this threat, King Shaka had sent his envoy Sotobe to set up diplomatic ties with the English crown's representative in the Cape Colony so as to contain and accommodate the threat they represented.<sup>58</sup>

Nyembezi's sudden change in attitude towards the voortrekkers and King Dingane were influenced by his political beliefs and the fact that at Fort-Hare, unlike what I believed to be the politically oppressive atmosphere existing at Wits University- particularly affecting African lecturers, he was now working with people in the forefront of protest struggle against racism, apartheid and subjugation. As Eliot Zondi indicated to me during an interview,<sup>59</sup> Nyembezi, as a member of the ANC, was now working 'hand-in-hand' with other senior and influential colleagues like Professor Z.K. Matthews in pursuing the policies of the ANC in its struggle to fight for the emancipation of the black peoples of South Africa. Together with his contemporaries like Mazisi Kunene they pursued their fight for freedom. Kunene straddles the pre-armed struggle and armed struggle epochs, and his interpretation of the role of King Dingane shifts significantly over these periods and will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **3. Seeing King Dingane through the eyes of King Shaka: Eliot Zondi's image of King Shaka**

Eliot Zondi was also one of the academics who produced various texts and historical novels on the rise and fall of the Zulu Kingdom.<sup>60</sup> Zondi wrote during the age of the social engineers like Hendrik Verwoed. Some of their texts revered the founder of the Zulu Kingdom - King Shaka. They regarded him as a military genius, a person of great intellectual and political acumen and one of the finest leaders to have graced South African shores. To them he was the 'founder' of African nationalism and a strong supporter of unity among African people. Like Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo,<sup>61</sup> they used King Shaka's image in their advocacy of African unity

<sup>58</sup> On this theme see Guy's article, 'King Shaka-a reappraisal'.

<sup>59</sup> See chapter 6 of the thesis.

<sup>60</sup> See B.W. Vilakazi, 'Oral and written literature in Nguni', E.Zondi, *Ukufa kukaShaka*, Johannesburg, 1960; M. Kunene, 'An analytical survey of Zulu Poetry' and *Emperor Shaka the Great*, C.T. Msimang, *Buzani kuMkabayi*, Pretoria, 1982.

<sup>61</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis.

- social, political and above all cultural. To them King Shaka exemplified this trend of thought. He wanted all Africans to speak one language and be one strong united nation in the face of adversaries. Therefore it was not surprising that they lamented his death and denounced those who were held responsible for this deed, who included King Dingane. Their images of the latter were extremely negative and this group was accused of being responsible for existing bad race relations.

Zondi was born in 1930 in what is now regarded as KwaZulu-Natal. He qualified as a teacher at St. Chad's; one of the missionary founded teacher-training colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. After a brief spell as a teacher he went to Fort Hare (in the early 1950s) to do his BA. Degree. He studied History, Politics, Public Administration and isiZulu among other courses.<sup>62</sup> Zondi, at present a retired senior lecturer of isiZulu at the University of Natal-Durban Campus, which he joined in the early 1980s, 'confided' to me (during an interview) that the book Ukufa kukaShaka originated as a third year isiZulu literature long-paper project. Professor Sibusiso Nyembezi who together with Professor Z.K. Matthews, had groomed him politically, and supported his literary endeavours taught him.

Zondi confessed that both Nyembezi and Prof. Matthews, as older members, were approachable and played an instructive role in the political development of the 'Young Turks' at the University of Fort Hare. Zondi considered himself to be lucky to have benefited from their wisdom and caring attitude characterised by generosity and open-mindedness. Zondi explained that Prof. Matthews left it open to the students to choose their own topics within the discipline. Zondi chose to submit a long essay paper on an historical drama about King Shaka.

Eliot Zondi provided two major reasons for choosing the historical drama for the final year project. His first major reason was what he regarded as an unfair, extremely negative image of King Shaka propagated in Rolfes Dhlomo historical novel on King Shaka.<sup>63</sup> Zondi regarded his long paper, which was later published by Wits University Press, as a corrective exercise. He asserted that he was raised on a 'staple diet' of Dhlomo's historical novels whilst still a student. He believed that white historians like the Rev. A.T. Bryant influenced Dhlomo's

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Eliot Zondi, Natal University-Durban, 17/3/98.

<sup>63</sup> See chapter 2 of the thesis on Rolfes Dhlomo.



perceptions of King Shaka. As far as he was concerned EA. Ritter's perceptions of the king were positive, relatively speaking. The latter's images could easily pass as that of a black person.

The second reason for Zondi deciding on an historical drama on King Shaka was political.<sup>64</sup> At that time Fort Hare was a fertile ground for political activism. As a member of the African National Congress Youth League he took active part in the politics of the day. The Youth League's idea of 'African Nationalism', its assertion of African identity, its rejection of foreign leadership of Africa, its stress on the unity of all Africans, and its belief that Africans must rely on their own efforts to free themselves all attracted him.<sup>65</sup> Zondi chose King Shaka for his project since the king was an authentic symbol of African unity and African Nationalism appealed to Zondi. It was also motivated by a desire to inhibit the move to form student political movements on ethnic grounds (here Zondi mentioned the organisation formed by Xhosa speaking students including Kaizer Matanzima specifically).<sup>66</sup> To Zondi, this subverted the dream of a united front against racism, fascism and discrimination. He saw King Shaka as a national figure and believed that writing the historical drama on the death of the king would serve as a 'healing' process since he was mourning the passing away of a person he regarded as an exceptional leader.

Those who were part and parcel of the conspiracy to assassinate the King could not expect 'forgiveness' and 'mercy' from him. Even though there might be debates about the people who carried out the actual assassination, King Dingane and the Regent Mnkabayi could not escape their role in the planning of the entire exercise. But Zondi was not totally anti-King Dingane. He could draw parallels between the king and Bhambatha<sup>67</sup> and commended both of them as far as challenging white supremacy was concerned.

The theme of the political intrigues involving succession and hereditary battles within the Zulu royal house was adopted by Eliot Zondi's historical drama on Ukufa kukaShaka<sup>68</sup>. This book which was prescribed in most African schools as an isiZulu set-work dramatises the plot leading to the assassination of King Shaka. It has both Dingane and Mnkabayi as the main protagonists. In a nutshell, he too regarded King Dingane as a mirror image of King Shaka.

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with E. Zondi, 17/3/98.

<sup>65</sup> See chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>66</sup> Zondi mentioned the name of the organisation to me but due to technical problem-this part of the cassette is not audible.

<sup>67</sup> Eliot Zondi has published a book on Bhambatha and the 1906 rebellion.

<sup>68</sup> Zondi, Ukufa kukaShaka.

He regarded the latter as 'genius' that was a fine military strategist and rewarded his men for displaying fighting skills in the battlefield. Accordingly, the king proclaiming his preference for brave men to Jeqe, his body servant, and boasted in the presence of the then Prince Dingane and other members of the royal house who were possible rivals. Lavishing Jeqe with praise and belittling Dingane as a coward who lacked courage and vision the King proclaimed

Jeqe mina ngifuna izinsizwa ezifana. nawe.... Ngilapha ngizomisa umbuso kaZulu. Ngithanda njengoba sengiqalile-nje, ukuba ngibumbe umuntu omnyama abemunye...Ngokubambana zisingithane, izizwe ezincane ziyama, ngobhici nokungazwani ezinkulu ziyawa. Baphi oZwide? Baphi oPhakathwayo<sup>69</sup>

*Jeqe I want young men who are like you...I am here to strengthen the Zulu kingdom. As I have already began I would like to continue building unity among black people. Through co-operation small black nations will arise, through pressure and misunderstandings the larger (nations) will fall. Where is Zwide? Where is Phakathwayo?*

Throughout the text King Dingane is portrayed as one-dimensional weakling. He is a timid but sly schemer who is easily influenced and manipulated by his ever present and powerful aunt, Mnkabayi. King Shaka, Dingane and subjects of the Zulu Kingdom hold the latter in awe. She instils terror and terror into the hearts of men. The book begins with Prince Dingane at his aunt's court. The latter voiced her strong disapproval of what she perceived as the destructive policies of King Shaka's rule and the timid, lackadaisical, attitude of her nephews - including Dingane. The policies to which she objected included the banning of marriage and of courtship between male and females of certain age groups and its replacement by the amabutho system.

Uyayibona Dingane imizi yezifunda ngezifunda iphenduka amanxiwa; uyasibona isizwe sakithi siphela; izintombi zijendeviswa, izinsizwa zithenwa, amakhehla nezalukazi kuthiwa akuganane kuzale ...Nithule nithini Dingane? Ningamadoda ngoba nilengise amalengisi? Angiphenduke indoda yini?...Sukujama Dingane; isilonda sikaZulu siyabhibha, uZulu uselindele ihawu elisha. Zifudumela izandla oyakwamukelwa ngazo, libanzi iphiko engiyokwefumakela ngalo.<sup>70</sup>

*Dingane do you notice that households of the various regions are becoming old kraal sites, do you notice the destruction of our kingdom, females being turned to old, childless, unmarried women, males being castrated, courtship being promoted among grandfathers and grandmothers so as to bear children...Why are you all silent Dingane? Are you men because of your private parts? Do you want me to change into a man? Do not stare at me Dingane; the open wound of the Zulu nation is festering, the Zulu nation is awaiting a new shield. You will be welcomed with warm hands, I will protect under my broad wings.*

Zondi believed that King Shaka was autocratic and was partly responsible for the hardening attitude of his aunt and siblings towards him, particularly Prince Dingane. Both the latter

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

and Prince Mhlangana objected to the endless war expeditions in the name of unity as they were also enlisted in one of the regiments. Dingane voiced his objections during the tactical discussion of a forthcoming expedition and inferred that endless wars hardened people attitudes and promoted unnecessary hatred. He expressed a personal preference for nation-building strategies underpinned by peace as a driving force- as opposed to conquering other groups through violence, 'uma into yenziwa ngoxolo igcina ngalo, kanti impi yenza izinhliziyi zabantu zihlale zingamuhle'.<sup>71</sup> (if things are done peacefully, the end results will be peace but war hardens people hearts). King Shaka's siblings soon regarded the war expeditions as part of a ploy by the king to kill them..<sup>72</sup> Regent Mnkabayi endorsed their sentiments when she heard that they were about to leave for a war expedition to kwaSoshangane, 'niyakubona ebengikusho? Niyazi kwaSoshangane? Kwamamangalahlwa? Aniyikubulawa indlala, niqedelwe isitha eniyosihlasela sizihlalele endlini yaso?'<sup>73</sup> (Do you notice what I have alluded to? Are you aware how far is kwaSoshangane? Kwamamangalahlwa? Are you not going to die of hunger and finished off by a formidable enemy whom you have set out to attack in his own backyard). She alerted them to existing dangers, and the possibility that they might die of famine, and hunger before they reached Soshangane's distant country. But both princes outmanoeuvred King Shaka as they deserted the army during this expedition and returned to the King's palace at kwaBulawayo where they assassinated him.

A striking silence and weakness in Zondi's plot is his failure to provide more than a cursory examination of power relations between indigenous Africans and white settlers. This may be because his historical novel is primarily about the death of King Shaka and therefore has no developed view of the Retief massacre. Accordingly this prevents the author from developing the character of King Dingane whose political stand is sketched to represent nothing more historically significant than personal predisposition towards cruelty and self-serving greed. These perspectives lock Zondi into existing dominant orthodoxies that cannot pose fundamental challenges to conventional Afrikaner nationalist and textbook treatment of the history that they portray as far as the king is concerned

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

#### 4. Censorship and the image of King Dingane

In 1996 whilst searching for Petros Lamula's text at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg Library, I had an informal discussion with Mr. Gcumisa,<sup>74</sup> a poet and a writer in isiZulu literature who was also doing a literature search. After introducing myself and discussing my research interests with him - he confided to me that, in the volatile 1980s he had produced a manuscript in isiZulu on King Dingane for Shuter and Shooter in Pietermaritzburg. He claimed that the publishers were unwilling to publish anything on King Dingane particularly if it did not follow the path set by white historians. He was told, in a subtle manner, that the 'market' was not yet ready to accept a positive image on King Dingane because of what the king 'did to Retief and party' and boers in general. He reasoned that the publishers were afraid of the state and secret service and subsequent to this his manuscript went missing and was never returned to him by the publishers. He was then an employee of Shuter and Shooter when I met him and claimed that he enquired about his manuscript whereabouts and was never able to locate it - even from the archives. The publishers claimed to have 'lost it'. The reason he wanted the manuscript was that he thought it was now publishable as it was post the 1994 elections.

Thus publishers were also guilty of a different type of censorship. A further example was mentioned by R. Dhloho on publication of the second edition of his book *Izikhali Zanamuhla* several sections of which were omitted by the publishers Shuter and Shooter without his permission. But there were black writers who used the pen as an oppositional tool and to some extent produced a positive image on resistance politics (like that found on the Starred series). It is worth noticing that during the late 1970s and the 80s, the two available published texts that explored the images of King Dingane were in the main negative. These were the texts by Kunene and Msimang.

Eliot Zondi also pointed out that censorship and subtle 'control' of writers was rife prior the coming of independence in South Africa.<sup>75</sup> He used the example of his historical novel on Bhambatha to prove the point. His manuscript was accepted for publication by the Wits University Press who then suggested to him that he should submit it to the government

<sup>74</sup> See chapter 6 of the thesis on his poem on the Battle of 'iNcome'.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Eliot Zondi, 17/3/98.

sanctioned Zulu (Language) Council. This was done in order to acquire the permission for the book to be prescribed as an isiZulu literature textbooks in African schools and be part of the 'main stream'. The Council was dominated by academics from the University of Zululand-who were the main 'gatekeepers'. Wits University Press submitted the manuscript on his behalf for approval. But after a considerable time had elapsed without reply, Mr Zondi contacted the council to find out about their decision. To his surprise, through their representative, Mr Khathi, they denied even receiving his manuscript. He then contacted Wits University Press and told them the 'sad news'. The latter in turn, supplied him with a letter of acknowledgement of receipt of the manuscript from the council. Soon after receiving this letter he sent it to Mr Khathi together with his response, denying being in possession of the manuscript. As expected he received a positive response from the council who, for the first time, acknowledged that they had received the manuscript and would discuss its merit in an appropriate full council meeting. Zondi alludes to the fact that this process took a long time but eventually his book was given the 'green light'.

According to Zondi, such was the power of these state sponsored councils that they could make or break writers and academics. He suspected that the major problem the gatekeepers had with his book was that it had an Africanist slant and was thus sympathetic to Bhambatha absolving him of any wrong doing justified in the rebellion against oppressive white rule. He later read one review by an Afrikaner academic who voiced his anger and accused him of fanning the flames of 'racial war'. This academic accused Zondi of calling black people to take up arms against Afrikaners.<sup>76</sup>

Zondi argued that this form of intervention and censorship had its precedent in the early 20th century. Schools were still controlled by missionaries and their publication houses like Lovedale and Marrianhill were gatekeepers. They set the rules and agendas for both publications and prescribing school textbooks. According to him every published manuscript had to conform to the norms and the teachings of christianity in order to be part of the 'mainstream' and hence accepted as set works in African schools. Zondi used the works of Lamula, Vilakazi and Rolfes Dhlomo as an example. He argued that Petros Lamula's books like uZulu kaMalandela were never part of the mainstream and were never prescribed at schools precisely because he produced them as an independent after he broke away from the

<sup>76</sup>

Interview with E. Zondi, 17/3/98.

Norwegian Missionaries. That is why even today they are not well known, as important as they are as far as the writing of history by black South Africans is concerned.

Zondi pointed out to me another example of church intervention and censorship tendencies including the harassment of black writers by quoting the differences that are apparent in Rolfes Dhlomo's publication Indlela yababi. He claimed that certain parts were missing in the second edition of the book and suggested that this be because they challenged the 'pure', idealistic image of the church. The first edition had a scene whereby a priest indulged himself in 'unholy' earthly affairs by falling in love with a woman. Zondi suspects that the publishers were unhappy about this scene as it challenged the moral authority of the church and painted the picture that the church authorities were also human in one way or another. They felt that such a scene besides being 'unchristian', would also 'corrupt' school pupils. Hence they amended the second edition of the text. Probably Dhlomo accepted this action for economic reasons, among others. He wanted the book to be prescribed at schools.

Zondi further argued that Vilakazi's book Noma Nini dealt with the same problem in an 'innovative' way. It introduced the notion of a dichotomous way of dealing with such problems, either adopting the 'christian way' or by using African traditions and perceived cultural 'norms'. In this instance the 'problematic' that was posed by Dhlomo's book was contextualised within the realms of African culture and traditions without sacrificing 'holy christian beliefs and morals'. By adopting this method, Vilakazi had no choice. He had to take a conscious decision not to offend the missionary controlled schools and publishing houses.<sup>77</sup> It was therefore going to be difficult to publish books and texts on African nationalism as this theme permeates King Dingane's reign.

It now becomes clear why the extremely negative views on King Dingane are predominant. It was inconceivable to publish a positive account of King Dingane through mainstream publishers. It also becomes clear why the majority of black writers published and used historical novels in African languages, newspaper articles and drama as another way of writing their own history. One can therefore conclude that it is now understandable why there is a dearth of published materials on King Dingane as compared to King Shaka, particularly during the 1950s, 1960s-1979. The state, publishers and academics are guilty.

