

Chieftdoms on the margins of the Zulu Kingdom: A case study of Nzama and Ngubane chieftaincies in Kranskop, Umvoti, from the 1820s to 1870s

Siyabonga Nxumalo

University of Johannesburg

nxumalosiyabonga@rocketmail.com

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Abstract

The chieftaincies in Kranskop in Umvoti seized the opportunity to exercise independence from the Zulu royal family, an opportunity which the advent of British imperialism provided. These chieftaincies decided to support the invading colonial forces during the Anglo-Zulu War of January to September 1879 and participated actively in the colonial armed forces which fought the Usuthu section of the Zulu royal family during the 1880s. They also provided active military support to the Natal colonial forces during the Poll Tax uprisings of 1906. This article retraces the genesis of the dispute over the chieftainship at MaMbulu in Kranskop between the Ngubane and the Nzama families. The consolidation of the Zulu Kingdom by King Shaka does not tell the whole story because some chieftdoms maintained their own autonomy. Examples are the shift in allegiance by the Ngubane to the British side because of political conflicts, and the move away from King Shaka by the Nzama chieftdom. It will be shown that the context which made it possible for the Nzama people to come under the leadership of the Ngubane can be linked to the different relations that King Shaka kaSenzangakhona, the founder of the Zulu Kingdom, shared with the various chieftaincies on its western boundary during the 1820s.

Keywords: Chieftdoms; Zulu royal family; Nzama; Ngubane; Political conflict; Shifts of allegiance.

Introduction

There is a general assumption that chieftdoms reacted uniformly when they were invaded by King Shaka, the founder and leader of the Zulu Kingdom from 1818 to the 1828. According to this view, the incorporated chieftdoms simply discarded their identities and embraced the Zulu identity without question or contestation.¹ However, historical evidence shows that it was the missionaries and the European settlers who attributed Zulu-ness to the people of southeast Africa. From the 1820s

¹ RS Khumalo, *Uphoko: Umqulu 1* (Pietermaritzburg, Cape Town and Randburg, Shuter & Shooter, 1995).

and 1830s they categorised all African people living to the north and south of the Thukela River as the *amaZulu* despite the fact a significant number of them, especially those residing to the south of the Thukela River, never considered themselves *amaZulu*. Similarly, the missionaries who were actively involved in spreading Christianity in the region were beginning to refer to the dialects spoken by these people as *isiZulu* by the 1840s.² By the next decade some ethnographers began to identify a cultural region which included both the Zulu heartland to the north of the Thukela River and territory to the south as being predominantly Zulu. Despite this cultural homogenisation, other ethnographers distinguish between the Zulus of the kingdom and the “kaffirs” of Natal.³ Those referred to as “kaffirs” were Christian converts (*amakholwa*) and other people living to the south of the Thukela River, who had embraced categories such as the *amalala* to distinguish themselves from those to the north of the Thukela River by the 1850s.⁴ It was only from the 1880s onwards that some of the *amakholwa* began to see political value in aligning themselves with the besieged Zulu royal family.

The assumption that all Africans who lived in the region were Zulus goes against available evidence, which suggests that the Zulu Kingdom, like most conquest states, was not a cohesive and united polity.⁵ Rather, it was an amalgamation of discrete, previously independent chiefdoms, each with its own established ruling house, its own identity, and its own body of memories and traditions about the times before the Zulu conquest. Acquiescence to Zulu over-lordship on the part of these chiefdoms, as John Wright further argues, was thus not tantamount to an acceptance of Zulu identity.⁶ Furthermore, the early kingdom was a hierarchical structure that consisted of groups which responded differently to the rule of the Zulu royal family and Zulu-ness as an identity.⁷ It was only a handful of groups that embraced the Zulu identity. Included in this group were the notable (*iziphakanyiswa*), who had been elevated to positions of power by King Shaka, and the men of the new state’s age regiments (*amabutho*). By identifying with Shaka’s rule and Zulu identity, these groups received or hoped to receive a share of the largesse in cattle which were distributed

2 J Wright, “Reflections on the politics of being ‘Zulu’”, B Carton, J Laband and J Sithole (eds.), *Zulu identities: Being Zulu, past and present* (Durban, UKZN Press), pp. 37-38.

3 “Kaffir” is a derogatory word which the white settlers used to describe African people in southern Africa during the colonial, segregationist and apartheid periods. It has its origins in Arabic where it simply meant a “non-believer”. It is used here as it was from the advent of colonialism in southeast Africa (present-day KZN) and the end of apartheid rule in 1994. See W Holden, *The past and the future of kaffir races* (Cape Town, Struik, 1963), pp. 137-138; [First published as London, William Holden, 1866]; GH Mason, *Life of the Zulus of Natal* (London, Longman, 1855); and SJR Martin, “British Images of the Zulu, c.1820-1879” (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1984), pp. 80-82.

4 J Wright, “Reflections on the politics ...”, B Carton et.al. (eds.), *Zulu identities...*, p. 38; H Hughes, *First president: A life of John L. Dube, founding president of the ANC* (Auckland Park, Jacana Media, 2012), pp. 1-10.

5 J Wright, “Reflections on the politics...”, B Carton, J Laband and J Sithole (eds.), *Zulu identities...*, p. 35.

6 J Wright, “Reflections on the politics...”, B Carton, J Laband and J Sithole (eds.), *Zulu identities...*, pp. 35-36.

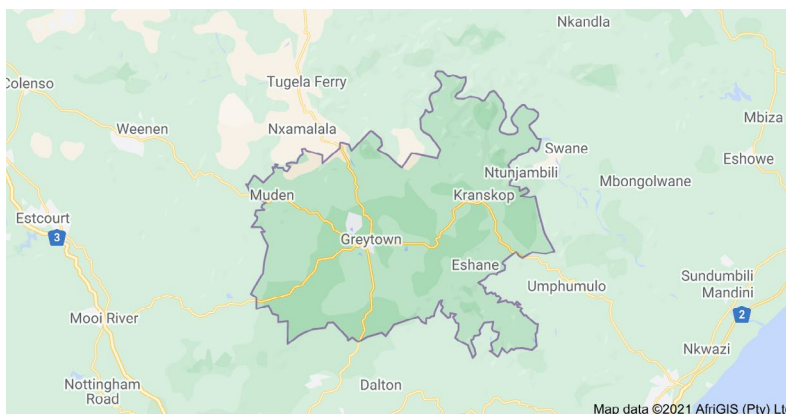
7 J Wright, “The dynamics of power and conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries: A critical reconstruction (PhD thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 1989), pp. 232; 239; 252; 259; 262-264; 269, 278; 285-288; 293-294.

after successful cattle raids. Even then, their identification with the Shaka political project did not guarantee that they would be accepted into Zulu identity, which was confined exclusively to members of the Zulu royal house. Instead, the Zulu aristocracy encouraged them to adopt the *ntungwa* ethnic identity as a means of fostering a sense of belonging. In time they came to think of themselves as sharing a common origin and superior cultural standing as the *amantungwa* which is captured in the expression ‘*ukuphatha kable njengezikhali zamantungwa* (handling something with delicate care as if you are handling the weapons of the *ntungwa* people).⁸

The Zulu polity remained divided during the reigns of the second and third Zulu kings, Dingane kaSenzangakhona (1828-1840) and Mpande kaSenzangakhona (1840-1872). It was only during the third decade of Mpande’s rule (in the 1860s and 1870s) that the Zulu Kingdom began to achieve a degree of political unity. Critical to this unity were common external threats posed by the British in the south and the Boers in the west, which prompted leading chiefs to rally behind the Zulu leadership.⁹

In addition, members of the *amabutho* who were drawn mainly from the ranks of the *amantungwa* started to identify themselves as *amaZulu* because by then their memories of conquest and subjugation were gradually receding into the past. Even so, local identities remained significant, which became evident when allegiances to the Zulu Kingdom crumbled even before the defeat of the Zulu in 1879. Rather than fight on the side of the kingdom, a number of chiefs were forced to negotiate separate peace agreements with the British.¹⁰

Image 1: Maps of Umvoti in KwaZulu-Natal



Source: Greytown, Umvoti Municipality, available at <https://umvoti.gov.za/maps/> (accessed 12 July 2022).

