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THE DYNAMICS OF POWER AND CONFLICT IN THE THUKELA-MZIMKHULU REGION IN THE LATE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURIES: A CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION

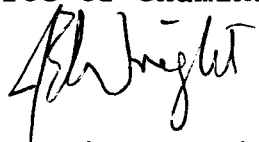
John Wright

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

1989

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.



John Britten Wright

12 December 1989

ABSTRACT

This dissertation sets out to trace the political history of part of what is now Natal in the period from the third quarter of the 18th century to the late 1820s. After briefly describing the nature of political organization in the region at the beginning of the period, it explains how, in the later 18th century, several large paramountcies emerged among the small-scale chiefdoms which had previously been in exclusive occupation of the area. It traces continuities between the conflicts which brought about the formation of these larger polities and the upheavals which, in the later 1810s and early 1820s, totally transformed the region's political landscape. It argues that the concept of the mfecane, which portrays these upheavals as a product of the violent expansion of the Zulu state, is based on colonial-made myths and is devoid of analytical usefulness. It shows that A.T. Bryant's supposedly authoritative account of the period of the upheavals is very largely plagiarized from two minor publications produced long before by Theophilus Shepstone. It goes on to propose an alternative account which demonstrates that the Zulu state was simply one among a number of important political actors in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu territories in the 1810s and 1820s. Though the Zulu were eventually able to establish domination of the region, they did not 'devastate' it, as conventionally they are supposed to have done, and were unable effectively to occupy more than a small part of it. The Zulu were still in the process of establishing a hold on the region when, in the mid-1820s, its political dynamics began to be transformed by the increasing involvement of British traders from Port Natal in the affairs of the Zulu state. By the end of the 1820s, Cape-based commercial and political interests were beginning to contest Zulu hegemony in the region south of the Thukela, and a new era in its history was opening.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Commission on Laws and Customs	Report and Proceedings, with Appendices, of the Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs, Cape of Good Hope Blue Book no. G.4.-'83, part II, Cape Town, 1968 (1st ed. 1883).
DSAB	Dictionary of South African Biography
HZ	A.T. Bryant, A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes, Cape Town, 1964.
JAH	Journal of African History
JSC	James Stuart Collection
NGG	Natal Government Gazette
OT	A.T. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, London, 1929.

GLOSSARY OF ZULU TERMS

iButho (amaButho): age-group or unit of fighting men; 'regiment'.

inDuna (izinDuna): person appointed by a chief to a position of authority or command.

isiGodlo (iziGodlo): women of a chief's establishment who resided in his private enclosure.

iKhanda (amaKhanda): chief's establishment where amabutho were quartered.

ukuKhonza: to give allegiance or subject oneself to a chief.

umuZi (imiZi): homestead.

PREFACE

The aim of this dissertation is to present an analysis of the political history of the region between the Thukela and Mzimkhulu rivers, which forms part of what is now Natal, in the period from the third quarter of the 18th century to the later 1820s. This was a period when sweeping social and political changes were taking place across an area extending from the northern Transkei through Natal, Zululand and Swaziland into southern Mozambique and the eastern Transvaal. The forces which produced these changes were given their initial impetus, and much of their subsequent dynamic, by the rapid expansion after about 1760 of an international commerce at Delagoa Bay, first in ivory, then in cattle, then in slaves.

Since the rise of Africanist history in southern Africa in the 1960s, a number of academic studies have gone a long way towards reclaiming the history of the area north of the Thukela in the period under study from the domination which settler-oriented historiography has exercised over it for a century and a half. By contrast, the contemporary history of the area south of the Thukela has been left largely untouched by academic historians. This study essays to establish a new base line for research into the topic. The region on which it focusses

was given a certain historical unity in the period under study by its position on the southern periphery of territories in which, after 1760, a number of embryonic states were competing for supremacy, and in which, by the later 1810s, the Zulu chiefdom was emerging as the dominant power. The period of study begins with the first impact on the polities south of the Thukela of the conflicts which were taking place to the northward. It ends when, in the later 1820s, an entirely new set of forces, rooted in developments in the political economy of the Cape colony to the south, was beginning to make itself felt in the politics of the region, and new interests were beginning to challenge the domination which the Zulu had established over it.

Interpretations of this period of Natal's history are still overwhelmingly dominated by notions which were first developed by British settler writers in Natal and the Cape as far back as the late 1820s and 1830s. The tradition of settler writing on precolonial Natal history reached its summation in the works of Alfred Bryant, first published in the early decades of the 20th century, and still widely regarded as authoritative. If an alternative interpretation is to be put forward, as this study aims to do, the notions entrenched in the literature by Bryant and his predecessors need to be identified, and examined in detail for their analytical usefulness or otherwise. Much of this study, as is reflected in its sub-title, is therefore directed towards developing a critique of the historiography in order to situate the argumentation developed here in a clearer context.

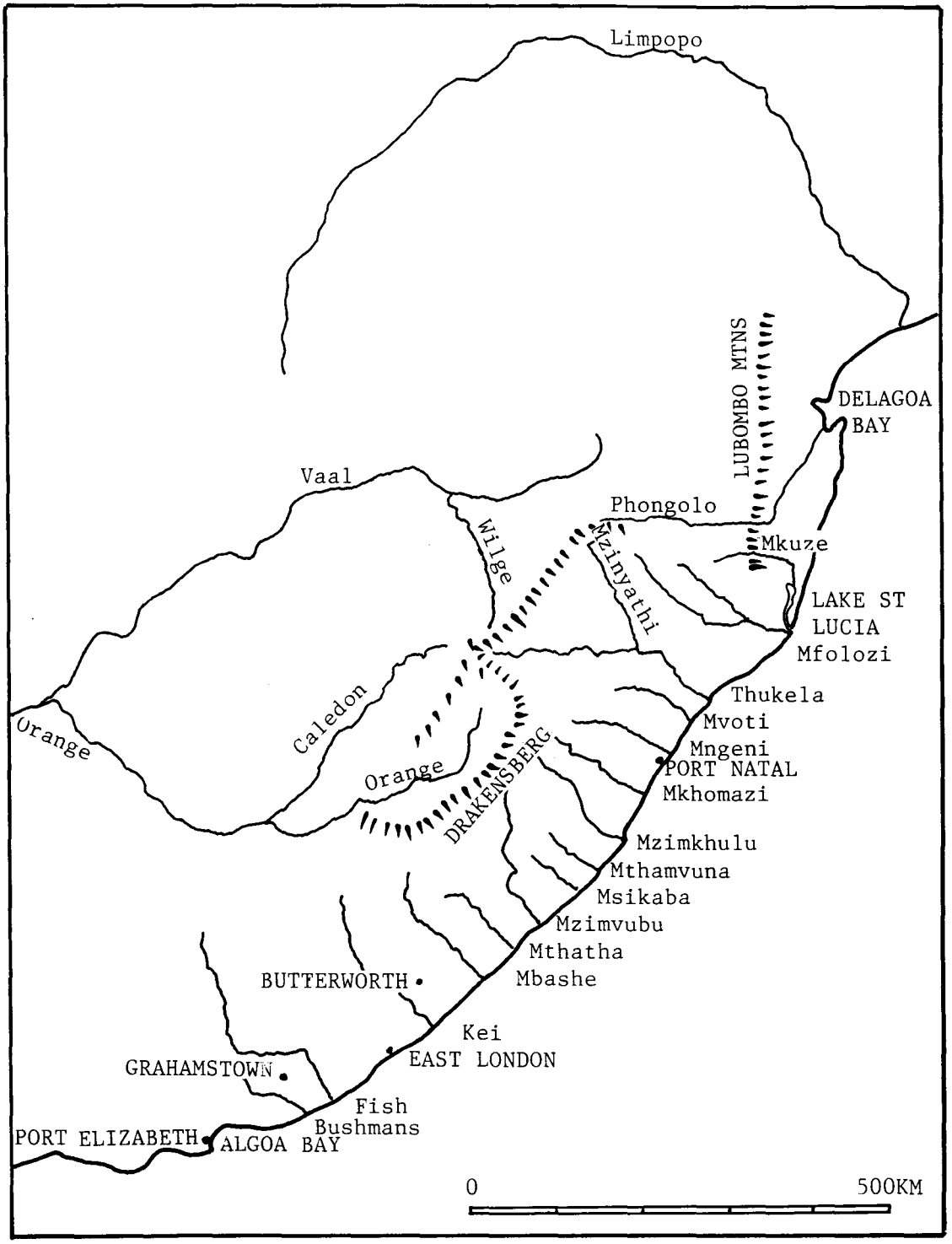
The representation of the period's history which is put forward in this study is based on concepts and approaches developed by writers on the precolonial history of southern Africa since the 1960s, and on evidence to be found in the collection of oral traditions recorded by James Stuart in the first two decades of the 20th century. Like all texts, Stuart's notes need to be used with care

as sources of historical evidence, but intrinsically the process of evaluating them is no different from that used in evaluating other forms of documentary evidence. Whatever their deficiencies, they provide the essential empirical means of moving beyond the established settler versions of Natal's pre-1830s history. While many of the interpretations of his informants' testimonies made here are necessarily tentative, it is to be hoped that they will provide a basis for shifting debate about Natal's precolonial history onto a new terrain.

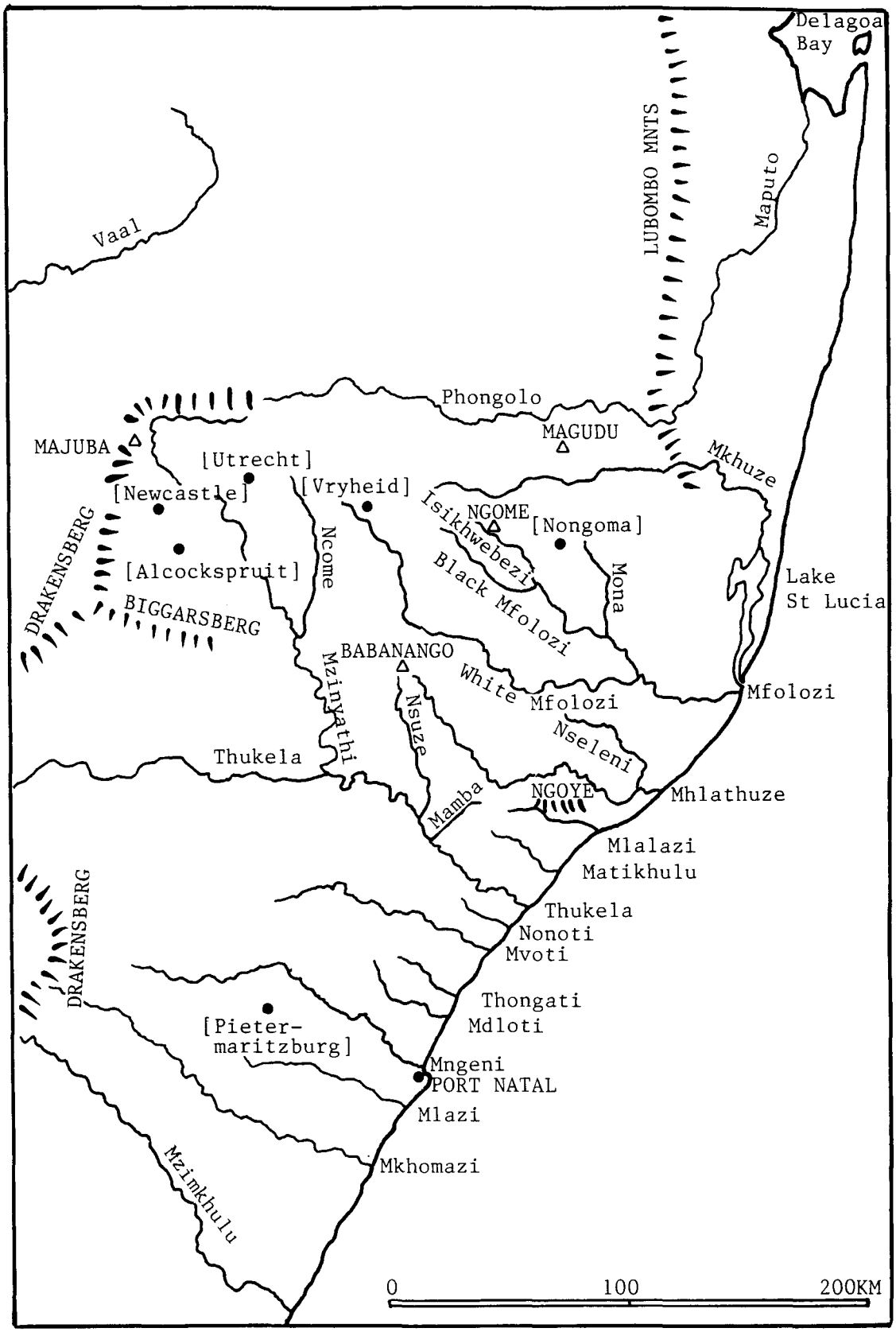
My thanks go to the many people who helped in various ways in the production of this dissertation. I would like to express my special appreciation to four in particular. Philip Bonner was a firmly supportive supervisor. His sense of historical judgement was important in giving shape to the arguments put forward in this study. Carolyn Hamilton provided encouragement and constructive criticism in equal measure. Many of the ideas expressed in this dissertation have grown out of co-operative research and writing with her extending over half a dozen years. In the later stages of my work, Julian Cobbing praised and criticized, encouraged and goaded, and commented trenchantly and at length on the drafts of several chapters. My wife, Cara Pretorius, tolerated my academic preoccupations, initiated me into the mysteries of word-processing, and, with Joanna, Julia and Catherine, looked forward to the day when this dissertation would be completed.