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with E. Zondi, 17/3/98.

## 5. Felix Okoye, African Nationalism and radical images of King Dingane: Racism, Relativism and History as 'subjective truth'.

Partly because of the restrictions discussed in the last section, it was left to an African of the Diaspora to write the most compelling pro- King Dingane project. He was Felix Okoye a Nigerian who was living and studying in the USA in the 1960s. The latter was part of an Africanist revolution in African history in which 'white' historians played an equally prominent role. Okoye as an Africanist, produced a rejoinder to Eurocentric historians and painted a positive image of the King. The intense racism experienced by Okoye and other African intellectuals in their pilgrimage to the world of 'learning and scholarship', to the citadels of 'equality' and 'enlightenment', science and 'reason', created the discord that prompted this approach. The postscript of Okoye's doctoral dissertation provides us with particularly frank reasons why he was sympathetic to King Dingane where he writes

*It is appropriate now that my task is done to recall the factors that prompted me to undertake this historical investigation. The fact that I am an African has a lot to do with it. So also the fact that I did my graduate work in America. It was only after I had arrived in the United States that I discovered that Africa enjoyed an unfavourable image abroad. At dinner parties I was often shocked by the ethnocentrism of one of many highly educated American University professors who glibly described the people of the second largest continent as uncivilised, as savages. African religion and art were categorised as 'primitive'. Our dances were denounced as erotic. The less sophisticated citizens of Columbia repeatedly ask very annoying questions. Whether one began wearing clothes only after one's advent in their country; where was my spear, why no tribal markings on my face and no ring through my lip, how many lions I have as pests. One professional bleeding heart was impudent enough to ask me whether it was true that Africans possess tails! The sponsors of the late shows in television seemed to have an insatiable appetite for bwana-saying Africans and for Tarzan balderdash. The movie commercials vociferously insisted that our continent was a land where animals had a sense of humour and where man alone was stranger. These are some unpleasantries African students in the United States are subjected to. I decided to do something about them after reading Dr E. Blyden's West Africa before Europe.<sup>78</sup> A passage from this memorable work was really a catalytic force:*

**If the African educated on European lines... is unable or unwilling to teach the outside world something of the institutions and inner feeling of his people; if for some reasons or other, he can show nothing of his real self to those anxious to learn... if he cannot make his friends feel the force of his racial character and sympathise with his racial aspirations, then it is evident that his education has been sadly defective, that his training by aliens has done but little for him - that his teachers have surely missed their aim and wasted time**

*I exposed the ingenious falsehood and distortions of the white supremacists and I gave the reader an insight into the realities of African life because I wanted to reassure my western mentors, George E. Mowry, Ray Allen Billington, Leonard M. Thompson, Richard W.*

<sup>78</sup> E.W. Blyden, West Africa before Europe, London, 1905.

*Leopold, Jan Vansina and Jere King - that they did not waste their invaluable time and remarkable talents.*

In 1969 Felix Okoye wrote a revisionist and polemic article on the king titled 'Dingane: A reappraisal'.<sup>79</sup> It was revisionist in the sense that it was unashamedly Africanist in focus and was a rejoinder to Eurocentric historians. Okoye was born in 1938 in Enugu, Nigeria. He did his BA. Degree at the University of London in 1962 and in 1969, the same year he wrote his article on King Dingane. He completed his doctoral thesis on 'The American image of Africa: myth and reality' at the University of California in Los Angeles. He studied African history under Jan Vansina and Leonard Thompson. It was the latter, whose research interests included Southern African history, who probably influenced him to publish the journal article on King Dingane.

Okoye felt that King Dingane incurred, by the murder of Piet Retief and his followers, the seemingly undying hatred of white historians.<sup>80</sup> He argued that this history and their accompanying images of King Dingane were one sided and flawed. They were characterised by ideology and racism as white historians had reached a consensus on the image of King Dingane. This, according to him was unacceptable as history and did not amount to reaching a consensus for a given event. He accused white traders, hunters and historians (both amateur and professional) like Isaacs, Fynn, Gardiner, Owen, Bryant and Morris of portraying the king as a person with hardly a single redeeming quality: blood thirsty, capricious, treacherous, self indulgent, an absolute despot, an ingrate and an inveterate liar. What he found remarkable about this consensus among white historians was that, according to him, the king lacked all of these unflattering attributes.<sup>81</sup> He believed that there were many reasons that led to this state of affairs including the white scholars' inability to understand the dynamics of African societies.

He accused these white 'prophets of doom' failed dismally to contextualise King Dingane's actions to existing circumstance and social conditions. He chided them for not questioning their sources of information, and most importantly, not learning that an historical narrative is a selection of facts. This implied a socially determined value judgement in which the roles of power, language and politics could not be ignored. In short, it should be stated that despite

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<sup>79</sup> F.N.C. Okoye, 'Dingane: A reappraisal', *Journal of African History*, 1969, pp.221-235.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.221.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*



claims of objectivity, all historical writing had some ideological component. Therefore all the literature on King Dingane failed to consider historical problems from more than one perspective.

Okoye used the same sources as the white historians which were mainly written by both amateur and professional white historians, travel writers, traders and hunters including, among others, the diaries of Henry Francis Fynn and Rev Owen, Allen Gardiner and Nathaniel Isaac's books on travel in the Zulu Kingdom. Amongst all the authors who had written on King Dingane, Felix Okoye was the only trained historian and Africanist who read white sources through different eyes. As a professionally trained historian Okoye used this evidence to derive an alternate viewpoint that portrayed a different and positive image of the king suggesting that historical knowledge is relative. Okoye regarded his article as a corrective exercise to all the misconceptions on King Dingane and claimed that 'many reasons could be given for this grievous error on the part of (Eurocentric) scholars'.<sup>82</sup> It should be noted here, Okoye is disconnected from Zulu oral traditions about King Dingane. He is in no way organic because he is from West Africa.

Okoye first set out to explain the king's domestic policy of eliminating enemies of state as 'just' considering the circumstances. To him these were not 'destructive' murders because King Dingane had to consolidate his position by destroying his real or potential enemies just as any other statesman. For King Dingane, these included the favourite chiefs of his predecessor, his male relatives, chiefs who had renounced their allegiance to the Zulu Kingdom, those who practised witchcraft, poisoned others, appropriated royal cattle or disobeyed the king. Okoye pointed out that King Shaka was more ruthless than King Dingane noting that most of the dependants of those struck down by the latter managed to survive and sought and received sanctuary at the British settlement of 'Port Natal', for example, Nqetho-chief of the Qwabe. These rebels naturally had no love for the king and were, responsible for the worsening relations between King Dingane and white settlers, as they repeatedly and maliciously spread the rumour that the Zulu monarch was contemplating exterminating the whites. Okoye argued that previous commentators had failed to recognise the important role played by these runaways from Zulu justice in the disruptions of relations

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

between Dingane and the Europeans and mistakenly ascribed the worsening of relations to the king's innate treachery, his uncontrollable caprice and his calculated premeditation.<sup>83</sup>

Okoye asserted that up to 1835 King Dingane was not hostile towards the white settlers, was at pains to court their presence and was consistent in the pursuit of this objective. He explained that it was necessary for the Zulu monarch to adopt an accommodating diplomatic stance because he coveted the settlers' trade goods. These included muskets in order to revolutionise the method of warfare by adding a regiment of amabutho armed with guns. He also needed their knowledge of the outside world as he was now aware, through Hlambamanzi, of the threat posed by both colonisation and capitalism as was the case in the Cape Colony.

To Okoye, King Dingane was neither capricious, self indulgent nor treacherous. He was not an absolute despot for he always consulted with his two prominent advisors, Nzobo and Ndlela in matters of state. He was neither an ingrate nor an unadulterated liar. He was a nationalist and continually attempted to revolutionise the Zulu military policy and strategies to confront the formidable technological power of the gun and musket. He was not hostile to whites in general and continually tried to retain the friendship of the European traders. In this he failed because of false accusations by the black wards of the Europeans who propagated unfounded rumours against him. Okoye did not absolve the traders of blame considering the bad blood that existed between the two groups. He accused them of failing to have greater confidence in the king as they embarked on measures that could only be interpreted as inimical to the king's interests.<sup>84</sup>

Okoye further suggested that the manipulative ivory traders and other white traders bore part of the blame for the murder of Piet Retief and company and for the shift of King Dingane's accommodationist diplomatic policy to a confrontational one. He disputed the argument presented by white historians that Piet Retief and his men were killed because the voortrekkers - who had already defeated Mzilikazi - presented the Zulu with a threat very different from any posed by the presence of the traders at Port Natal. He found such arguments unconvincing because King Dingane, as early as 1830, had become persuaded that the Zulu could not afford a military confrontation with Europeans and their superior

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<sup>83</sup> Okoye, 'Dingane', pp. 222-223.

<sup>84</sup> Okoye, 'Dingane' p. 234.

weapons. To Okoye - it was this conviction which was largely responsible for the king's wary disposition towards the Natal settlers as he constantly tried to make his army strong by means of muskets.

The 'untrustworthy' Europeans frustrated King Dingane's aspirations when they discontinued the sale of firearms. The appearance of the voortrekkers revived the king's hopes of overhauling his military policies and strategies, especially as Piet Retief had promised to send him the guns and horses that were to be seized from Sigonyela. Okoye contended that Retief's subsequent refusal to fulfil his promise was undoubtedly a heavy blow to the Zulu monarch. The subsequent staging of a mock, sham calvary charge, in the royal presence, by the voortrekkers, further aggravated matters. The sham fight increased the king's desire to obtain the guns and horses for his warriors. Since these could not be obtained by peaceful means, King Dingane was forced to resort to confrontation. Okoye thus absolved King Dingane of any wrongdoing and bad intentions towards whites in general. According to him, had the European traders not discontinued the sale of firearms, King Dingane would not have had cause to obtain these weapons by means of murder.<sup>85</sup> Okoye rather regarded King Dingane as one of the foremost African nationalists who was protecting his land and people from the marauding white settlers.

One of the major reasons why Okoye took a 'radical' viewpoint as far as King Dingane was concerned was the influence that the coming of independence in Africa in the 1960s had on him. This period also marked the ascendancy of Africanist history and historiography. For the first time retrieving the past of Africa became the major part or the agenda of both Africanist and nationalist historians. This oppositional history put Africans at the centre of analysis by challenging racial stereotypes and consensus type of history as far as the image of King Dingane was concerned. As an example, the latter was now seen through African eyes, not through Western eyes.

Another major reason why Okoye challenged the dominant racial stereotypes on King Dingane is provided by the postscript to Okoye's doctoral thesis. Here he supplied us with the rationale and the major reasons why he chose to study American images of Africa. To me his rationale is also applicable to the journal article on King Dingane. It can be rephrased as

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 235.

white historians' images of King Dingane. This article was published during the same year that he finished his doctoral degree. Therefore Okoye's project on King Dingane was to teach the outside world about the 19th century Zulu monarch-state as an institution, and as an exercise to expose what he regarded as falsehoods and distortions of white supremacists. He also wanted to give his mainly white audience an insight into the realities of African life and also to reassure his white mentors that they did not waste their invaluable time and remarkable talents. If one analyses Okoye's postscript we can conclude that History is not about the past, rather it is about how we think about the past in the present. From Okoye's research interests we learn that there is a 'past' that actually happened, but we can only know it through language and some form of representation. This makes 'history' at once, and always subjective.

## Conclusion

This chapter highlights the fact that most of the representations on King Dingane were shaped by the by indigenous discourses shaped by Magolwane kaMakhathini and Mshongweni. These representations are defined by and within the five themes discussed in chapter one of the theses. The image of the king as portrayed by Kunene, Nyembezi and the other scholars allows us to begin to understand the making of popular apprehensions of King Dingane. These apprehensions were not necessarily arrived at from the same vantage point. Some of the authors claimed that they were engaged in critical appraisal of the works produced by their elder peers. For example, Zondi claimed that he was reviewing Rolf Dhlomo's work.

But what also becomes apparent in this chapter is that both Vilakazi and Nyembezi use the established archive of the king to add further interpretations of his reign and image. Like the radical Vilakazi before him, Nyembezi challenged the assertion that the king gave the final order for the killing of the Dutch. He used the same argument that at the time, the king was being treated in preparation for the first fruits ceremony- **ukweshwama**, which kept him, confined to his royal hut. Like Vilakazi, Nyembezi also refuted that the order and statement for killing the voortrekkers was '**bulalani abathakathi**' (kill the wizards). He insisted that the signal was but a mere whistle.<sup>86</sup> He then cited Vilakazi's assertion that it was the women in the royal palace that influenced Nzobo kaDambuza to order the killing of the voortrekkers. This approach by both Vilakazi and Nyembezi was required by their scholarly, research dissertations. It drew attention to the limits on the acts of inventing and imagining King Dingane and his reign. It included the way in which the history of the image itself constrains

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid

manipulations of King Dingane in the present. Nevertheless, the transformation of the image of King Dingane into metaphors of contemporary politics was also adopted by politicians of the day as the next chapter will show.

To conclude, Zondi did not think that King Dingane was a patriot-concerned about his kingdom. But there were other historians who differed with this extremely negative viewpoint on the king, Credo Mutwa and Felix Okoye were amongst them. The former, focusing on the problems of race and racism in the 1970s, was of the opinion that

The recent history of South Africa is to a large extent the history of two races failing to understand each other's customs, and of tragedy resulting from this. Often a completely wrong interpretation of such an event has been put down in the history books-Bantu children have to learn such 'facts' in school, even when they already know the truth from their own tribal history. Such is the case of the murder of Piet Retief, the leader of the Dutch Voortrekkers. The version of this episode given in history book is as follows...The only explanation suggested for this action on the part of Dingana is that he was a lazy, sneaky, treacherous, cowardly, bloodthirsty savage. No history book has ever suggested that he might have had some good reason-however misguided what he did. Every year on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December Afrikaners celebrate...this day by making bitter and provocative speeches against the Bantu-speeches which inflame irresponsible young white men to acts of violence, and which cause the Bantu to stay locked in their huts all day for fear of being beaten up by these hooligans. The Bantu fear this day more than any other in the year, and if the celebrations continue to be salted and peppered with inflammatory speeches of this kind, sooner or later they are going to lead to bloodshed...His (King Dingane) dealings with Piet Retief, on the other hand, were entirely straightforward, and the murder, shameful as it was, could not be called an act of treachery.<sup>87</sup>

Mutwa's viewpoint corresponded to those adopted by the liberation movements during the period of the armed struggle whilst Msimang's and Kunene viewpoint corresponded to that of Inkatha. All these points will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### **King Dingane in the age of the Armed Struggle:**

#### **Introduction**

The utilisation or reworking of history for political purposes is one of its occupational hazards; and has been documented in several of the previous chapters. In the case of the various and contending images of King Dingane this became most extensive and intensive in the era of the armed struggle. Academic historians often have a parochial and limited view of history. They are dismissive of history and versions of the past produced outside the academy because they perceive themselves as the only 'true' historians. As a result of this misplaced and self-serving judgement academic historians seriously underplay the significance of the kinds of histories produced by ideologues of major social movements and political interests in broader society. Regarding King Dingane, there were both negative and positive viewpoints that emanated from these quarters. They were trumpeted by, among others, ANC, PAC and IFP ideologues.

This chapter focuses on both stable and changing views of ideologues from various political movements on the significance of the 16<sup>th</sup> of December in the era of the armed struggle. Its major aim is to highlight the way that histories produced outside the academy and particularly by Africans are an important and relevant archive that can and have played a significant role in the rewriting of our country's history. It will also include viewpoints of non-academic and academic productions of history on King Dingane which have been tinged by the struggles for political hegemony that characterised this period.

#### **1. The ANC and PAC: "Dingaan's Day", 'struggle' politics against apartheid and separate development.**

The accession power of the Nationalist Party in 1948 and its strict adherence to apartheid policies and separate development compelled the Youth League dominated ANC to review its stance on the commemoration of King Dingane. The 1930s and 1940s policies of Thema and cohorts that had at their core the politics of gradualism, collaborating with white power brokers and fighting for the franchise of educated

were now suspect.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of the radical Youth League spearheaded by in 1944, the ANC Congress in Bloemfontein formally created the ANC Youth League, as well as the Women's League. Anton Lembede was elected chairman, Oliver Tambo secretary and Walter Sisulu treasurer. This leadership undertook to develop a three-year programme to mobilise the ordinary black people of South Africa. The 1944 Youth League Manifesto preamble declared that 'Africanism must be promoted', meaning that Africans must struggle for development, progress and national liberation so as to occupy their rightful and honourable place among nations of the world. The Manifesto declared:

1. We believe in the divine destiny of nations
2. The goal of our struggles is Africanism and our motto is 'Africa's Cause Must Triumph'
3. We believe that the liberation of Africans will be achieved by Africans themselves. We reject foreign leadership of Africa
4. We may borrow useful ideologies from foreign ideologies, but we reject the wholesale importation of foreign ideologies into Africa....

**AND**

9. We believe in the unity of all Africans from the Mediterranean Sea in the North to the Indian and Atlantic Oceans in the South-and that Africans must speak with one voice.<sup>2</sup>

The disbanding of the CPSA in 1950, and the success of the ANC led mass movement of resistance through the Defiance Campaign two years later, forced communists to reassess their relationship with the ANC in particular, and with nationalism more generally. As the struggle against apartheid intensified in the early 1950s, a new theory was evolved to fit South Africa's 'unique' conditions. That theory, 'Colonialism of a Special Type' or internal colonialism, was the ideological glue which held the ANC and the newly formed South African Communist Party (SACP) alliance together for the next four decades.<sup>3</sup> This alliance was an expression of the ANC's policy of non-racialism that was expressed in the Freedom Charter Document drawn up in 1955.