8 J Wright, “Reflections on the politics...”, B Carton, J Laband and J Sithole (eds.), *Zulu identities...*, p. 36.
9 J Wright, “Reflections on the politics...”, B Carton, J Laband and J Sithole (eds.), *Zulu identities...*, p. 37.
10 J Wright, “Reflections on the politics...”, B Carton, J Laband and J Sithole (eds.), *Zulu identities...*, p. 38.

In this article, I look at the varying responses of different chiefdoms to the Zulu royal family especially those of the Ngubane and Nzama living in the area called Mambulu in Kranskop in Umvoti, KwaZulu-Natal. They suffered under the aggression of the Zulu Kingdom and this forced them to shift allegiances and move away from Shaka.

Explanations for varying responses of the different chiefdoms to colonialism

There is a dearth of literature on why certain chiefdoms which were located on the boundaries of the emerging southern African kingdoms readily embraced the invading British and Boer forces, while others decided to defend the besieged royal families in general and those that were departing the region.¹¹ Among the reasons for the lack of such literature is that some historians of southern Africa, as argued below in the paper, either adopted approaches which provide an oversimplified analysis that portrays these kingdoms as coherent political entities that confronted the invading colonial forces as united forces, or alternatively, have eschewed the subject altogether in their analyses. Both these approaches take it for granted that these southern African polities were able to rally all their people behind the besieged royal families, whereas more recent evidence suggests that there was a lack of common identity and sense of belonging in most African kingdoms, including the Zulu Kingdom.¹² A recent paper on the conflicts in the Greytown, New Hanover and the Kranskop areas by Bongani Ndlovu, has eschewed the pre-colonial roots of varying responses to colonialism on the part of some chiefdoms. For example, this article is centred around the political tensions between the Ngubane chiefdom, under Chief Njengabantu Ngubane, and the Natal colonial authorities during the 1904 census. At the core of the conflict were the suspicions on the part of the commoners in the *amaBomvini* chiefdom of the Ngubane people that the colonial state was using the census to dispossess them of their land and confiscate their cattle.¹³ The source of these suspicions was the speech which the new magistrate, JW Cross, gave in Greytown in Umvoti, allegedly telling the gathering of chiefs and the *izinduna* that the land on which their chiefdoms were situated had become government property. The amaBomvu in the New Hanover and Greytown areas reacted negatively to this pronouncement because they had always regarded the land as theirs and that the chief was its custodian who was holding it on behalf of the people as a whole. The tensions which arose two years before the outbreak of the Poll Tax uprisings in 1906, culminated in the deposition of Chief Njengabantu Ngubane from the Ngubane chieftaincy and his banishment to the

11 For example, see Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* that looks at why the Barolong decided to work with the Boers against the Ndebele. ST Plaatje, *Mhudi* (Alice, Lovedale, 1930). For the departure of chiefdoms into other regions, see J Sutherland and D Canwell, *Zulu kings and their armies* (Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2004).

12 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition and the struggle for power in the early Zulu Kingdom" (MA dissertation, UCT, 1985); J Wright, "The dynamics of power and conflict...", p. 315; "Reflections on the politics...", B Carton et al (eds.), *Zulu identities...*, p. 35.

13 B Ndlovu, "The demotion of the *Amakhosi* and the confiscation of their land by the Natal Colonial Government: The case of Njengabantu Ngubane of the AmaBomvu clan", *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 63(3&4), 2009, pp. 66-80.

Alfred County near Port Shepstone. He took with him two of his senior *izinduna* named Phikane Ngubane, who was his brother, and a certain Qweletsheni.¹⁴

Contrary to James Stuart's historical evidence which demonstrates that the Ngubane people had opted not to identify with the Zulu royal family and its kingdom following Shaka's killing of their great grandfather Nzombane, which led to their migration from their original place of abode in the vicinity of the Ngubevu Drift, it appears that they suddenly expressed loyalty to the former Zulu kings and that they questioned how the colonial authorities dared to cast doubt on the loyalty of the Ngubane people who had always enjoyed close affinities with the Zulu kings Shaka, Dingane, Mpande and Cetshwayo.¹⁵ The political conflicts highlight the fluidity of identity formation and the shift of political allegiances especially in times of colonial threats to autonomy. Furthermore, Carolyn Hamilton and John Wright caution historians to remain vigilant of the James Stuart Archives and maintain that much of the work is scrappy and tends to have conflicting interpretations from conversations with various unknown Africans.¹⁶

Back to the Ngubane, this demonstrates that even chiefly families were not at all times united in their loyalty to the colonial state. This development alienated the senior Ngubane chieftaincy from the colonial state, on the one hand, while on the other, the junior house of Chief Homoyi Ngubane remained loyal to it. It is unclear whether this political action had anything to do with the animosities between Chief Homoyi Ngubane and the senior Ngubane chiefly house, because Chief Homoyi had previously contested the chieftainship with Chief Njengabantu, Ngubane's grandfather (Chief Somahashi Ngubane).¹⁷ However, it was Chief Homoyi Ngubane who was embroiled in the dispute with the Nzama people.

Reggie Khumalo and Jabulani Maphalala's Zulu-centric accounts have also shunned the varying responses of the different chiefdoms to colonial invasion and conquest.¹⁸ Both authors portray the dissenting groups as the *amambuka* (traitors) and those who remained loyal to the besieged Zulu royal family, especially its Usuthu section, as the

14 B Ndlovu, "The demotion of the *Amakhosi*...", *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 63(3&4), 2009, pp. 67-68.

15 B Ndlovu, "The demotion of the *Amakhosi* ...", *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 63(3&4), 2009, p. 67; J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone and the forging of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, UKZN Press, 2013), p. 108; "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The James Stuart Archive* (hereafter JSA), 5, pp. 341-342.

16 C Hamilton, "Backstory, biography and the life of the James Stuart Archive", *History in Africa*, 38(1), 2011, pp. 333-335; C Hamilton, *Terrific majesty: The powers of Shaka Zulu and the limits of historical invention* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 59-71; J Wright, "AT Bryant and the 'Lala'", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (38), 2012, pp. 355-368; J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone and forging of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, UKZN Press, 2013), p. 108

17 J Guy, "Singcofela kaMtshungu to J Stuart, 3 April 1910", C de B Webb and J Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 5, p. 346.