Pietermaritzburg

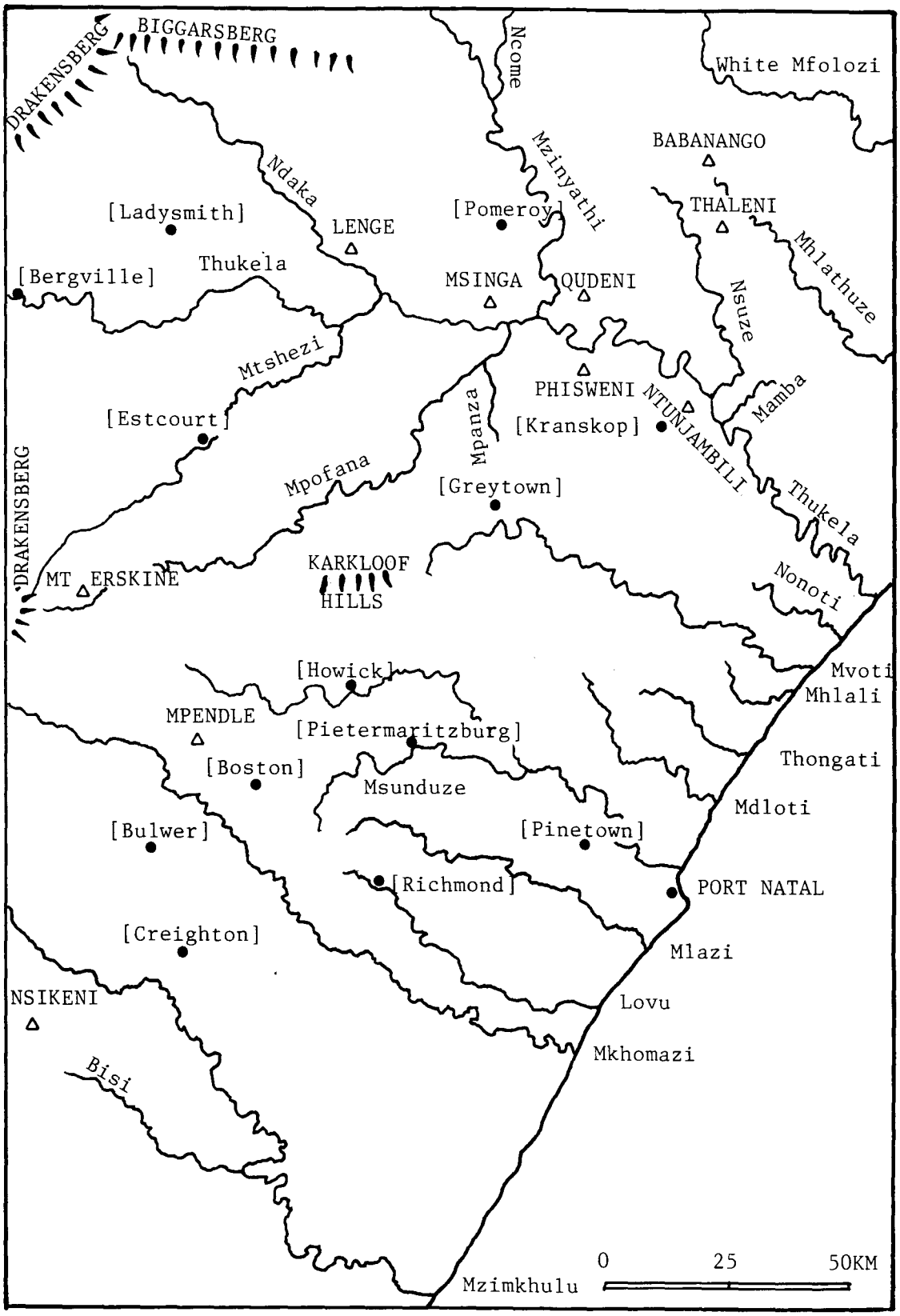
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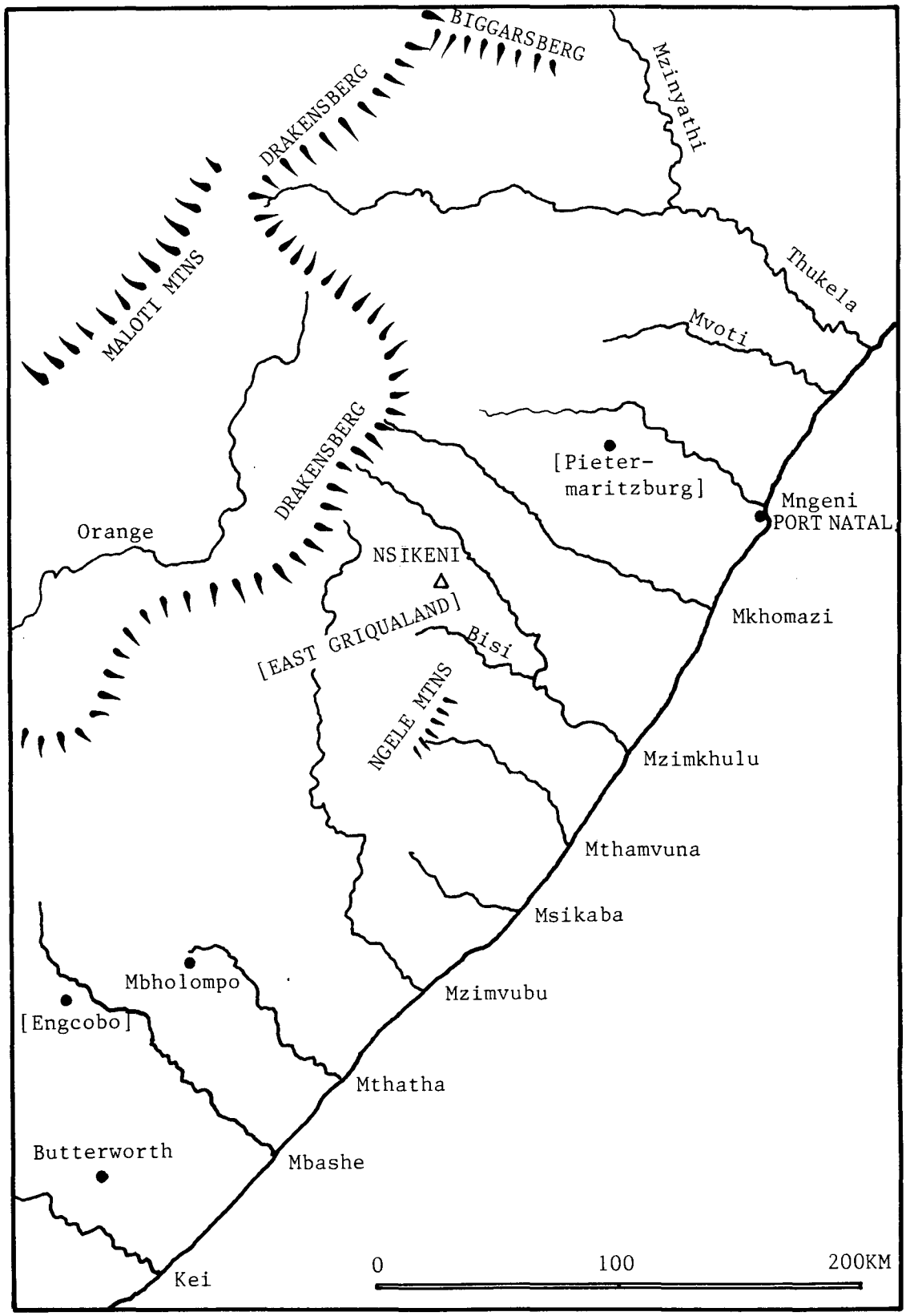
MAP 1. The eastern regions of southern Africa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries



MAP 2. The Delagoa Bay-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries



MAP 3. The Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the 1810s and 1820s



MAP 4. The Thukela-Mbashe region in the 1810s and 1820s

CHAPTER 1

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE LATER 18TH CENTURY

1. The Thukela-Mzimkhulu region to the early 19th century: an outline of the historiography

The historiography of what is now the Natal-Zululand region dates back to the later 1820s, when some of the British hunter-traders who had established themselves at Port Natal from 1824 onward began to publish acounts of their experiences in Cape newspapers. Included in some of these were brief notes on the region's history.[1] The information on which these notes were based would have been obtained in the first instance from African informants at Port Natal and in the Zulu kingdom, but there is nothing in the record about their identity or about the circumstances in which they gave their evidence. In the late 1820s and 1830s, digests of these historical comments began to appear in books written by British travellers, missionaries and others who had visited, or resided in, the Cape colony.[2] From the mid-1830s they

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1. The first of these accounts, written by James King, and entitled 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement at Port Natal...', was published in the South African Commercial Advertiser of 11 and 18 July 1826. It was reprinted, with a few omissions, the following year by George Thompson in his Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa, published in London. See the Van Riebeeck Society's edition of Thompson's book, vol. 2, Cape Town, 1968, pp. 243-52, esp. pp. 248-9.

2. See for example Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol. 1 (1967, 1st ed. 1827), pp. 172-3; H.B. Robinson, ed., Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar Performed...under the Direction of Captain W.F.W. Owen, R.N., vol. 1, Farnborough, 1968 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1833), p. 71; S. Kay, Travels and Researches in Caffraria, New York, 1834, pp. 341-2; A. Steedman, Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa, vol. 2, Cape Town, 1966 (repr. of 1st ed. London, 1835), pp. 200-1, 204, 209, 212.

were supplemented by jottings of historical information included in books written by sojourners in Natal itself.[3]

Two main themes dominated the version of the region's history which thus began appearing in print: first, the rise of Shaka's Zulu kingdom north of the Thukela, and, second, the 'invasions' of the territories to the south of the river which were supposed to have been carried out by the Zulu a few years before the coming of the first traders. It was not until after the establishment of British colonial rule over the Thukela-Mzimkhulu territories in the 1840s that the 'pre-Zulu' period of this region's history began to receive any attention from literate recorders. In the early 1850s, Lewis Grout, an American missionary, and Henry Fynn, one of the first whites to have lived at Port Natal, provided a Natal government commission with lists of the 'tribes' which, according to the testimony of African informants, had inhabited the region before the so-called Zulu conquests. Accompanying these lists were snippets of information on the localities which the various tribes had occupied, and on the identities of their chiefs. The evidence of both men was made public in 1853 through the medium of the Natal Government Gazette.[4] A few years later the essence of Grout's evidence on these topics was more widely disseminated in Joseph Shooter's well-known work, The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country.[5]

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3. See N. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, el. L. Herman & P.R. Kirby, Cape Town, 1970 (1st ed. London, 1836), pp. 146-50, 152; A.F. Gardiner, Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country, Cape Town, 1966 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1836), pp. 90, 98-9.

4. Grout's evidence to the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal (which will henceforth be referred to as the Harding Commission, after its first president) was published in Natal Government Gazette (NGG), no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853. Fynn's evidence was published in NGG, no. 220, 22 Feb. 1853.

5. First published in London, 1857; repr. New York, 1969. See pp. 375-82 on the 'Tribes of the Zulu-Country and Natal'.

These publications remained the only generally available sources of information on their subject for more than thirty years. Though Theophilus Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal colony, worked up a set of brief tribal histories in 1864,[6] these were not published until 1888, when they appeared, without attribution, in John Bird's influential compilation of historical documents entitled Annals of Natal.[7] Shepstone made a few general remarks on conditions in Natal before the Zulu conquests in a historical article first published in 1875,[8] and also in an official history of the tribes of Natal published in 1883,[9] but neither work gave much attention to the pre-Zulu period. Until the appearance of the first of Father Alfred Bryant's historical works in the early years of the 20th century, Shepstone's set of notes remained the most authoritative published source on the pre-Zulu history of the region which became Natal colony.

At the same time as Grout, Fynn and Shepstone were producing their notes on tribal history, speculations about the origins of the African peoples of southern Africa began to be published. The first work on Natal to touch on this issue seems to have been the Oxford-educated Charles Barter's The Dorp and Veld, published in 1852, in

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6. See pp. 101-6 below for discussion of the circumstances in which they were produced.

7. Two vols., Pietermaritzburg, 1888, repr. Cape Town, 1965. For Shepstone's histories see vol. 1, pp. 124-53.

8. T. Shepstone, 'The early history of the Zulu-Kafir race of south-eastern Africa', Journal of the Society of Arts, 29 Jan. 1875, repr. in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 155-66. Also published in Cape Monthly Magazine, vol. 11 (1875), pp. 95-104.

9. T. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch of the tribes anciently inhabiting the Colony of Natal - as at present bounded - and Zululand,' in Cape of Good Hope Blue Book no. G.4.-'83, Report and Proceedings, with Appendices, of the Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs, part II, Cape Town, 1968, (repr. of 1st ed., 1883), pp. 415-20. (This source will henceforth be cited as Commission on Laws and Customs.)

which the author mentioned 'the generally received theory' that the ultimate origins of south-eastern Africa's black inhabitants lay in south-west Asia.[10] A similar view was expressed in the report of the Harding Commission.[11] In 1857 the missionary J.L. Döhne put forward the notion that the African peoples of southern Africa had 'in time immemorial' come from Egypt.[12] In the next decade Lewis Grout put their point of origin in south-west Asia, as did another missionary, William Holden.[13]

By the 1860s, then, a three-phase model of the history of Natal before the coming of the first Europeans was being developed by the colony's white intellectuals. Influenced by the rising interest among contemporary social scientists in the question of how different cultures and peoples had originated,[14] they suggested that the ancestors of the African population of Natal had, at some unknown period, migrated into the region from further north in Africa. The period of migrations had been followed, in their view, by a long phase in which the people had lived in numerous small 'tribes'. Conventionally the tribe was seen as a group of people who occupied a specific territory under the political authority of a hereditary chief, and which was to a large degree united by ties of kinship, culture and language. This notion, too, was becoming central to anthropological

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10. C. Barter, The Dorp and the Veld; or Six Months in Natal, London, 1852, p. 190.

11. Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, n.d. (1853), p. 31.

12. J.L. Döhne, A Zulu-Kafir Dictionary, Cape Town, 1857, p. xiv.

13. L. Grout, Zulu-land, or Life among the Zulu-Kafirs, London, 1863, pp. 62-7; W.C. Holden, The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races, Cape Town, 1963 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1866), p. 5.

14. M. Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory, London, 1969, ch. 6; T.K. Penniman, A Hundred years of Anthropology, London, 1965 ed. (1st ed. 1935), ch. 4.

thought at this time.[15] The third phase of Natal's pre-European history, that of Zulu conquest and domination, had begun shortly before the arrival of the first Europeans in 1824, and had ended with the defeat of the Zulu at the hands of the Boers in the late 1830s.

This schema was consonant with ideas propounded a little later by writers whose focus was on the broader southern Africa region. By 1880 George Stow had developed an elaborate account of how 'negro' people had colonized the sub-continent in successive 'waves' of migration from the north, with stronger tribes pushing weaker ones before them.[16] Similar notions were being disseminated from the end of the century onward in the voluminous and immensely influential writings of G.M.Theal.[17] On a broader, Africa-wide canvas, Johnston was simultaneously propounding his theory that the whole continent had originally been colonized by migrants from the neighbouring regions of Asia.[18] By this time, writers were beginning to try to date the period of migrations. Johnston saw the southward movement of the 'Bantu' as having begun some 2500 to 3000 years before.[19] Theal estimated that the vanguard of the Bantu had reached the

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15. M.H. Fried, The Notion of Tribe, Menlo Park, Calif., 1975, p. 8; P. Skalnik, 'Tribe as colonial category', in E. Boonzaier & J. Sharp, eds., South African Keywords: the Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts, Cape Town, 1988, p. 70.