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 4 of the thesis on Thema.

<sup>2</sup> ANC web page 'Unity in Action: A short History of the African National Congress (South Africa 1912-1982)', <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history,pp.18-19>. Hereafter [ancdocs/history](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history).

<sup>3</sup> See David Everatt, 'Alliance Politics of a Special Type: the Roots of the ANC/SACP Alliance, 1950-1954', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol 18, No 1, 1991, p.19.

The Freedom Charter, among other things, proclaimed that South Africa belongs to all that live in it. Some members of the ANC who believed in African Nationalism as earlier propagated by Lembede rejected this proclamation. The differences between those who supported non-racialism and those who did not were to play a large part in the internal dynamics of the organisation. In 1959 the group that was opposed to the Freedom Charter broke away and formed the Pan Africanist Congress. It included, amongst others, Robert Sobukwe. Again, in 1959 at its national conference in Durban, the ANC had taken the decision to conduct a massive nation-wide struggle against the Pass Laws. Both the PAC and the ANC took up anti-pass campaigns in 1960.

The PAC campaign began on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1960. People were asked to leave their passes at home and to gather at police stations to protest. People gathered in large numbers at Sharpeville in the Vaal and at Nyanga and Langa, near Cape Town. At Sharpeville police opened fire on the unarmed and peaceful crowd, killing 69 and wounding 186. The massacre of peaceful protesters brought a decade of peaceful mass-defiance campaigns and protest to an end. After the killing of innocent people the ANC called a national one day strike on March 28, 1960 and ordered a mass burning of passes. The government, alarmed by the powerful wave of mass action and support for this initiative, declared a state of emergency. They arrested a thousand of activists from the two organisations. Shortly thereafter, the South African government banned both the ANC and the PAC. These organisations refused to accept the banning order and decided to continue the struggle underground and in exile. Whilst in exile the ANC formally adopted the armed struggle and formed its military wing Umkhonto weSizwe, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1961. <sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that uMkhonto weSizwe had a guerrilla unit named after Johannes Nkosi. After this turning point the ANC formally commemorated “Dingaan’s Day”, officially renaming it “South African Heroes’ Day

A document on the history of the ANC published by the movement observed that on December 16, 1961, organised acts of sabotage against government installations took place. These acts marked the emergence of Umkhonto weSizwe. As the document emphasises, December 16 was a day of great historical significance. This was a public holiday in South Africa commemorating the military victory of the Afrikaner



Voortrekkers over African warriors on the banks of iNcome River (re-christened by the settlers Blood River) in Natal in 1838. Therefore this day was symbolic for the ascendancy of white power over blacks. The ANC document continues, 'to the Africans this day symbolises resistance and indomitable quest for freedom-it was on this day that Johannes Nkosi, a communist activist was killed in Durban in 1930'.<sup>5</sup> A leaflet issued by the High Command of Umkhonto weSizwe on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1961 signalled the dawn of a new era as it trumpeted:

Units of Umkhonto weSizwe today carried out planned attacks against government installations, particularly those connected with the policy of apartheid and race discrimination. Umkhonto weSizwe is a new, independent body, formed by Africans, it includes in its ranks South Africans of all races. It is not connected in any way with the so-called 'Committee for National Liberation' whose existence has been announced in the press.... The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom...the people's non-violent policies have been taken as a green light for government violence. Refusal to resort to force has been interpreted by the government as an invitation to use armed force against the people without any fear of reprisals. The methods of Umkhonto weSizwe mark a break with the past...It will be the fighting arm of the people against the government and its policies of race oppression. It will be the striking force of the people for liberty, for rights and for their final liberation!...<sup>6</sup>

The New Age newspaper reported the various bombings around the country in its December 1961 issue. In Johannesburg explosions shook government buildings on December 16 and 17. Time bombs hit the Rand again on the morning of December 21 when power pylons were damaged near Edenvale Hospital on the outskirts of Johannesburg.<sup>7</sup> From newspaper and police reports it emerges that the five Johannesburg explosions of 16<sup>th</sup> of December took place over a period of about five hours. One blast could be heard two miles apart. The police force was immediately alerted. Special branch raids were ordered on a number of well-known activists in the congress movement. It was also reported that explosions occurred in five places in Port Elizabeth and New Brighton between nine and ten o'clock, on 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1961. Damage was caused at the Labour Bureau, Administration offices and Bantu

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<sup>4</sup> 'Mzabalazo: A History of the African National Congress', ancdocs/history, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> 'Unity in Action: The formation of the Umkhonto weSizwe', ancdocs/history, p.24.

<sup>6</sup> Manifesto of Umkhonto weSizwe, Sechaba, vol .13, 1979.

<sup>7</sup> New Age, 28/12/1958, front page. See also a photograph of Umkhonto weSizwe poster pasted on Johannesburg walls and poles titled, "Umkhonto We Sizwe".

Education offices at New Brighton and at big electric substations. Shortly after the explosions, traffic police with wailing sirens raced through the streets. There followed police trucks and before long, a large number of police were on the streets. The police guarded all main government buildings over the weekend.<sup>8</sup> Police raided a number of homes, amongst them those of Caleb Mayekiso, Mzisi Mancoko, Vuyisile Mini, Frances Baard and Lungile Fuyani. Harold Strachan was arrested and charged under the Explosives Act and with malicious injury to property. In Johannesburg, the police detained Reggie Vandeyar, a member of the Transvaal Indian Congress and in Durban homes of many members of the Congress Alliance were raided. At the home of Curnick Ndlovu the police carefully examined two small tins containing a black substance. Believing that they had found some explosive material, the police puzzled over the contents of the tins until eventually it dawned on them that it was only stove polish.<sup>9</sup>

A poster was distributed around the major cities by uMkhonto weSizwe to coincide with the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1961 bombings. It read

This is a new, independent body formed by Africans. It includes in its ranks South Africans of all races. It is not connected in any way with a so-called Committee for Liberation whose existence has been announced in the press. Umkonto weSizwe will carry on the struggle for freedom and democracy by new methods which are necessary to complement the actions of the established national liberation movement and our members jointly and severally place themselves under political guidance of that movement... We hope that we (bring) the Government and its supporters to their senses before it is too late so that both the Government and its policies can be changed before matters reach the desperate stage of civil war. We believe our actions to be a blow against Nationalist preparation for civil war and military rule. In these actions we are working in the best interests of all our people in this country, Black, Brown and White, whose future happiness and well being cannot be attained without the overthrow of the Nationalist.<sup>10</sup>

Search warrants used on the early morning raids on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1961 empowered the police to seize the usual typewriters, letters, minutes, including new items: Nitric acid, one gallon tins, plastic containers, rubber gloves, french chalk and other substances used for the manufacture of explosives. These warrants were supposedly investigating offences committed under the Arms and Ammunitions Act,

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<sup>8</sup> New Age, 21/12/1961 and 28/12, 1961.

<sup>9</sup> New Age, 28/12, 1961.

<sup>10</sup> New Age, 21/12/1961 and 28/12, 1961.

the Unlawful Organisations Act, the Criminal Laws Amendment Acts and other acts.<sup>11</sup>

Govan Mbeki's unpublished draft manuscript on the struggle for liberation in Port Elizabeth indicates the problems faced by uMkhonto we Sizwe:

In 1961 in December 16, MK started sabotage activities in various parts of the country. They were small beginnings, but they built up over time into Umkhonto weSizwe Army, but soon the police brought their own chemist to examine materials at the point of explosion, they immediately found out that permanganate of potash from Lennon. One of our comrades who worked obtained fifty pounds of permanganate for our use. We discovered in the course of time that permanganate absorbed moisture and was ineffective as part of the mixture of the material used for explosives. In course of time the units found themselves without explosives and on a few occasions explosives were stolen as in Durban and Johannesburg the MK units were infiltrated. But in Johannesburg the MK units were infiltrated by the security police, leading to the arrest of the entire units.... The units of MK in the Eastern Cape, from Pondoland through Knysna, went up to about 350, but they had no materials to work with.... The National Command decided to go a step further and embark on military operations against the Nationalist Party government, because sabotage activities had virtually come to a stand still.... Joe Modise had come from Johannesburg to learn how the bomb, which was developed by the technical committee worked...<sup>12</sup>

Members of Umkhonto weSizwe High Command included Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni and Elias Motsoaledi. In 1961, during the period of underground mobilisation, Nelson Mandela undertook various trips to the African continent. He met and made contacts with African leaders, politicians and freedom fighters. Mandela returned to South Africa in July 1962 and worked underground until he was arrested in Natal on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1962. He was convicted on November 7, and sentenced to three year's imprisonment on the charge of incitement and two years on the charge of leaving the country without valid documents. Other members of Umkhonto weSizwe High Command continued with the struggle but were arrested on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1963 on a farm near Rivonia. The police found a document titled 'Operation Mayibuye' at Rivonia, a strategic planning document drafted by members of Umkhonto weSizwe's High Command. The subsequent Rivonia Trial began on

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Govan Mbeki, 'Then and After: The historical sketch of the struggle for liberation in Port Elizabeth', unpublished manuscript in my possession, p.79 and p.111. There is a dearth of information on these issues because Sechaba and Dawn were not published in the 1960s.

October 1963 and lasted until June 12 1964 when a sentence of life imprisonment was passed to members of Umkhonto's High Command.<sup>13</sup> To tighten the noose around the ANC and to send a chilling message to political activists within the country, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1964 the government sent three prominent ANC activists, Vuyisile Mini, Wilton Khayingo and Zizakile Mkhabela to the gallows for Umkhonto weSizwe related activities.

The lack of resources and materials, combined with the state's crippling strategy of imprisoning the entire membership of Umkhonto weSizwe high command and technical committee, temporarily rendered the group leaderless within the confines of South Africa. On his arrest for his role during the December 16, 1961 sabotage activities Govan Mbeki writes:

MK activities on sabotages started on 16 December 1961. Before that a small technical committee consisting of Harold Strachan (Jock), Joseph Jack and Johnny (now an MP as he confirmed to me) had been training Sisa Dukada and Mabandla from Transkei.... Three or four days after the explosions of December 1961, Sisa Dukada and Mabandla were arrested in the Transkei, because Sisa Dukada had set an incendiary bomb at the magistrate offices at Engcobo, but it exploded without starting a fire. The police then took the gallon tin and went from garage to garage to find out who had bought a gallon tin of petrol in that plastic bottle. The petrol attendants pointed to Sisa Dukada who made a mistake of filling the bottle to the top when he should have left space below the detonator for petrol to catch alight...Sisa then pointed out to the police that he was trained in Port Elizabeth ...that led to the arrest of the three members of the technical committee. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of January I was arrested and placed in solitary confinement in the circular structure above Rooi Hell...<sup>14</sup>

The ANC, through the efforts of Oliver Tambo, the Acting President of the ANC, regrouped in an effort to fill the leadership vacuum but were in no position over the subsequent few years to organise sabotages to mark their counter-commemorations of 16th December. According to Peter Tshikare and Wilson Ngcayiya, Wilton Mkwazi played a very important role in reviving the internal ANC branches and uMkhonto weSizwe cells after the Rivonia trial.<sup>15</sup> As a result in July 1967 Umkhonto weSizwe

<sup>13</sup> 'Unity in Action', ancedocs/history, p.35.

<sup>14</sup> Mbeki, 'Then and After' p.100.

<sup>15</sup> The author corroborated this fact with Mkwazi during an interview on 28/2/2001 in King Williams Town. Both Ngcayiya and Tshikare are ANC veterans and were interviewed by me for the South African Democracy Trust's project on the Road to Democracy. The interviews with Ngcayiya were held on the 11th and 12th/1/2001. He pointed out to me that Mkwazi stayed at his house in Dube, Soweto during his endeavours to revive the internal underground structures of the ANC. Tshikare, a retired SANDF army general, and a former member of uMkhonto weSizwe was interviewed by myself. On the 12/2/2001. He elaborated the fact that

was to join forces with the ZAPU and engage into a battle with the joint forces of Rhodesia and South Africa at Wankie and Sipolilo. These battles ranged until late 1968 and ended in 'failure' notwithstanding the fact that members of Umkhonto<sup>16</sup> gained the necessary experience in combat and other military strategies. One outcome of these events led to the Morogoro Conference that was held in Tanzania on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1969. One of the aims and objectives of this conference was to review the aims, objectives and policies of the movement. As a result of this reorganisation the ANC again officially commemorated the "Heroes' Day" on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1969. In a speech titled 'Capture the Citadel', that was clandestinely broadcasted through "Radio Freedom" to South Africa on the eight anniversary of the formation of Umkhonto weSizwe, Oliver Tambo commented:

Thus, the formation of Umkhonto weSizwe joins together three periods in our history: the first the period of wars of resistance waged by our forefathers against white invaders of our country. This lasted centuries. The next began with the formation of the African National Congress, which meant the birth of a new united African nation in South Africa. The third the emergence of Umkhonto weSizwe itself. This signified the resumption of armed struggle under modern conditions for the restoration of our land to its rightful owners... Our Morogoro Conference sought to accelerate our progress towards this armed struggle confrontation with the enemy... We have to redouble our efforts to eliminate flaws in our work and create an increasingly more efficient machine for the prosecution of our struggle at all levels whether we operate in South Africa or from outside its borders. Already the distribution of thousand of leaflets and broadcasts in east London, Durban Cape Town, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth under the fascist noses of Vorster and his execution squad-this had already demonstrated the determination of the ANC and our people to outclass the forces of reaction in the struggle for the seizure of power and for the liberation of our country...<sup>17</sup>

The significance of the widening of the commemorations away from the focus on King Dingane to all the heroes of the past was a strategic move to accord the king national rather than an ethnic based status. It was also a move to recognise him as one of the original freedom fighters whose ancestral spirit was protecting, driving, guiding the twentieth century freedom fighters of uMkhonto weSizwe, including other fallen heroes. From a speech titled 'Mobilise our Black Power' presented by Tambo on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Umkhonto weSizwe, on December 16, 1971, Tambo elaborated

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he was one of the first people to be contacted by Mkwazi after his escape from imprisonment. He was tasked by Mkwazi to visit and revive each branch in the Vaal, Johannesburg and Pretoria. According to him, his efforts were partially successful as they managed to send many cadres to Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania.

<sup>16</sup> Some of them are members of the South African National Defence Force upper echelons.

<sup>17</sup> O. R. Tambo speech, 'Capture the Citadel', 16<sup>th</sup> December 1969, [ancdocs/history](#).

Let us arm ourselves with the willpower and fearlessness of Shaka: the endurance and vision of Moshoeshoe: the courage and resourcefulness of Sekhukhuni: the tenacity and valour of Hintsa; the military initiative and guerrilla tactics of Maqoma, the farsightedness and dedication of S.P. Makgatho, Sol Plaatjies, Langelibalele Dube, Isaka kaSeme, W.B. Rabusana, Meshack Pelem, Alfred Mangena, Paramount Chief Letsie 2 of Lesotho and all the founding fathers of the African National Congress....This is the day when we pause and re-examine ourselves and our organisation. Are we living up to what is expected of the members of the revolutionary and fighting organisation? Is the OATH we took of any meaning and substance to those who swore to fight until freedom is won? We unite and follow in the footsteps of our martyrs-in the footsteps of the men who fell in the frontline in South Africa and Zimbabwe and other countries-men such as Molefe, Mini, Khayinga, Mkaba, Bongco, Solwandle, Sallojee, Imam Haroun, Paul Peterson, Patrick Molaoa, and yesterday Ahmed Timol. What hope do their children have....Let us think of all the patriots languishing in Vorster's dungeons-Mandela, Mbeki, Motsoaledi, Bram Fischer, Ahmed Kathrada, Goldberg. Others like Mrs Florence Matomela, Alpheus Madiba, Caleb Mayekiso were killed in prison...<sup>18</sup>

Tambo's speech is focused on unity between the different indigenous ethnic groups hence its focus on leaders from some of these groups. A possible explanation that there is no single reference to King Dingane in the above speech is because King Shaka represents amaZulu as an ethnic group. The focus on unity against ethnic division by the acting president of the ANC was inescapably influenced by the current circumstances and future needs of the organisation in their struggle against the divide and rule strategies utilised by their opponents. At another level this focus shows us that History is a tremendously political tool that can be utilised as a kind of quarry to dig out ammunition against opponents rather than try and understand the past in its own terms.

Subsequently various issues of Sechaba<sup>19</sup> and Dawn, mouthpieces and respective official newsletters of the ANC and uMkhonto weSizwe, featured articles on counter-commemorations of "Dingaan's Day". The ANC also organised annual events to mark this day. In London, on the evening of 16th December 1976, Braam Fischer, a white South African vilified by the apartheid state for his stand against its racist policies, together with Oliver Tambo, were conferred - with the World Peace

<sup>18</sup> O.R. Tambo speech, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1971, Sechaba, February 1972.

<sup>19</sup> Sechaba, Second Quarter 1977, January 1977, December 1980, December 1982, December 1988.