18 RS Khumalo, *Uphoko*..., pp. 68-85; J Maphalala, *Umlando Wamakhosi Esifundazweni Sakwazulu* (Dlangezwa, Prince Ndabuko Publishers, 2013), pp. 226-230; J Maphalala, *Izingxabo Zamakhosi Esifundazweni Sakwazulu* (Dlangezwa, Prince Ndabuko Publishers, 2014), pp. 68-74.

amaqhawwe (heroes/and patriots), or *izingwazi* (those who fought brilliantly) because their analyses do not take into account the dynamic differences on the ground at the point of contact between the colonial forces and the established kingdoms. This approach fails to explain why Shaka's Zulu Kingdom entered into close relations with some polities and individuals while it clashed with others. Nor does it take these relations into account when it explores the behaviour of certain polities towards the colonial authorities during the turbulent period of the 1880s to 1910. The liberal scholarship of Edgar Brookes and Colin Webb, John Laband and Paul Thompson has not enhanced our understanding of why chiefdoms responded differently to colonialism and why the colonial authorities treated them differently, because it has adopted a positivist approach which claims objectivity and neutrality while in reality it tends to exhibit more sympathy for the colonial forces which invaded and subjugated the local African population in general and the Zulu Kingdom in particular.¹⁹

Historians John Lambert and Jeff Guy make passing references to the differing responses by some of the chiefdoms that were situated on the western boundary of the Zulu Kingdom.²⁰ Writing within the *mfecane* framework, Lambert has, for example, argued that:²¹

... the events of the early nineteenth century caused havoc not only within the chiefdoms of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu area, but also with the institution of chiefship.

Invoking the materialist class analysis on pre-colonial and pre-capitalist African societies, which gained ground in South African scholarship between the 1970s and the end of the 20th century, Lambert adds that:²²

... by the 1820s, the Zulu *chiefs*, Shaka and his successor Dingane, were either directly or indirectly subjugating the chiefdoms of the region and taking over the labour services of the *amabutho*.

19 EH Brookes and C de B Webb, *A History of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, UNP, 1965); J Laband, *Kingdom in crisis: The Zulu response to the British invasion of 1879* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992); J Laband, *Rope of Sand: The rise and fall of the Zulu Kingdom in the nineteenth century* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1995); PS Thompson, *The black soldiers of the queen: The Natal Native Contingent in the Anglo-Zulu War* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2006).

20 J Lambert, *Betrayed trust: Africans and the state in colonial Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, UNP, 1995); J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*

21 J Lambert, *Betrayed trust...*, pp. 23-24.

22 J Lambert, *Betrayed trust...*, p. 24. Note that we have italicised the term "chiefs" because it highlights the unconscious white academic prejudice against African leadership. Such authors never considered Africans to be "kings". They were of the opinion that the only legitimate kings and queens were those of England. Lambert claimed positivist academic objectivity and neutrality but his approach in this regard betrays his prejudice against the African people who have "remained objects of study". His tone simultaneously displays sympathy for white domination and colonialism.

Building on Hamilton's work, Lambert adds that the Zulu kings treated the chiefdoms they had incorporated into the Zulu Kingdom differently. While they used the Cele, Thuli, Bhaca and Nhlanguwini to collect tribute from the remnants of the other chiefdoms they had conquered and subjugated they expressed their inferior status face to face with the Zulu royal family by distinguishing the chiefdoms to the south of the Thukela ideologically from those to the north. The latter were closely incorporated into the Zulu Kingdom and were encouraged to regard themselves as the *amantungwa* and of being of common descent with the Zulu royal family, while those to the north were distinguished as the *amalala* (menials) and were firmly excluded from the centres of power and prevented from organising the *amabutho* for military service.²³ This distinction played a significant role in determining the responses of the various chiefdoms to colonial conquest and subjugation.

Both Lambert and Guy argue that the first signs of fracture became evident during the civil war involving King Dingane and his half-brother and successor, Mpande kaSenzangakhona, which is often referred to as the *ukugqabuka kwegoda* (the breaking up of the rope), between 1838 and 1840. The chiefdoms that were powerful before the rise of King Shaka kaSenzangakhona as the Zulu king, such as the Thembu and the Chunu, reasserted their independence and established their power bases to the south of the Thukela River in the wake of this civil war. As a consequence they retraced their steps back from the south of the Umkhomazi River to their original lands in the vicinity of the uThukela and Umzinyathi rivers. They then re-established themselves around the confluence of the two rivers.²⁴ When a British colony was established in Natal in the 1840s, these chiefdoms took advantage of the changing situation and re-asserted their independence. Although some of them, such as the Hlubi under the leadership of Langalibalele kaMthimkhulu, later ran into conflict with the colonial authorities, the Hlubi, the Chunu under Phakade kaMacingwane, the Thembu kaNodada kaNgoza and the Ngwane under Zikhali kaMatiwane, among others, became the more prominent and powerful polities which aligned themselves with the colonialists.²⁵

Jeff Guy devotes much attention to the realignment of some chiefdoms to the British colonial administration in his critical biography of Theophilus Shepstone. However, his primary focus is on the Qwabe.²⁶ In this work, Guy focuses primarily on chiefs and *izinduna* and totally ignores men who contested chiefly power such as the Nzama in various parts of Natal after the advent of British colonialism. For example, while he covers the two sections of the Ngubane chieftaincies in general in

23 J Lambert, *Betrayed trust...*, p. 24.

24 J Lambert, *Betrayed trust...*, pp. 24-25; J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*, pp. 108-109.

25 J Lambert, *Betrayed trust...*, pp. 25-27. For the conflicts between Langalibalele kaMthimkhulu Hadebe and the Natal colonial authorities, see WR Guest, *Langalibalele: The crisis in Natal, 1873-1875* (Durban, University of Natal, Department of History and Political Science, 1976); J Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, pp. 56-57; 60; 71; J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*, pp. 404-432; 501.

26 J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*, pp. 108; 109.

great detail, and Chief Homoyi Ngubane chieftaincy in particular, he says absolutely nothing about the challenge which the Nzama made over the leadership of the people of MaMbulu near Kranskop.²⁷ The primary reason for this is Guy's heavy reliance on the James Stuart Archive which should be critiqued for interviewing only the men from influential chiefly families in Natal and Zululand to the exclusion of those polities and families that were attacked and displaced by the Zulu kings such as Shaka and Dingane kaSenzangakhona. This history has been marginalised in the historiography. For example, while he covers Jobe kaGece kaMaphitha of the Sithole people, he says absolutely nothing about the senior Sithole chief named Mbulungeni kaMbadu kaNtshiba kaMaphitha or his successor, Chief Mbila kaMbulungeni kaMbadu kaNtshiba, whose people were attacked and displaced from eQhudeneni when King Shaka promoted Jobe kaGece to the Sithole chieftaincy because Jobe was the main supplier of the *izidwaba* (leather skirts) to the Zulu royal family during the reign of King Shaka in the 1820s.²⁸ The main reason why Jobe and his grandson, Matshana kaMondise kaJobe, aligned themselves with both the Boers and the British colonialists is that they fell victim to Zulu aggression when King Mpande attacked the Sithole people and confiscated their cattle during the 1840s.²⁹ It will be shown below that Chief Mbila kaMbulungeni and four of his brothers perished at the Battle of Isandlwana in January 1879, fighting on the side of British colonial forces, while Matshana Sithole defected over to the Zulu side and subsequently served as a decoy that rendered the British camp vulnerable to the Zulu armed forces at Isandlwana. If the Zulu-centric line of thought is pursued, Matshana was a hero while Mbila and his siblings were traitors. There are only a few passing references to Mbila kaMbulungeni, Mbulungeni kaMbadu and Mbadu kaNtshiba in the published versions of *The James Stuart Archive*.³⁰

The studies which provide more elaborate examples of political conflicts and shifts of allegiances among chiefdoms that formed part of the infant kingdoms such as the Mthethwa, Ndwandwe, Tembe, Gaza, and Swazi, among others, between the late 18th and early 19th centuries are those of Alan Smith, Henry Slater, David Hedges,

27 J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*, pp.108; 303.

28 "Lunguza kaMpukane to J Stuart", 11 November 1909, C de B Webb and J B Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 1, p. 301; J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*, pp. 109-110; 116; 122; 125; 127. On Matshana, see J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*, pp. 157; 214; 224; 257-258-261; J Lambert, *Betrayed trust...*, pp. 26; 31; 71-72.