16. G.W. Stow, The Native Races of South Africa, Cape Town, 1964 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1905), pp. 233-5 & chs. 21, 22. This work, edited by G.M. Theal, was published after the author's death. As the preface makes clear, the manuscript had been completed by 1880.

17. For instance G.M. Theal, South Africa, London, 6th ed., 1899 (1st ed. 1893), p. 5; G.M. Theal, History and Ethnography of Africa South of the Zambesi, vol. 1, London, 1907, pp. 54-73.

18. H.H. Johnston, A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Peoples, New York, 1966 (repr. of 1930 ed., 1st ed. London (?), 1899), ch. 1.

19. Ibid., p. 5.

Orange and Kei rivers in about AD 1650.[20]

The theory of tribal migration as developed by European writers appeared to be underpinned by the oral traditions of Africans themselves. Many of these traditions, as interpreted by researchers like Stow, spoke of movements of groups whose structures appeared to match those of the anthropologists' tribes. Thus, while writers like Theal could dismiss African traditions as containing little worthwile historical information,[21] they were not led to query the general validity of traditions of migration, nor of the concept of the bounded tribe as the basic organizational unit in African society.

By the later 19th century, the three-phase model of Natal's pre-European history was well entrenched in the literature.[22] By this time Bryant was beginning to pursue the researches which, between 1905 and 1929, saw him produce what are still by far the most detailed and influential works on the pre-European history of the Natal-Zululand region to have been published.[23] Sixty years after its first appearance in 1929, his monumental Olden Times in Zululand and Natal remains for many researchers the standard work of reference on its subject.

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20. Theal, South Africa, p. 5.

21. Theal, History and Ethnography, vol. 1, p. 107.

22. R. Russell, Natal: the Land and Its Story, London, 1891, pp. 111-26.

23. Bryant's first major historical work was the essay entitled 'A sketch of the origin and early history of the Zulu people', which was published as a preface to his A Zulu-English Dictionary, Pietermaritzburg, 1905, pp. 12*-66*. (The page numbers of the series of prefaces in this work are asterisked to distinguish them from the page numbers of the main text.) This was followed by a series of articles published in the newspaper Izindaba Zabantu in 1910-13; these were reprinted in A.T. Bryant, A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes, Cape Town, 1964. The article, 'The origin of the Zulus', Native Teachers' Journal, vol. 1, no. 1 (1919), pp. 9-16, reflected some important developments in the author's thinking. His historical magnum opus, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, was published in London in 1929.

But, if Bryant's work added a mass of detail to the published record of the Natal-Zululand region's history before the advent of Europeans, it was cast in very much the same conceptual mould as earlier writing on the subject. It saw the African peoples of the region as comparatively recent immigrants from the north. It took the evidence in their oral traditions at face value in presenting the region's past in the form of discrete tribal histories with their focus on origins, migrations and chiefly genealogies. It depicted the 'Zulu invasions' as having brought the post-migration phase of the region's history to an abrupt and traumatic end. And it attributed the invasions primarily to the individual volition of the Zulu king Shaka.

Bryant's works in effect served to entrench the established European settler view of Natal's pre-European history by providing more detailed and apparently reliable empirical evidence for it than any previous author had done. For reasons which themselves require study, his conclusions survived virtually unchallenged for nearly half a century after the emergence of liberal academic historiography in South Africa in the 1920s, and the contemporaneous establishment of social anthropology as an academic discipline.[24] In the 1940s and 1950s, Gluckman and Wilson, both of them anthropologists, began to move away from Bryant's 'great man' notion of historical change and to consider the social and political effects of, respectively, rising population pressure and external trade.[25] Wilson also suggested that the migrations of

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24. Some of the reasons for the survival of Bryant's version of history are touched on in the next chapter: see pp. 80 ff.

25. M. Gluckman, 'The kingdom of the Zulu of South Africa', in M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, eds., African Political Systems, London, 1940, p. 25; M. Gluckman, 'Analysis of a social situation in modern Zululand', part B, Bantu Studies, vol. 14 (1940), pp. 148-51; M. Wilson, Divine Kings and the 'Breath of Men', Cambridge, 1959, pp. 23-4.

black people into south-eastern Africa had possibly taken place by AD 1300 or before.[26] It was not until the rise of Africanist historiography in southern Africa in the later 1960s, however, that historians like Omer-Cooper, Smith and Thompson began to bring these notions into a wider discourse.[27] At the same time, Marks and Atmore produced the first studies to argue the need for a thorough reassessment of the traditions of origin and migration presented forty years before by Bryant.[28]

By this time, too, archaeological evidence was beginning to emerge that gave a completely different picture of the nature and dating of the process by which southern Africa had been settled by African farming societies. After the beginning of systematic research into the 'Iron Age' of the Natal region in the early 1970s, the long-established notion that the area had been occupied comparatively recently by black immigrants from the north rapidly became discredited. By the early 1980s it had become clear that the first farming communities had emerged in the region by about AD 300 or earlier,[29] and the notion that they had originated in a process of

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26. M. Wilson, 'The early history of the Transkei and Ciskei', African Studies, vol. 18 (1959), p. 178.

27. J.D. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath: a Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Bantu Africa, London, 1966, pp. 25, 27; A. Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay as a factor in Nguni politics 1750-1835', in L. Thompson, ed., African Societies in Southern Africa, London, 1969, ch. 8; L. Thompson, 'Co-operation and conflict: the Zulu kingdom and Natal', in M. Wilson & L. Thompson, eds., The Oxford History of South Africa, vol. 1, Oxford, 1969, pp. 336-41.

28. S. Marks, 'The traditions of the Natal "Nguni": a second look at the work of A.T. Bryant', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, ch. 6; S. Marks & A. Atmore, 'The problem of the Nguni: an examination of the ethnic and linguistic situation in South Africa before the Mfecane', in D. Dalby, ed., Language and History in Africa, New York, 1970, pp. 120-32.

29. The evidence is summarized in T. Maggs, 'The Iron Age sequence south of the Vaal and Pongola rivers: some historical implications', Journal of African History, vol. 21 (1980), pp. 1-15.

immigration was itself becoming the subject of debate among archaeologists.[30]

The results of the archaeological research of the 1970s reinforced the emerging view that African oral traditions of migration could not be taken at face value, as generations of writers had done, as sources of evidence about the origins of, and relationships between, historically known African communities.[31] In the 1960s and 1970s a new understanding was developing among Africanist scholars of the ways in which oral traditions were formed, and of the social and political functions which they performed. They were coming to be seen less as factual statements than as largely political statements which served to legitimize the right of ruling groups to occupy particular territories, and to exercise authority over subordinate groups in those territories.[32] Traditions of migration, for their part, were coming to be recognized as often constituting not so much records of actual movements as 'founding charters' which had little, if any, basis in fact.[33] Any lingering opinions, among informed researchers, at least, to the effect that Bryant's complex schema of migrations might directly

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30. See M. Hall, The Changing Past: Farmers, Kings and Traders in Southern Africa, 200-1860, Cape Town, 1987, ch. 3.

31. The three paragraphs that follow draw on J. Wright & C. Hamilton, 'Olden Times and beyond: conceptualizing the pre-documentary history of Zululand-Natal', unpubl paper, University of Natal, Durban, 1985, pp. 3-4, 9; and J. Wright & C. Hamilton, 'Traditions and transformations: the Phongolo-Mzimkhulu region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', in A. Duminy & B. Guest, eds., Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910: a New History, Pietermaritzburg, 1989, pp. 50-52, 55.

32. See J. Vansina, Oral Tradition: a Study in Historical Methodology, Harmondsworth, 1973 (1st French ed., 1961), esp. ch. 4; D.P. Henige, The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera, Oxford, 1974, esp. ch. 1.

33. J.C. Miller, 'Introduction: listening for the African past', in J.C. Miller, ed., The African Past Speaks, Folkestone, 1980, pp. 31-4.

reflect historical reality eroded rapidly in the face of these ideas.

Another contemporary conceptual development that was of the greatest importance in enabling historians to move on beyond Bryant's notions was the gradual abandonment from the later 1960s onward by the more enlightened Africanist academics of the concept of the 'tribe' as the characteristic unit of social and political organization in Africa. At the time when Bryant was doing his researches, this notion had long since become thoroughly entrenched in anthropological discourse, and it is hardly surprising that he absorbed it uncritically into his own work. His predisposition to do so would have been reinforced by the fact that, in the African oral traditions with which he worked, historical narratives were often cast in the form of histories of bounded tribes, or 'clans' as he called them, with an objective existence of their own. There was nothing in the premises of the anti-historical structural-functionalist social anthropology which began emerging in about the 1920s to challenge the concept of the bounded tribe, and it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that a sustained critique of it began to be mounted by more historically minded social scientists.

Among many Africanists the term 'tribe' was by this time coming to be seen as a pejorative one. Numbers of anthropologists, followed a little later by historians, were beginning to recognize that it was also a term which confused political units, descent groups, and ethnic groups, and which failed to distinguish between political units of different types. Use of the term, it was coming to be seen, effectively prevented analysis of changes in basic social and political relationships, and thus inhibited production of the kind of history which sought to move beyond the descriptions of the 'unrewarding gyrations' of tribes (to resituate a phrase from Trevor-Roper's notorious statement) which had featured centrally

in the works of writers on African history since the mid-19th century. In place of the concept of the bounded tribe began to emerge the notion of chiefdoms whose geographical boundaries, composition, internal organization, and cultural and ethnic affiliations were fluid and subject to internally and externally induced change.[34]

Previously, historians like Bryant had conceived of historical change in 'tribal' society almost entirely in terms of changes in military organization and in political scale. They had been unable to conceive of the notion that changes in the basic social structures of the 'tribe' itself were possible.[35] Though writers like Gluckman and, later, Omer-Cooper had in some ways edged towards notions of structural change,[36] it was not until the analytical usefulness of the notion of the bounded tribe began to be queried that the way was opened for a broader understanding of the nature of historical change in the precolonial period to be developed.[37] In the 1970s the study of this period was comprehensively transformed by the work of a dozen or so doctoral researchers, based largely at the Universities of London and of California,

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34. For early critiques of the concept of the tribe see A.W. Southall, 'The illusion of tribe', in P.C.W. Gutkind, ed., The passing of Tribal Man in Africa, Leiden, 1970, pp. 28-48; Fried, The Notion of Tribe, passim. Among more recent commentaries are A.W. Southall, 'The ethnic heart of anthropology', Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, no. 100 (1985), pp. 567-72; Skalnik, 'Tribe as colonial category', in Boonzaier & Sharp, eds., South African Keywords, ch. 5.

35. See the discussion of these issues in Wright & Hamilton, 'Olden Times and beyond', unpubl. paper, pp. 5-7, 15-16; Wright & Hamilton, 'Traditions and transformations', in Duminy & Guest, eds., Natal and Zululand, pp. 53, 56-7.

36. Gluckman, 'The kingdom of the Zulu', in Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, eds., African Political Systems (1940), pp. 25-45; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath (1966), pp. 24-37.

37. See for example Thompson, ed., African Societies, where, in some of the studies, the notion of the tribe survives uneasily alongside newer concepts.

Los Angeles, who for the first time made it a respectable field of research for historians as well as for archaeologists and anthropologists.

Several of these researchers produced work which bore directly or indirectly on the history of the territories north of the Thukela river in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but only one, Henry Slater, gave attention to the region south of the river.[38] Like a number of his contemporaries, Slater was strongly influenced by the materialist notions of history which were emerging from the revival of marxist studies in western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. More explicitly than any of his colleagues, he incorporated the materialist concept of mode of production into his work. His doctoral thesis was in essence an exposition of how a number of different modes of production had manifested themselves in south-eastern Africa in a succession of social epochs, and of how the transition from one epoch to the next had taken place.

Slater's work marked a radical departure from established approaches to the writing of the Natal-Zululand region's precolonial history. He was the first historian in half a century to reveal in detail that the region actually had a precolonial history worth studying. He was also the first to propose a comprehensive theoretical framework which broke decisively with the tribally focussed model which had been dominant since the mid-19th century. But the rigidity of his framework, together with serious flaws in his handling of empirical evidence, prevented his ideas from being taken up with any enthusiasm by other historians. His schema of social epochs, which was derived from structuralist marxist analyses of the history of Europe, could be applied to the history of south-eastern Africa only be stretching the

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38. H. Slater, 'Transitions in the political economy of south-east Africa before 1840', unpubl. D. Phil., University of Sussex, 1976.

evidence to breaking-point. And, by omitting any systematic consideration of the nature and political significance of subjective consciousness among the various social categories which he identified in his successive epochs, he ended up by presenting a strongly evolutionist conception of historical change in which the role of conscious human agency was minimized.

David Hedges's thesis, which was rooted in a more flexible version of materialist theory, succeeded in providing a more empirically based and therefore convincing explanation of historical change in the Delagoa Bay-Thukela region in the later 18th and early 19th century.[39] Though, like Slater, he did not specifically confront Bryant's notions, his hypothesis that political change in the region was linked to the expansion of international commerce at Delagoa Bay at one stroke rendered much of Bryant obsolete. As will become clear later in this chapter, his findings had major implications for an understanding of the causes of contemporary political changes in the area south of the Thukela.

Hedges's argumentation was greatly strengthened by his use of two sources of evidence which had been left virtually untapped by previous writers on the Natal-Zululand region. One consisted of assemblages of unpublished official documents in Portuguese archives.[40] The other was the copious collection of oral traditions which had been recorded in Natal and Zululand in the first two decades of the 20th century by James Stuart, a colonial official, and which had been housed in a library in Durban since the late 1940s. A number of these

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39. D.W. Hedges, 'Trade and politics in southern Mozambique and Zululand in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1978.

40. Alan Smith had previously shown that these sources could be used to throw light on the history of the Zululand region (see note 27 above). The focus of his work was, however, on southern Mozambique.

traditions had been published in Zulu by Stuart in the 1920s,[41] and had been drawn on by Bryant in his researches towards the writing of Olden Times. But these works do not seem to have been taken seriously as possible sources by later historians, and it was not until 1976 that Stuart's collection began to become more generally known. In that year was published the first of a series of volumes, edited by Colin Webb and the present author, in which translated and annotated renderings of the oral testimony recorded by Stuart became available to a wider audience.[42]

In the early 1980s, using Stuart's records in detail, and armed with an understanding of the ideological functions performed by oral traditions which moved beyond the notions that had become established in the 1970s, Carolyn Hamilton developed the most comprehensive and penetrating analysis so far produced of the nature of the political struggles which had taken place in the Thukela-Mfolozi region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[43] An unpublished paper which she wrote in 1982 constituted the first empirical study to advance beyond Bryant's treatment of the history of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in this period.[44] The first published study to do so, co-authored by Andrew Manson and the present writer, appeared the following year;[45] this too drew heavily on

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41. In five Zulu readers published in London. These were uTulasizwe (1923), uBaxoxele (1924), uHlangakula (1924), uKulumetule (1925), and uVusezakiti (1926).

