

WHO WERE DINGISWAYO AND SHAKA?
INDIVIDUAL ORIGINS AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

by

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In recent years there has been considerable discussion about the origins of the Zulu kingdom. There has not, however, been an equivalently detailed discussion about the origins of the Zulu kings. In this paper, therefore, I consider the origins of two of them from a particular point of view that, I believe, throws some additional light on the circumstances in which the new political organization of the kingdom emerged. If that point of view is the anthropologist's rather than the historian's, I hope to show that it does not inevitably mean "looking at historical evidence 'for the sake of extracting static conclusions from moving elements'". (1) Instead, it can mean looking at apparently unique historical events as examples of recurrent processes, the demonstration of which shows that the events are not always what they seem to be.

In this case, the "events" at which I want to look are some of those contained in the Zulu (2) traditions, as relayed by European writers. I therefore first provide summaries of these traditions, drawing for the most part on the versions of Fynn (3) and Isaacs (4) which were closest in time to the original events that the traditions purport to describe. (5)

The Traditional Origins of Dingiswayo

The story here is that Ngodongwana (as Dingiswayo was originally known) was the son of one wife of Jobe, chief of the Mthethwa tribe. Jobe was induced by the adherents of Mawewe, another son by a different wife, to believe that Ngodongwana was plotting to kill his father. Jobe therefore ordered that Ngodongwana should himself be killed. However, Ngodongwana escaped from Jobe's warriors, after receiving a spear wound in his side, though Jobe was informed that he had been killed. Ngodongwana found refuges among a succession of Zulu tribes, leading him gradually to the north-west, where he ended up amongst that section of the Hlubi tribe under chief Bungane. While with Bungane, he displayed outstanding qualities by killing a lioness single-handed, for which he was rewarded with a sub-chiefship by Bungane. Subsequently, Ngodongwana entered the service of that famous, though mysterious, umlungu (6) who appeared amongst the Hlubi from the west. Ngodongwana accompanied this umlungu nearly to the coast, where Phakatwayo, chief of the Qwabe, had the umlungu killed. However, sufficient of the umlungu's prestige, particularly that deriving from his possession of a horse and a gun, became attached to Ngodongwana to win the support of some of the Mthethwa. With their help, Ngodongwana overcame the warriors of his half-brother, Mawewe, the successor of their father, Jobe, who had himself died during Ngodongwana's exile. Ngodongwana himself then became chief of the Mthethwa, but under

the name of Dingiswayo, by which he was thereafter known.

The Traditional Origins of Shaka

For my purpose, this story begins at the point where Senzangakhona, chief of the Zulu proper, was said to have had full sexual intercourse with Nandi, a woman of the Langa tribe, despite the fact that he had not yet been circumcised. Since this deficiency meant either that such intercourse was forbidden to him (according to Fynn) or that he was incapable of procreation (according to Isaacs), it was officially denied by the Zulu that Nandi could be pregnant, although she had begun to display the usual symptoms of that condition. These symptoms were explained away by the Zulu representatives as the effects of an intestinal complaint called by the term itshaka, from which derived the name given to the son whom Nandi subsequently bore, thus demonstrating that she had indeed been pregnant. Despite (or perhaps partially because of) this portentous birth, Shaka later fled from the territory of the Zulu proper, either with his mother (according to Fynn) or with his uterine half-brother, Ngwadi (according to Isaacs). In either case, Shaka ended up in Mthethwa country, where (according to both Fynn and Isaacs) he was well received by Dingiswayo, who was already chief there. Shaka soon displayed marked ability as a fighter, as a composer of songs and as an orator. This combination of qualities marked him as a leader who might be considered highly suitable to succeed, as chief of the Zulu proper, Senzangakhona, who died about 1816. However, the succession fell to Sigiyana, but he was eliminated by Shaka's half-brother, Ngwadi, and so Shaka then secured the chiefship of the Zulu, with the aid of an Mthethwa contingent.