Council's highest award, the Joliot Curie Medal.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere and internally within South Africa, the ANC adopted strategies that challenged the official commemoration of December 16. On the very same day that Fischer and Tambo were honoured a leaflet titled, "December 16th is a historic day in the freedom struggle" was distributed in Cape Town. It read as follows:

The national liberation movement, under the leadership of the ANC, formed UMKHONTO WESIZWE in 1961 when it became clear that only through armed struggle - no matter how long and bloody - could freedom be won. UMKHONTO provides our people with the skill of modern warfare. The bomb blasts and sabotage actions that rocked South Africa in the early 1960's are being heard again. Now the conditions and opportunities for our struggle have become more favourable. The oppressor will be met bullet for bullet here in South Africa. Our youth - African, Indian and Coloured - must join UMKHONTO in ever bigger numbers and train to become skilled freedom fighters... Let us continue to convert our anger into revolutionary action. Let us harass the enemy on every front. On this December 16th - Heroes day - the ANC dips its revolutionary banner in memory of all those comrades who have fallen in battle. To all the parents we say "Be proud for giving birth to such heroic children. They have not died in vain and we will continue the battle until victory is achieved..."<sup>21</sup>

One can argue that the ANC was raising its profile among young South Africans because of the ungovernable situation permeating the country as a result of the 1976 Soweto Uprisings. The Sechaba report maintained that these leaflets were scattered to mark and celebrate the founding of Umkhonto and to commemorate fallen heroes like King Dingane. Reporting on December 16<sup>th</sup> celebration of 1976, the January 1977 issue of Sechaba declared, "December 16 is known throughout South Africa as 'Heroes Day'. On the day Umkhonto weSizwe was formed in 1961, 123 years after impis of Dingane confronted the white invaders at the banks of iNcome, which the racists call 'Blood River". The reports and sabotage actions also served to assist the ANC's recruitment campaigns. Disaffected young people were called upon to rally behind the ANC and join Umkhonto in even greater numbers for military and guerrilla warfare training."<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the ANC declared 1979 the 'Year of the Spear (Umkhonto)' in commemoration of the centenary of impi yase'Sandhlwana'. This battle took place

<sup>20</sup> Sechaba, Second Quarter 1977.

<sup>21</sup> Sechaba, 1977.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, British MPs, members of the diplomatic corps, attended this gathering from Vietnam, Jamaica, and Cuba, Liberia among others.

between forces of the Zulu Kingdom and the British Empire in 1879. The ANC leaflet celebrating the event pointed out that it was important to learn about the past and use the past in order to plan for the future. It was also self critical as it highlighted difficult internal dynamics within the organisation. It acknowledged that the organisation was not a homogenous entity as it was riddled by problems of factionalism and ethnicity, among other problems. In this respect the leaflet advocated the use of history in order to fight against ethnicity, disunity and spies as forces of destabilisation by adopting what it referred to particularly as the ‘positive traditions of our people:’

Amabutho ka Cetshwayo (Cetshwayo’s Regiments) won great victory at the battle of Isandhlwana. We commemorate this event not because we like to glorify our past. On the contrary we draw serious lessons from our past, lessons which help us to take decisions for the execution of the struggle today, we assess and evaluate our past with the aim of mastering the present and planning the future...whilst basing ourselves on the positive traditions of our people we have to wage a bitter struggle against negative traditions and tendencies: laziness in order to fight against ethnicity, factionalism, sectarianism and complacency. This is the essence of the interconnection between revolution and tradition...Isandhlwana taught us many lessons. One of them is the significance of unity, an ideal which is cherished by all people and finds expression in our freedom songs: "Zulu, Mxhosa, Msuthu hlanganai" (Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho unite). It is important to note that unity has a clear political content...We exclude those who collaborate with the racists or those who are working for international imperialism...In Wankie operations of 1967/8 the soldiers of Umkhonto-Spear showed high qualities of courage and determination, high political convictions and moral standards. These qualities included physical fitness, high mobility and speed, iron discipline and fearlessness. Like Cetshwayo’s soldiers they were confident in their own capability and making skilful use of the tactic of surprise attack-hit and run and drawing the enemy up all manner of blind alleys...<sup>23</sup>

The following year, in 1980, the ANC issued a leaflet celebrating various armed attacks in South Africa highlighting, ‘early 1960s Wankie battle, from Ermelo to Durban, Fort Jackson, Orlando, Boyseens, Sasolburg, Chiawelo and Voortrekkershoogte’.<sup>24</sup> In the following year, in 1981 celebration’s of “Heroes’ Day”, Sechaba extolled the virtues of King Dingane’s amabutho as freedom fighters

The African National Congress calls you to observe the Day of the People’s Heroes, December 16. Let us together rise on this historic day to pay tribute to the heroes of the freedom struggle, the day on which King Dingane’s brave

<sup>23</sup> ‘The Year of the Spear’, [ancdocs/history](#).

<sup>24</sup> Sechaba, Second Quarter 1980.



soldiers laid down their lives with honour in defence of our freedom, the day on which Umkhonto weSizwe was formed in 1961.<sup>25</sup>

The editorial of the same publication added

December 16 is an important day in the history of our movement! On December 16, 1838, one of the fiercest battles took place in the Natal province of South Africa...The history of anti-colonial resistance in South Africa knows many such incidents. Our people fought valiantly and this tradition is part of our history and heritage.<sup>26</sup>

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, uMkhonto we Sizwe's own journal, Dawn, published various articles on African leaders and kings like Makanda, Shaka, Sekhukhune, Moshoeshoe and Dingane. These triumphalist articles eulogised their greatness as African nationalists and 'freedom fighters'. The journal also featured assorted counter-commemoration articles titled 'Izibongo zeNkos'uDingane'<sup>27</sup> and 'Why did Dingane kill Retief?'.<sup>28</sup> In the latter article the readers are warned about the abuse of history by white South Africans. The latter are accused of using Social Darwinism as an ideological tool. The article defined Social Darwinism as a racist theory that proposed that certain races, the Negroid type, were static, and remained savages whilst the Caucasians were dynamic and evolved into civilised groups.

The same articles also provided a revisionist account of the battle at iNcome. The author of the December 1979 article argued that Boers, the so-called forces of 'light' and 'civilisation' did not defeat nor depose King Dingane from his throne. It was his brother Mpande who defeated and deposed him at the battle of Magqongqo in 1840. As it explained

Every year, on December 16, there is a spate of claptrap from pulpits and platforms and press about how, at Blood River, on December 16, 1838, the forces of civilisation and of light, the messengers of God ... Himself, destroyed the power of barbarism and darkness in the shape of Dingane's Zulus...That was on December 16, which the Afrikaners now celebrate as a public holiday to mark what they have been taught by Nationalists historians to believe was the 'decisive' battle between white and black. In fact however, Blood River was by no means a decisive battle. The Afrikaners lacked the military power of the British...

<sup>25</sup> Sechaba, December 1981, p.4.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Dawn, Vol 2 No 6, December 1978, p.12.

<sup>28</sup> Dawn, Vol 3, No 11, December 1979, pp.4-9.

It was only in January 1840, when Dingane's treacherous brother, Mpande... that the latter (Dingane) was defeated and forced to flee.<sup>29</sup>

The PAC also appropriated King Dingane in a positive, though slightly different way, through their present Deputy President, S. Pheko. In the 1980s, Pheko wrote several articles on King Dingane whilst in exile. He adopted an unashamedly pro-King Dingane stance.<sup>30</sup> Pheko postulated the theory that African states, kingdoms and societies lived a harmonious, static life destroyed by the arrival of white settlers. He argued that all towns with colonial names should revert and use their 'original' African names. Pheko went on to wrongly claim that the pre-contact and original place name-for the present-day city of Pietermaritzburg (the first town established by the voortrekkers in the Mzimkhulu-Thukela region) was uMgungundlovu.<sup>31</sup> It seems likely that before the arrival of Retief and party, indigenous Africans referred to the place where the present town is located under the names of different chiefdoms, like Machibisa and Dambuza. These names still exist even today but refer to African townships around the town. The original name of the area where the town of Pietermaritzburg is situated is probably Machibisa. It fell under this chiefdom which at one stage was controlled by a female chief.

What Pheko did reflect accurately however is that black South Africans had long dubbed Pietermaritzburg as uMgungundlovu. Here black South Africans adopted a classic weapon of the weak associating an act of cultural subversion with an earlier episode of military resistance. How far back this went is uncertain but would be fascinating to know.

Pheko, like Nkosi, Nzula, Ngubane and H. Dhloomo before him, believed that commemoration of December 16 was a charade and an insult to his people's dignity,

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<sup>29</sup> Dawn, Vol 3, No 11, pp. 4 and 9.

<sup>30</sup> For other pro-King Dingane images during this period see iNjula, November 1988, No 1.

<sup>31</sup> S.E.M. Pheko, 'Azania: Answer to slave colonial South Africa', New York, 1991, pp.12-13, SA: The betrayal of a colonised people, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 10-11. In fact, this name is the original name of King Dingane's homestead which is more than 300 kilometres away from the town of 'Pietermaritzburg and the king's royal homestead was established before the arrival of the voortrekkers. It seems likely that before the arrival of Retief and party, indigenous Africans referred to the place where the present town is located under the names of the different chiefdoms like the Machibisa and Dambuza. These names still exist even today but refer to African townships in the vicinity of the town. The original name of the area where the present-day town of Pietermaritzburg is situated is probably Machibisa.

civilisation and character. He argued that the commemoration was an event used by the white South Africans, in particular Afrikaners to justify dispossession of land belonging to Africans as reflected in the so-called 'Retief-Dingane' Treaty. For Pheko

This 'agreement' supposedly signed by Dingane giving land to the trekkers is extremely puzzling and leaves unanswered many questions... The land was being 'sold' to Retief, yet he did not sign the 'agreement' (someone else did on his behalf). It is more likely the alleged agreement (the so-called Retief-Dingane Treaty) was made out after Piet Retief's death to make a case against the British colonial government, which had its eyes on Natal. There can be no proof that the alleged X mark found on this document is that of King Dingane and it is most unlikely that Dingane would have been party to such an agreement as traditionally, land is not sold in African society. Yet despite the suspicious nature of this document, the 16th of December each year is celebrated by the Boer descendants in South Africa. The struggle between Dingane and Piet Retief is seen as a battle between light and 'western Christian civilisation' on one hand and 'darkness and barbarism on the other'.<sup>32</sup>

By the same token the commemoration of December 16 also propagated an exclusive identity based on white racism.<sup>33</sup> Events like the Day of the Vow were depicted by Pheko as part of Afrikaner mythology and having nothing to do with civilisation. For this reason, Pheko described King Dingane as a **Friend of True (African) Civilisation**.<sup>34</sup> To him, African Civilisation was the true civilisation for it was inclusive and characterised by the indigenous people's quest for human rights in their own land.

In a publication written in the early 1990s,<sup>35</sup> Pheko contended that the then political negotiations for a democratic dispensation in South Africa were of no value, recalling the first fatal King Dingane-Retief 'negotiations on land issues. He adopted a profound nationalist though 'one dimensional' viewpoint to state his claim that 'Azania was a land of milk and honey' before the arrival of the white settlers,

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<sup>32</sup> It fell under this chieftom which at one stage was controlled by a female ruler. S. Pheko, 'The battle of Blood River' in *Apartheid-The story of the dispossessed people*, London, 1984, Chapter 6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 7.

<sup>35</sup> I have misplaced the reference to this article because of my to and from movement between KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

particularly referring to the voortrekkers who invaded the Zulu kingdom.<sup>36</sup> At the opposite end to Pheko's view of the king was Mazisi Kunene, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a member of Zulu royal house and Themba Msimang.

## **2. Mazisi Kunene: Seeing King Dingane's Diplomatic policy through the Image of King Shaka**

Mazisi ka Mdabuli Kunene was born in Durban, Natal – South Africa, on 12 May 1930. He began writing poetry as a boy and by the age of ten or eleven was submitting poems to newspapers and magazines. He left South Africa for England in 1959, having completed his Masters thesis titled 'An analytical survey of Zulu Poetry both Traditional and Oral' at the University of Natal in 1957. His aim in England was to conduct research in comparative literature and to complete a doctoral dissertation on Zulu literature in the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University. Instead he got involved in politics, becoming in 1962 the United Nations representative for the African National Congress and later its director of finance in 1972. In addition he held office in the Anti-Apartheid and Boycott Movement (1959-1968), Committee of African Organisations (1960-1966), Pan African Youth Movement (1964) and Afro-Asian Literature Organisation (1966-1970).<sup>37</sup>

Through both periods of his writing Kunene portrayed King Dingane in an extremely negative light. However his interpretation of the role of the king shifted significantly in a way which may be related to Inkatha's reconstruction of Zulu history. For his masters thesis he undertook extensive fieldwork in Umzinto, Inanda, Dumisa, Stanger and Embo areas to supplement documentary data that included manuscripts by James Stuart and Killie Campbell on *izibongo*.<sup>38</sup> He further emphasised for us that he relied on books by Samuelson, A.T. Bryant and Henry Stanley for the historical account of life in 'pre-conquest' times. He shared similar sentiments with these authors as far as his perception of King Dingane.<sup>39</sup> He was and still is explicitly dismissive of the

<sup>36</sup> S. Pheko, 'The battle of Blood River'

<sup>37</sup> See Earnest Mathabela, *Mazisi Kunene*, University of Texas-Austin, nd. See also the sleeve of the book *Emperor Shaka, the Great*, Heinemann, London, 1979. Also some of the information was gathered during an engaging interview and enjoyable discussions with Prof. Kunene by the author, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Kunene, *Emperor Shaka*, preface, p.v.

<sup>39</sup> In 1996 I had an informal discussion with the amiable and approachable Professor Kunene on King Dingane at the University of Natal- the main reason was the fact that I wanted to set up an interview. He declined and told me in a diplomatic and polite manner that he was not interested

king. Kunene claimed that King Dingane was a revengeful reject whose morbid pettiness drove him to murder whole families without any concrete reason in mind.<sup>40</sup> He described him as a cruel, inhumane and treacherous coward with a lower intellect. Furthermore he lacked military acumen when compared to King Shaka

people would rather have had Prince Mhlangana who, though not exceptionally brave, was more humane than Dingane. Conditions were such that a man who was more humane and more statesmanlike would have done greater good than a bloodthirsty soldier of mediocre intelligence.<sup>41</sup>

Kunene doubted King Dingane's leadership qualities and mocked him as a politically immature failure who did not possess problem-solving skills and hence was overwhelmed by the presence of the white settlers in his kingdom. The art of diplomacy needed an astute leader when dealing with foreign affairs, 'a great statesman to manipulate events to the best advantage of the country. Dingane was not such a statesman' as far as Kunene was concerned. To him, King Dingane cut a pathetic figure. He was timid and always panicking. His failure to deal effectively with the threat posed by the white settlers and internal dissension antagonised everyone and finally brought disaster to the Zulu Empire.<sup>42</sup> He lived in a constant state of fear of Europeans and other subjects, thus the claim 'he died an unhappy man, pursued and hated by his own people'.<sup>43</sup>

Kunene further asserted that the manner in which Dingane assumed the kingship of the Zulu nation was not in accordance with its high ideals of bravery. The act was one of treachery rather than bravery. Kunene believed that Dingane did not kill Shaka because he wanted to perform a duty to what he perceived as 'a nation building exercise', nor was the 'nation' behind him in what he did. He reasoned that it was because of this that his reception by the 'people' after assuming the throne was 'cold'. Comparing Dingane to Shaka, Kunene was of the opinion that Dingane had not endeared himself to the 'people' either by his deeds of bravery or personal contact. As a person, Kunene claimed, King Dingane lacked the quick wittedness of King Shaka

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for there was nothing much to discuss about King Dingane whom he regarded as a failure and embarrassment. King Shaka was his man. But two years later in May 1998 he invited me to his house and we had a fruitful meeting and he still held steadfast to his view on King Dingane.

<sup>40</sup> Kunene, 'An analytical survey', p.132.

<sup>41</sup> Kunene, *Emperor Shaka*, p.141.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.141.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.129.

and was primarily motivated by 'burning' personal ambitions,<sup>44</sup> and the yearning for power. King Dingane's decrees which allowed his subjects to have more personal freedom, including freedom of choice, were dismissed by Kunene with the words, 'these events, important as they are socially, are not of great national importance'.<sup>45</sup> His Masters thesis also depicts Mnkabayi as strategizing, influencing and manipulating Dingane, the 'weakling' to adopt an anti-Shakan stance and playing the leading role in the hatching of the plan to assassinate Shaka.

In 1979 Kunene, now in exile, published his seminal book, Emperor Shaka the Great<sup>46</sup> based on the existing archive of oral traditions. Although the book deals with King Shaka, it is possible for us to reconstruct Kunene's image of King Dingane. He portrayed the latter as an inverted image of his principal subject. Kunene observed that relatives and friends both on his mother's side (Ngcobo family) and father's side took great pride in preserving and narrating our national history'.<sup>47</sup> Among other people who helped him on this project was Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi whom he referred to as his

brother and leader, who greatly inspired and encouraged me. His glorious example of leadership is a true continuation of the tradition of his ancestor, Shaka the Great himself. Through such visions as he possess, the actions of the forefathers became a living reality<sup>48</sup>

In this work we notice a shift in Kunene's perceptions concerning the relationship involving both King Dingane and Regent Mnkabayi. Kunene denounces Dingane as power-hungry and claims that the latter tried to influence Mnkabayi to adopt a negative view towards King Shaka by proclaiming, 'I am disturbed by the policies of Shaka; They shall bring disaster to our whole nation. I have no faith in promises of white strangers'.<sup>49</sup> Mnkabayi is depicted as a constructive person who empathised with King Shaka as she tried by all means to discourage the 'evil', forever jealous, reckless, impulsive, narrow-minded and ambitious Prince Dingane from inflicting damage to the Zulu throne. Here Kunene presents to us the pragmatic, sympathetic

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.140.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> M. Kunene, Emperor Shaka.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.xi.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 303.