42. C. de B. Webb & J.B. Wright, eds., The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples, vols. 1-4, Pietermaritzburg, 1976-86. Three more volumes in the series are planned.

43. C.A. Hamilton, 'Ideology, oral tradition and the struggle for power in the early Zulu kingdom', unpubl. M.A. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986.

44. C.A. Hamilton, 'The amaLala in Natal, 1750-1826', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1982.

45. J. Wright & A. Manson, The Hlubi Chiefdom in Zululand-Natal: a History, Ladysmith, 1983, ch. 1.

testimony originally recorded by Stuart. At much the same time, Hamilton and the present writer were producing the first studies which were concerned explicitly to confront some of the notions central to Bryant's conception of the history of the Natal-Zululand region before the 19th century.[46] Most recently, Julian Cobbing's radical critiques of mfecane theory have carried this process a long step further.[47]

The studies produced in the last fifteen years or so have paved the way for an account of the history of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the later 18th century which moves on from Bryant's 'clan' histories to attempt to delineate broader patterns of change. In the next section of this chapter, a review of the evidence on the nature of political organization in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the mid-18th century will be presented. The third section will seek to identify the forces which, in the second half of the century, were making for far-reaching political change across a broad sweep of territory to the north, south and west of Delagoa Bay, including the area south of the Thukela. The fourth section will present new evidence on the impact which these forces had on the polities of this region.

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46. J. Wright, 'Politics, ideology and the invention of the "Nguni"', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1983 (this paper was published in virtually unaltered form in T. Lodge, ed., Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies, Johannesburg, 1986, pp. 96-118); C. Hamilton & J. Wright, 'The making of the Lala: ethnicity, ideology and class-formation in a precolonial context', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984 (a revised version of this paper is due for publication in 1990 in the South African Historical Journal); Wright & Hamilton, 'Olden Times and beyond', unpubl. paper, University of Natal, Durban, 1985.

47. See especially J. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane (with perestroika)', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988, esp. pp. 10-15; J. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi: thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo', Journal of African History, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 487-519, esp. pp. 503-7.

2. The polities of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the mid-18th century

The main source of evidence on the history of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region before the beginnings of its more or less connected documentation in the later 1820s is the body of oral traditions which survives in the records made by a number of researchers during the period c.1850-c.1920. The brief notes on tribal history produced in the 1850s and 1860s by Grout, Fynn and Shepstone have already been mentioned, as have the rich collection of oral testimony made by Stuart in the early 20th century, and the syntheses of individual 'clan' histories produced by Bryant at much the same time. To this list should be added an annotated list of tribes compiled in the early 1850s by James Perrin,[48] and a synthesis of oral traditions published in 1922 by Magema Fuze.[49] The notes made by Grout, Fynn, Perrin and Shepstone pertain essentially to the early 19th century. The traditions recorded by Stuart, together with those which can be extracted from Fuze's and Bryant's works, reflect events which took place as far back as about the mid-18th century.

Between them these sources indicate that in the mid-18th century the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region was occupied by several dozen or several score separate chiefdoms.[50]

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48. Robert Garden Papers (Natal Archives), 'Aboriginal tribes residing in the District of Natal at the time of the Zulu invasion, and destroyed by Chaka', pp. 826-83. The list is unattributed, but there is little doubt that it was the work of Perrin: see pp. 104-5 below.

49. M. Fuze, Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona, Pietermaritzburg, 1922. An English translation by H.C. Lugg, edited by A.T. Cope, was published in Pietermaritzburg in 1979 under the title The Black People and Whence They Came.

50. Much the most detailed of the sources is Bryant's Olden Times. His brief notes on the histories of individual 'clans', or chiefdoms, in the later 18th century are synthesized from the previously published notes and records of Grout, Fynn, Shepstone, Fuze and Stuart, and from his own researches into chiefly genealogies. The main references to the chiefdoms of the mid- and later 18th century to be found in Olden Times, are, on a region-by-region basis, as follows: northern Natal, pp. 347, 353; middle Thukela valley, pp. 364, 520-

Bryant put the number of clans in Natal in 'pre-Shakan' times at fifty.[51] Perrin's list of 'aboriginal tribes' supposedly destroyed by the Zulu contained fifty-four names.[52] Fynn listed fifty-six tribes which had inhabited Natal before Shaka's time, Grout seventy, and Shepstone ninety-four.[53] There is no clear indication in the sources as to how many of these entities constituted independent polities. The terms 'clan' and 'tribe' as used by the various authors fairly certainly refer to political groupings of different sizes and different levels of organization. Some may have been independent chiefdoms, others may have been sections of chiefdoms, still others may have been clusters of largely autonomous chiefdoms under a paramount chief.

Whatever the differences in size and level of organization between these groups, the evidence from oral tradition strongly suggests that the polities of the region were all relatively small and relatively loosely structured. Bryant estimated the population of Natal in the early 19th century as 100 000,[54] and while this figure represents only the roughest of estimates, it has not been

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3; lower Thukela valley, pp. 507, 510, 512; lower Mvoti valley, pp. 524-32, 534, 545; northern midlands, pp. 253-4, 548-52; Mngeni valley, pp. 373-4, 553-6; southern Natal, pp. 256-7, 268-70, 561.

There is comparatively little in the traditions recorded by Stuart that pertains to the period under discussion. See JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dabula, p. 88; vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 98, 108; vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 110-34 passim; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana pp. 274, 276-8; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 54; vol. 3, evidence of Stephen Mini, pp. 133-5; vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 10.

51. Bryant, OT, p. 236.

52. Garden Papers, list of 'Aboriginal tribes', pp. 826-83.

53. Fynn's evidence to Harding Commission, NGG, no. 221, 1 March 1853; Grout's evidence to Harding Commission, NGG, no. 215, 18 January 1853; Shepstone's notes on tribal histories in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 124-53.

54. Bryant, OT, p. 236.

challenged by later writers. Even if it is too low, the larger polities of the region in the mid-18th century are unlikely to have numbered more than a few thousand people, or to have extended over more than a couple of thousand square kilometres. There is no indication in the traditions that groupings larger than this emerged before the later 18th century.

This picture is consistent with the evidence from two other sources on the nature of social organization in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region before the 19th century. One is the information yielded by archaeological research into the later phases of the Iron Age in Natal, i.e. the period from c.1500 to c.1800. This evidence is significant in a negative rather than a positive sense. Comparatively little research has been undertaken on this period, and such as has been done has focussed almost entirely on investigating subsistence patterns, and settlement type and distribution.[55] There has as yet been no attempt to conceptualize political structures in the way done by researchers like Denbow and Huffman in other parts of southern Africa.[56] Nevertheless, the research findings so far published on subsistence and settlement patterns in Natal during the later Iron Age do not contradict the argument that in the mid-18th century, and for an unknown

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55. See the following survey articles: T. Maggs, 'The Iron Age sequence south of the Vaal and Pongola rivers: some historical implications', JAH, vol. 21 (1980), pp. 11-15; T. Maggs, 'The Iron Age south of the Zambezi', in R.G. Klein, ed., Southern African Prehistory and Paleo-environments, Rotterdam & Boston, 1984, pp. 354-60; T. Maggs, 'Iron Age settlement and subsistence patterns in the Tugela river basin, Natal', in M. Hall et al., eds., Frontiers: Southern African Archaeology Today, Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology 10, Oxford, 1984, pp. 200-206; T. Maggs et al., 'Spatial parameters of Late Iron Age settlements in the upper Thukela valley', Annals of the Natal Museum, vol. 27 (1986), pp. 455-79.

56. J. Denbow, 'A new look at the later prehistory of the Kalahari', JAH, vol. 27 (1986), pp. 3-28; T.N. Huffman, 'Iron Age settlement patterns and the origins of class distinction in southern Africa', Advances in World Archaeology, vol. 5 (1986), pp. 291-338.

period before, political groupings in the region were small in scale.[57]

The other major source of evidence on the history of the region before the later 18th century is the body of documented accounts of journeys made through the region by parties of shipwreck survivors, and of visits made by traders. The evidence on the nature of political organization that can be gleaned from these accounts is meagre, but nevertheless illuminating. The first recorded journey through the area by a group which included literate observers was made by the survivors of a Portuguese ship, the Sao Joao, which was wrecked near the mouth of the Mthamvuna river in 1552.[58] The party of Portuguese and slaves, which initially numbered about five hundred, struggled northward along the coast to Delagoa Bay. There is very little in the record of their march by way of description of the societies through whose territories they passed. One clue as to the nature of local political organization is provided by the fact that early in its journey, possibly before it crossed the Thukela, the Portuguese party fought several skirmishes with groups of inhabitants.[59] That even in its debilitated state it was able to beat off opposition and push its way forward, suggests that the polities of the region were not of great

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57. Supporting evidence comes from archaeological research conducted in the region north of the Thukela: see M. Hall, Settlement Patterns in the Iron Age of Zululand: an Ecological Interpretation, Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology 5, Oxford, 1981.

58. For bibliographic information on Portuguese accounts of the journey, see E. Axelson, Portuguese in South-East Africa 1488-1600, Cape Town, 1973, p. 207n. An English translation of one of these appears in G.M. Theal, ed., Records of South-Eastern Africa, vol. 1, Cape Town, 1964 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1898), pp. 128-49. On the site of the wreck, see T. Maggs, 'The Great Galleon Sao Joao: remains from a mid-sixteenth century wreck on the Natal South Coast', Annals of the Natal Museum, vol. 26 (1984), pp. 173-86.

59. Theal, ed. Records of South-Eastern Africa, vol. 1, p. 137.

size or strength. This conclusion is supported by the acount of the journey made through the same region by the survivors of another shipwreck, that of the Sao Bento, in 1554.[60] It also emerges clearly from this source that the economy of the region was based on the production of grain and livestock, and that 'village' organization was well-established.

Much more informative on political organization is the account written about the journey made by the survivors of the Santo Alberto in 1593.[61] After being shipwrecked at a point which, Bell-Cross argues in a well-researched essay, was a little way to the north of what is now East London,[62] the Portuguese party followed an inland route on their walk northward. Recent commentators agree that it would have passed somewhere through East Griqualand and the Natal midlands.[63] South of the 'Vchugel' or 'Uchugel'

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60. This account was written by Manuel Perestrêlo, one of the survivors. For bibliographic information on the Portuguese versions of it, see Axelson, Portuguese in South-East Africa 1488-1600, p. 210n. An English translation of part of one of these versions appears in Theal, ed., Records of South-Eastern Africa, vol. 1, pp. 218-85. On the site of the wreck of the Sao Bento at the mouth of the Msikaba river in what is now the northern Transkei, see C. Auret & T. Maggs, 'The Great Ship Sao Bento: remains from a mid-sixteenth century Portuguese wreck on the Pondoland coast', Annals of the Natal Musuem, vol. 25 (1982), pp. 1-39.

61. This account was edited by Joao Lavanha, and published in Lisbon in 1597. English translations appear in C.R. Boxer, ed., The Tragic History of the Sea 1589-1622, Cambridge, 1959, pp. 107-86; and in G.M. Theal, ed., Records of South-Eastern Africa, vol. 2, Cape Town, 1964 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1898), pp. 283-346. On the circumstances in which Lavanha's account was produced, see Boxer, pp. 42-6.

62. G. Bell-Cross, 'Portuguese shipwrecks and identification of their sites', in E. Axelson, ed., Dias and His Successors, Cape Town, 1988, pp. 59-60.

63. R. Derricourt, 'Early European travellers in the Transkei and Ciskei', African Studies, vol. 35 (1976), pp. 283-4; Axelson, Portuguese in South-East Africa 1488-1600, pp. 222-6; A.R. Willcox, Shipwreck and Survival on the South-East Coast of Africa, Winterton, Natal, 1984, pp. 22-3.

river, which is accepted by commentators to have been the Thukela, the party of more than two hundred proceeded for several weeks through a well-populated country where the agricultural economy was productive enough to enable it to purchase all the food it needed. (The party was fortunate to have made its journey during the harvest season.) The inhabitants lived in small villages, and were ruled by chiefs whose territories were some two days' march across. The chiefs, several of whom are named in the account, had retinues of up to a hundred armed men. Their authority extended as far as their being able to exercise control over trade between their adherents and the members of the Portuguese party. The existence of some degree of social hierarchy is attested by a reference to a group of 'young nobles'. Nowhere, though, is there any indication of the existence of a level of authority superordinate to that of the chiefs whom the Portuguese encountered.[64]

Later accounts add little to this general picture of political organization as it was in the later 16th century. The survivors of the Sao Joao Baptista, wrecked in 1622, possibly near the mouth of the Bushman's river in the eastern Cape, reported on the importance of what would now be called ideologies of kinship and descent among the inhabitants of what were probably the coastlands of Natal.[65] The survivors of the Stavenisse, some of whom

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64. Boxer, ed., Tragic History, pp. 148-62.

65. The experiences of the party were recorded in a first-hand account written by Francisco d'Almada and published in 1625. For bibliographic information on this account, see Boxer, ed., Tragic History, p. 48. English translations appear in Boxer, pp. 190-271, and in G.M. Theal, ed., Records of South-Eastern Africa, vol. 8, Cape Town, 1964 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1902), pp. 71-137. The possible site of the wreck is discussed in Bell-Cross, 'Portuguese shipwrecks', in Axelson, ed., Dias and His Successors, p. 63. There is a broad consensus among commentators on what part of d'Almada's account applies to the party's journey along the Natal coast: see E. Axelsen, Portuguese in South-East Africa 1600-1700, Johannesburg, 1969, p. 199; Boxer, ed. Tragic History, pp. 238n, 241n; Derricourt, 'Early European travellers', African Studies, vol. 35 (1976), p. 285. For the comments on kinship and descent referred to, see Boxer, ed., Tragic History, p. 239.

spent a year living on the Natal coast in 1686-7, confirmed that the local inhabitants lived in well-organized communities under the overall rule of chiefs.[66] A Captain Rogers, who traded several times at the Bay of Natal (later the site of Durban) at the end of the 17th century, wrote a brief description of the region in which he mentioned the existence of differences of wealth in cattle among the inhabitants, and the authority which male elders exercised over women and young men.[67]

Several other account of journeys made in Natal in the 17th century and the first half of the 18th serve to confirm the points which emerge from the sources cited above. Overall, this body of documentation suggests that, for at least two hundred years before the mid-18th century, the typical polity in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region was the small-scale chiefdom. At least two levels of authority can be discerned, that of the chief and that of the homestead or 'village' head. The subordination of women to men, and of younger people to older, is attested, as is a degree of social differentiation between 'nobles',

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66. D. Moodie, ed., The Record, or a Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa, Amsterdam & Cape Town, 1960 (repr. of papers first published in Cape Town, 1838?-1842?), part I, documents on wreck of Stavenisse, pp. 415-18, 419-20.