Comparison of These Traditions with Each Other

Even from the summary forms in which I have presented them, it should be apparent that the stories of the early careers of Dingiswayo and Shaka have something in common, even though they relate to two distinct historical personalities. Indeed, according to Fynn, Dingiswayo himself saw a general resemblance between their careers, when "he took Chaka under his protection, saying that, as he had himself been driven from his father, and had become an outcast wherever he went, Chaka should be under his special care". (7)

More specifically, there is a set of elements which are repeated in both stories, though they are expressed in differing details. These elements are:

- a) A woman bears a male child who has supposedly been begotten by a chief.
- b) This child is unjustly driven into exile by, or on behalf of, his presumptive father, the chief.
- c) While in exile, he manifests heroic qualities which attract the favourable attention of a patron who eventually bestows subordinate office on him.
- d) In his original home, the chief, his presumptive father, dies and is succeeded by a recognized heir.
- e) Shortly afterwards, the exile returns to his former home, equipped with some source of prestige or power.
- f) This prestige or power wins him a following amongst a section of the people in his former home, who recognize him as the child who was driven into exile.
- g) They therefore support him in getting rid of the incumbent heir, whom he replaces as chief, thus finally achieving the position to which he has a genealogical claim.

As far as I know, no such comparison and analysis of the two stories has been made in the previously published voluminous literature on Dingiswayo and Shaka. The lack of such a comparison is one reason why there has been a general failure to appreciate the legendary form of the stories. Hence, although it has frequently been recognized that certain details of the stories must be legendary, all those discussions of the stories I have read or heard have accepted the main point of the stories: that Dingiswayo and Shaka were the sons of their fathers who returned from exile to succeed them. But it is precisely this point which I find unacceptable. My reasons for doing so rest on having used the comparative method of the anthropologist to show, first, that the form of the Zulu legends is closely similar to that of numerous other legends found among several peoples in different parts of Africa and, secondly, that this form is so recurrent because it constitutes a common fabrication meant to justify the assumption of political office by those with no hereditary claims to it.

Comparison of the Zulu Legends with Others of Similar Form

I cannot present here the details of this wide-ranging comparison, but should at least offer a condensed version sufficient to allow some judgement of its validity. I refer, then, to my own earlier field-work amongst the Soli people of Zambia. Amongst them, I collected a relatively large number of legends with a common theme. The essentials of this theme resemble those of the Zulu legends, allowing for the difference (unimportant in this context) that the Soli are a matrilineal society.

Typically, the theme is that a female member of a Soli chief's matrilineage was captured by some other tribe during a raid. Sometimes she already had a baby which was taken with her, and sometimes she bore a child later, at the home of her captors. Years later, when the child had grown up, it was either set free by its masters or escaped from them, and returned to Soli country, about which it had supposedly heard from its mother. The child arrived back, just at the time when the local chief had died and the people were looking around for a successor. The child was able to establish its identity by naming its mother and by describing the circumstances in which she had been abducted. It also had (or claimed to have) some source of power or prestige. The local Soli found the story and its teller acceptable and appointed him (or her) as their new chief, even though he (or she) might not even be able to speak their language.

Faced with stories of this kind about at least five different individuals from four separate chiefdoms, I was not disposed to reject the notion that individual Soli were frequently carried off in raids, nor did I consider it unlikely that some of them or their descendants eventually returned to their Soli homes. But I did become very sceptical about the possibility that five such persons were missing rightful heirs to chiefship. I eventually found that my scepticism was shared by at least some Soli over the most recent of the five cases.