Princess Mnkabayi - the power broker- dismissing Prince Dingane's concerns during one his 'jealous fits'

I, too, am beginning to see strange things in your brother's life... Despite all this I still have faith in him. Perhaps this dark cloud shall pass, And we may yet see a new and powerful king, Yes I still have great in him. He is a king most needed in our times. Such sharpness of mind only comes as a gift from the Creator...You, too, must help your brother and consolidate his power.<sup>50</sup>

Thus to Kunene King Shaka's leadership was constructive and promoted nation building and unity among the black people.<sup>51</sup> In his book Kunene 'respected' and sympathised with Regent Mnkabayi maybe because of 'newly found' empathy and pride of the Zulu royal house and history in the 1980s.

Kunene portrayed King Dingane in animalistic terms, namely a black mamba - lethal, dangerous and poisonous for harbouring hard feelings against the king. He painted a picture of the king as an emotional person who 'got carried away by his own thoughts and pride.'<sup>52</sup> Because of this he would never attain the glory of Shaka's rule. Mazisi Kunene criticised what he regarded as King Dingane's unreasonable, short-sighted, combative and confrontationalist diplomatic policy towards white settlers. He claimed that the king harboured deep suspicion against them and was bitter that they participated so intimately in the affairs of the Zulu court. He was keen to stage an open confrontation with them. Unlike Shaka, who advocated skilled accommodative diplomatic strategies against them-including sending Sotobe to the Cape to establish diplomatic ties with the representatives of the British throne, Dingane demanded a strike that was immediate and decisive.<sup>53</sup> Thus he was driven by his compulsive hatred of whites and was scornful of King Shaka's constructive and accommodative diplomatic approaches. In this regard Kunene's views accord with those of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p.300.

<sup>51</sup> M. Kunene, *Emperor Shaka*, p.355.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 301.

<sup>54</sup> See Buthelezi's perception of King Dingane, these are to a large extent similar to those of Kunene. In the preface to his study Kunene pays homage to Buthelezi as a brother and leader. It is perhaps not surprising that Mazisi Kunene is not in favour of what he termed as the unreasonable and confrontationalist diplomatic policies of King Dingane regarding whites in general and receptive of King Shaka's accommodative policies.

In the late 1990s Kunene completely reversed his attitude towards King Dingane. He played a prominent role in the debates around representing the Zulu viewpoint as far as the Battle of iNcome is concerned, including the construction of an alternative monument to commemorate this battle. In his address to the audience who had attended a seminar organised by the Department of Arts and Culture<sup>55</sup> he proposed the view that the king and the battle should be viewed within the global and comparative context - by comparing the king to 'great white heroes' like Russians who stood up against the might of the Germans during the Second World War.<sup>56</sup>

### **3. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha and the Images of King Dingane in the 1970s and 80s**

Like Paul Forsyth, I am of the opinion that the influence of non-academic productions of history is especially evident in societies permeated by sharp political conflicts. The warring factions reflect these in sharply divergent productions of the past. This was clearly the case in South Africa where political movements like the ANC, PAC and Inkatha systematically turned to the past to find ideological explanations for their policies, programme of action and activities in the present. Paul Forsyth believes that the most graphic example of this in recent years has been the construction of particular version of Zulu history by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.<sup>57</sup>

Forsyth divides Chief Buthelezi's political career into five main periods, each of which corresponded to his appeals, to, and reliance upon, different sets of historical traditions. Between 1951 and 1968, as he battled to assume a position of power within Zulu politics, he relied on Zulu history to assert an 'historic' right to wield power. Between 1968 and 1972, Chief Buthelezi climbed his way to the pinnacle of power within Zulu Bantustan politics not only through his appeals to Zulu history and traditions, but also by appealing to Afrikaner history. His use of Afrikaner historiography and traditions corresponded with his efforts to establish himself as a credible homeland leader in the eyes of the then government.

<sup>55</sup> Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology seminar, University of Zululand, 27/11/98. This document is at DACST, probably with the Professor Xulu, the Deputy Director general for he was instrumental in commissioning the paper and subsequent reports.

<sup>56</sup> He did this by challenging what he rightly or wrongly perceived as Prof. Laband's pro voortrekker sentiments after the latter has presented his paper.

<sup>57</sup> P. Forsyth, 'The Past in the Service of the Present: the Political Use of History by Chief A.N.M.G. Buthelezi 1951-1991', South African Historical Journal, 26, 1992, pp.74-92.



The third phase in the development of Chief Buthelezi's historical discourse fell in the period between 1972 and 1979. During these years he pursued his ambition of attaining a national political following using African nationalism as well as the ideology associated with the black consciousness movement-this took the shape through the annual commemoration of King Shaka's Day in September. The period between 1979 and 1983 marks the fourth phase in the development of his historical discourse.<sup>58</sup> The period saw him re-writing the history of African nationalism in South Africa and claiming the mantle of the 'original' ANC influenced by accommodative Shakan ideals as opposed to the ANC 'mission in exile' of the 1960s influenced by confrontationalist "Dingane- like' ideals. To some extent, Inkatha's revival of King Shaka's commemoration was a response to the ANC's focus use of December 16th as 'Heroes Day'. Chief Buthelezi, like other writers before him, names his fear of politically, racially, ethnically based genocide and extermination.<sup>59</sup> However he did so in an ambiguous fashion. On one hand, he accused the Afrikaners of being masterminds of racially motivated genocide. Addressing Piet Koornhof, then Minister of Co-operation and Development, Chief Buthelezi remarked, 'Do I really fear for my life because of you? Today's political events make me as a Black afraid of the future. I fear Whites will one day shoot my children because they fear them'.<sup>60</sup> Again, and on the other hand, he accused the ANC of ethnically based genocide against what he referred to as the Zulu Nation,<sup>61</sup> and also of pursuing political genocide against big business.<sup>62</sup> Later, between 1983 (which saw the formation of the UDF) and 1990, Chief Buthelezi's historical discourse was concerned with re-writing South African

<sup>58</sup> This paragraph is largely based on Forsyth's article.

<sup>59</sup> This theme needs to be researched and this is beyond the scope of this thesis. It probably should involve a multi disciplinary approach including History and Psychology among other disciplines.

<sup>60</sup> G. Buthelezi-speech addressed to Koornhof, 14 June 1982. This was his formal response after the South African Government suggested that Ingwavuma be excised and incorporated to Swaziland. Most of the speeches have been collected by the University of Natal-Durban Library and readily available for researchers.

<sup>61</sup> Speech by Buthelezi, 'King Shaka the foundation of a nation', 21 Sept. 1983.

<sup>62</sup> Buthelezi claimed that 'the theme on Zulu land and the kingdom's landscape as a historical archival material is predominant throughout the thesis. The ANC Mission in exile is not only fighting to eliminate apartheid. It is striving for the eradication of free enterprise system as such. They hold that apartheid and capitalism are irrevocably intertwined and that one must be destroyed with the other...The violence that has been perpetrated in Pietermaritzburg against Inkatha is violence directed at the free enterprise system as such and politics of negotiations'.

history in such a way as to present the Zulu 'nation' as a determining force in African politics and in the process appropriated the image of King Shaka.

Inkatha's anti-King Dingane's position is based on the third and fourth phase (of Chief Buthelezi's) political discourse, that is, 1972-1983. It was partly influenced by the political path it had chosen to chart for itself in relation to Afrikaner nationalism and big business. The movement insisted (at certain times) that Zulu and Afrikaner histories were similar in the ways in which each nation had responded to oppression. This often led it to 'demonise' or suppress King Dingane the 'murderer' of King Shaka-whom they revered as the founder of the Zulu Kingdom, also the 'devourer' of Piet Retief and his group of voortrekkers. For existing bad relations Buthelezi laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of King Dingane. He accused him of being the person who instigated the existing animosity between blacks and whites in apartheid South Africa. Hence to the leadership of Inkatha, whites had every right to fear blacks, discriminate against them and to exploit and oppress them. A speech delivered by Chief Buthelezi in June 1983 captures these apprehensions of Dingane in a particularly dense and complex way. Running to 33 page in length it could pass as an academic article. It was heavily influenced by established Zulu oral traditions discussed in earlier chapters of the thesis. It is replete on these as well as sources written by white 'historians' like Brian Roberts, J. Gibson and James Stuart.

A tone of ambiguity runs through the speech. It was delivered at the unveiling of the tombstone of Dingane in Ngwavuma; an event billed as the National Rehabilitation of King Dingane. The commemoration was prompted by the South African government declared intention to detach iNgwavuma from Kwa-Zulu and hand it over to Swaziland, which it proffered as an inducement to the Swazi government to continue acting against the liberation movements within its borders. The speech and the event thus served as an assertion of Zulu sovereignty, even though the circumstances attending King Dingane's death at this spot simultaneously served as a lesson about what was misguided about his role. Chief Buthelezi began by reminding his audience that

King Dingane acceded to the Zulu throne under circumstances which even after 155 years are as ugly as if it all happened yesterday. The murder of King Shaka is an event, which distresses every Zulu child who hears of it from adults or reads about it in his or her Zulu primer. We all feel that we would not have suffered as we have done for so long or be under the political bondage that we

are under up to this day had King Shaka not died so tragically and so prematurely. We believe that this would not have happened because of the very special gifts which King Shaka the founder of this great Nation, possessed in such great abundance. It is therefore inevitable that a certain amount of animosities has welled in the heart of the Zulus over many generations towards those who were prime actors in King Shaka's assassination who included Prince Dingane.<sup>63</sup>

Chief Buthelezi went on to dispute Nyembezi's assertion that King Dingane's mother Mpikase was King Senzangakhona's eldest wife, Buthelezi asserted that she was his sixth royal wife and therefore Prince Dingane did not have immediate rights to the throne. On the other hand Chief Buthelezi acknowledged that King Dingane had other virtues. He possessed an enquiring mind and asked white settlers probing questions about their life history, country of origin, religious belief, culture, customs and the forces they represented. Through his advisors, the king was conscious of the technological powers at their disposal including the gun and power of literacy. Buthelezi noted that

There are many interesting stories of the King's encounter with the white missionaries one of them being that when Revd Owen told the King about Heaven and a great King of heaven, God, the King is reported to have said that Heaven was here (meaning eMgungundlovu) and that he was the great King of Heaven! He was always evasive when Rev Gardiner applied for a Missionary site. He referred them to his Prime Minister Ndlela Ntuli and one Senior Induna Dambuza... The King therefore told American Missionaries that they must first build a house on the Natal side of his kingdom and then come to teach him and his people how to read and write and once this happened he would want schools throughout his territory... King Dingane developed great interest in the whiteman's firearms<sup>64</sup>

As far as the king's relations with whites were concerned Chief Buthelezi was of the opinion that King Dingane appeared to have at first followed King Shaka's accommodative, strategic diplomatic policy. The turning point, according to Buthelezi, came when Piet Retief wrote a threatening letters to King Dingane.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless Buthelezi laid the blame for subsequent events squarely on the king's shoulders because of the antagonistic race relations that according to him thereafter permeated the South African society.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Speech by M.G. Buthelezi, Ingwavuma, June 1983. I have been unsuccessful to get access to the records of the process of the tombstone funding, plans regarding the commemorations, debates etc.

<sup>64</sup> Buthelezi, Ingwavuma, June 1983, p.11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Buthelezi speech, 24 Sept. 1981, p.5.

Buthelezi's "Dingaan's Day" speech, delivered later in the same year, offered similarly balanced assessment even though it was critical of King Dingane. Buthelezi presented the murder of Retief and his party as having lessons both for himself and for the residents of Imbali Township, in Pietermaritzburg, the majority of whom opposed the IFP

We know how after 1838 in this part of South Africa divide and rule was so effectively used in this part of South Africa. The 16th of December is perhaps the most important date on the South African calendar as far as the Black/White conflict, which tears the South African nation from top to bottom, is concerned... But that cannot mask the fact that it just happened by an accident of history that this event happened in KwaZulu and revolved and revolved around Zulu King, King Dingane, who is regarded as a hero amongst Black people for the determination to resist White encroachments which led to him to do what he did to Piet Retief and his followers. It is difficult for us to judge the action of political characters involved in these events which occurred more than 140 years ago. We may in today's terms not approve of the methods which King Dingane used in dealing with Piet Retief, but we are so removed from the events of 1838 that it becomes extremely difficult to be dogmatic in our judgement of those sad events...This city has its roots in the events of December 16th 1838 when King Dingane killed Piet Retief...History knows that act to be the gravest political blunder that any African leader in this country had made to that point in time... All I am saying is that the conquest of this part of South Africa by Whites which was finally undertaken by the British in 1879 was made easier because of the tragic killing by King Dingane of Piet Retief and his followers...The aftermath of the killing of Piet Retief and King Dingane's strategic blunder of attacking entrenched gun fire with bare hands at the Battle of Blood River, was the division of Zulu forces and the final defeat of King Dingane at the hands of the Boers...Pietermaritzburg was built on the foundations of Black disunity and the building up of Pietermaritzburg is rooted in an enabling Black/Black intrigue...On this day...let us draw together the lessons of history so that we may learn from experience and sharpen the forces we employ against apartheid...All my life I had courage to stand up and be counted as one who has eye-ball to eye-ball confrontations with Prime Ministers and Ministers of States...My brothers and sisters, those in the (Imbali Fedsem-Theological) Seminary who would drive me before them would like to see me flee before the forces of apartheid like King Dingane fled to Pongola to die as a victim of the struggle itself.<sup>67</sup>

Themba Msimang was among those people who agreed with Chief Buthelezi's image of King Dingane.

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<sup>67</sup> M. Buthelezi speech, 16th December, 1983, Imbali, Pietermaritzburg.

#### 4. Themba Msimang and King Dingane the treacherous despot.

The idea that King Dingane was a weakling who was manipulated by the dominant character of the Regent Mnkabayi is a subtext Msimang's, Zondi's and Kunene historical novels. In 1982, Themba Msimang, the present acting Vice-Principal-Academic at the University of South Africa, published an isiZulu historical novel Buzani kuMkabayi on Regent Mnkabayi.<sup>68</sup> Msimang believed that an incompetent, ruthless, bloodthirsty, treacherous despot - King Dingane supported by the Regent Mnkabayi, undermined the glorious past of the Zulu kingdom.<sup>69</sup> Hence the title "Ask Mnkabayi/Demand explanations from Mnkabayi" which advised those Zulu who wanted to know why the past had followed the destructive course it did, to ask Mnkabayi.

Msimang's characterisation of Mnkabayi is similar to that of the 'milder' Kunene. He was of the view that Mnkabayi was easily manipulated and influenced<sup>70</sup> by the power-hungry, ambitious and sly Prince Dingane who was jealous of King Shaka.<sup>71</sup> Like the majority of white writers, Msimang accused King Dingane of being an inveterate liar but for different reasons. He chided Dingane for daring to question King Shaka's leadership qualities by complaining to his aunt, the Regent, about the destructive policies adopted by Shaka to govern the kingdom including the never ending military expeditions, 'Jama ngiyabonga ukukubona ungena ngelamasango akwaDukuza ukuba nawe ube ngufakazi wokubhubha kwezwe lawobabamkhulu libhujiswa yiloShaka osephenduke inkentshane'<sup>72</sup> ( Son of Jama I am thankful to see you entering through the gates of kwaDukuza so that you will be the witness regarding the destruction of our forefathers kingdom destroyed by Shaka who has changed into a jackal). Even though the Regent was at first resistant and sympathised with King Shaka, she ultimately connived and conspired to assassinate King Shaka together with the 'gullible' prince, his sibling, Mhlangana and his servant Mbopha.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> C.T. Msimang, Buzani kuMkabayi,

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, chapters 14-18.

<sup>70</sup> This is against existing oral tradition whereby it is claimed that the Regent was not easily manipulated, see chapter 1 of the thesis on Mnkabayi.

<sup>71</sup> Msimang, Buzani, p.143.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.140.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid,pp.144-145.