67. Rogers's account was originally published in W. Dampier, ed., Voyages and Discoveries, vol. 2, London, 1699. Slightly variant versions were reprinted in S. Bannister, Humane Policy; or Justice to the Aborigines of New Settlements, London, 1830, appendix; Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 56-9; and C. Graham Botha, ed., Collectanea, Cape Town, 1924, pp. 129-32. The last-mentioned seems to be the most faithful to the original. J.D. Buttner's 'Korte beschrijving van terra de Natal', written in c.1716, and reprinted, together with an English translation, in G.S. Nienaber & R. Raven-Hart, eds., Johan Daniel Buttner: Accounts of the Cape/Natal/East Indies 1716/1721, Cape Town, 1970, pp. 123-8, is nothing more than a translation of Rogers.

by which was presumably meant members of the chiefly house, and commoners. As in the oral traditions, there is no indication of the existence of sharply stratified and highly centralized polities in the region.

The term 'chiefdom', however, does not by itself adequately capture the nature of the organizational forms in which political authority was exercised among the societies of the region. The word tends to convey the notion of a discrete political entity with a more or less stable membership subordinate to an independent and clearly located centre of power. A close reading of the traditions which surface in Olden Times suggests, though, that political authority was more diffuse, and political organization more fluid, than this meaning allows for.

In many parts of the region were to be found clusters of chiefdoms whose chiefly houses were, at least as Bryant represents them, related by ties of kinship. Some of these clusters, for example those formed by the Bhele, Zizi and Wushe chiefdoms respectively, were headed by what Bryant calls a paramount chief.[68] Whether the authority associated with this office was real or merely nominal, Bryant does not indicate. Other clusters, such as that formed by the Dlamini chiefdoms, are not described by Bryant specifically as having had a paramount. The heads of the component chiefdoms, though, all claimed to trace their descent from a common ancestor, and recognized one of their number as genealogically senior to the rest.[69] It may be that it was this type of figure whom Bryant had in mind when using the term 'paramount'. In a third category of clusters, it seems from Bryant's text, the chiefs could not always establish descent links with a

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68. On the Bhele, see OT, pp. 347, 354; on the Zizi, OT, pp. 353, 355; on the Wushe, OT, p. 374.

69. On the Dlamini, see OT, pp. 364-8.

common ancestor, but nevertheless regarded themselves as genealogically related.[70]

There is not enough evidence in Bryant or elsewhere to indicate the particular circumstances in which clusters of these different kinds came to be formed, or whether they had any political significance. The possibility needs to be kept in mind, though, that some of them had originally been formed to protect or advance interests which the dominant groups in their component chiefdoms had in common, and that the claims made by the chiefs to be related might have been a product of the need to establish closer ideological links with one another in specific political circumstances rather than a reflection of genealogical reality. In this case these clusters would constitute another level of political organization, though one which acquired significance only under particular conditions and probably for comparatively limited periods of time. A central feature of the political process in clusters of this sort would have been that authority would constantly have been contested, in ways subtle and unsubtle, between the paramount and his largely autonomous subordinate chiefs. The degree of power exercised from the centre by the paramount, never very great, would have fluctuated widely over time.

A well-recognized feature of the political organization of the chiefdoms of the Natal-Zululand region as it is thought to have been before the widespread emergence of more centralized polities, or states, in the later 18th century was the propensity for sections of these chiefdoms to hive off and set up as independent chiefdoms, or else give their allegiance to another chief.[71] Less well-

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70. In this category were, for example, the clusters formed by the Nxamalala, Zondi and Mpumuza (OT, pp. 520-23), by the Hlongwa, Maphumulo and related chiefdoms (OT, pp. 524-33), and by the Nyamvini, Dunge and Bombo (OT, pp. 548-52).

71. Gluckman, 'The kingdom of the Zulu', in Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, eds., African Political Systems, p. 25; M. Gluckman, 'The rise of a Zulu empire', Scientific American, no. 202 (April 1960), pp. 160-1; Omer-Cooper,

recognized for this period is the converse process, that by which chiefdoms incorporated groups of outsiders which came to give their allegiance. That the former process has received more attention in the anthropological and historical literature than the latter in part reflects the nature of the oral record, particularly as found in Bryant's Olden Times, which gives much more attention in the 'pre-Shakan' period to cases of fissioning than to cases of incorporation.[72]

This asymmetry, in turn, is partly the product of Bryant's concern to elaborate in detail the theory that the Natal-Zululand region had been populated through a process of group migration and fissioning. But it is also in part a reflection of the inherently ideological nature of the traditions themselves. New political entities which were formed in the process of hiving off had a vested interest in maintaining the collective memory of how they had originally come into being. By contrast, in the pre-state period, when incorporation very often took place through the voluntary tendering of allegiance, as distinct from processes of conquest, both the dominant group and the incorporated groups had a vested interest in establishing ideological links with one another,[73] and

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Zulu Aftermath, pp. 19-20.

72. On cases of hiving off which took place, it seems, before the early 19th century, see Bryant, OT, pp. 256, 346, 356, 363-4, 365, 368, 374, 510, 524, 527-9, 531-2, 534, 548, 549, 550, 552; also JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dabula, p. 88; vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 98; vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 111, 116, 119, 120-1, 126, 131, 132, 134; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 277.
On cases of incorporation, see Bryant, OT, pp. 347, 490, 511, 521, 525, 550; also JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, p. 11; vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 112, 120, 129, 130; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 278.

73. Detailed empirical evidence in support of this point is presented in detail in Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 112-15, 155-61. See also pp. 33-4, 35-6 below.

thus with suppressing the memory that the latter had previously given their allegiance elsewhere.

There is not enough evidence in the sources to allow patterns of political conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region to be traced before the later 18th century. The region's political history becomes visible only from the beginning of the period covered by the testimony from recorded oral traditions. The available sources indicate that in the later 18th century the main forces making for change south of the Thukela were emanating from an increase in political conflict in the territories to the north of the river. The next section of the chapter turns to an examination of those forces and of their origins.

3. Political centralization and expansion north of the Thukela

Evidence from the traditions suggests that until the later 18th century the Thukela river did not constitute a significant social or political boundary. North of the river, the pattern of social and political relationships was similar to that described above for the region to the south of it. But in about the third quarter of the century, it seems that a decisive shift towards new patterns of relationships began to take place in a region which extended from the Thukela northwards to Delagoa Bay and beyond.[74] As synthesized in several recent studies, the evidence indicates that at a number of different locations in these territories the ruling groups of certain chiefdoms began to expand both the scope and the geographical span of the political authority which they exercised. East of the Maputo river, in what is now southern Mozambique, the Mabhudu chiefdom was gradually separating from the Thembe paramountcy which had hitherto

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74. The passages which follow draw on Wright & Hamilton, '_Olden Times_ and beyond', unpubl. paper, pp. 17-21; and Wright & Hamilton, 'Traditions and transformations', in Duminy & Guest, eds., _Natal and Zululand_, pp. 59-66.

dominated the region south of Delagoa Bay.[75] To the south-west, the intrusive Dlamini were taking control of what is now southern Swaziland.[76] Across the Phongolo to the south, the region round Magudu was becoming the focal point of an expanding chiefdom dominated by the Ndwandwe, who, like the Dlamini, seem to have migrated from the area near Delagoa Bay.[77] Still further south, between the lower Mfolozi and Mhlathuze rivers, the Mthethwa chiefdom was rising to prominence.[78]

The causes of this process of expansion have in recent years been the subject of debate among historians. In place of Bryant's 'great man' theory of change, several alternative hypotheses have emerged. One is the idea that the growth of these chiefdoms was a product of intensified conflict over resources consequent on the growth of the region's human population. This idea was first articulated by Gluckman, and uncritically adopted and popularized by Omer-Cooper in his influential The Zulu Aftermath.[79] But, as other commentators have pointed out, there is no firm evidence on which demographic explanations of this nature can be based,[80] and the

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75. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 134-41.

76. P. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: the Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth-Century Swazi State, Johannesburg, 1983, pp. 9-12.

77. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 155-8; Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 10-11; P. Bonner, 'Early state formation among the Nguni: the relevance of the Swazi case', unpubl. paper, University of London, 1978, pp. 6-10.

78. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 178-83; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 110-19.

79. Gluckman, 'The kingdom of the Zulu', in Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, eds., African Political Systems, p. 25; and 'Analysis of a social situation', part B, Bantu Studies, vol. 14 (1940), pp. 148-51; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, pp. 25, 27.

80. Thompson, 'Co-operation and conflict', in Wilson & Thompson, eds., Oxford History of S.A., vol. 1, p. 341; J.J. Guy, 'Ecological factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu kingdom', in S. Marks & A. Atmore. eds., Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa, London, 1980,

argument remains speculative. A variation of it, which has been argued in its most sophisticated form by Jeff Guy, sees the causes of intensified conflict over resources as lying not so much in an increase of population as in a decline in the productivity of grazing and agricultural land resulting from centuries of unscientific farming practices.[81] In opposition to this line of thinking, Martin Hall has argued on the basis of his archaeological researches that there is no evidence that the natural environment in the region would have been subject to ecological strains of the kind postulated by Guy.[82] In any case, like the 'demographic' argument, the 'environmental' argument is not based on firm evidence, and cannot by itself explain why conflict over resources should have begun when and where it did, nor why it should have produced the particular political effects that it did.

This is not to argue that no thought need be given to the social and political implications of processes such as the spread, possibly in the 18th century, of maize production in south-east Africa,[83] or to the impact of environmental factors such as the changes in patterns of climate in the region postulated by Hall for the later

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pp. 112-13; D.S. Chanaiwa, 'The Zulu revolution: state formation in a pastoralist society', African Studies Review, vol. 23 (1980), p. 5.

81. Guy, 'Ecological factors', in Marks & Atmore, eds., Economy and Society, pp. 102-18. See also J. Gump, 'Revitalization through expansion in southern Africa, c.1750-1840: a reappraisal of the "mfecane"', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1980, chs. 1-3.

82. Hall, Settlement Patterns, chs. 5-9, esp. pp. 177-8.

83. See S. Marks, 'The rise of the Zulu kingdom', in R. Oliver, ed., The Middle Age of African History, London, 1967, pp. 86-7; M. Hall, 'Dendroclimatology, rainfall and human adaptation in the later Iron Age of Natal and Zululand', Annals of Natal Museum, vol. 22 (1976), pp. 701-2.

18th and early 19th centuries.[84] It is, though, to insist that historians need to avoid determinist explanations about the historical effects of forces of this kind by foregrounding the specific social and political contexts within which they were played out.

The most persuasive arguments so far put forward to explain the political changes which were taking place north of the Thukela in the later 18th century are based on the hypothesis that the initial dynamic, at least, was provided by the impact of international trade. That the effects of this commerce could in particular circumstances precipitate political conflict which led certain chiefdoms to extend their domination over neighbouring polities is well attested in the literature on the history of pre-colonial Africa.[85] Several studies indicate that at Delagoa Bay, as at other points on the coast of south-east Africa, a spasmodic trade in ivory had been conducted by visiting European merchants, mainly Portuguese, from the mid-16th to the early 18th century. Though it had a marked impact on the politics of the region round the bay, it was too intermittent and too small in scale to have any lasting effect on chiefdoms further afield. From the mid-18th century onward, however, the ivory trade expanded over a period of perhaps thirty years to attain an

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84. Hall, 'Dendroclimatology', Annals of Natal Museum, vol. 22 (1976), pp. 693-703.

85. See C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Research on an African mode of production', in M. Klein & G.W. Johnson, eds., Perspectives on the African Past, Boston, 1972, pp. 33-51; and 'The political economy of the African peasantry and modes of production', in P.C.W. Gutkind & I. Wallerstein, eds., The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, Beverly Hills, 1976, ch. 3; R. Gray & D. Birmingham, eds., Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900, London, 1970, esp. pp. 15-22; E. Terray, 'Long-distance exchange and the formation of the state: the case of the Abron kingdom of Gyaman', Economy and Society, vol. 3 (1974), pp. 315-45; M. Mason, 'Production, penetration and political formation: the Bida state, 1857-1901', in D. Crummey & C.C. Stewart, eds., Modes of Production in Africa: the Precolonial Era, Beverly Hills, 1981, ch. 8.

unprecedented volume. This development co-incided closely in time with the process of political expansion, as outlined above, which took place in the territories to the south.

Over the last twenty years a number of writers have sought to establish connections between the growth of trade at Delagoa Bay and the contemporaneous expansion of certain chiefdoms in the bay's hinterland. The pioneering studies in this field were produced by Alan Smith.[86] His suggestion was that the growth of conflict between the chiefdoms of the region may have been underlain by the marked increase which took place in the trading of ivory at the bay to European and Indian merchants in the second half of the 18th century. In this view, the growth of trade led to increased rivalry between chiefs for control of trade routes and for resources, with competition between them spilling over into a spiral of violence which eventually ended with the emergence of a single dominant power in the region. Slater took this argument a significant step further when he made the point that the expansion of external trade would also have provided an incentive for the rulers of African chiefdoms to seek to reorganize relations of production within their polities in a direction which gave them more control over the production of trade goods. This would have led to an increase in internal political conflict.[87]

Hedges's contribution to the debate was to put these arguments into a firmer historical context.[88] He saw the Delagoa Bay trade in the later 18th century as falling

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86. Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies', ch. 8; 'Delagoa Bay and the trade of south-east Africa', in Gray & Birmingham, eds., Pre-Colonial African Trade, ch. 13; 'The struggle for control of southern Mocambique, 1720-1835', unpubl Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970, chs. 5, 6.

87. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, ch. 9.

88. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, chs. 3, 6.

into two distinct phases. The first, lasting from the 1750s to about 1790, was marked by the growth of the trade in ivory, most of it apparently produced in the regions south of the bay. This period saw the beginnings both of political centralization and of territorial expansion on the part of certain of the chiefdoms in the territories to the south well beyond the vicinity of the bay. The main agencies in both processes were the men's amabutho (sing. ibutho) organized and controlled by the ruling chiefs. Originally functioning as young men's circumcision sets, the amabutho were gradually allocated more and more tasks in the sphere of production for the chiefs, particularly in hunting ivory. Over time they also took on more and more military and police functions.

In the second phase, the ivory trade went into decline, but was replaced by a trade in cattle, as, in the late 1780s and 1790s, Delagoa Bay increasingly became a provisioning base for American and British whalers. The region about Delagoa Bay is not good cattle country, and within a short while the trading chiefdoms at the bay would have been importing cattle from the ecologically more favoured regions to the south. The switch from exports of ivory to those of cattle had far-reaching social and political effects. Where ivory was a 'luxury' item whose production and exchange involved relatively few people, cattle by contrast played a pivotal role in the life of every household. Exports of cattle therefore constituted a potentially serious drain of socially necessary resources.