In about 1912, after one of the Soli chiefs had died, and there had been an interregnum of about a year, an Ngoni man from Fort Jameson who was passing through Soli country on his way to the line of rail, succeeded in becoming the new chief on the grounds of a story of the kind I have related. He maintained his claim in the face of resistance from some members of the Soli chiefly matrilineage who were contending amongst themselves for the position, and he managed to convince the white officials of the BSA company that his story was true, so that they, too, recognized him as the rightful heir. However, when I persisted in questioning some of my most knowledgeable informants who had first given me the story as it stood, they revealed their own opinions that the story was untrue.

They told how the Ngoni man had fallen in with a group of important Soli headmen, when he first arrived in the area. He learned of the death of the chief from them and told them that back in Fort Jameson he had a number of stores which brought

him much wealth and that he was also the owner of large herds of cattle. He promised that if the headmen would support him as a candidate for the chiefship, and he got it, he would transfer all his wealth and cattle to Soli country and use some of it to reward those who had helped him. The headmen accepted this proposition and supplied him with necessary circumstantial detail about a woman who had disappeared long ago and whose returned child he could claim to be. The scheme worked and he did become chief, though the riches he described so graphically never materialized and his supporters got nothing for their pains.

There are certain features, that I cannot retail here, about the other cases of this kind which compelled me to believe that essentially the same imposture happened with them. The anthropologist, if not the historian, can face with equanimity the leap back in time and space from these cases to the Zulu ones to conclude that they too are the concealing records of impostures. But, having made the leap, even the bold anthropologist must present any local evidence that he can find in support of the conclusion. It is very unlikely that there are any contemporary Zulu informants who could provide such evidence in the way that my Soli ones did about the 1912 case, so I have not bothered to look for them. Instead, I have looked for any evidence which suggests that there were Zulus who rejected the stories at the time they were first propagated. I believe I have found some contained in parts of the narratives themselves.

One such part is embedded in the version Bryant collected of Dingiswayo's arrival in Mthethwa country. This version describes how Dingiswayo first went to the homestead of a man called Mbangambi, who was supposedly a kinsman and a boyhood companion of Dingiswayo. In Bryant's words,

Mbangambi at once passed on the wondrous news to his local headman, Nqola. This [headman] ..., however, proved a man of conservative politics, who did not approve of pretenders and revolutions; and Mbangambi was directed to acquaint the stranger with the fact. (8)

Instead of which, Mbangambi helped Dingiswayo to raise a body of warriors who promptly put Nqola to death for his scepticism. He was, of course, neither the first nor the last honest man to die for his opinions, but he does not seem to have earned any credit for them from historians of the Zulu. Perhaps they would now care to pay him belated amends by accepting his (and my) scepticism about the "pretender", Dingiswayo.

As far as I know, there is no equivalent record of any such heroic challenge to Shaka's identity, at the time when he claimed the right to succeed Senzangakhona. But, as we have already noticed, in several versions of the stories recounting Shaka's birth, either Senzangakhona himself or one of his kinsmen denied that Nandi was pregnant, at any rate by Senzangakhona. It is noticeable that, in even those versions which do admit an encounter between Senzangakhona and Nandi, it is generally a surreptitious, brief one in the bush. The briefest encounter of all is probably that in the version by the Zulu author, Fuze, in his book, Abantu Abanyama. His account has been previously available only in the Zulu original. However, it has recently been translated by Mr Harry Lugg and has been edited for publication by my colleague at the University of Natal, Professor Cope, who has allowed me to see the typescript. Since it is new material in the sense that it has apparently not been used by any of the modern white commentators on early Zulu history, it may be useful if I quote briefly from it here. After describing how Nandi and other Langeni girls came to visit Senzangakhona and his male companions in the bush, the translation continues:

All the girls were then invited to come forward, which they did, and stood in a line. And the Prince saw Nandi ... And indeed they came together, right there, as desired by the princess. And what do you know? It was right there that the princess got pregnant.

Fuze adds later that "they never came together again, only once there in the clump of bushes".