29 "Lunguza kaMpukane to J Stuart", 11 November 1909, C de B Webb and J B Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 1, p. 313; 321-322.

30 "Lunguza kaMpukane to J Stuart", 11 November 1909, C de B Webb and J B Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 1, pp. 301; 313; 321-322; "Singcofela kaMtshungu to J Stuart", 31 March 1910, C de B Webb and J B Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 5, p. 340.

Phillip Bonner, Carolyn Hamilton and John Wright.³¹ Hamilton's analysis of King Dingiswayo's treatment of the different chiefdoms that were incorporated into the Mthethwa kingdom during the third phase of its development provides more useful insights for what was probably at the core of the different relations which the Zulu Kingdom subsequently shared with various chiefdoms to the west of its boundary during the 1820s. King Dingiswayo's main policy during the incorporation of different chiefdoms into the Mthethwa state was to remove recalcitrant chiefs and to replace them with minors or known Mthethwa loyalists from amidst their ranks. Dingiswayo was able to embark on a course of consolidation through the stabilisation of the northern reaches of the Mthethwa kingdom, exerting tighter control over those located on the coastal areas while simultaneously applying some form of divide and rule strategy during his inland expansion towards the western boundary of the Mthethwa Kingdom. To the north of the Mfolozi River, according to Hamilton, the Mthethwa approach was one of consolidation and friendship aimed at securing trade routes, and not an approach of expansion as David Hedges has supposed.³² For example, Dingiswayo extended a hand of friendship through the gift of Nomatuli kaJobe as a royal bride to the Nxumalo chief, Malusi kaMatshuku.³³ This was aimed at securing the northern-most border of the Mthethwa kingdom around the Mona River which divided the Mthethwa from the Ndwandwe Kingdom of the Nxumalo.³⁴

Dingiswayo maintained the Sokhulu and the Dube chiefdoms, whose leaders had earlier *khonzad* the Mthethwa, as tributaries which supplied the Mthethwa, particularly with agricultural products.³⁵ The Mbonambi, who inhabited an area just south of the Sokhulu, were obliged to *khonza* Dingiswayo and they paid tribute in the form of maize and spear-heads, two products for which they were famous.³⁶ Dingiswayo's early campaigns included the subjugation of the Ngadi and Qwabe chiefdoms further south near the Mfulu River. The Ngadi, who were genealogically linked to the Qwabe, refused to acknowledge the Mthethwa hegemony and were attacked by the Mthethwa who seized and removed their cattle. The oral traditions relate that the life of the Ngadi chief, Madlokovu, was spared through a judicious

31 A Smith, "The struggle for control of southern Mozambique, 1720-1835" (PhD thesis, UCLA, 1970); H Slater, "Transitions in the political economy of South-East Africa before 1840" (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1976); D Hedges, "Trade and politics in southern Mozambique and Zululand in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1978), pp. 156-165; P Bonner, *Kings, commoners and concessionaires: The evolution and dissolution of the nineteenth-century Swazi State* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983); C Hamilton, "Ideology, Oral tradition..." (MA dissertation, UCT 1985); J Wright, "The dynamics of power and conflict..." (PhD thesis, Wits 1989); G Liesegang, "Notes on the internal structure of the Gaza Kingdom of southern Mozambique, 1840-1895", JB Peires (ed.), *Before and after Shaka: Papers in Nguni history*, (Grahamstown, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1981); J Wright, "Rediscovering the Ndwandwe Kingdom", N Swanepoel, A Esterhuysen and P Bonner (eds.), *Five hundred years rediscovered: Southern African precedents and prospects* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2008), pp. 217-238.

32 D Hedges, "Trade and politics...", p.149.

33 D Hedges, "Trade and politics...", pp.182-187.

34 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 123.

35 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition ...", pp. 123-124.

36 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 124; AT Bryant, *Olden times* (London, Longmans) pp. 103; 105.

retreat and then his voluntary act of *khonza* to Dingiswayo.³⁷ The Qadi, who occupied territory to the south at the Thukela River, were treated the same way. They were defeated decisively and were then required to *khonza* the Mthethwa king. Their cattle were removed to the Mthethwa royal establishments.³⁸ Hamilton adds that there are no references in the relevant traditions to men of either the Ngadi or the Qadi being incorporated into the Mthethwa army.³⁹ She also states that the little evidence available on these two groups indicates that although they had large numbers of people, very few of them, if any, were involved in the Mthethwa armed forces. It can be inferred from this, she adds, that they were unlikely to have maintained armies after their subjugation.⁴⁰

The Qwabe chief, Khondlo, was also obliged to recognise the Mthethwa overrule and was personally denied the right to many of the features of the *ubukhosi*, which were the outward signs of chieftainship. These included the removal of the Qwabe *isigodlo*, which is a special establishment of women, the maintenance of which was conventionally a royal prerogative.⁴¹ Dingiswayo also denied Khondlo a further royal right of keeping herds according to the colour of their hides, and of slaughtering meat for the *amabutho*. The latter practice was a jealously guarded monopoly.⁴² A cattle tribute comprising mostly of oxen was further demanded of the Qwabe.⁴³ Mthethwa interests south of the Mhlathuze were henceforward to be represented by Myaka, a member of the Mthethwa ruling lineage.⁴⁴ Formal rights of chieftainship were likewise asserted over Mjezi, another chief of the area whose *isigodlo* was removed.⁴⁵ The Mthethwa then attacked the neighbouring chief, Thokozwayo kaMandayiza, who was specifically prevented from conducting the *umkhosi wokweshwama*, a central royal ritual.⁴⁶ Finally, Macingwane of the Chunu was also obliged to surrender both *isigodlo* and cattle.⁴⁷

Hamilton argues that the Mthethwa control over the south was considerably tighter and more direct than Hedges suggests.⁴⁸ On the death of the Qwabe chief, Khondlo, Dingiswayo asserted the right of suzerain in deciding the succession dispute between

37 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition ...", p. 124; T Bryant, *Olden times*, p. 101.

38 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 124.

39 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition ...", p. 124. On Qadi and Ngadi dispersal, see "Maquza kaGawushane to J Stuart", 1905, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 2, p. 237; "Maziyana kaMahlabeni to J Stuart", 1905, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 2, p. 268.

40 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition..." (MA dissertation, UCT, 1985), p. 124.

41 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 124; J Stuart, "The life of Tshaka"; and T Bryant, *Olden times*, p. 100.

42 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 124; J Stuart, "The life of Tshaka"; "Baleni kaSilwana to J Stuart" C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 1, p. 41; "Lunguza kaMpukane to J Stuart", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 3, pp. 323; 343.

43 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 125; HF Fynn, *Diary*, p. 9; T Bryant, *Olden times*, p. 189.

44 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 125; N Isaacs, *Travels*, p. 33.

45 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 125; J Stuart, "The life of Tshaka", p. 336.

46 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 125.

47 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p.126.