The development of the export trade would therefore have been accompanied by the growth of strong incentives for chiefdoms engaged in it to seek to replace exported livestock by using their increasingly militarized amabutho to raid other chiefdoms. Cattle raiding had no doubt been frequent in these societies before this time, but from the 1790s it may well have begun to increase in frequency and scale. As the importance of cattle as export commodities

increased, so raids began to turn into wars of territorial conquest aimed at bringing regions of good grazing under the permanent control of chiefdoms involved in the trade. The overall political consequence was a marked increase in violent conflict between the chiefdoms of these territories, and a strengthening of the forces which were making for the emergence of larger and more centralized chiefdoms.

Hedges's argument is often thin on empirical detail, but it is nevertheless the first to have been put forward which explains the processes of political change which were taking place in the Delagoa Bay-Thukela region in the later 18th century in historical rather than evolutionist or determinist terms. Bonner draws on some of the notions advanced by Hedges to argue that the Delagoa Bay trade was an important factor in the events which led to the expansion of the Dlamini chiefdom.[89] Delius has suggested that this trade may also have played a role in stimulating the extension of Maroteng domination over the chiefdoms of what became the Pedi polity of the eastern Transvaal.[90] More recently, Cobbing has criticized Hedges for entirely failing to consider the evidence that there may have been a significant trade in slaves at Delagoa Bay by the later 18th century,[91] but his points do not affect the overall thrust of the 'trade' hypothesis: if anything, they serve to strengthen it. Unlike the arguments based on notions of population pressure or of environmental crisis, this hypothesis is historically rooted: that is, it is able to explain why the processes of political centralization and expansion described above should have begun in the Delagoa Bay hinterland rather than anywhere else in south-eastern

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89. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 20-3.

90. P. Delius, The Land Belongs to Us: the Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Transvaal, Johannesburg, 1983, pp. 13-19.

91. J. Cobbing, 'The myth of the mfecane', unpubl. paper, University of Durban-Westville, 1987, pp. 17-18.

Africa, and in the later 18th century rather than at any other time.

Documentary evidence supports the notion that the expansion of the Mabhudu chiefdom in the later 18th century was linked to its control of trade routes which led southwards from Delagoa Bay.[92] Though no direct evidence survives to indicate that the emerging states further south, like those of the Dlamini, Ndwandwe and Mthethwa, were trading to Delagoa Bay at this time, by the early 19th century the Mthethwa were certainly doing so (see pp. 157, 160, 178 below). So, less certainly, were the Ndwandwe (see p. 158 below), and it is probable that in both cases direct or indirect commercial links with the bay dated back several decades earlier. Centrally controlled amabutho existed in both the Mabhudu and Mthethwa polities by at least the later 18th century, and in the Dlamini and Ndwandwe polities by at least the early 19th.[93] If the development of this institution can be taken as an index of the increasing capacity of ruling groups to extract tribute in the form of labour-power from subordinate groups, then it seems that in the case of these chiefdoms external expansion was accompanied by significant internal social and political reorganization.

Linked to the centralization of the amabutho system and the concomitant growth in the coercive power of politically dominant groups in all these chiefdoms was very probably the development of more pronounced social

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92. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 141-3.

93. On the Mabhudu amabutho see Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 153-4; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahungane & Nkomuza, p. 147. On those of the Mthethwa see Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 116-19. On those of the Dlamini see Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, p. 24; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Giba, pp. 152-3; Bryant, OT, p. 317. On those of the Ndwandwe see JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 186; vol. 1, evidence of Luzipho, p. 354; vol. 2, evidence of Madlebe, p. 45; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhando, p. 146; vol.3, evidence of Mmemi, pp. 270, 271.

stratification, and of the power of rulers to extract other forms of tribute from their adherents. The evidence for this is clearest in the case of the Mthethwa chiefdom. Hamilton's close study of the traditions of groups which were subordinated by the Mthethwa reveals that, in the early stages of the chiefdom's expansion, newly subject communities were incorporated into it through manipulation of their traditions of origin in a way which enabled them to claim to be kinsfolk of the ruling house. By the end of the 18th century, however, newly subjected groups were being prevented from making such claims, and were coming to form a stratum within the Mthethwa polity which was politically and socially quite distinct from, and subordinate to, the core of groups linked to the ruling house.[94] A similar pattern can be discerned in the development, as analyzed by Bonner, of the Dlamini chiefdom.[95] Though there is very little evidence on the subject, this pattern is likely to have been a feature of the expansion of chiefdoms like those of the Ndwandwe and Mabhudu as well.

These developments reflected the expansion of a cluster of budding states which were much larger and more powerful than the polities which had previously existed in the region. While the expansion of these states, and the sharpening of conflict between them, are subjects which have received much attention from historians, very little has been written on the question of what impact their emergence had on the polities on their peripheries. It is suggested here that one effect was to stimulate political expansion among the chiefdoms in the regions to the south and west, along the line of the Thukela and Mzinyathi rivers. This development was not so much a response to the growth of the Delagoa Bay trade as an essentially defensive reaction to the expansion of the trading states

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94. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 112-31.

95. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 24-37.

to the north. This difference was reflected in the relative looseness of their political structures and in the existence of a less clearly defined distinction between dominant and subordinate groups. Among the polities in this category were those of the Qwabe, Ngcobo, Mkhize, Chunu and Hlubi.

Hedges has argued that the Qwabe chiefdom was already expanding southwards from the Mhlathuze in the first half of the 18th century;[96] if so, the process seems to have been further promoted after the middle of the century by the rise of the Mthethwa power on the Qwabe northern borders. By the end of the century, if not before, the Qwabe dominated the region between the lower Mhlathuze and the lower Thukela. There is some evidence that Khondlo, who ruled the Qwabe in the late 18th and first few years of the 19th century, formed amabutho:[97] this suggests that political centralization in his chiefdom was to some extent proceeding along the same lines as in polities like those of the Mthethwa, Mabhudu and Dlamini. However, Hamilton's researches indicate that historical circumstances operated to set a limit to the degree of power which the Qwabe ruling house sought to exercise over subordinate groups. Unlike the rulers of the expanding Mthethwa and Dlamini polities, she argues, the dominant group among the Qwabe had a direct interest in closely assimilating the groups which it subordinated. This was because its prime concern was not so much to extract tribute from them as to obtain their co-operation in defence against the 'increasingly militarized and predatory trading states' to the north. Where the core groups in the Mthethwa and Dlamini chiefdoms were concerned to prevent subordinate groups from claiming kinship links with them, the Qwabe rulers were concerned

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96. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 169-73.

97. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Khambi, p. 210; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, pp. 252, 254, 260; Bryant, OT, p. 185.

to incorporate subordinate groups by allowing them to claim such links. The practical effect was that the Qwabe chiefs did not exercise the same degree of power over their adherents as did the rulers of the more northerly chiefdoms.[98] In contrast to these aggressively expanding polities, the Qwabe chiefdom remained a loose defensive coalition of groups which recognized the genealogical and ritual seniority of the ruling house but which retained a good deal of autonomy from it. The chiefdom as a whole was held together more by outside pressures than by the coercive capacities of its rulers.

On the western borders of the Qwabe chiefdom, about the Mamba and lower Nsuze rivers, another polity of the same kind seems to have been emerging in the later 18th century. This was the Ngcobo chiefdom, with the Nyuswa as the senior group. Bryant's synthesis of the traditions of origin of the various Ngcobo sections is highly confusing, but it indicates that their polity was even more loosely knitted together than that of the Qwabe.[99] It too probably came into being in response to the expansion of the Mthethwa and other chiefdoms to the north.

Further up the Nsuze river were the Mkhize and Chunu chiefdoms, which may also have been engaged in expanding at this time. According to one of James Stuart's informants, Mbokodo kaSikhulekile, the Mkhize chief, Gcwabe, who ruled in the later 18th century, formed four amabutho.[100] In his praises as given by Mbokodo he is remembered as a fighter who attacked other chiefs.[101] Mbokodo was himself a descendant of Gcwabe's,[102] and possibly prone to exaggerating the extent of Mkhize power in his time, but his evidence is consistent with

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98. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 155-61.

99. Bryant, OT, pp. 479-97.

100. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 15.

101. James Stuart Collection (JSC), file 58, nbk. 23, pp. 30-31.

102. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 1.

indications in other sources that in the early 19th century, during the reign of Gcwabe's son and successor, Zihlandlo, the Mkhize chiefdom was expanding at the expense of its neighbours (see pp. 168-70 below). The evidence that the neighbouring Chunu were also expanding at this time is less clear. Macingwane, chief of the Chunu in the early 19th century, is said to have had five amabutho and eight chiefly imizi, or homesteads.[103] He apparently exercised authority over a number of Chunu sub-groups, and defeated several neighbouring chiefdoms in the course of his reign.[104] On the basis of this evidence Hamilton has argued that in the early 19th century the Chunu chiefdom was 'large and politically diverse':[105] the likelihood is that it was already expanding in the later 18th century.

The evidence that the Hlubi chiefdom, whose core territory lay about the upper Mzinyathi river, was also extending the area under its control at this time is somewhat firmer.[106] According to a set of praises published by Henry Ndawo, Nsele, the chief who ruled the Hlubi in the later 18th century, was remembered as a conqueror of other chiefs.[107] In either his reign or that of his successor, Bhungane, the Hlubi ruling house, the Hadebe, extended its domination over most of the upper Mzinyathi basin. According to Mabhonsa kaSidlayi, another of Stuart's informants, Nsele was buried near what is now Alcockspruit. Bhungane's chief homestead was in the same area, while that of his chief son, Mthimkhulu, was near Utrecht, and that of Mpangazitha, the chief son in

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103. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 86.

104. Fuze, The Black People, pp. 52, 53.

105. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 258.

106. For a recent survey of the evidence see Wright & Manson, Hlubi Chiefdom, pp. 3-10.

107. H.M. Ndawo, Izibongo Zenkosi zama-Hlubi nezama-Baca, Mariannhill, 1928, p. 9.

Bhungane's left-hand house, was near Newcastle.[108] A section of the Hadebe was established in the far north of the Hlubi teritory near Majuba mountain, and another in the west under the Drakensberg.[109] Two others, the Gumbi section under Mkhungela kaPhisholo, and the Madakane section under Ntanzi, were situated near the Ncome river in the chiefdom's eastern borderlands.[110] On its north-eastern border, near what is now Vryheid, were the Zwana people under Hawane.[111]

The picture given by Mabhonsa is of a polity in which Bhungane maintained Hadebe domination of the upper Mzinyathi region by placing sections of the chiefly house, each under one of his male relatives, at strategic locations in the territories over which he claimed suzerainty. Though the chiefdom which he ruled was relatively large in area, the authority which he exercised remained ritual and managerial rather than coercive. Mabhonsa states specifically that Bhungane did not form any amabutho. He did, though, have a special knowledge of the medicines of chiefship and a wide reputation as a rainmaker.[112] Annually, at the beginning of the harvesting season, he held an umkhosi ceremony at which the chiefs who recognized his authority formally received permission to start harvesting their new crops.[113] Overall, the Hlubi polity at this time seems to have been a loose agglomeration of partly autonomous groups more like the Qwabe chiefdom than the relatively centralized and stratified Mthethwa chiefdom. Though it has sometimes

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108. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, pp. 13, 16, 21, 28.

109. Ibid., p. 24.

110. Ibid., pp. 16, 19.

111. Ibid., pp. 18, 25, 27.

112. Ibid., pp. 12, 13, 14, 21, 22. See also W. von Fintel, 'Traditions and history of the Amahlubi tribe', Native Teachers' Journal, vol. 11 (1932), p. 231.

113. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, p. 21.

been characterized as an important 'trading state',[114] it is unlikely to have been such in Bhungane's time. As far as the evidence goes, it did not reveal the structures typical of the trading states of the Delagoa Bay hinterland. Nor did it have the resources of ivory which seem to have been important in the emergence of polities like those of the Mabhudu and the Mthethwa: as indicated by Mabhonsa, the open grasslands of the upper Mzinyathi basin would not have been good elephant country.[115] Like the Qwabe chiefdom and others in the lower Thukela-Mzinyathi region, the expansion of the Hlubi polity is likely to have been a response more to political developments in the territories towards Delagoa Bay than to the penetration of new forms of long-distance trade.

The relatively rapid expansion of several chiefdoms in a nearly unbroken rank from the mouth of the Thukela to the sources of the Mzinyathi is likely to have had widespread political effects among the chiefdoms to the south and west. Unfortunately for the historian, there is no evidence which enables developments in the interior regions of what is now Natal to be assessed. There is clear evidence, however, that the emergence of large chiefdoms north of the lower Thukela was directly instrumental in setting in train far-reaching political transformations in the coastlands south of the river. In the later 18th century, first the Thuli and then the Cele migrated southward across the Thukela and, in place of the numerous small chiefdoms which had previously occupied the area, proceeded to establish two large paramountcies which dominated the coastal region to the Mzimkhulu and beyond. The emergence of these polities forms the subject of the next section of the chapter.

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114. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 191.
115. JSA, vol. 2, p. 30.

4. Intrusions into the coastlands south of the Thukela

Recorded traditions indicate that, immediately prior to its removal to the south, the Thuli chiefdom had been located at the sources of the Matikhulu river. From this region, according to both Thuli and Qwabe traditions, it was pushed across the Thukela by the Qwabe.[116] On the basis of evidence given to him by Maziyana kaMahlabeni, Stuart calculated that this event had taken place in perhaps 1750.[117] Without giving his sources, Bryant dated it to somewhere about 1760.[118] Maziyana states categorically in his testimony that the Thuli migration took place when the senior section of the Thuli was ruled by Myebu, and the subsidiary amaZuba section by Dole.[119] Evidence from Maziyana and from Mcothoyi kaMnini indicates that Myebu reigned one generation before his son, Ntaba, who was killed in the time of the Zulu king, Shaka.[120] As is well known, the latter had been reigning for some years before 1824, when literate British observers first visited his kingdom. Both Myebu and Ntaba had long reigns, according to Maziyana,[121] but is seems unlikely that Myebu would have been ruling as early as 1750. As for Dole, both Maziyana and Mcothoyi indicate that he ruled two generations before his grandson Mabona (or Manti), who died not long before Ntaba did.[122]

The best that can be said about the dating of the Thuli migration is that it probably took place some time towards

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116. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 282, 300; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 30, 33, 41; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 53, 58; Bryant, OT, p. 499.

117. JSA, vol. 2, p. 301.

118. OT, p. 499.

119. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 275, 282, 300.