Of course, Senzangakhona was neither the first nor the last male chauvinist to deny paternity after such a single, abrupt transaction. But his denial does not seem to have been accepted by the historians, not even by the male ones. However, as an unreconstructed male chauvinist anthropologist, I am quite willing to accept it. Indeed, I am keen to go further and assert that the stories that they did briefly meet and furtively copulate were political fabrications for dealing with the problem that there must have been many kin and subjects surviving Senzangakhona who knew that there had certainly been no open, regular relationship between him and Nandi. However, they would not have been able to prove that there had never been a short, clandestine affair between them, and therefore were less able to deny the story which would thus do to give Shaka some sort of hereditary claim to the succession, even if it were not a full, legitimate one.

Read together with the comparative material, this internal evidence from the Zulu legends therefore leads me to infer that neither Dingiswayo nor Shaka was, in origin, who he claimed to be. In that case, who were they? Obviously, there are not going to be any conclusive answers to this question, since all the surviving evidence is predicated on the assumption that they were indeed the sons of their fathers. But if we follow a procedure based on the contrary assumption, then at least some versions of the legends can be made to yield suggestions about their actual origins. That procedure is to assume that one of the places to which the hero went during his supposed exile was, in fact, his place of origin.

The Possible Origins of Dingiswayo

Applying the procedure to the legends concerning him, we would be obliged to conclude from most versions that he was in fact a member of the Hlubi tribe. However, there is at least one version of the story which raises more interesting possibilities. This is the famous, or notorious, version apparently first propagated by Theophilus Shepstone that Dingiswayo

in his travels ... had reached the Cape Colony and must have lived with or entered the service of some colonist ... It was during his stay in the Cape Colony that he acquired the information, or made the observations, which were to effect the great change in his native land and the surrounding countries. (9)

Now, Shepstone's statement has frequently been dismissed as one of the most obvious fallacies about early Zulu history. For example, Bryant rejected it (10) and Professor Hattersley considered it "improbable". (11) More recently, Professor Thompson has written that "it is no more than a wild speculation" (12), and goes on to castigate it as yet another example of that white racial prejudice which will not allow that the black man is capable of creating anything original for himself.

In the face of such solidarity amongst historians of otherwise variable attitudes (Bryant would himself undoubtedly count as a white racist in many quarters today), I might well hesitate to say a word in Shepstone's defence - and, indeed, I do not want to defend his version in the particular terms in which he presented it. Instead, I want to ask a question that deserves more serious consideration than Shepstone's critics have apparently given it, namely: Where did Shepstone get this item from? Bryant thought that Shepstone had misunderstood the reference in the legend to the white man on the horse, whereas Professor Thompson obviously thinks that Shepstone simply invented it, but he does not tell us how he knows that it was merely "speculation" or "admittedly conjectural". Professor

Hattersley, on the other hand, writes that "it is based on native legend", but the Shepstone article to which he refers in support of this assertion does not actually say that it is.

As it happens, I recently put the question to Mr Harry Lugg (a nonagenarian survivor from the earlier days of Natal "native administration"), whom I had heard dismissing Shepstone's version as a "myth". After a moment's reflection, he replied that Shepstone probably got it from one Timuni, a Zulu originally from the Mapamulo district. I had no further opportunity then to ask Mr Lugg his grounds for this supposition, but quite coincidentally, on the same day, I found a reference to a Timuni in Shepstone's papers in the Killie Campbell library, as one of the Zulu chiefs who took refuge in Natal, where I assume he came under Shepstone's jurisdiction and therefore could have been one of his informants. There is, then, this slight evidence to believe that Shepstone did not invent the story himself, but got it from a Zulu source which he failed to acknowledge. I can add to this evidence that there is another, more detailed version of it to be found in the Stuart papers, also in the Killie Campbell collection, and as yet unpublished. (13) Stuart writes (in English) that Dingiswayo

now appears to have gone off to Grahamstown district, where, meeting an European, he entered his service as a stable-boy. Years passed whilst so engaged. In course of time he was seized with an attack of fever. Whilst suffering from this illness he frequently dreamt of Nodunga and his father. A disclination [sic] to work now came over him. He gave notice to leave, bade the European farewell ... The European asked 'What kind of reward would you like me to make for your services?' 'A gun and a horse', the other replied. The European gave the things desired and accessories.