Msimang, like John Dube before him - further elaborated on the influence of the pro conquest 'ghost' of King Shaka in chapter fourteen titled 'Umfula wegazi' ( river of blood) - not referring to the battle that took place at Ncome River but to 'atrocities' supposedly committed by the king. Fearing King Shaka's ghost and his so-called prophecy about whites ruling blacks until eternity, King Dingane was driven to a rule of fear in which he destroyed friends, generals and chiefdoms that were loyal to King Shaka. Msimang named the following as among those that were killed; Ngwadi kaGendeyana - the brave warrior who was very close to the king, Sontobe kaSibiya-Shaka'a confidante.<sup>74</sup> The author claims that Matiwane of the Ngwane chiefdom, Dube of the Qadi chiefdom, the Cele chiefdom fell for the trap and were all lured by King Dingane to their death. Msimang was of the opinion that as an inveterate liar King Dingane misguided his subjects. He did this by offering the excuse that he killed King Shaka in order to set them free from oppression, and claimed that people now had freedom of choice, particularly as regards courting and marriage. The king also promised to scale down war expeditions, which exposed people to predators:

Kumele abachazele ukuthi uShaka umbulalele ukukhulula bona. Ngemuva kwalokhu izintombi nezinsizwa zizothola ilungelo lokugana kuphele lesiyasihluku sikaShaka sokuyeka izintombi zigugele ezinsisheni, nezinsizwa zizezizutshwe sezingamaxhegu. Abathembise futhi ukuthi abazukuphenduka ukudla kwamanqe kanti futhi ngeke abhuqabhuqe izwe ngezimpi.<sup>75</sup>

*He should explain that he killed Shaka in order to free them. After this deed both matured boys and girls were free to marry after Shaka's cruel deed of allowing marriageable matured girls to age and matured boys to marry when they had aged. He must also promise them that would not become food for vultures and would also refrain from destroying the nation by sending out endless war expeditions.*

Msimang argued that these promises were false as they served as a mask of a sly, scheming, ruthless, vicious, and ambitious power-monger.

Msimang believed that the situation was further complicated by the arrival of the voortrekkers. He pictures the whites as good-natured and not meaning any harm as was evident during Shakan times. In his account King Shaka liked

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.157.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.168.

white people in general, particularly the trader 'uMbuyazi weTheku' (Henry Frances Fynn).<sup>76</sup> King Dingane as an inverse image of King Shaka loathed and feared whites in general, and was influenced in this regard by the so-called Shaka's prophecy about 'swallows that will rule the Zulu Kingdom until eternity'.<sup>77</sup> To Msimang, like other writers before him, the main reason why King Dingane decided to plot the assassination of Retief and party at uMgungundlovu was to prevent King Shaka's prophecy becoming true. Other factors such as the cattle dispute involving Sigonyela, the defeat of Mzilikazi, the threatening letter from the voortrekkers, reconnaissance mission around the royal homestead were secondary to Msimang and he mentioned them in passing.

Msimang professed that among other reasons why he wrote the historical fiction novel on Mnkabayi was what he perceived as a negative representation of the latter (Regent Mnkabayi in the historical dramas) by Eliot Zondi's and Rolfes Dhlomo's historical novels on King Shaka.<sup>78</sup> Msimang received most of his information on the Regent from a Mr Eliot Buthelezi of Alexandra Township. The latter, whom Msimang respected and referred to as a 'fundi of Zulu history and Zulu culture - a great custodian of Zulu history'. Buthelezi hailed originally from eMahlabathini in Zululand and was related to Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. As far as Msimang was concerned, other members of the royal family, like Buthelezi's mother, Princess Magogo, were not as knowledgeable as Elliot.

In the interview Msimang was of the opinion that Regent Mnkabayi was both manipulated and misled by ambitious, power hungry and jealous Prince Dingane. This she lived to regret, as she loved King Shaka and saw something like her in him. According Msimang, Regent Mnkabayi, like King Shaka was determined to build the Zulu nation and make it the best in the world (probably

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid 172.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> G.Mseleku interview of Themba Msimang, 21/9/1996, Umlazi, Durban. She was interviewing Msimang for her History Honours project at University of London-SOAS. I was present during this interview.

this viewpoint influenced black writers like Kunene to change their attitude towards the Regent in their later publications). More so there were a number of common denominators Shaka recognised in her aunt.

Msimang argued that it was possible for Prince Dingane to manipulate and influence the Regent to adopt a negative attitude towards King Shaka because of bad communication and logistical problems. King Shaka had already relocated to kwaDukuza near the coast and the Regent was based at ebaQulusini. It was Dingane who took advantage of this state of affairs as he constantly supplied her with information about the dynamics within the royal palace. The misinformation campaign was largely biased against the king and Msimang mentioned that Mnkabayi believed Dingane. This was because she held the empire dear and was of the opinion that the unity of the Zulu nation was threatened by the autocratic king.<sup>79</sup> For Msimang, Mnkabayi was not involved in the plot to kill Shaka because this was a simple straightforward conspiracy between Dingane, Mhlangane and Mbopha. There was no unfolding plot involving the Regent, except in the creative mind of a fictional writer like Zondi. During Shaka's reign, Mnkabayi had resigned from politics because she was of the opinion that King Shaka was capable of running the kingdom on his own. Thus, for Msimang, Mnkabayi was a tragic hero who made sacrifices and suffered more than she actually gained. He wanted readers to pity her and thus he consciously adopted Eliot Buthelezi's perspective. Msimang to some extent justified the death of King Dingane at the hands of Nyawo (as he claims). He based his justification on the premise that King Dingane had failed in leading the Zulu and also he had failed in conquering the Boers, and if he carried on it was inevitable that the Boers would crush him.

I interviewed Professor Msimang, four years later on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, 2000 at his Pretoria office at the University of South Africa. In this interview Msimang highlighted his belief that Regent Mnkabayi was not the main instigator and was never involved in hatching the plan to kill King Shaka. He believed that King Dingane, whom he regarded as an ambitious trickster took advantage of

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<sup>79</sup>

Ibid



the Regent to justify his need for power. Msimang elaborated the issue that Mnkabayi was no longer interested or involved in the politics of the royal house and therefore was not aware of what was taking place in the various izigodhlo zenkosi uShaka. She had retired to one of the izigodhlo, far away in the land of abaQulusi. It was during one of Prince Dingane's (her favourite nephew) visit that the latter conjured lies about King Shaka by insinuating that he had murdered her mother, Nandi. As a result, the Regent soon adopted a negative attitude towards King Shaka because she believed that the king's conduct was unbecoming and was both morally and politically repugnant as it destroyed the cradle of the Zulu kingdom. Msimang also stressed the viewpoint that by this time Prince Dingane and Mhlangane and Mbopha had already hatched their plan to kill the king. Unknowingly, the Regent voiced her dissatisfaction against Shaka. The conspirators soon manipulated the Regent's revulsion to suit their own needs and proceeded with their plot to murder the king and hence claimed Mnkabayi's support. For Msimang Dingane was cunning and was patiently waiting for the opportune time to strike.<sup>80</sup> Msimang also acknowledged that until he met Buthelezi he always thought that Regent Mnkabayi was a bad person. He was also convinced by Zondi's historical novel besides the other books he had read on the subject<sup>81</sup>

Msimang admitted that he got most of his tradition from Buthelezi including the slant on Mnkabayi.. Buthelezi's grandfather was Khobongela, elder than Ngqengelele of the famous Buthelezi clan. Like Princess Magogo, he valued history. According to Msimang, Buthelezi was a highly skilled historian, good and astute narrator. He compared him to Ben Shezi, a domestic worker who helped him to during the publication of one of his books, Kusadlwa ngoludala . Msimang believed that Buthelezi was different from other members connected to the royal family, particularly the learned ones, who took history for granted and did not value its importance. This group often relied on publications by professional white historians including E.A. Ritter and J. Omer-Cooper<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>

Ibid., Msimang and Buthelezi other accounts of Mnkabayi in the oral records broadly conform to those of Magolwane as 'uBhuku, uSoqili and umalunguza angene' a profoundly, forceful person.

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E.A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu: The rise of the Zulu empire, London, Longman, 1955; Omer-Cooper, J. The Zulu Aftermath: A nineteenth Century Revolution in Bantu Africa, London, 1966.

because such texts are freely available to them as complimentary copies. In the end, like parrots, they narrated historical narratives about the Zulu kingdom propagated by these texts. Elliot Buthelezi, as a self-employed inyanga and a firm believer in African customs, culture and traditions did not rely on such texts. He was extremely proud of the Zulu royal house, including the Buthelezi clan's contribution to the history of amaZulu. One of the major reasons for his commitment to preserve the history of amaZulu, was because his grandfather was a leader of one of victorious regiments of King Cetshwayo during impi yaseSandlwane. Buthelezi, who has since passed away in 1998, got most of his information about oral tradition from both his grandfather and father.<sup>83</sup>

##### **5. iNcome noMgungundlovu and King Dingane: Poetry, the Landscape as historical material.**

A number of African poets who were not in exile continued the tradition of documenting oral histories of King Dingane. Thus a new breed of intellectuals used poetry and physical geography to consolidate the historical perspectives and cultural aspirations of African people. Among other things, these poems articulated the complexities of transition from tradition to modernity. The twentieth century Zulu poets, who personally visited places like iNcome and iSandhlwana as part of their pilgrimage regarded these places as their own Mecca so to speak-a place to pray and pay homage to their ancestors and fallen heroes. The common thread in their writing is their empathy with the poor whom they met when visiting such places, particularly Kwa Mathambo where the river iNcome is situated.

Writers like Nxumalo, Gcumisa and Masuku were not in exile. Writing within the country they subtly used poetry to raise the consciousness of the African people. They could escape the wrath of the authorities because of poet's reliance on symbolic language and metaphors that could have multiple meanings. This included the historical significance of iNcome and uMgungundlovu/the City of Pietermaritzburg as cultural landscapes and sacred spaces.<sup>84</sup> These authors chose to publish only in

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Msimang, 17/04/2000

<sup>84</sup> For discussion about landscape and history in African societies, a subject which is beyond the scope of this thesis see Kalipeni, E. And Zeleza, P. Sacred spaces and public quarrels: African cultural and economic landscapes, Africa World Press, 1999.

isiZulu only probably for populist reason and also as means of avoiding detection by the white censorship authorities that might not have been familiar with ideological implications of their works because of language constraints.

By writing in isiZulu they were tacitly excluding white South Africans as part of their audience and hence avoiding the wrath of the Broederbond and various Language Boards. These gate-keeping organisations and censors were controlled by apartheid ideologues that wrongfully approved books on the premise that they perpetuated apartheid grand policies. They regarded African language publications as tools to be utilised in cementing separate development as each ethnic group was encouraged to pursue its 'own affairs' through, among other things, vernacular literature. As a result uMasihambisane and iGoda (edited by Sibusiso Nyembezi) seem to have also escaped the net of being classified as 'subversive literature'. Both books were staple diets prescribed for African primary schools. Moreover, these books were a cornerstone for those who were studying isiZulu as vernacular at primary school-myself included.

J.A.W. Nxumalo's 1961 Zulu textbook, uMasihambisane for standard five pupils, was the first of the series of texts that used iNcome and physical geography as a visual hook. He wrote an historical, narrative poem on iNcome. By providing us with a revisionist interpretation of the actual battle scene he differed from dominant perspectives. Commenting on the casualties, Nxumalo posited that the fallen amabutho were heroes who died for a just cause, defending their land which led him to conclusion, 'Zazingahlanyi lezozinsizwa, Zazivikela izwe lakubo kwaZulu' (They were not madmen -all they were doing was to protect their sovereign Zulu kingdom). Like Lamula before him he regarded the fallen heroes as King Dingane's finest 'ithemba leNkosi uDingane' (King Dingane's hope), and accordingly as martyrs whose ashes would rise from the dead and lead them to liberation from the tyrannical white rule. They would also oversee a return of his nations' customary land.

To Nxumalo, iNcome was actually a rivulet; it was not a river even though it was consistently referred to as 'Blood River'. His analysis by focussing on the physical geography of the place challenges the explanations by military historians that the 'Blood River' was a barrier which figured in a central way to the voortrekkers'

military strategy and high number of casualties amongst amaZulu -three thousand in total. The assertion that iNcome was a rivulet/ a small stream seems to question the locality of battle itself. In existing settler traditions, iNcome was referred to as a river big enough to act as bunker that hampered the mobility of the marauding Zulu impi. It is suggested that amabutho could not cross the overflowing river easily in order to attack the position of the voortrekker who had camped across the river.

Writing in the early 1960s, Nxumalo first had a defeatist attitude and doubted the chances of realising freedom in his lifetime. He believed that the defeat at iNcome marked the turning point for black people as they lost both their land and freedom. He argued that it would be a difficult and testing process to return the land and country to its rightful owners. This created in him a sense of grief, sadness and helplessness. Tears filled his eyes whenever he visited iNcome and surroundings. This defeatist attitude is reflected in his opening stanza but changes to hope at the end of the narrative poem. He thus realised that freedom can be attained and at best by fighting against cultural imperialism and assimilation. In turn this would lead to a return to African civilisation-, which he believed (like Pheko), was the old and true civilisation. 'Loze Libuye sidle ngoludala, Mhla zibuyayo emasisweni, Sohlala sidle ndawonye, phansi komthunzi wendalo, umthunzi wokukhanya, umthunzi wempucuko, umthunzi wenkululeko'.<sup>85</sup> (Our land will be returned and we will enjoy life like we did during the olden, precolonial times. We will all eat together, under the shadow provided by the natural habitat, light, civilisation and freedom/liberation).

Another Zulu poet, who in the early 1970s, used poetry to articulate his Africanist tendencies through his positive portrayal of King Dingane was Thomas M'zwenduku Masuku. These writers were using narrative poetry as a subversive tool. We must remember that at this time apartheid was at its pinnacle while censorship was at its worst in the 1970s and 80s. Masuku, like Nxumalo, was well versed in existing and established oral traditions on the king. His poem is thick with allusions to these. It is constructed within the historical narratives permeating these traditions, such as; the 'Great Trek' and arrival the voortrekkers in the Zulu Kingdom; their reconnaissance mission around the royal palace; the question of the cattle as means of production,

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<sup>85</sup> J.A.W. Nxumalo, uMasihambisane, Pietermaritzburg, 1961, p.71.

Sigonyela and his fate; the killing of Retief and party; and King Shaka's so-called prophecy, and various battles between King Dingane and the voortrekkers.<sup>86</sup>

Masuku's unashamedly pro-King Dingane (historical) narrative poem does not sanitise history and relies on historical facts rather than imaginative, evocative language and stylistic traditions adopted by other poets. It positively acknowledges the technical superiority of the white military and advantages of the gun including the humiliating defeat of amaZulu. But it simultaneously regards the defeat as a continuation of wars of resistance that started with arrival of Jan van Riebeck on south African shores. Moreover, it is a subtle call for Africans, to arm themselves and rise above the defeat, thus the assertion, 'Loze libuye sidle ngoludala' (Our land will return and we will feast like in the olden times).<sup>87</sup>

The poets' view of history and images of King Dingane challenged those portrayed in existing conventional and official history textbooks prescribed in South African schools. Masuku's 1971 poem<sup>88</sup> was a rare exception in an environment dominated by the anti-King Dingane images and rhetoric in official history textbooks. His portrayal of the king was similar to that of the young Selope- Thema, H. Dhlomo, and Jordan Ngubane. To Masuku, King Dingane was 'Magnificent' and 'Greater than heaven' as 'edlula izulu, uyindlovu ehlula izulu, uyingwenya egubhuza izulu' (an elephant greater than heaven, a crocodile who is liken to thunder), 'ezamazisa isibhakabhaka' (shaking the sky).<sup>89</sup>

Masuku's last stanza is a call to challenge the negative portrayal of the Zulu Kings and the history of amaZulu in various conventional historical texts 'Buyanini, mathole kaZulu, Dumisan' amakhosi akwenu: Amakhos' oqotho, akwaZulu; Tusanini okuhle kwakwenu' [Zulu calves (young men) return, praise your honest kings of kwaZulu, commend what is positive about your land]. The battle was not over yet, 'Amandla ethu awakapheli' (Our strength has not been exhausted). The real challenge commenced when Mpande collaborated with white settlers at Maqongqo hence his call to stand up and continue to fight the white settlers and their black surrogates.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, see chapter 1 of this thesis on the discussion of these themes.

<sup>87</sup> Nxumalo, p. 71.

<sup>88</sup> T.M. Masuku, *Izikhali zeMbongi*, 1971, p. 78.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, he dedicated his ode/poem on King Dingane to the African Continent, amaZulu and the youth in Africa whom he required to carry on with the fighting tradition of King Dingane-fighting for their own freedom, 'ngiyayethula lenkondlo, Zulu, ngiyithulel' izwe le-Afrika; ngiyayinikez' inkondlo Zulu, ngiyinikez' intsha ye-Afrika'. (Zulu people I am presenting this poem, I am presenting it to the continent of Africa, I am directing it to the youth of Africa).

In the 1980s, twenty years later, M.S. Gcumisa was to pick Nxumalo's themes in his publication of Zulu poems, Isilulu Semicabango. Gcumisa 's poems reflected his vast knowledge of existing oral traditions as reservoirs of historical knowledge on King Dingane. His poems discussed the role of the king's political advisors, like Ndlela and Nzobo including other intelligence officers as part of the team that was instrumental in drawing up the battle strategy at iNcome.

Gcumisa was familiar with the different regiments (battalions in today's terms) that were engaged in the battle identifying the iZinyosi, uDlambedlu, iNgwegwe and uMdlenevu, among others.<sup>90</sup> It is worth noting that all these regiments were also identified by in the various eyewitness accounts discussed in the first chapter by the likes of Tununu, Socwatsha and Sivivi. Gcumisa was also familiar with the names of brave warriors who took part in this battle like Bhongoza kaNgcobo, uNozishada kaMaqhoboza and uSonsukwana kaGqwashaza.<sup>91</sup> He vividly described the technological advantage and power of the gun during the battle. Gcumisa noted that he imbibed the oral traditions of the battle from his grandfather, which in turn were passed to his grandfather by his mother (Gcumisa's great-grandmother) who was still a spinster during the battle.