48 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p.125; D Hedges, "Trade and politics...", pp. 176-177.

Nomo and Phakathwayo in the latter's favour. However, he allocated land to Nomo in the immediate area between Mthethwa and Qwabe, exerting the right of a recognised chief. Furthermore, Dingiswayo defended Nomo against the crack Qwabe *ibutho*, the iziNkondo, who were sent to kill him. This campaign saw the Mthethwa establish control over the important river crossing of the Mhlathuze drifts.⁴⁹

In order to control the coastlands, the Mthethwa king relocated his royal residence from the Mfolozi confluence into the coastal lowland area occupied by their erstwhile suzerains, the Mbokazi. During this relocation, the Mbokazi chief was murdered, and a minor named Guluzana was installed as the new leader. He owed his power and position to his Mthethwa overlords. The Mbokazi, in turn, were obliged to occupy the confluence area vacated by the Mthethwa.⁵⁰ Dingiswayo also had the Thembu chief named Jama killed and his heir, Ndina, who was still a minor, was forced to *khonza* the Mthethwa.⁵¹ He also had the neighbouring Xulu chief, Gxabashe, murdered, and a new dynasty under Mapholoba was raised up to the chieftaincy.⁵² Likewise, the Qungebeni and Dlamini chiefs who resisted Dingiswayo were killed and the Mthethwa king abrogated to himself the right to approve and support their replacements.⁵³

Dingiswayo also sub-contracted out military responsibilities to the Mthethwa loyalists when the kingdom became heavily overextended.⁵⁴ High office of commanders and senior administrators in the Mthethwa Kingdom was limited to a narrow sector of those groups who were first recruited and incorporated into the Mthethwa state. Ngomane of the *abasemaDletsheni* became commander-in-chief of the Mthethwa army and an *induna* of the *ibutho*, iNhlngane. He was placed in charge of a district near kwaNogqogqo, on the turbulent south western border of the Mthethwa Kingdom, abutting on the small Zulu chiefdom. Hamilton adds that his command on the periphery of the kingdom and his close involvement with the installation of the new Zulu leader, Shaka kaSenzangakhona, suggests that the Mthethwa expansion inland may have occurred under his supervision. Furthermore, it was his task to absorb all refuges from the Mthethwa's inland neighbours, to incorporate them effectively into the *amabutho* and to conduct diplomatic relations

49 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral traditions...", p. 125; J Stuart, "The life of Tshaka"; "Mmemi kaNguluzane to J Stuart", 14 October 1904, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 3, pp. 243-245.

50 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", pp. 125-126; AT Bryant, *Olden times*, p. 84.

51 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 129; "Jantshi kaNongila to J Stuart", 13 February 1903, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 1, p.181. Hamilton refers to James Stuart's informant, Madikane, who is quoted as saying that Senzangakhona told him that Shaka was "at Mthethwa, where we are ruled". See, "Madikane kaMlomowethole to J Stuart", 8 July 1903, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 2, p. 48.

52 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 129; AT Bryant, *Olden times*, pp. 101, 243.

53 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 129; AT Bryant, *Olden times*, pp. 101, 229.

54 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 129; UKZN, KCALM, Essay Competition, 1942, CJ Magwaza, "Historical Records", based on the evidence of Muntuwenkosi Mthethwa of the regiment or *ibutho* named iMbokodwembomvu, pp. 2-3.

to the west.⁵⁵ His attendance was required at the court of oYengweni, which had become Dingiswayo's administrative capital and the place where he frequently resided. This widespread demand made of all the *izinduna* enabled the Mthethwa king to retain effective control over his subordinates and minimised the possibility of localised opposition gathering around the *izinduna* in the areas of their command.⁵⁶

In the course of this rapid expansion, the Mthethwa royal family maintained a sharp distinction between the original Mthethwa and the later additions to the polity which bolstered an emerging system of social stratification. The increasing exclusivity of Mthethwa rule was further entrenched by the "separation" of numerous sections of the dominant lineage, and their endowment with separate *izibongo*. This led to the creation of the Nxele, Seme and Msweli "sub-groups" out of the original Nyambose clan,⁵⁷ and possibly the Masondo and the Mpanza.⁵⁸ The creation of new 'surnames' in this way was a royal prerogative. Its effective consequence was that it facilitated intermarriage with the ruling lineage, thus circumventing the social exogamy. This meant that resources, in the form of *lobola*, could be made to circulate within an increasingly limited group. This led to an even greater disparity in wealth between a small and closed ruling group, and the remainder of the kingdom. The Mthethwa Kingdom was thus neatly divided into the ruling clan (*abendlunkulu*) and the commoners (*abantukazana*).⁵⁹

Shaka's relations with the chiefdoms on the western boundary of the Zulu Kingdom exhibited the patterns and features which characterised his mentor's relations with the chiefdoms that were incorporated into the Mthethwa Kingdom. At the core of patronage relations between Shaka's Zulu Kingdom and certain individuals and chiefdoms was the trade of essential items such as assegais, spears and the *izidwaba* (leather skirts) which some of these chiefdoms supplied to the Zulu state. In return they enjoyed special privileges and rights that were denied to others. This left a legacy which came back to haunt the Usuthu, which was the senior section of the Zulu royal family, when the colonial authorities placed it under siege between the 1880s and the mid-1920s. With these points in mind let us explore the dynamics in the mid-western boundary of the Zulu kingdom between the 1820s and the 1870s.

55 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 129; AT Bryant, *Olden times*, pp. 102, 129.

56 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 129.

57 On the size and composition of Mthethwa's army see the interesting M. Kunene, *Emperor Shaka the Great*, p. xv. As indicated in chapter six, Hamilton bemoans the fact that Kunene's work is unfortunately without source annotation and yet it contains a wealth of detail which was apparently derived from primary sources. See C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 135.

58 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 135; "Jantshi kaNongila to J Stuart", 11, 13 and 14 February 1903, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 1, pp.180-182; "Mkebeni kaDabulamanzi to J Stuart", 17 September 1921, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 3, pp. 198-199.

59 C Hamilton, "Ideology, oral tradition...", p. 135; AT Bryant, *Olden times*, p. 120; J Stuart, "The life of Tshaka", p. 338.

King Shaka's relations with the Ngubane and Nzama chieftaincies, from the 1820s to the 1870s

To put the dispute between the Nzama family and the Ngubane chieftaincy over the leadership of the Nzama people resident in the MaMbulu area in Kranskop in a slightly longer historical context it is necessary to retrace our steps somewhat. The genesis of the problems for the Nzama family should be understood against the background of the relations which Shaka had with the chieftaincies to the west of the Zulu Kingdom in the 1820s. Shaka had very close ties with several prominent chiefs near the western boundary of the Zulu Kingdom. These included Zihlandlo kaGcwabe of the Mkhize, who was allegedly his blood relative through their Mhlongo mothers. It is alleged that Zihlandlo's mother was a sister to Nandi Mhlongo and to Somuncwe of the Chube of the Shezi people.⁶⁰