Stuart gives no source for this version, but I doubt that he, too, invented it. The details of it suggest to me that it represents the attempt of an African informant to account for Dingiswayo's possession of that horse and gun. It is, of course, a singularly naive attempt in supposing that a European would actually give a horse and a gun and accessories to his departing African servant, but perhaps the informant was naive and perhaps he had never worked for a European. Even so, it does repeat the notion that Dingiswayo had some direct experience of European colonial society.

Therefore, although I do not defend either Shepstone's or Stuart's version as it stands, I am willing to give them sufficient recognition to apply my suggested procedure to them. I thus derive the proposition that the Cape was not where Dingiswayo went, but from whence he came.

To entertain this proposition means that I can then ask the further question: What sort of person is he likely to have been? One possible answer is that he was an escaped African slave of a white master from whom he had perhaps stolen a horse and a gun. Professor Monica Wilson provides some supporting general evidence for this possibility in remarking that, during the eighteenth century, among those "who were absorbed into Nguni chiefdoms were refugees: escaped slaves ...". (14) It is true that she is here clearly thinking mainly of the Xhosa chiefdoms, but it is not absolutely inconceivable that such an escapee could have gone right through the Transkei and Natal, especially if he had a horse. On the other hand, he would have had to be exceptionally determined and lucky to get that far, particularly if he were alone. So, although this possibility cannot be entirely excluded, I think there are more plausible alternatives.

One is that he was not an "African" refugee, but a "Khoikhoi" (or a "Coloured") one. That is, he could have been amongst what Dr Marks describes as that "considerable number of Khoikhoi [who] withdrew from the struggle [with the colonists]

altogether, by going off north to the Orange River, carrying with them the key to white superiority - horses and guns". (15) I may add that it was not only to the Orange River, for Fynn mentions parties of armed and mounted "Hottentot" elephant-hunters as far as the Umzinkhulu river in the 1820s, so it is probable that similar parties had been well into the Transkei a decade or so before then. This identification of Dingiswayo accounts quite well for the horse and gun, and it also reduces the distance he would have to travel alone through unknown country. He might, that is, have become detached from one of those parties of what Dr Marks aptly calls "VoorVoortrekkers", who had already penetrated well into the interior by the end of the eighteenth century, even, she says, as far as the Limpopo.

It would also, I think, account for the tendency in some versions of the Dingiswayo story to fuse, or perhaps confuse, him with that mysterious umlungu whose identity has been the subject of so much fruitless speculation (Dr Cowan, and all that). For Fynn states quite plainly that "... all persons wearing clothes (as our Hottentots did) were deemed by the Zulus to be Europeans" (16); and, again, that the Zulu impi who attacked and killed most of the Hottentot party at the Umzinkhulu told some Pondo that "... they had met with and killed a party of 'white men' - as they termed the Hottentots from their European dress, and comparatively light complexion ...". In other words, at that time the term umlungu was used by Zulus for a category that was as much cultural as it was racial. Hence, it is entirely possible and, I think, very probable that the umlungu in the traditions of Dingiswayo, who sometimes seems to be Dingiswayo himself, was a Khoikhoi or Coloured.