Gcumisa recalled that his grandfather was greatly moved whenever he narrated these traditions, during which his eyes were always full of tears. He recalled that his own grandfather confided that his mother's traumatic experience of the battle likewise always left her tearful and shaking whenever she remembered the battle. In the aftermath she was forced to flee elsewhere and thereby was displaced from her original abode, 'uMkhul' ubeyixoxa lendaba, Kuye kuhlengezel' izinyembezi, Athi

<sup>90</sup> See Izindatyana zaBantu and the James Stuart Archives on amabutho.

<sup>91</sup> S. Gcumisa, Isilulu Semicabango, Pietermaritzburg, 1981, p. 8.

unina wayebukela bengamatshitshi. Wayeyixoxa maqed'aqhaqhazele, Athi base babaleke bona, Bahlakazeka bagcwal' izinkalo'.<sup>92</sup> (My grandfather was always in tears when he narrated the story. He said his mother, who was still a spinster, witnessed the events. She was always trembling whenever she narrated the events to my grandfather as they escaped and scattered throughout the landscape)

As a Zulu and African Nationalist, Gcumisa, like Nxumalo before him, felt aggrieved whenever he visited iNcome and the surroundings areas at KwaMathambo. For this reason Gcumisa called for unity amongst amaZulu in order to fight the common enemy, the apartheid government, who represented the voortrekkers of the years gone by. As a nationalist, he deemed it necessary for both the ANC and IFP supporters to rise above their differences through reconciliation. Most importantly, as amaZulu, they should rise up against the tyranny of apartheid and conquering white cultural traditions by going back to the olden times-calling for cultural retrieval and a revival of traditions and customs. This was when Zulu culture was at its pinnacle and when leaders like the Regent Mkabayi and King Shaka were at the helm.<sup>93</sup>

Again in the 1980s, Gcumisa, A.T. Kheswa and M.A. Hlengwa were involved in an effort to retrieve the historical significance of the city of Pietermaritzburg and its place in South African history through their poem 'uMgungundlovu'. This poem described the then existing race relation and life in the apartheid riddled city and surrounding urban environment like iMbali and Sobantu townships.<sup>94</sup> These poets discussed the historical significance of the city as far as race relations were concerned in South Africa. They also deliberately avoided using the official name for this city, that is, Pietermaritzburg. To these poets, there existed only one official name-uMgungundlovu. According to them, this needed to be elaborated and emphasised for generations to come as South Africa's' history of race relations was underpinned and characterised by confrontation, "baningi abasayowu land' umlando wakho benabe nawo ulondeke, Wena uyobe ulokhu wama njalo"(Many will continue to narrate and preserve your history. You will forever be part of the physical space and landscape).<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p.9.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid p.11.

<sup>94</sup> Gcumisa et al; Amaqoma, Pietermaritzburg, p.31.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

Thus the poem ‘uMgungundlovu’ discusses the linkage between the racial organisation of space in South African urban areas and the relationship between the state and its citizens. Both the creation of the segregated spaces and political conflict concerning their creation were important in shaping the racially and spatially differentiated citizens of our cities. Accordingly, these poets emphasised the rebellious nature of the city’s African inhabitants who resisted unfair policies of the white controlled state. Hence like uMsunduzi, the river that runs through the city and surroundings, as Africans, ‘ngeke basisunduze noma sesiseduze’ (They will never push us out of sight even though we are within their vicinity).

The poetry of Masuku, Gcumisa, Kheswa and Hlengwa served the same ideological purposes as those of the Black Consciousness, and worker and UDF inclined ‘protest’ poets. And as a result, the former were also an integral part of this cultural tradition and movement of the 1970s and 80s but focused their attention closely on Zulu culture, traditions, history and the past including that of the Zulu Kingdom.<sup>96</sup>

The use of urban and rural spaces, the resulting political and social relations that were embodied in the landscapes produced, was not only the preserve of the above-mentioned Zulu poets. The South African landscape is littered with voortrekker monuments that represent white supremacist ideology. Whenever the white Afrikaners and British colonists went and scattered, they built monuments that occupied both rural and urban spaces-the majority of which are related to the white colonial officials and the voortrekker –King Dingane conflict.<sup>97</sup> The most famous and important of the latter are the ‘Bloed Rivier’ voortrekker monument next to iNcome (it is made up of voortrekker ox-wagons designed in a form of a laager), the Voortrekker Church in Pietermaritzburg and Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. The Pretoria monument dominates this city’s landscape. All the monuments celebrate the voortrekker’s victory on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1838.

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<sup>96</sup> Mzwakhe Mbuli also drew largely on this tradition, particularly the heroic past of the African monarchies that permeate his lyrics. I think that the existing catalogue of songs on King Shaka by both local and international artists, groups and musicians deserve a study on their owns.

<sup>97</sup> “Myths, Monuments, Museums, New Premises?” proceedings of the University of Witwatersrand History Workshop, 16-18 July 1992.



The dominant visual historical discourse displayed in panels in these Afrikaner monuments articulate the fact that white South Africans perceive 'Blood River' as a place where the enemy, Africans, had hoped to wipe out whites. In short, the 'Zulu Peril' had been removed. It is further claimed that 'Blood River' ended in a splendid victory for the weapons, organisations and courage of the trekker commando. It was the greatest battle ever between black and white South Africa. Hence 'Blood River' was not just victory for the voortrekkers but for white civilisation as a whole. It stood for permanent white South Africa.<sup>98</sup> It was against such a demeaning view that Masuku; Nxumalo, Gcumisa and others defined the sacredness of iNcome and the surrounding areas, including the town of uMgungundlovu. They did not identify themselves with laagers, ox-wagons, the church in uMgungundlovu and other monuments dotting the landscape and commemorating the 'Great trek' or the defeat of King Dingane. The whereabouts of these symbols did not matter.

Both the foundation stone of the 'Bloed Rivier', and the monument in Pretoria were laid during the centenary celebration of impi yaseNcome, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1938. Both monuments have panels that supposedly elucidate visual voortrekker history, the real history on King Dingane and the Voortrekkers. The following examples adorn the panels of the monument in Pretoria: Panel 9 "Retief reports on negotiations with Dingane"; Panel 12, "Retief and Dingane sign the treaty"; Panel 13, "The murder of Piet Retief and his men"; Panel 20, "Making the Vow"; Panel 21, "The Battle of Blood River, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1838".<sup>99</sup> All these panels are accompanied by an Afrikaner Nationalist historical text. This view of history is opposite to the image produced by Nxumalo, Masuku and the other poets.

The emphasis placed on the physical geography by pro- and anti- King Dingane camps as part of everyday historical discourse was realised in post-apartheid South Africa whereby the battle site at iNcome was declared a national monument. A monument that commemorates the fallen Zulu warriors was built. It was erected by the post-apartheid state alongside the laager shaped 'Bloed Rivier' Monument. This move by the post-apartheid state captured the feelings of Masuku, Gcumisa and the

<sup>98</sup> Van Jaarsveld, 'A historical mirror', E. Delmont, 'The Voortrekker Monument: Monolith to Myth', South African Historical Journal, Volume 29, November 1993, pp.76-101.

<sup>99</sup> Delmont, 'The Voortrekker Monument'.

other Zulu poets regarding the fallen amabutho as heroes of the struggle for freedom by Africans. The Minister of Arts and Culture, Lionel Mtshali was to comment

On 16 December 1998 we plan to unveil an appropriate monument at KwaMathambo, on the east bank of the Ncome/Blood River. Plans for the ceremony are at an advance stage. The central theme at that national function will be nation building and reconciliation.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion

From the various interpretations of the images of King Dingane discussed in this chapter it becomes obvious that history as a discourse is a powerful means of political conscientisation. The ANC, PAC and Inkatha ideologues used public history to revive and replenish the political identity of both the victims and beneficiaries of apartheid rule for political awareness. Their versions and images of King Dingane supported and justified their own political actions, ideologies and agendas as these feed into the public sphere and their supporters. These versions of the past carried a high level of popular acceptance and credibility, not because of scholarly merit but because in the apparent complex nexus between politics, ideology, and ideologically powerful versions of the past.<sup>101</sup> As a result, the philosophical question on the role of ideology in history becomes prominent - but is beyond the scope of this thesis to grapple with this theme.

What must also be noted is the fact that the political ideologues together with the Zulu poets, are producers of history distinctly outside the walls of professional historian's heaven, the academia. Like Mazisi Kunene and Themba Kunene, academics in their own right, they had produced extremely influential versions on the images of the king that appealed to significant audiences. Furthermore, these non-academic historians used physical geography and name-places as historical archives, particularly iNcome and uMgungundlovu as part of the public and political discourse to challenge popular consciousness of history and culture depicted in various Voortrekker Monuments.

The use of the name uMgungundlovu by Africans including Pheko and the Zulu poets, when referring to the city of Pietermaritzburg, posits a sensitive picture of the constant and circumspect struggle waged by the oppressed people materially and

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<sup>100</sup> Opening Address by L. Mtshali, Seminar on the re-interpretation of the Battle of Ncome/Blood River, University of Zululand, 30/10/1998.

<sup>101</sup> See Forsyth, 'The past in the service of the Present'.

ideologically against their oppressors. It reflects that techniques of evasion and resistance may represent the most significant and effective means of the political struggle in the long run. Vernacular language, public spaces, the landscape and name-places were other ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups. Most forms of this struggle stop well short of outright collective defiance that includes, slander, arson and sabotage discussed in other sections of this thesis. Also this type of struggle required little or no co-ordination or planning. By using the name uMgungundlovu for Pietermaritzburg, Africans avoided any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority. The work of the Zulu poets and Pheko is underpinned by what we can perceive as a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labelled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history.<sup>102</sup>

#### POST SCRIPT

##### **King Dingane, Nation- Building, Race Relations and Reconciliation in post- apartheid South Africa-the views of Mangosuthu Buthelezi in the present.**

The Battle of iNcome might have been insignificant to the African participants because the latter saw it in the broader context and as a continuation of wars of liberation against the advancing, abject white settlers. Nevertheless December 16 became significant to Africans as soon as it was proclaimed a national holidays in post-apartheid South Africa. Accordingly it is worth noting that by 1998 both the IFP and ANC, as organisations dominated by Africans, now emphasised the idea of reconciliation. This philosophy consolidated amongst Africans, particularly the supporters of the two organisations who had been at each other's throats in the past two and a half decades, is not accidental. It has to do with the post-apartheid state's nation-building efforts, and its eagerness to promote inclusive, democratic citizenship. Therefore Selope-Thema's 1930 proposal that December 16 should be recognised as a 'Day of Reconciliation', primarily between black and whites, was implemented.

In May 1998 the South African cabinet approved eight legacy projects which the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Technology and Science earmarked for delivery in the financial year 1998/99. Among the package of projects was the commemoration of

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<sup>102</sup> For an in-depth analysis of such struggles see J. Scott, Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance, New Haven, 1985.

the war of 1838, which the ministry claimed would focus on the reinterpretation of the Battle of Ncome/Blood River in 1838.<sup>103</sup> The presence of Minister Mtshali, a very important member of the IFP national executive committee, at the commemoration of the battle and its re-interpretations, including the recasting of the image of the King and subsequently the history of amaZulu suggests a major shift in the IFP position on the role of King Dingane in shaping the politics of post-apartheid South Africa.

The Minister now totally rejected the old orthodoxy previously propagated by both the IFP and Afrikaner Nationalist regarding King Dingane. Instead Mtshali recorded 'with pride the valour of the Zulu warriors who fell in defence of noble values, cultural norms and traditions upheld by His Majesty King Dingane, the son of Senzangakhona'. In much the same vein, the President of the IFP was to note in his 16th December 1998 speech that King Dingane 'fought for (his kingdom's) inalienable right to this God-given land, and for freedom and liberty',<sup>104</sup> a complete reversal of his earlier views of the king.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by the President of ANC-the ruling party, Thabo Mbeki, who shared the same platform with his IFP counterpart and delivered a speech identical to that of the latter. This show of solidarity between the two organisations and leaders both signified and symbolised reconciliation and an end to the violent running battles between the African supporters of both organisations. For this reason this can be seen as an important step towards an inclusive nation building process in South Africa, and an end to the so-called 'black on black violence' or at least show of willingness and commitment to address this issue. From these changing positions one can infer the fact that Shaka and Dingane now represented the same side of the coin not inverted images of each other- a position adopted by African workers in the late 1920s.<sup>105</sup> It did not matter whether Shaka's Day or "Dingane's Day" was commemorated because both kings now represented the political victory of African peoples in post- apartheid South Africa, thus promoting the idea of nation-building.

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<sup>103</sup> African viewpoints of this battle in Chapter 1 of the thesis.

<sup>104</sup> Speech by Mangosuthu Buthelezi during the Inauguration of the monument to Ncome/Blood River, 16/12/98.

<sup>105</sup> See chapter 4 of the thesis on this issue.

Newspapers reported that the commemoration was attended by approximately 5 000 Africans. How different this was from the days when the tearful Nxumalo and Gcumisa commemorated the day as private, forlorn individuals. The call by the post-apartheid government to hold a non-partisan commemoration of the day was a gesture for nation building and to build a genuine reconciliation. But it fell on deaf ears as pro-King Dingane Africans and anti-King Dingane white Afrikaners held separate commemorations.

Buthelezi's commitment to the 16<sup>th</sup> of December as the 'Day of Reconciliation'<sup>106</sup> for overtly nation-building purposes unashamedly promotes an idea of a Patriotic History whereby 'their dreams clashed, their blood spilled in thousand ripples of pain, flooding down into the river of history. In this battlefield's river, as in the one of history, one could not distinguish then, as one cannot distinguish now, the blood of the Afrikaner from the blood of the Zulu, which together merged in mutual pain on this sacred soil'<sup>107</sup>

Buthelezi's interpretation of history, although it emphasises a dark side of exploitation, suffering, and poverty, is influenced by a teleological assumption. Thus his explanation of the battle between King Dingane and the voortrekkers refers to its implications in the new millennium, reconciliation for nation-building endeavours in post-apartheid South Africa, rather than in its original contexts which is basically underpinned by imperialism and colonial conquest.

His grand-narrative has its shortcomings in its pretence to comprehensiveness, as well as its silences and exclusions. This narrative has an upbeat pro-IFP resonance as it articulates: the rise of the Zulu monarchy, the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, British colonialism and the rise of the ANC and Inkatha, in particular. It reads as follows

From Blood River with sufferance and endurance, the Zulu nation and its Kings would walk the long journey marked by the Bhambatha Rebellion, the imprisonment and exile of King Cetshwayo and King Dinizulu, the manipulation of our traditional leadership and our laws and traditions, the stealing of our land, the exploitation of our labour, the creation of the African National Congress, the creation of Inkatha ka Zulu, apartheid the systematic

<sup>106</sup> See chapter 2 on this issue.

<sup>107</sup> Speech by Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 16/12/98.

violation of human rights, the creation of the second Inkatha yeNkululeko yeSizwe National Cultural Liberation Movement, the armed struggle, the political violence and the many other glorious and tragic moments which have marked our history...the horrors of Piet Retief, horrors of Blood River, horrors of Anglo Boer War, the Independence war of the Afrikaner republic, The Anglo Boer-War, British colonialism, the Afrikaners' apartheid and the many horrors of the armed struggle for liberation and the conflicts of our most recent past, have all impregnated the soil of our fatherland with blood and our collective consciousness with pain, fear, grudge and sorrow. All these suffering of the past are not going to have been in vain if out of them a future of harmony (and reconciliation) may stem.<sup>108</sup>

Again, there are commonalties between Rolfes Dhlomo and the older Selope Thema and Buthelezi's idea of Patriotic History and patriotism including the idea of history as progress.<sup>109</sup> Buthelezi's idea of Patriotic History is explicitly connected to understanding the idea of the past, it has the past at the centre and does not call for its dismissal nor wiping out our memories for the sake of the future. He acknowledged the fact that South Africa had a diverse population but this diversity meant richness, that difference does not necessitate intolerance and sectarianism. It means

'Forging a new nation conceived in diversity and dedicated to the proposition that within a framework of equality and mutual respect, diverse people can strive together towards the common goal of prosperity and social stability. However we should dedicate this battlefield and its monument to a new covenant which henceforth may bind those who were once divided to pursuing our common goal in a framework of unity in diversity'<sup>110</sup>.

Chief Buthelezi focused on development, human assistance, peace and reconciliation as poverty, unemployment, ignorance for lack of education and lack of essential services, as factors bedevilling our society. He described these as the main root causes of most of the vicious social evils.<sup>111</sup> His December 16th speech also called for responsible citizenship because of the persistent problem of incorporating into the political arena the masses that have remained second or third class citizens. Despite significant strides made by the post-apartheid government, this problem will be largely dependent upon finding some solution to the acute socio-economic marginality experienced by a large majority of the population.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> See also Buthelezi article, 'Let's unite to rebuild the cradle of a new order', Sunday Times, 28 March 1999. It is based on his days at Fort Hare as a member of the ANC Youth League and also as a student of Matthews. It includes his fond memory of the later.

<sup>110</sup> Buthelezi speech, 16/12/98.