Shaka then deposed chiefs he disliked and replaced them with his favourite men in several chieftoms in the western boundary of the Zulu kingdom. Examples include, among others, the Chube of the Shezi people at Inkandla and the Sithole of the eQhudeneni area. He encouraged Jobe kaGece kaMaphitha to fight his nephew, Mbulungeni kaMbadu kaNtshiba kaMaphitha at the Ngubevu Drift in 1819.⁶¹ In addition, he had the Sithole and the Chube chiefs, Mbulungeni kaMbadu kaNtshiba kaMaphitha of the Sithole at eQhudeneni and Duluzana kaMvakela Shezi of the Chube chieftom at Inkandla removed from their chieftainship positions while he camped at the eQhudeneni and Inkandla areas during the war with the Ndwandwe people of Zwide kaLanga in 1819. He then promoted Jobe to the Sithole chieftaincy in the eQhudeneni area because the latter was the main supplier of *izidwaba* (leather skirts) to the women of *undlunkulu* during the reign of King Shaka in the 1820s. In addition, Mbulungeni was driven south across the uThukela and he re-established his chieftom at the Nhlimbithwa area near Greytown in Umvoti. Shaka also replaced Chief Duluzana kaMvakela Shezi with Zokufa kaSomuncwe Shezi as the chief of the Chube people following the death of the chief of the Chube people, named Mvakela kaDlaba.⁶²

The news of Chief Mvakela kaDlaba's death came through on the day Shaka had spent the night at the home of Somuncwe Shezi who was also his cousin by virtue of the fact that Somuncwe's and Shaka's mothers were sisters from the Mhlongo family.⁶³ Mpatshana kaSodondo says that Chief Mvakela kaDlaba died from a heart attack when he heard that the Zulu army had descended on his Nkandla territory during

60 Magaye kaDibandlela of the Cele people was another close friend and ally of King Shaka kaSenzangakhona. It is alleged that King Shaka performed the *ijadu* dance with only Zihlandlo kaGcwabe of the Mkhize and Magaye kaDibandlela of the Cele because he regarded them as his closest allies and personal friends. See Melapi kaMagaye to J Stuart, 27-30 April to 1-3 May 1905, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 3, pp. 72-99.

61 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart, 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, p. 340.

62 Note that Reggie Khumalo spells Zokufa as Zweekufa. See RS Khumalo, *Uphoko...*, p. 117.

63 "Mpatshana kaSodondo to J Stuart, 30 May 1912", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 3, p. 322.

the war between the Ndwandwe and the Zulu kingdoms.⁶⁴ Shaka consequently ruled that from that time onwards, the chieftaincy would shift from Duluzana, who was the senior son to Mvakela and his heir to the Chube/Shezi chieftaincy, to Zokufa, who was from the *ikhoblo* branch of the Shezi/Chube ruling family and the son of Somuncwe. Chief Duluzana kaMvakela kaDlaba and the senior branch of the Chube/Shezi ruling family migrated south and settled at the Ifafa area across the Umkhomazi River. It is the chieftainship based at Nkandla which was subsequently drawn closer to the senior section of the Zulu royal family especially during the reigns of Kings Shaka and Cetshwayo. This was evident during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and the subsequent sheltering of Cetshwayo kaMpande during the Battle of Msebe in the early 1880s.⁶⁵ The family was charged with the responsibility of taking care of the grave of Cetshwayo kaMpande following in 1883. Close ties were strengthened even further during the Poll Tax uprisings of 1906.⁶⁶ However, the Chube women were the most prominent gender and generational activists when the *Ingcugce* women revolted against the rule that they could only get married as per the Zulu royal instructions to older men during the reign of Cetshwayo.⁶⁷

Shaka's interest in Chube politics stemmed from the fact that the Shezi people were one of the main suppliers of assegais and spears to the Zulu Kingdom. They were well-known blacksmiths and metallurgists (the *izintswelaboya*) alongside the Nzama of the Wosiyana people at the Nsukaze in Kranskop, the Nxumalo and the Duma people in the mid-region of southeast Africa. A prominent blacksmith/metallurgist among the Nzama people was Gcugcwa.⁶⁸ This fact is corroborated in a number of historical sources which also point out that Gcugcwa's counterparts were Ntumisa of the Chube people at Inkandla, Nobamba kaGamede of Black Mfolozi, Mlaba of the Nxumalo, as well as the Nikiniki and Ngobozana of the Duma people. These metallurgists were commonly known as the *izintswelaboya*, those without body hair, because of the long periods of time they spent in front of the furnaces while producing assegais and spears which were then supplied to the regiments of the emerging, centralised polities such as the Tembe, the Ndwandwe, the Mthethwa and

64 "Mpatshana kaSodondo to J Stuart, 30 May 1912", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 3, pp.322-323.

65 MM Fuze, *The black people and whence they came* (publishing details please), p. 119.

66 RS Khumalo, *Uphoko...*, p. 117; J Laband, *Kingdom in crisis...*, p. 239; J Guy, *The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom the civil war in Zululand, 1879-1884* (London, Longsman, 1979), pp. 204-209; J Guy, *Remembering the rebellion* (Pietmaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006), pp. 116-128.

67 "Mtshayankomo kaMagolwana to J Stuart, 20 January 1922", C de B Webb and J B Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 4, p. 135.

68 Thathokwakhe Nzama during the Focus Group Discussion held at Nsukaze in Kranskop on 2 March 2016. The other members of the Nzama extended family agreed unanimously that the Nzama people were some of the well-known artisans and that their ancestor named Gcugwa left an imprint in the history of the KwaZulu-Natal Province because of his skill in making assegais and spears. The conflict with the Zulu King, Shaka kaSenzangakhona led to his death at the KwaDukuza Royal residence.

later the Zulu Kingdom between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and during the period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth-centuries.⁶⁹ The *izintswelaboya* later assumed a negative connotation to colonialists because the *amakhohwa* readily embraced the colonial authorities' demand that the Zulu Kingdom should demobilise its armed forces and disarm its people. Thereafter, anyone who carried a weapon was regarded as an outlaw, *intswelaboya*, which translates as one who behaves dangerously, like a wild animal. This explains the deep-rooted hatred that certain chieftaincies, such as the Ngubane, harboured against the Zulu royal family, especially from the 1880s onwards.

Wright and Hamilton add that the majority of the people from the far-flung homesteads that were expected to provide tribute in the form of cattle, young women and the labour of young men had absolutely no reason to identify with the Zulu ruling house. Instead, they identified with their own homestead-based communities and chiefs. These people were always viewed as ethnically inferior outsiders and the members of the Zulu royal family and the *amantungwa* often referred to them in derogatory terms such as the *amalala* (menials), the *amanhhlwenga* (those who are destitute), or *iziyendane* (those with strange hairstyles), *amazosha*, *izingadanqunu*, *amankengane* and many other such terms.⁷⁰

Chief Homoyi Ngubane was a brother of Chief Somahashi Ngubane, the leader of the main Ngubane chiefdom, in the New Hanover/Umvoti magisterial districts in Natal.⁷¹ The Ngubane people originated from the eQhudeneni area near the Sithole chiefdom of Mbulungeni kaMbhadu kaNtshiba. They lived on lands which stretched from the Ngubevu Drift up to the Ngongoma forest and in the Sikisiki and Taleni areas. The Ngubevu Drift is just north of the confluence of the Uthukela and Mzinyathi (Buffalo) rivers. King Shaka kaSenzangakhona dislodged both the Ngubane and the Sithole people from their original lands after he had put Nzombane, the father of Somahashi and Homoyi, to death. He then dislodged Mbulungeni from the area and elevated Jobe to the Sithole chieftaincy at eQhudeneni, as explained above.⁷² The Ngubane crossed into Natal during the reign of King Mpande kaSenzangakhona where they fought and seized lands and cattle from the Nxamalala (Zuma) people under the leadership of Mafahleni Zuma, the Amakhabela and the Sithole under

69 "Baleni ka Silwana to J Stuart, 17 May 1914", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 1, p. 41; "Magidigidi kaNobebe to J Stuart", 6 June 1905, C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 2, pp. 84-85; "Mkhehlengana kaZulu to J Stuart, 19 April 1905", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 3, p. 213. Faku and Mjiba were the metallurgists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. See "Mlokothwa kaMphumela to J Stuart", 3 November 1908", C de B Webb and J B Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 3, p. 234.