It may, of course, be objected against the attribution of this ethnic identity to Dingiswayo himself that, firstly, the Mthethwa would not have accepted him so readily as their chief and, secondly, that if they did accept him some indication of his cultural and especially his racial distinctiveness would have survived in the oral tradition. Against the first objection, I would adduce the plentiful evidence of a long-standing assimilation of Khoisan peoples by Bantu peoples, and vice versa, and conclude from it that the Mthethwa (except for Nqola, and we have been told what happened to him) would not necessarily have objected to one of them as a chief. After all, quite a lot of Africans later accepted Fynn, John Dunn, and even Shepstone as, in effect, their chiefs, so I do not see why they should have drawn the line at a brown man. As for the second objection, I would suggest that by the time he got to Mthethwa country he may have become quite well Zulu-ized (or Nguni-ized), by acquiring at least some of the language along with other culture traits, and he may, in addition, have been a particularly dark brown man. His original ethnic identity would then not have been so conspicuous that it would have survived in the oral traditions, especially since, in my interpretation, the main point of those traditions was precisely to conceal his original identity.

For those who still cannot accept this second possibility, I can offer a third and final one, which is, I judge, the most consistent with all the available versions of the Dingiswayo legend. This possibility is, in brief, that Dingiswayo was an Nguni-ized, former Sotho client of one or more of those Khoikhoi or Coloured VoorVoortrekkers. I do not need to discuss the latter again, except to say that service with them would explain his possession of the horse and gun (some versions actually state that he got them from the umlungu with whom he travelled). My justification for the Sotho identification is to be found mainly in Bryant, who accepts the idea of a white traveller, but adds that on his arrival in Hlubi country he was "accompanied by a party of Chwana-Sutu carriers or hunters" (17), and that he recruited Dingiswayo as a guide for his party on their way to the coast. Since, however, I reject the assertion that Dingiswayo came from the coast, I also reject the idea that he served as a guide towards it. Instead, I suggest that he was either already a member of the Sotho party when it reached Hlubi country or that he joined it there. Since Bryant also refers (18) to a party of "foreigners" who accompanied Dingiswayo to the coast, and identifies their clan-name with that of a Sotho group in the Free State, it seems that the first suggestion is quite plausible. It is, however, worth noting that Bryant alleges the Hlubi dressed both themselves and their

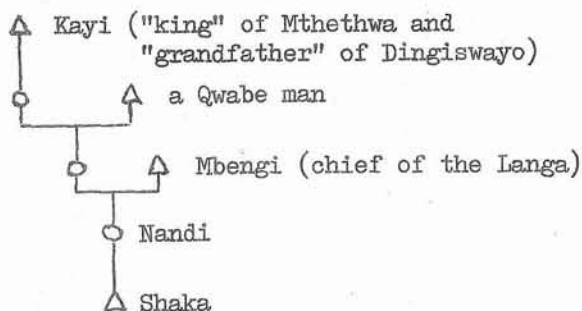
hair in a fashion that was more typical of the Sotho than of the Nguni. Certainly, ethnic identities of this kind are not sharply discontinuous, and the then geographical location of the Hlubi makes it likely that they were as much "Sotho" as "Nguni", so the possibility that Dingiswayo was a Hlubi (which is the one with which I began) is not inconsistent with his also being a "Sotho".

To sum up, then, this necessarily rather convoluted survey of the possibilities, I would say that the likelihood is that Dingiswayo was either himself a VoorVoortrekker or some kind of Setho with direct experience of VoorVoortrekker culture. Since such plain (though by no means certain) conclusions emerge from applying my procedure to the Dingiswayo material, it may produce equally plain ones in the case of Shaka. Let us see if it does.

The Possible Origins of Shaka

Nobody, as far as I know, has ever suggested that Shaka visited the Cape, so I do not have to consider the possibility that that is where he may have come from. I cannot, however, resist citing one assertion that he was a Coloured, if only because nobody else seems to have commented on it. It occurs in the Diary of Fynn, who records that, on one of his visits to the Pondo, some of them claimed that "Shaka ... was ... of white extraction, therefore I [Fynn] was probably one of his relations".(19) There is no way of knowing if Fynn ever contested this extraordinary assertion, since, quite maddeningly, he makes no further comment on it at all. I myself could face with equanimity the idea that Shaka had a few Caucasoid elements in his genetic constitution (perhaps from one of those shipwrecked survivors whom we know were in the area intermittently from the sixteenth century onwards), but since there is no other evidence on the point, I do not insist on it. (20)