The crisis is captured by Buthelezi where he observed that the state-led growth model is actually two-fold: one crisis is reflected in declining economic conditions, and the other in the failure of the state to provide citizenship goods-be these public service, welfare benefits or symbolic partnership in the national community for nation-building purposes. Indications of the crisis of public authority comes in the form of higher levels of violence and crime, particularly visible in major cities but also observed elsewhere; the private use of public means of violence by the police sector, widespread tax evasion among entrepreneurial sectors and the rampant government corruption.<sup>112</sup> Hence Buthelezi's call for nation-building in order effectively to address all these challenges through responsible citizenship. This suggests that opportunities to expand the basis of social solidarity, and therefore to provide firm grounds for a solid democratic order, are not readily forthcoming-hence Chief Buthelezi's call for a 'new covenant' in order to build a new country and a nation free of racism, discrimination, violence, exploitation and crime as we move towards the new millennium.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> E. Reis, 'Nationalism and Citizenship: The crisis of authority and solidarity in Latin America' in T. Oommen (ed.), Citizenship and National Identity: From colonialism to globalism, New Delhi, 1997, Chapter 9.

## Conclusion

This thesis is not about King Dingane and therefore does not tell (his)story as the central subject. It is about various images and historical knowledge about the king as produced by izimbongi and public intellectuals, missionary educated 'elite', workers and trade unionists, politicians and ideologues, journalist, poets, scholars and intellectuals. Accordingly the resulting image of the king constructed by all these historians is multi-dimensional and not homogenous. My definition of an historian is inclusive and defined according to a spectrum whereby one end is made up of public intellectuals and the other opposite end consists of History professors. Workers, poets, journalists and politicians are also represented in this spectrum.

Each image about the king described by each historian reflects own interests and indirectly those of their society and the concerns of their time. Magolwane and other public intellectuals used oral traditions and izibongo to produce historical knowledge and contending images of the king. Their narratives focused largely on dynamics within the royal house itself. These were informed by socio-political values and beliefs including inter-relationships of the various subjects owing their allegiance to the Zulu kingdom. Some of these subjects were part of the royal house itself as, for example, izinceku or were victims of King Dingane's rule. By the turn of the twentieth century there was a noticeable shift as regards the image of the king. This shift was spearheaded by missionary educated 'elites' like Magma Fuze, John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo. This era marked the production of the king's history and image largely within the binary themes circumscribed by barbarism and civilisation, tradition and modernity. Fuze, Dube and Dhlomo described the king as an anti thesis of both civilisation and modernity. He was perceived as an uncouth barbarian who was both anti-white demagogue and anti-christ. The killing of Piet Retief and voortrekkers was the central episode permeating their historical narrative. This event perhaps more than any other in South African history, aptly signifies for Fuze, Dube and Dhlomo an unfortunate and embarrassing event reflecting the 'atavism' and 'primitivism' of 'darkest Africa'. Their stance indirectly perpetuated the voortrekker icon as the bearer of civilisation to the sub-continent and was its source of history. Thus they supported a perspective that depicted white domination as unfortunate and perceived it as result of the killing of Piet Retief. This group was also dismissive of King Dingane's authority and capabilities. By pushing a genealogical Zuluist ideology, the anti-King Dingane group perceived him as a barbarian whose rule was essentially cruel. In their production



of historical knowledge these Zulu nationalists perceive King Dingane as a mirror image of King Shaka. They do this by emphasising King Shaka's role in history and their view is based on nationalism, heroism, valour and capacity for state-building.

But during the same period a conflicting historical narrative and image took root. It was constructed by amongst others, Selope Thema, Herbert Dhlomo Johannes Nkosi and Jordan Ngubane who begged to differ. This pro-King Dingane group focused on obvious themes based on race, racism, economy, politics and ideology. They refuted the existing dominant orthodoxy propagating an ideology whereby King Dingane was defined as a non progressive member of the lower races who was incapable to 'rule the earth'. To them, the king was not an inverted image of the voortrekkers who were referred to as members of the civilised higher races.<sup>1</sup> Further or the anti-thesis of modernity. Thus they resisted the dichotomy simplistically articulating that whites in general were civilised and blacks were barbaric. Notwithstanding this racist ideology, this pro-King Dingane group constructed their own particular historical knowledge concerning the king. They did this by placing the land issue, and therefore economic issues, at the centre of their production of historical knowledge about the king. The theme of Zulu land and the kingdom's landscape as a historical archival material recurs throughout the thesis. Subsequently land remains a principal theme when analysing historical narratives on King Dingane's antagonistic and confrontational standpoint towards the voortrekkers. The pro-King Dingane group approved the king's stance against what they described as the land grabbing policies of voortrekkers- representing white imperialist and colonisers. Henceforth viewed the king as one of the original freedom fighters .

Both the pro- and anti -King Dingane groups have a similar project in mind but differ in their production of historical knowledge about the king. They use, differently, the images of the voortrekkers, King Shaka and King Dingane to discuss the language about power and authority, control and domination, conquest and rule, dissent and suppression, rebellion and destruction of flight. As a result, we become aware that during the process of producing historical knowledge, History becomes inextricably bound up with historians' values, and these are influenced by their political view of the world. In this regard history has meanings in the present and hence ideological agendas. This therefore highlights the role of ideology in the production of their historical texts, narratives and archives. Accordingly, the resulting divergent ideologies are elaborate and point

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<sup>1</sup> See among others, D. Kruger, *Die viering van Dingaansdag:1838-1910*, Cape Town, n.d; M. Swart, *Geloftdag*, Cape Town, 1961; P. Kapp, *Ons volksfeeste*, Cape Town, 1975.

towards a creative tension between the two groups as far the image of the king is concerned.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth the historical knowledge and images about King Dingane has been produced by two distinguishable groups of authors, writing at the same time, in works whose production was determined by markedly similar social and economic conditions. In fact two of the authors were brothers, namely the Dhlomo brothers. They produced their different texts during the same year, in 1936.

The thesis further illustrates that contending viewpoints concerning the king's image was a continuous and vigorous point of discussion in the twentieth century. This becomes apparent when we analyse the images of King Dingane as expounded by Mazisi Kunene, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Themba Msimang among others. These images are a continuation of the themes put in place earlier by Zulu nationalists like Fuze and Dube. The killing of King Shaka is central and largely influential in the type of historical knowledge and narratives that is subsequently produced. These include perceptions of King Dingane as a cruel barbarian. According to this group, King Shaka was a standard bearer of both civilisation and progress for the African communities. His perceptive diplomatic policies and endeavours including initiatives towards accommodating the expansionist British power were branded as political strategies of a genius. The move by King Shaka to unite the various kingdoms, chiefdoms and different clans under the system of a divine kingship was an empowering move - a mission that will benefit African peoples whereby the dynamic indigenous life, politics, and military vitality posed a serious deterrent to European expansionism.

Consequently the image of King Dingane seems to have developed historically very much over and against the image of Shaka as Fuze, Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo narratives highlight. But this is not the case with African workers in the 1930s. According to the latter, the two kings were neither inverted images of each other nor violent, harsh enemies of the people. Accordingly, such debates sets the production of historical knowledge apart from other disciplines. The 'historic sense' is not one of certainties, which can be arrived at in a prescribed manner. The production of historical knowledge is a process of constant negotiation between evidence and interpretation where many questions remain unanswered or capable of a wide variety of conclusions as reflected by the contending images about King Dingane amongst Africans. This issue is illuminated by the existing

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See the article that highlights this creative tension, 'NkoShaka kaSenzangakhona:Ngabe wayengumholi onjani?', *Injula*, November 1988, No 1, p.12.

conflicting historical narratives about the killing of both King Shaka and Piet Retief. History, therefore, is an argument, an explanation and a viewpoint drawing on selected facts. Therefore, History is a matter for debate and refinement of perceptions, and is seldom 'right' or 'wrong'. This is unlike in disciplines such as physics or geometry, whereby in terms of knowledge production, goals are given to individuals, who then transform problems to arrive at 'right' or 'wrong' solutions. In the production of historical knowledge, goals remain vague and indefinite, open to a great deal of personal interpretation as historians like Johannes Nkosi have shown by demythologising the meaning of "Dingane's Day". History is more often either 'convincing' or 'poorly argued' (as opposed to right or wrong) and as such this contributes to the quality of historical knowledge.

All these points become apparent when academics like Bhambatha Vilakazi, Mazisi Kunene and Sibusiso Nyembezi, amongst others, rigorously analyse existing historical evidence on King Dingane in a tight, scholarly manner. They were inward looking and focused on their subject of research. They paid particular attention to the power dynamics within the Zulu royal house including the influential role of Regent Mnkabayi. These academics, like other historians and intellectuals, also analysed the killing of Piet Retief and party and its historical meaning. Their analysis of the event and circumstances leads one to conclude that historical knowledge is but an extension of our everyday knowledge of the past. For example, Most of their resultant narratives about the killing of Retief and voortrekkers are drawn from their common experience of life—namely the escalating, combustible racial conflict in South Africa. They all regurgitate one of the existing five themes connected with the King Dingane and Piet Retief saga. Each construction is well supported by historical evidence. Accordingly, historians like Kunene experienced life as purposeful and oriented towards the future hence their call to forget about what the king did in the past, particularly the killing of Piet Retief and voortrekkers, and focus towards the future in order to build and strive for better race relations. Other historians like Vilakazi do not necessarily subscribe to this viewpoint. Their narratives and perceptions about the king simply reflected the structures of their experiences as individuals caught up in several historical processes defined by race conflict, prejudice and political oppression.

Additionally, both Selope Thema and Vilakazi were, in the end, ambivalent and ambiguous regarding the killing of Piet Retief. Consequently their views changed in a given time. We can therefore conclude that the various images and historical narratives on King Dingane reflected in this thesis are neither sacrosanct nor cast in stone. This is because the production of historical

knowledge is about change in a given time. As an example, both Selope Thema's and Vilakazi's (including Chief Buthelezi's) changing images in regard to the king were influenced by their understanding of the structures of political power and of the processes of political changes that took place in South Africa at a particular time.

On a different note, the thesis has highlighted divine kingship as a key metaphor of civilisation (as opposed to barbarism) for Shembe, Nkosi, Vilakazi, Nyembezi, Ngubane, Pheko and ANC activists, among others. Both the anti-King Dingane and pro-King Dingane group believe in divine kingship. Hence their construction of historical knowledge on King Dingane is circumscribed by their belief and support of the central role of divine kingship in African societies. But the pro-King Dingane group support of divine kingship is intertwined with socio-political condition that existed during their time. As opponents of racial oppression this group portrayed King Dingane as public hero number one of the South African national past. To them King Dingane was not a barbarian for he boldly refused to succumb to the exigencies of imperialism. Moreover, to Pheko, the younger Dhlomo and Ngubane, King Dingane-as **the true friend of African civilisation**- love for independence as opposed to white rule was a civilising mission for the entire African people in South Africa. This group as ideologues of African nationalism and supporters of African traditions and culture challenged myths about African inferiority. They also rebelled against the negation of the achievements and accomplishments of Africans in general. For this group, African traditions and cultural achievement were crucial tools to be utilised if Africans were to realise their emancipation in this oppressive world.<sup>3</sup> The rigidity and supposed cultural superiority of christian missionaries and their brand of religion largely regarded as a 'civilising mission' of the 'barbaric' African led to the rise of African nationalist churches, including that of Shembe. Such churches represented African resistance and voices from the shadows against christianity and hence their belief in African culture, tradition, civilisation and monarchies like King Dingane. Modernity held no brief for them because it propagated self-doubt, racism and violent oppression which promoted and emphasised conflict set forth by genocide and extermination of Africans.

Extermination and genocide also form the hallmark of King Dingane's historical narratives and image. These themes contribute towards the construction and production of historical knowledge about the king. Different viewpoints on this issue are reflected by Magolwane in *izibongo*, public intellectuals accounts, Dhlomo brothers, Thema, Ngubane, Pheko, Msimang, Buthelezi and the

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In this respect see the works of H. Dhlomo

ANC. Because of the existing dynamics within the Zulu royal house, public intellectuals like Mshwongweni and Sivivi, Rolfes Dhlomo, Buthelezi and Msimang, among others, focused their production of historical knowledge on various cruel episodes carried out by the king or on his instructions. These led to the extermination and genocide against his sibling and subjects who were dissatisfied with his ascendancy to power. In contrast, Ngubane, H. Dhlomo Pheko, and uMkhonto weSizwe activists focused on the threat of genocide and extermination posed by the advent and arrival of white settlers in the Zulu kingdom. There were various reasons advanced by this group to explain this threat. Their production of historical knowledge in this regard was underpinned by the argument that the indigenous population of all the continents colonised by white European settlers were victims of violence, atrocities, and massacres. They did not have to look too far but at the plight of the African population and politics in the Cape Colony. According to them, white settlers had to be challenged and confronted through whatever form of action. This invariably led to the use of many strategies including the formation of Umkhonto weSizwe. The press, represented by Ngubane and Dhlomo, was also at the forefront of this revolution, using pen and paper to ferment oppositional views to what they perceive as extermination and genocide perpetuated through racism, apartheid policies and oppression of the African majority. The black consciousness movement, represented by Pheko, emphasised the issue of the production of knowledge, education and called for the psychological liberation of African mind which they believed was destroyed by cultural imperialism. They argued that African knowledge patterns were running a risk of being exterminated by domineering Eurocentric knowledge effects-simultaneously they acknowledged the destructive violence perpetuated by white settlers. All these groups were dominated by Africanist and were dismissive of the unfounded and 'imagined' fears of the so-called 'black hordes' by the white settlers. They believed this to be a myth and an ideological ploy used by whites to usurp their land. The groups argued that, like King Dingane, they had nothing against white people in general precisely because Africans were not racist, and also they had never enslaved nor oppressed any group-in fact their mistake, a fatal one indeed that was emphasised by Hlambamanzi and Matiwane among others, was to accept and welcome white settlers into their fold with open arms.

To deal with the apparent contradictions and ambiguities posed by King Dingane's image most writers reflect back into the past and rely particularly on oral traditions in order to understand the present. Consequently, poets like Gcumisa and Masuku, amongst others, highlight the continuities between the traditional and modern by focusing on traditions which essentially were about kingly and military prowess. For this reason, H. Dhlomo proclaimed, 'the African has been detribalised

and modernised, and that it is of his new life and problems and surroundings the Africans dramatist should write. This is true: African drama should show life as it is today. But this does not in any way defeat our contention that the Past should be the chief basis of our *literary* drama'.<sup>4</sup> This belief is reflected in his play based on King Dingane. Subsequently the different texts use past customs, ceremonies, festivals, political structures, myths, legends, traditional 'rituals and rites' including performance based traditional forms of poetry like izibongo to project their contending images of the kings to an essentially modern audience.

It is also important to begin to understand the role played by newspapers like iLanga, the Bantu World and iNkundla yaBantu in the production of historical knowledge on King Dingane. They were specifically aimed at the African population and audience and played a particular and ideological role which was modernist in essence. These historical archives conscientised a large number of their avid readers and audiences in issues that described politics of the day. This includes the feature articles of John Dube, Dhlomo brothers, Selope-Thema and Ngubane on King Dingane. As a result, the oral traditions, historical fiction and the newspaper articles on the monarch deal with the complexities of socio-economic and cultural-ideological determination silently at work.

The use mnemonic devices like the landscape is another overriding theme of the narrative poems about King Dingane. The narrative poetry, iNcome and uMgungundlovu amongst others, reflecting particular images of the king, are used as weapons of oppression to deal with remembering, memory and forgetting. It is also important that language, as a handy tool for colonisers, is crucial in the production of historical knowledge because white settlers coined their own place names for each indigenous name. For example, iNcome River and the immediate environment are the perfect example. This includes other battle sites like oThukela, oPate and eTalen which permeate both Zulu and Afrikaner oral traditions. One has to be familiar with both Afrikaans and isiZulu place names to compare and contrast historical evidence underpinning these traditions. As an example, the naming of iNcome River as 'Blood River' by white settlers was an act of trying to blatantly ignore and subvert pre-existing African names and histories of the land. The naming of Pietermaritzburg as uMgungundhlovu<sup>5</sup> by indigenous Africans and the continued disregard of the name 'Blood' River in favour of the original- iNcome by Africans, simply illuminates the latter's central role in the production of historical knowledge and their resolve to vigorously challenge and contesting the

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H. Dhlomo, 'Why study tribal dramatic forms', p.40.

The original uMgungundlovu is situated in an area called Vryheid, meaning 'Freedom', probably referring to perceived voortrekkers freedom from the confrontational strategies of King Dingane.

cultural power of maps and place names-including the intended subversion of their past.<sup>6</sup> This also signifies the oppositional nature of history as a discourse and the central role remembering, memory and oral traditions play in challenging this form of cultural power. Consequently, the cultural contestations over naming and possessing the land, highlight the multiple and complex meanings attached to both land, space and place in South Africa.<sup>7</sup>The narrative poetry focussing on King Dingane, iNcome/BloodRiver and uMgungundlovu/Pietermaritzburg, is both anti-imperial and nationalistic in detail. We can therefore infer that both the city of Pietermaritzburg and Blood River as part of the South African landscape, and the historical narrative generated by the mere mention of these names, 'is tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism which conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscapes understood as inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of high (European) 'culture' and 'civilisation' into a natural 'space'.<sup>8</sup>

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See chapter 5 on narrative poetry by Gcumisa et al; on both these places.

See K. Dorian Smith et al; Text, theory, space: land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia, London: Routledge, 1996, Introduction.

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