70 C Hamilton and J Wright, "The making of the Amalala: Ethnicity, ideology and relations of subordination in a precolonial context", *South African Historical Journal*, 22, 1990, pp. 1-32; J Wright and C Hamilton, "Traditions and transformations: The Pongolo-Mzimkhulu region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries", A Duminy and B Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand: From earliest times to 1910: A new History* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1989), pp.72-73

71 See footnote 4 in C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 5, p. 355.

72 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, pp. 338-339.

Jobe kaGece who had previously raised and protected Somahashi during reigns of Kings Shaka and Dingane kaSenzangakhona.⁷³ The section under Mbulungeni kaMbadu Sithole, with whom they ultimately settled in the Umvoti division near the Nhlimbithwa area in Greytown, sided with them during the war with the Nxamalala people.⁷⁴ Chief Somahashi Ngubane died in 1878 while his son, Chief Mawele Ngubane, died towards the end of the South African War (1899-1902).⁷⁵

Although, as explained above, it is important to approach the James Stuart Archive with caution, Singcofela KaMtshungu Ngubane claimed that King Shaka had Chief Nzombane Ngubane killed because of jealousy in about 1827.⁷⁶ Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane told James Stuart:⁷⁷

... that it was Tshaka [sic] who chased our tribe [sic] out of Zululand. Zombane [sic] was killed by Tshaka. Tshaka killed Zombane [sic] because he was so handsome that he should become the chief of the Zulu country. Tshaka said when he looked into the water (our former looking glass) he found himself ugly and not so handsome as Zombane [sic] who had a nice long neck, whereas Tshaka's nose was so large that it filled much of his face – [and] was as big as a toad. Tshaka said that on looking on Zombane [sic] it seemed as if he, Tshaka, should salute (khulekela) him. Tshaka sent for Zombane [sic], his object being to kill him, which was done at the Mateku. He was killed before the mourning (isililo) for Nandi. The result of the chief being killed was that our tribe [sic] crossed into Natal.

In support of this rendition, it is alleged that whenever Shaka travelled the length and breadth of the Zulu Kingdom he often spent the night at the homes of prominent chiefs and well-to-do men. There, he was often supplied with a virgin woman who would spend a night with him. However, before the king could retreat to his resting hut the chosen woman would be introduced to the assembly of chiefs and men of stature who would be informed that she would spend the night with the Zulu king. It is alleged that whenever a woman was chosen, she would express the view that if she had been given the choice she would have chosen to entertain Chief Nzombane Ngubane instead of the Zulu king.⁷⁸

Shaka ultimately asked Nzombane Ngubane why the women expressed this view. Nzombane Ngubane answered that it was because of the power of their chiefly medicine. King Shaka asked him how it worked, Chief Ngubane said when he

73 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, p. 346.

74 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, pp. 341-343, 345.

75 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, p. 346.

76 The year 1827 is approximate here because Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane says Zombane was killed shortly after the death of Nandi Mhlongo, King Shaka's mother, who died that year. See "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, p. 339; J Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone...*, p. 108.

77 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, p. 339.

78 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, p. 340.

took one look at the person, he overshadowed him or her. It is alleged that Shaka then ordered his cousin, Zihlandlo kaGcwabe of the Mkhize people, to gouge out Nzombane Ngubane's eyes – to remove the source of such magnetic power that was the cause of such embarrassment to the Zulu. Ngubane thus died a blind person. However, while Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane acknowledges that Shaka put Chief Nzombane Ngubane to death, he does not associate the customary ritual of cutting of the left index finger, which is common among the Ngubane people, to this incident. Instead the allegation is that this was a form of pledge that the Ngubane people would never associate themselves with the Zulu royalty again. Singcofela claims that this practice began after the Ngubane people crossed over to Natal during the reign of King Mpande when the king cleansed the Zulu Kingdom of those who were closely allied to his predecessor, King Dingane kaSenzangakhona.⁷⁹

The Nzama family, who were also the casualties of the expanding Zulu Kingdom under Shaka during the 1820s, trace their origins to the vicinity of the Ntolwane River near Inkandla between the late 18th and the early 19th centuries. They had two migrations in the 1800s. They first migrated from their original place of abode in the vicinity of the Ntolwane River, which is the tributary of the Nsuze River at Inkandla, southwards across the uThukela River to the Kranskop side, where they settled in the vicinity of the Madlalathi River. This first migration was a result of the fear of Shaka who was raiding and subjugating chieftaincies to the west of the Zulu Kingdom.

They remained in the area for a long time until there was a fallout between Gcugwa Nzama, who was a blacksmith and one of the suppliers of assegais and spears to the Zulu Kingdom and Shaka. This forced them to flee the area, hence the second migration in the 1820s. Proof of their settlement and influence in the area is still evident in the names of local rivers and hills which bear names of the Nzama people. One of them is the Wosi River which refers to the lions which Gcugwa used to hunt, trap and capture. He called them the *amawosi* hence the *isithakazelo* (form of a polite address) for the Nzama people is the *amaWosiyane*.⁸⁰ Khumalo, however, attributes their initial migration to an internal dispute involving the Nyuswa and the Shangase people who seem to have been historically related to the Nzama people. Nyuswa was of the Ngcobo and, according to Khumalo, Nyuswa of the Ngcobo and Mkheshane of the Shangase were related, albeit distantly.⁸¹ He adds that when the Shangase left their original place of abode in the vicinity of the Ntolwane River following internal clashes with the Nyuswa the Nzama people accompanied them across the Uthukela River and they all settled in the Madlalathi River. During this initial migration across the Uthukela River they were under the leadership of their

79 "Singcofela kaMtshungu Ngubane to J Stuart on 29 March 1910", *JSA*, 5, pp. 341-342.

80 "Thathokwakhe Nzama's comments in the Focus Group Discussion held at Nsukaze/MaMbulu in Kranskop", 2 March 2016.

81 RS Khumalo, *Uphoko...*, pp. 86-87.

inkosi named Mvakela kaKhumalo kaManjanja kaNzama.⁸²

The Nzama people were among the most prominent blacksmiths of the pre-colonial period. They shot to prominence as a result of the dispute over a cattle payment for the assegais which Gcugcwa Nzama had supplied to Shaka's armies. It was this dispute which was responsible for their second southward migration. The blacksmiths or metallurgists supplied assegais in return for cattle. Apparently, a bundle of assegais was exchanged for three cows and the brass neck rings cost the buyer one cow.⁸³ However, Shaka did not honour the agreement.⁸⁴ According to Khumalo, an *ibandla* (Council of the Nzama Chiefdom) under the leadership of *Inkosi* Mvakela Nzama deliberated on the course of action to be taken in response to the refusal of the Zulu king to settle his debt. The entire council expressed the view that the matter should be left alone because they suspected that the Zulu king was looking for an excuse to attack the Nzama people. However, Gcugcwa refused to heed the call and undertook to confront Shaka on his own. He proceeded to the KwaDukuza royal residence and duly collected the number of cattle due for the assegais supplied.⁸⁵ Ironically, James Stuart's informants, who were sympathetic to Shaka, portrayed Gcugcwa as the "thief" who stole the royal cattle.⁸⁶