Nor do I insist on supposing that Shaka was an Mthethwa, which is what he ought to have been, if we apply the procedure, by which the last place the hero reaches in his "exile" is in fact the place from which he originated. For, in Shaka's case, the question of his origins is complicated by the prominent and wandering role which Nandi plays in the legends. I have plenty of doubts about that role, but since they would take much space to expound, let alone resolve, I refrain from raising them. Instead, I merely remark on the significance of the fact that Shaka's recorded genealogical claims to a place in any of the communities where he supposedly lived are all essentially through women. The fact is especially evident in the case of his claim to a place in Mthethwa society, which, according to evidence in the Stuart papers (partially supplemented by other material), rests on this series of three female links:



In considering this genealogy, it must be appreciated that, although a link through one woman may be fairly acceptable and even quite common in patrilineal societies like the Zulu, a series of such female links would ordinarily make a claim to status a very weak one. So, even if the genealogy is correct as it stands, it means that socially Shaka was an outsider to Mthethwa society and, in varying degrees, to the other communities where his or Nandi's wanderings took him. He had, that is, no agnatic homeland at all, not even in Zululand proper, to which I have argued his legendary attachment was spurious. Putting this point more generally, we can say that whoever Shaka was he was not a full member, in its own terms, of the society he came to dominate. In this respect, as in others, he resembled Dingiswayo, with whom, appropriately enough, his fortunes came to be so closely linked. What, then, are some of the wider implications of this resemblance?

The Outsider and Political Change

Given the right attendant circumstances, the outsider in any society has one or both of two advantages over an insider: firstly, he may be aware of a wider range of possibilities than those whose mental horizons have been confined to one culture; secondly, he is initially free from the numerous social and political obligations which constrain the insider. The outsider with both these advantages can, if he is also able and daring, use them to manipulate the existing political structure to his own advantage and, in doing so, he may change that structure in significant ways. That, I suggest, is precisely what Dingiswayo did, because he was such an outsider. If, therefore, Bryant was being a racist when he remarked of Dingiswayo's activities that, "as a pure initiation of the Bantu mind and a product of purely Bantu training, they would have been decidedly extraordinary" (21), those who now apparently want to argue that the rise of the Zulu kingdom owed little to exogenous factors are, in my opinion, being at least unrealistic.

They might be on stronger grounds, though, in stressing the indigenous character of Shaka's achievements, for there is no evidence that he had external sources of wealth or power, such as a horse, a gun, a body of foreign followers, or experience of alien military organization and tactics. On the contrary, the legends of Shaka constantly emphasize the poverty and even the disgrace of his early years. Not much there in the way of wider mental horizons to explain his subsequent rise to power. True, that rise was partly dependent on the patronage of Dingiswayo himself, but this patronage came only when Shaka had already achieved enough by himself to attract Dingiswayo's favourable attention. Were there, then, any other factors within the indigenous society which would explain how Shaka overcame the major initial disadvantages from which he suffered?

Perhaps paradoxically, I suggest that his "outsider" status within that society helped to make him self-reliant, determined and ruthless. These qualities enabled him to travel successfully along a route to power other than the orthodox one of hereditary succession. This route can, I think, be most readily traced by looking at some anthropological materials on contemporary Zulu society, rather than at the historical records of Dingiswayo's time, which are scanty enough. That is, we may use again the method of looking at one set of temporal events to uncover recurrent social processes.

If we do so, we may see Shaka's early achievements as a manifestation of what I call, for want of a better term, the "igoso syndrome". In identifying this syndrome and the processes which lie behind it, I have not got much help from the existing anthropological literature on the Zulu. I have benefited more from the unpublished researches of two of my students in Natal: Mr J. Thomas, who has studied ngoma dance groups among Zulus in Durban, and Miss C. Cross, who has done rural field-work in The Valley of a Thousand Hills. I may quote briefly from something she wrote, at my request, about the local career of a man, M, in the area where she worked:

... he appears to have been chosen igoso for his district sometime before 1960 ... He achieved the position by a sort of informal decision ... he, as an aspiring igoso, 'collected' a potential team of dancers, both 'boys' and girls from his neighbourhood, who confirmed him as their group leader. There is no formal election, nor any other candidates: the decision crystallizes around personality by informal consent ... M's qualification for the position of igoso was simply that he was recognised in his local area as iqhawe, a skilled fighter, outstandingly brave and successful ... M's personality was so strong that it is reported he could go up to anyone and demand money, and the victims would be so afflicted with fear and unease that they could not meet M's eyes and would hand over whatever was demanded. This dominance appears to have been psychological rather than a product of the anticipation of violence.

What, then, I am moved to ask, was M, but some Shaka guiltless of his country's blood? And what was Shaka, in the early stages of his career, but a fairly typical Zulu igoso, whose developed personal qualities were more than sufficient to raise him to this position, for which no hereditary qualifications were required? What was untypical about him was that he later went, with Dingiswayo's help, from igoso to inkosi, for which a hereditary qualification was required and which therefore had to be manufactured by or for him. Consequently, I suggest, some of his extraordinary behaviour as a chief, such as his pronounced taste for war, his disregard for human life, his liking for grandiose display, can be interpreted as an exaggerated and unrestrained continuation of behaviour expected (within limits) of an igoso, and perhaps also as an attempt to make secure, through terror, a position that was not rightfully his.

Certainly, it seems to me that the careers of both Shaka and of Dingiswayo become more interesting and more comprehensible if we now recognize fully their status as "outsiders", which the legends I have analysed have been so successful in concealing for the last 150 years.

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Notes

- (1) S. Marks, Journal of African History, v. 11, 1970, p. 441.
- (2) Here and elsewhere I use the term "Zulu" anachronistically to mean the whole indigenous population of what came to be called "Zululand". When I refer to the Zulu tribe, in the strict, limited sense, I write of the "Zulu proper".
- (3) The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, eds. Stuart and Malcolm (Pietermaritzburg, 1950).
- (4) N. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, eds. Herman and Kirby (Struik: Cape Town, 1970).
- (5) Fynn, for example, apparently claims on p. 1 of his Diary (op. cit.) to have got the story of Dingiswayo from Shaka himself, and to have "corroborated [it] from other sources".
- (6) See below, p. 7, for further discussion of this term, usually translated as "white man" or "European".
- (7) J. Bird, Annals of Natal, vol. 1, p. 65.
- (8) A. T. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal (Struik: Cape Town, 1965), p. 90.

- (9) In Bird, op. cit., p. 163.
- (10) Bryant, op. cit., p. 95.
- (11) A. Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal (1959), p. 9.
- (12) L. Thompson, in Oxford History of South Africa, vol. 1, p. 339.
- (13) A large proportion of the Stuart papers are currently being edited and translated for publication by Professor Webb and Mr Wright of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I do not know if this particular item is to be included in the published version and I do not have the file number of the original with me.
- (14) The Oxford History of South Africa, vol. 1, p. 234.
- (15) S. Marks, op. cit., p. 445.
- (16) Fynn, op. cit., p. 129.
- (17) Bryant, op. cit., p. 88.
- (18) Ibid., p. 89.
- (19) Fynn, op. cit.
- (20) I may, however, speculate that, if this Pondo accusation does not prove that Shaka was a Coloured, it could nevertheless be supplementary evidence that Dingiswayo was. The Pondo were, after all, a long way from Zululand and may have confused Shaka with his predecessor.
- (21) Bryant, op. cit., p. 94.