Shaka, according to the Nzama family of Thathokwakhe Nzama, despatched the Zulu army to proceed to the Madlalathi area of what is now known as Kranskop to fetch the cattle. However, he added that they should not harm Gcugcwa. Once the Zulu warriors had taken the cattle, Gcugcwa returned to KwaDukuza on his own to fetch the cattle yet again. Shaka was angered and instructed the warriors to fetch the cattle, capture Gcugcwa and bring him to the Dukuza Royal House. It is alleged that when Shaka tried to greet Gcugcwa he initially refused to do so. He then said *ubona mina nje bayokubona nawe ngomuso* meaning (although you [Shaka] see me, folks will also see you someday). The *izinduna*, which they referred to as *iziwengu* (uncritical followers) of Shaka dragged Gcugcwa outside, tied him to the ground and drove thousands of cattle over him. He thus met his death in front of the cattle kraal at KwaDukuza.⁸⁷

82 RS Khumalo, *Uphoko* ..., pp. 87-88.

83 "Baleni ka Silwana to J Stuart, 17 May 1914", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *JSA*, 1, pp. 41-42.

84 Testimony of the Members of the Nzama extended Family, Nsukaze, 2 March 2016.

85 RS Khumalo, *Uphoko*..., pp. 87-88.

86 "Melaphi kaMagaye to J Stuart, 29 April 1905", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 3, p. 81; "Mmemi kaNguluzana to J Stuart, 16 October 1904", C de B Webb and J Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 3, pp. 245-246. The differences between the individual members of the various chiefdoms and the inner circles of the chiefdoms, which included the chiefs and the *ibandla*, were not uncommon during the 1820s. Another example was that of the migration of Mzilikazi kaMashobane to the Highveld following his conflict with King Shaka over the cattle he had confiscated from Soshangane of the Zikode. His chief named Bheje of the Khumalo could not have him back at kwaCeza as this would have exposed the Khumalo to a possible attack by King Shaka's Zulu armies. At the time of his flight up north, Mzilikazi kaMashobane was merely an outstanding former general of King Zwide's Ndwandwe Kingdom.

87 "Mmemi kaNguluzana to J Stuart, 16 October 1904", C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds.), *The JSA*, 3, p. 246.

Upon hearing the news of the death of Gcugcwa the Nzama people under Chief Mvakela Nzama fled from the Madlalathi River near Kranskop and settled near the Ilovu River. The Shangase people who had crossed the Uthukela River with them during their initial migration from the vicinity of the Ntolwane and the Nsuze rivers at Inkandla accompanied them during this second migration.⁸⁸ Historical records show that the Nzama and the Shangase are among the chiefdoms whose people decided to move northwards again because of a range of factors. The first was that they ran into the territory with two powerful polities of the Mpondo and the Bhaca which had forced the Thembu to move further south while the remnants of the Ngwane and other smaller groups such as the Chunu, the Nzama, the Shangase, etc returned to the north and settled in areas which subsequently became part of colonial Natal in the 1840s. The second reason was that the territory between the Mzimkhulu and the Mzimvubu rivers was rapidly falling under the reaches of the zone of British colonial expansionism.⁸⁹

The Nzama and the Shangase settled in the vicinity of the Mdloti River in the Ndwedwe area. Mashiza Nzama succeeded Mvakela as the inkosi of the Nzama people. He was among the chiefs who were recognised by the British Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA) in Natal during the 1860s, the notorious Theophilus Shepstone or Somtsewu as he was called.⁹⁰ The members of Thathokwakhe Nzama's family argue that Mashiza Nzama left his people at Ndwedwe and returned to the original site at Nsukaze kraal which is now known as MaMbulu because he liked their original lands. He remained an *inkosi* of the Nzama in the Kranskop area until his death at some time during the 1870s. Thereafter the intervention of the colonial authorities led to the loss of the chiefdom and its people which was transferred to the Ngubane people.

The colonial state took advantage of the existing fissures by entrenching "divide and rule strategy" through what became known as the system of reserves in Natal. This system served as mechanism for mobilising labour and of exerting control over the African population at a minimal cost.⁹¹ The endearment between some chiefs and the colonial state was deepened by the imminent danger of war with the Zulu Kingdom in the late 1870s. The colonial authorities empowered those chiefs such as Chief Homoyi Ngubane, who were loyal to them, while they disadvantaged their political rivals such the Nzama people. The incorporation of the Nzama people into the Ngubane chieftaincy under false pretences on the part of the colonial state's initiative was aimed at consolidating its support around Kranskop on the eve of the invasion of the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. Chief Homoyi Ngubane, who was appointed by the colonial state as a chief was duly placed in charge of the Kranskop which was earmarked as one of

88 RS Khumalo, *Upboko...*, pp. 87-88.

89 J Wright, "Mkhize family History", available at <http://www.archivalplatform.org> (accessed on 20 Jun 2012); J Wright, "The dynamics of power and conflict..." (PhD thesis, Wits, 1989).

90 PAR, CNC 211, Ref 941-980, "Petition of Mabengwana Nzama to CNC Natal, 8 October 1921, pp. 2-3; 9.

91 N Hurwitz, "Aspects of the Native Reserve policy of Natal", *Theoria*, 5, 1953, p. 63.

the points at which the colonial forces planned to invade the Zulu Kingdom. These details are important in explaining the hostility which some chieftaincies, including the Ngubane, the Chunu and the Tlokoa, among others, held towards the senior section of the Zulu royal family during the crisis period when the Zulu Kingdom was put under siege by the colonial authorities between 1879 and the 1880s.

What this shows is that the simplistic and over-generalised understanding of Zuluness, on the one hand, and the failure to scrutinise the reasons for the hostilities of the dissenting chiefdoms carefully does not help us develop a nuanced understanding of why certain chiefdoms chose to align themselves with the invading colonial forces – especially during the 1870s and 1880s. The failure to fully grasp the dynamism of the transitional period from the demise of the African kingdoms and chieftaincies to the rise of colonialism and the capitalist system makes it difficult to understand the political conflicts and the shift of allegiances in different chiefdoms.

Conclusion

This article analyses the dispute over chieftainship in the MaMbulu area of Kranskop between the Nzama people and the Ngubane chieftaincy from the 1880s to about 1928. It is shown that for different reasons, the Nzama and the Ngubane people suffered under aggression from Zulu kings between the 1820s and the 1840s. It is argued that this should be understood through the different experiences of incorporation into the rising Zulu state in which the Zulu Kingdom developed patronage with certain chiefdoms while it attacked and subjugated others. Some chiefdoms were made to feel that they belonged to the Zulu Kingdom, others, including the Ngubane and the Nzama people, had their leaders killed, forcing them migrate to the south of the uThukela River. It was shown that at the core of patronage relations between the Zulu Kingdom and certain individuals and chiefdoms was trade over essential items such as assegais, spears and the *izidwaba* which some of these chiefdoms supplied to the Zulu state. In return they enjoyed special privileges and rights that were denied to others. Shaka's failure to honour a trade agreement between himself and the Nzama supplier of spears and assegais named Gcugcwa Nzama led to his death. He was killed, which in turn forced the Nzama people to flee the Nsukaze area in the 1820s. Similarly, the alleged jealousy on the part of King Shaka resulted in the killing of the Chief Nzombane Ngubane which forced the Ngubane people to migrate to the south of the uThukela River.