120. Ibid., evidence of Maziyana, pp. 265, 283; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 53, 59.

121. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 282.

122. Ibid., pp. 265, 285, 293; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 60.

the end of the third quarter or beginning of the last quarter of the 18th century. At this time, according to Hedges's reading of Qwabe traditions, the latter were actively expanding from the Mhlathuze lowlands southward and westward along the Ngoye range towards the upper Matikhulu river.[123] It is highly likely, then, that the growth of the Qwabe chiefdom was the prime factor in sending the Thuli migrating across the Thukela.

But explanation of the Thuli move cannot simply be attributed to pressures exerted by the Qwabe. Statements that a stronger group 'drove out' a weaker are very common in traditions which bear on the history of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Historians are to apt to treat such statements unproblematically, and to assume that they mean either that the weaker group was physically ejected from its territory, or at the very least that it had no option but to move off. This perspective tends to cast the weaker group simply as the victim of superior force: it fails to consider that political submission was very often a feasible option to migration, and, concomitantly, that migration was very often the consequence of a deliberate decision on the part of leaders of the weaker group rather than simply the automatic consequence of defeat in war.

There is nothing in the recorded traditions to suggest that there was any actual fighting between the Qwabe and Thuli, and, as far as the evidence goes, it indicates that the Thuli moved not as a group of refugees but as a cohesive political entity. The people remained under their established chiefs, and according to Mcothoyi, remained in possession of their cattle.[124] The implication is that they left their territory on the Matikhulu not so much because they were 'driven out' by the Qwabe as because their leaders felt that removal was a

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123. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 172-5.

124. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 58.

preferable alternative to submission to the Qwabe chief. In support of this interpretation is the absence of any evidence to the effect that the Qwabe ruling house was concerned to drive out any of the other groups in the territories which it was then bringing under its domination. If anything, as Hamilton has argued, far from wanting to exclude subordinated groups from the Qwabe body politic, the ruling house was at this time seeking to incorporate them into it so as to strengthen the chiefdom against the powerful states to the north.[125]

Why the Thuli leaders chose to remove the chiefdom rather than remaining in situ and submitting to the Qwabe is a more difficult question to answer. Removal was in many ways a drastic step to take. It entailed the abandonment of a known resource-base, the disruption and perhaps the severing of marriage and trade links with neighbouring chiefdoms, and the desertion of the graves of the ancestors, which were sites where socially and politically important rituals were conducted. It also involved the potentially hazardous exercise of having to contest occupation of new territories with the established inhabitants. There is no evidence which allows the factors which were weighed up by the Thuli leaders in reaching their decision to migrate to be identified with any precision. Important among them, though, must have been the perception that the Thuli chiefdom was politically and militarily stronger than any of the chiefdoms which lay to the south across the Thukela. In chosing to move away in this direction, they were following the line of least resistance. To the north and east were the Qwabe, to the west was the expanding Ngcobo chiefdom, and, beyond it, the Mkhize and Chunu chiefdoms. To the south, by contrast, the way was barred by relatively small and weak polities.

It is likely that the body of people which migrated under the overall leadership of the Thuli chiefly house

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125. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 161.

was numerically larger than that to be found in most of the chiefdoms across the Thukela, for with the Thuli went a number of other groups which seem to have recognized at least the nominal authority of their chiefs. The main ones were the amaMbili, who seem to have been related to the Thuli, and the amaKhomo.[126] Others were the amaKhwela, a section of the Cele, and possibly a section of the amaNdelu.[127] Whether these groups had previously been subordinate to the Thuli, or whether they made their submission at the time of the migration, is not indicated in the evidence.

In the accounts of the Thuli migration which they gave to Stuart, both Maziyana and Mcothoyi played up the leadership role of Dole, who was chief of a section of Thuli genealogically junior to that headed by the senior chief, Myebu. In assessing the testimony of these informants it is important to bear in mind that Mcothoyi was himself a chief in a line descended from Dole, and that Maziyana, a man of the Ndelu people who was descended from Dole through his mother, was closely associated with Mcothoyi's section of Thuli.[128] Though Dole tends to feature in their evidence as a chief more or less equal in status to Myebu, it is possible that this depiction is a

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126. On the Mbili see JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 98; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 275, 281; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 30, 33, 41; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 54, 64. On the amaKhomo see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 275; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 33, 41; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 54, 64.

127. On the Khwela see JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 33, 41. On the Cele see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 275, 300. On the Ndelu see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 264. Bryant, OT, pp. 531-2, draws on a variant set of Ndelu traditions.

128. For Mcothoyi's position in the Thuli chiefly genealogy see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 264, 265, 283, 285, 286; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 53, 59, 60. On Maziyana's descent, see his evidence in JSA, vol. 2, pp. 285, 287. On his association with Mcothoyi's Thuli see his evidence in JSA, vol. 2, pp. 264, 266; and Mcothoyi's evidence in JSA, vol. 3, pp. 61, 64.

reflection less of historical reality than of the particular biases of the informants. When Mcothoyi states of the migration over the Thukela, 'We Tulis all crossed over together,'[129] it is probably safe to read this as meaning that the Thuli migrated as a united body under the leadership of the senior chief, Myebu. Moving as they presumably were into hostile territory, it would have been poor tactics for them to have done otherwise.

Whatever the precise circumstances of their migration, the evidence indicates that the Thuli pushed across the Thukela not as refugees but as invaders. According to both Maziyana and Mcothoyi, the passage of the Thuli across the river was strongly resisted by the local peoples, and the Thuli leaders had to play a trick on their opponents in order to secure the crossing.[130] Even if this is a metaphor rather than a reference to an actual event that took place on the banks of the Thukela, it indicates that their passage was marked by violence. 'We must in some way have forced our way through,' Mcothoyi remarked to Stuart.[131] As the Thuli fought their way along, Maziyana stated, they stabbed their opponents at close quarters rather than throwing assegais at them as was the practice in more restrained forms of warfare.[132] More than a hundred years after these events, the Thuli were still remembered by their own and other oral historians as ferocious fighters who had gone along impaling women and children on posts.[133] By these accounts they were hardly the 'exceptionally tame dogs' of

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129. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 54.

130. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 282; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 64.

131. JSA, vol. 3, p. 54.

132. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 282.

133. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 275, 282, 298; vol. 3, pp. 54, 84; also J.W. Colenso, Zulu-English Dictionary, 4th ed., Pietermaritzburg, 1905, p. 599, under 'Tshaba'.

Bryant's characterization.[134] This was drawn from the descriptions given of the Thuli in the 1820s by British traders who were deliberately exaggerating the destructive effects on Thuli society of Zulu raids a few years before (see below, pp. 291-2).

Heading south along the coastal plain, the Thuli and their associates proceeded to subjugate the pre-existing polities in a region that extended from the Thukela 200 kilometres southward to the Mzimkhulu. Maziyana's statements that the inhabitants of the region either fled or were driven out should not be taken too literally.[135] Thuli policy was very probably to destroy or drive out the ruling groups of the chiefdoms which they subordinated or which submitted to them, and no doubt numbers of individuals from these groups ended up, as Maziyana claims, as refugees in the Mpondo country south of the Mzimkhulu,[136] as well as in polities in the interior. But it is unlikely that the mass of the population was expelled, for the Thuli would simply not have had the physical capacity to drive out large numbers of people, and were in any case probably much more concerned to incorporate them under their authority as tributaries. Given that a chiefdom's power depended very largely on the size of its population, there was every incentive for the Thuli leaders to leave established populations largely _in situ_ once they had tendered their submission.

Such evidence as exists suggests that this is precisely what they did. According to Maziyana, while some Khanyawo fled from the Thuli, others remained under their rule.[137] Numbers of Thembu who lived near the bay of Port Natal _khonza'd_ (gave allegiance) to the Thuli, and established good relations with Dole's section.[138] According to

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134. _OT_, p. 503.
135. _JSA_, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 275, 276, 282.
136. Ibid., pp. 274, 282.
137. _JSA_, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 274, 276.
138. Ibid., pp. 276, 277.

Theophilus Shepstone's informant, Funwayo, the Vangane, who lived near the Mzinto river, also became tributary to the Thuli.[139] Numbers of the groups which had inhabited the coastlands north of Port Natal still occupied the region when it came to be dominated by the Cele sometime after the advent of the Thuli (see below, pp. 52 ff.).

For their own part, the Thuli proceeded to settle in the region about the lower Mngeni and Mlazi rivers near Port Natal bay. The senior section, headed by Myebu, established itself some thirty kilometres from the sea in the vicinity of what is now Pinetown.[140] Dole's section occupied what is now Durban Bluff and the area to the south of the bay, from which it had ejected the Mpofana people.[141] 'The Tulis...built where they fancied best,' Maziyana told Stuart,[142] and in the case of the senior section, at least, there were good ecological reasons for its leaders' choice of habitat. The region where Myebu's people settled would have straddled the belts of dry valley thornveld which run inland along the valleys of the Mngeni and Mlazi from within a few kilometres of the coast, and would have extended to the spur of well-watered higher ground between the two rivers which reaches an altitude of 600 to 700 metres near what is now Hillcrest. This region embraced a variety of cultivation zones and of grazing types, and was well suited for an economy based on cereal production and livestock raising. In its broad

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139. Funwayo's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Vangane history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 141. On Shepstone's authorship of these notes, see the discussion on pp. 101 below. Funwayo is identified as his informant on Vangane history in T. Shepstone Papers (Natal Archives), vol. 89, p. 135.

140. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 264, 275, 298; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 53-4.

141. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 117-18; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 275; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 54, 56, 57.

142. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 282.

features it was not dissimilar to the environment which the Thuli had occupied on the upper Matikhulu.[143]

The choice of habitat made by Dole's section contrasted strongly with that occupied by Myebu's group. It was well suited for cultivation, for it comprised the lands known as ifenya, 'wet or damp or moist country', as Mbovu kaMshumayeli told Stuart, 'lands where crops are easily grown'.[144] But lying as it did within the belt of coastal forest, it would not have been particularly good cattle country. On the other hand, it gave access to the fishing grounds of the bay of Port Natal, which, according to Maziyana and Mcothoyi, had previously provided a good living for the Mpofana and Thembu. The Mpofana were remembered as having been eaters of fish which they caught with tidal traps made of reed fences in the rich fishing grounds on the southern and eastern sides of the bay.[145] The Thembu had fished the northern side, and had apparently had a trade in smoked fish with neighbouring groups.[146] Possibly because of the relative wealth which their access to good fishing resources gave them, the Mpofana had exercised political dominance in the region round the bay. 'They were the strongest tribe then existing here,' Maziyana told Stuart,[147] and it may well have been this same resource base which attracted Dole's Thuli to the region. Though, having lived inland, they had not previously had much knowledge of fish, once settled at the bay they quickly adopted the fishing practices of the Mpofana.[148]

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143. Faculty of Agriculture, University of Natal, 'The agricultural regions of Natal', unpubl. student handout, n.d., pp. 1-3, 10.

144. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mbovu, p. 43.

145. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 275; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 54, 56, 57.

146. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 276.

147. Ibid., p. 278.

148. vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 56, 57.

From their new base in the lower Mngeni-Mlazi region, the Thuli leaders set out to establish domination of the territories round about. Presumably to avoid encroaching too far towards the Qwabe chiefdom's sphere of influence to the north, the main direction of their expansion seems to have been southwards towards the Mkhomazi river. Within a short time, the chiefs of the two main Thuli sections were colonizing this area with homesteads headed by members of their own immediate families. Though the record does not say so, these homesteads no doubt functioned as centres from which Thuli control over the newly subordinated chiefdoms of the region could be maintained. Ntaba, Myebu's chief son, remained resident in the heartland of the new Thuli territory near Pinetown, with the district under his authority said to have extended north to the Mngeni and twenty kilometres inland to the Ntshangwe (Inchanga) area.[149] Another son in Myebu's main house, Thusi, was established on the seaward side of Ntaba.[150] Others whose names survive in the record were Ndlebende, who settled north of the mouth of the Mngeni, Nguqe, who was on the Mlazi, Nongwadi, the chief son in the ikhohlo or left-hand house, further south at Mbumbulu, Ncwane (Mnciwane) at the Manzimtoti river, and Xoki (Cogi) at the Mkhomazi on the southern periphery of Thuli-dominated territory.[151]

A similar, if less extensive, pattern of expansion was followed by Dole, chief of the coastal section of the Thuli. The direction of this group's expansion is not made clear in the record, but was presumably southwards from the bay of Port Natal along the coast, and inland as far as the lands dominated by the homesteads of the senior

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149. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 282, 298, 302; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 41; Bryant, OT, p. 502.

150. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 264, 298, 302; Bryant, OT, p. 502.

151. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 264, 281, 282, 298; Bryant, OT, pp. 502-3.

section. Maziyana names eight of Dole's sons as having formed separate establishments,[152] although the localities where they settled cannot be precisely identified.

To the west and south of the expanding core of Thuli settled the groups which had migrated with them. Inland of Myebu's section were the Khomo, who occupied the territory from what is now Camperdown southwards to the Mkhomazi.[153] South of the lower Mkhomazi, in a region which had already experienced the intrusion of a number of groups pushed out by, or moving away from, the Thuli,[154] were the Mbili. They seem to have been divided into several sections under autonomous or semi-autonomous chiefs.[155] Further south, near the lower Mzimkhulu, was the uGwayi group, sometimes referred to in the sources as the uShaba (uTshaba), which seems to have been an offshoot of the Mbili.[156] Driven out or subordinated by the Gwayi-Shaba chiefdoms were groups like the imiThwana, the Ntshangase, and the amaCi.[157]

There is nothing in the record to suggest that the Thuli exercised any authority over the Mbili and the Shaba: if they did, it was probably of brief duration. From the time of their settlement, to all intents and

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152. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 285, 299.

153. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 275; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 54, 64.

154. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, p. 129; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 275, 276, 278, 282.

155. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 275, 281; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 64; Garden Papers (Natal Archives), list of 'Aboriginal tribes', p. 871.

156. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 275; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 30-1; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 54; Garden Papers, list of 'Aboriginal tribes', p. 872. The designation uShaba (uTshaba) as used in the sources is confusing, as it is sometimes used to refer to the Thuli and associated groups generally: see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, p. 116; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 54; Garden Papers, list of 'Aboriginal tribes', pp. 862 ff.

157. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 114, 116, 121, 132; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 276, 278.

purposes, they constituted autonomous chiefdoms. So too, in effect, did the coastal section of Thuli under Dole and his successors. Stuart's informants, Maziyana and Mcothoyi, were quite explicit about this, and though, as descendants of Dole, they no doubt had an interest in playing down the degree of authority which had been exercised by the senior chief, Myebu, and his successor, Ntaba, over the Thuli as a whole, the evidence which they provide on the structures of the Thuli polity indicates clearly that this authority would have been little more than nominal. There was nothing in Thuli society resembling the amabutho system through which chiefs in a number of the expanding polities north of the Thukela sought to exercise a more centralized control over their subjects. Men were organized by amabandla or local assemblies.[158] Nor, apparently, did the senior house exercise the degree of ritual authority over junior sections which the Qwabe and Hlubi paramounts were able to do, for among the Thuli, according to Mcothoyi, there was no centralized umkhosi ceremony.[159] In so far as the chiefs of the junior section formally acknowledged the genealogical seniority of the main house, they did so through their izinceku, or stewards, rather than in person.[160] 'We heads of sections lived almost independently of the principal chief...', Mcothoyi stated, with reference to the Thuli chiefdom of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. 'We considered our chief was "far off"...'.[161]

The Thuli polity, then, as established in the Mngeni-Mkhomazi region, was much more loosely structured than the expanding chiefdoms to the north. That it held together at all was a product less of the power wielded by the

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158. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 266, 292; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 65.

159. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 65.

160. Ibid.

161. Ibid.

senior chief than of the need to maintain at least a minimum unity in the face of possible aggression on the part of chiefdoms like those of the Qwabe and the Ngcobo, and, later, the Cele. To what extent the weakness of the central authority was inherited from the pre-migration period is impossible to say, but it is clear from the evidence that whatever power the main house had at the time of the Thuli resettlement came to be seriously undermined by endemic internal quarrels. Tensions within it may have begun to emerge in Myebu's lifetime, as his senior sons, each established in his own homestead, sought to establish their own power bases, but it was in the reign of his successor, Ntaba, that open conflict broke out.

The first major ruction was a consequence of a dispute over the succession between Ntaba and his brother Thusi. The latter was also of Myebu's main house, and so had a strong genealogical claim to the chiefship.[162] The quarrel between them was intensified by the intervention of Mzoywane, who had succeeded his father Dole as chief of the coastal section of the Thuli. In a move calculated to undermine the status of Ntaba as senior Thuli chief, Mzoywane tendered his allegiance to Ntaba's rival, Thusi.[163] The result was that Ntaba attacked Thusi, burnt his homestead, and drove him into Mzoywane's territory. Ntaba was himself then attacked and driven back by Mzoywane, who then assisted Thusi to rebuild his homestead.[164] Henceforth, according to Maziyana, Thusi was 'practically an independent chief, and ruled over his own section'.[165] Though Ntaba had beaten off Thusi's challenge to his position, he was unable to prevent him from emerging as a semi-autonomous ruler in his own right.

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162. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 298.
163. Ibid., p. 292.
164. Ibid.
165. Ibid., p. 298.

Other sons of Myebu - Nongwadi and Xoki - were also remembered by Maziyana as having fought each other.[166] In the next generation, Mabona, Mzoywane's son and his successor as chief of the coastal Thuli, intervened in a quarrel between two sons of Ncwane, a brother of Ntaba.[167]

The internal quarrels of the Thuli in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were well remembered in later years. In the 1860s, Shepstone noted the Thuli had 'very much weakened themselves by domestic quarrels on questions of succession and rank'.[168] Possibly drawing in part on Shepstone, Bryant commented on the 'serious intertribal ructions' which had taken place among the Thuli, though there is nothing in other sources to support his assertion that the various Thuli chiefdoms had largely 'disintegrated' and their members dispersed by the early 19th century.[169] As Maziyana saw it, the fighting between the various factions of Thuli was characterized by a low level of violence. 'In those days there was no killing off or eating up of cattle as was the fashion in later times', he commented.[170] Such depictions of the pre-Shakan period as a 'golden age' in which warfare was generally conducted with restraint, though common in the traditions recorded by Stuart and, in synthesized form, by Bryant, need to be treated with caution. It is likely, however, that in polities like those of the Thuli, where there was no centralized control over the means of violence, fighting was less intense than in the emergent states to the north of the Thukela.

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166. Ibid.

167. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 298, 300-1.

168. Shepstone's unattributed notes on Thuli history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 130. His informant was probably the Funwayo mentioned in the text.

169. Bryant, OT, p. 503.

170. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 301. See also his comments on p. 298.

Very little survives in the record about the nature of relations between the Thuli and neighbouring chiefdoms, whether those tributary to them or those on the margins of their sphere of influence. This dearth extends to evidence on the nature of the relations which came to exist between the Thuli and another invading group from north of the Thukela, that of the Cele under Mkhokheleli kaLanga and his successors. According to their recorded traditions, the Cele had formerly lived on the Mhlathuze river, and, like the Thuli, had migrated southwards to escape mounting pressure from the expanding Qwabe chiefdom.[171] Mkhokheleli, who is said to have led the migration,[172] ruled two generations before Magaye,[173] who is known to have become chief a little before or after 1820 (see p. 257 below). On this evidence, the incursion of the Cele across the Thukela would have taken place sometime in the later 18th century, a little after that of the Thuli, who, Cele and Thuli informants are agreed, had preceded them.[174]

Like the Thuli, the Cele seem to have managed to retain their group cohesion in the course of their movements southward, first to the Ngoye region and then over the Thukela.[175] Like the Thuli, they faced resistance to their intrusion into the coastlands south of that river from established chiefdoms.[176] But there are

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171. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza, p. 69; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 30, 41, 74; Bryant, OT, pp. 537-8.

172. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, pp. 68, 69; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 74.

173 . For Mkhokheleli's position in the Cele chiefly genealogy see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 68; vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, pp. 232, 233; vol. 2, evidence of Mvakwendlu, p. 309, vol. 3, evidence of Dinya and Melaphi, p. 90; vol. 4, evidence of Mtshebhwe, p. 158.

174. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 300, 302; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 54.

175. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 74.

176. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69.

no traditions in the record that make mention of anything like the violence which seems to have accompanied the passage southward of the Thuli. The difference is probably to be acounted for by the fact that the Cele were moving into a region which had already been subordinated to Thuli overrule, however lightly felt it was, and were able to subsitute themselves as the dominant group in the northern part of the coastlands without having to resort to force on the same scale. This scenario is congruent with the picture given by Maziyana, who relates that the Cele found the land open to them, the Thuli having chased off the previous inhabitants.[177] What he means in effect is that the Cele occupation was carried out with little resistance; that the region had remained inhabited after the Thuli invasion is attested by Mageza kaKwefunga, who names a number of groups which gave their submission to the Cele.[178]

A puzzling feature about the traditions relating to the intrusion of the Cele into territories which had previously lain within the Thuli sphere of influence is the failure of Stuart's informants, Cele and Thuli alike, to comment on the confrontation which must have taken place at this time between the two chiefdoms. It is unlikely that the Thuli, even though distracted and weakened by internal disputes, would have given way to the Cele without some kind of resistance. The absence of statements on the subject may be a function of the state of relations between the Cele and Thuli ruling groups in the early 20th century at the time Stuart conducted his interviews, though this hypothesis would need to be confirmed by research into the history of these chiefdoms during the period of colonial rule.

In the event, the Cele were able to extend their overlordship as far south as the Mdloti-Thongati

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177. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 302.
178. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69.

region,[179] where their sphere of influence shaded into that of the Thuli. Their ruling house, under Mkhokheleli, established itself in the lower Mvoti valley in what is now the Stanger-Groutville area.[180] Like his Thuli counterparts, Mkhokheleli proceeded to establish effective control of the territory under his suzerainty by setting up homesteads under his sons at a number of strategic points: Mageza kaKwefunga identifies half a dozen of these.[181] The process continued under Mkhokheleli's son and successor, Dibandlela, nine of whose homesteads and fifty-odd of whose sons are named by Stuart's informants.[182] Mkhokheleli is said to have been buried near the lower Mvoti,[183] and Dibandlela near the Mhlali,[184] some twenty kilometres to the south. This may indicate that the main direction of Cele expansion was to the south, and that over time the chiefdom's political centre of gravity shifted accordingly.

In the generation after Mkhokheleli a certain amount of quarrelling is said to have taken place among his sons,[185] a result, it seems of his failure to fix the succession with any certainty. The Cele ruling house, however, seems to have remained more cohesive than that of the Thuli. In part this may have been a function of a relatively greater degree of centralization of authority in the chiefdom, itself a product of the fact that the Cele had been

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179. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 235; Shepstone's unattributed notes on Cele history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 124; Bryant, OT, p. 538.

180. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69; Bryant, OT, p. 538.

181. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 73.

182. For the names of his homesteads see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 73. For the names of his sons see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 233; vol. 2, evidence of Dinya, p. 310; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 90.

183. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69.

184. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 74.

185. Ibid., p. 76.

engaged longer than had the Thuli in the political conflicts which attended the expansion of a number of large chiefdoms north of the Thukela. In part it may also have been a function of the geo-political position of the Cele chiefdom, sandwiched as it was between the Qwabe polity to the north and that of the Thuli to the south.

According to Mageza kaKwefunga, the coastal section of the Thuli at some stage khonza'd to the Cele ruling house.[186] Mageza was himself of high rank in the Cele ruling house,[187] and may well have had an interest in portraying this section of the Thuli as having been historically subordinate to the Cele. Not surprisingly, there is nothing in the traditions of the coastal Thuli, as given by Maziyana and Mcothoyi, to substantiate Mageza's assertion. On the contrary, Mcothoyi's opinion was that the Thuli (by which he presumably meant the chiefdom as a whole, and not simply the coastal section) had occupied a more extensive territory than had the Cele,[188] a claim which a glance at the map would confirm. If in fact the leaders of the coastal Thuli did at any stage khonza to the Cele, it was probably a tactical move to enable them to assert their independence of the Thuli senior section rather than a real submission to Cele authority.

The evidence leaves no doubt, however, that the Cele were on good terms with the coastal section of the Thuli. Mkhokheleli took as his chief wife a woman named Mathu, who was a sister of Dole, chief of these Thuli.[189] From this union was born Dibandlela, Mkhokheleli's successor. The connection between the Cele and the coastal Thuli was important enough for the latter to speak of themselves as

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186. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69.

187. Ibid.

188. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 54.

189. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 30; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 54; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 75-6.

the abalanda of the Cele, that is, as belonging to the 'wife's family'.[190] Dibandlela himself is said to have grown up among his mother's people, and, when he later became chief of the Cele, to have imposed the Thuli dialect on his people.[191] At a later stage, the then chief of the coastal Thuli, Mabona kaMzoywane kaDole, sent his son Mnini, who, it can be estimated, was born in the early years of the 19th century,[192] to be brought up among the Cele.[193]

Given the closeness of the relationship between the Cele and the coastal Thuli, it is signficant that when Dibandlela proceeded to take a chief wife, he did so not from a group associated with these Thuli but from the ruling house of the Qwabe, his most powerful neighbours to the north.[194] This probably indicates that by the time of this marriage the establishment of good relations with the Qwabe was becoming an important issue for the Cele leadership. Qwabe pressures on the Cele were increasing in the last years of the 18th century and first years of the 19th, for at that time, the Makhanya, an offshoot of the Qwabe chiefly house, pushed across the Thukela under

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190. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 30; also p. 33.

191. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 107; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 56-7; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 75-6.

192. Mnini had not yet come of age when, a little before or after 1820, Shaka's forces mounted a number of raids on the Thuli: see below, p. 262-3.

193. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69.

194. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 115, 119; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 74; vol. 4, evidence of Mtshebhwe, p. 159. Dibandlela would presumably not have been allowed to take a wife from within the ruling house of the Thuli, as they were his mother's kin, but there would have been nothing to stop him from marrying a woman of an unrelated group within the Thuli chiefdom. On ethnographically recorded prohibitions against a man's marrying into his mother's kin group among the 'Zulu' peoples, see E.J. Krige, The Social System of the Zulus, Pietermaritzburg, 1936, p. 156; Bryant, Zulu People, p. 584.

their chief, Mnengwa, and established themselves in the coastlands as far as the Nonoti river, a dozen kilometres to the south.[195] The evidence does not make completely clear whether the advent of the Makhanya constituted a colonizing move on the part of the central Qwabe leadership, or an attempt on the part of Mnengwa and his adherents to establish themselves as an autonomous chiefdom. That the former was the case is suggested by Mmemi's statement to the effect that the Cele did not resist the intrusion of the Makhanya, as they would not have dared to fight with the Qwabe.[196] For their part, the Makhanya probably saw it to their own advantage to remain at least nominally subordinate to the Qwabe chief, as by themselves they would probably not have been able to overawe the Cele as they did.

The intrusion of first the Thuli and then the Cele in the later 18th century completely transformed the political map of the coastlands between the Thukela and the Mzimkhulu. In place of the numerous small chiefdoms which had previously occupied the region were now two large, if loosely structured, paramountcies, that of the Cele in the north and that of the Thuli in the south. Further south, between the Mkhomazi and Mzimkhulu, smaller new polities had been formed by the Mbili and the Shaba groups, which seem to have been offshoots of the Thuli. Throughout the coastlands, the rulers of the pre-existing chiefdoms had either submitted to the authority of the intruders, or had fled or had been deposed or put to death. Most of their people had stayed put, and, under old chiefs or new, had become tributary to the new overlords.

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195. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, pp. 55, 62, 69; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 282, 302; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 26; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, pp. 261, 262; Bryant, OT, p. 187. For Mnengwa's position in the Qwabe chiefly genealogy, see JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 25; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, pp. 250, 251, 255; Bryant, OT, p. 187.

196. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, p. 262.

In both the Thuli and Cele paramountcies, the ruling group maintained domination over subordinate ones not directly through centralized institutions of control but indirectly through regionally dispersed homesteads established by the paramount chief and headed by members of his house. The power exercised at the centre by the paramount was comparatively weak. In the case of the Thuli, at least, the main challenges to it came not from tributary chiefs but from some of the paramount's male relatives with their own territorial bases of power. As far as the coastal section of Thuli was concerned, it operated as an autonomous chiefdom within the paramountcy. That it refrained from casting off its allegiance altogether was due probably to the need perceived by its leaders to maintain a degree of unity with the senior section in the face of possible threats from the large chiefdoms to the north.

That political pressures emanating from north of the Thukela remained a real threat for the new paramountcies was demonstrated by the intrusion of the Makhanya section of the Qwabe into the northern part of the Cele domain a little before or after 1800. In the first two decades of the 19th century, pressures from the northward increased markedly, climaxing with a further series of intrusions by groups from north of the Thukela in the years before and after 1820. These developments, their causes, and the way in which they have been presented in the literature form the subjects of the next three chapters of this study.

CHAPTER 2

THE 'DEVASTATIONS' OF THE 1810s AND 1820s: EXPOSING THE STEREOTYPE

1. Introduction

During a period which is difficult to define precisely, but which probably extended over the later 1810s and 1820s, the territories south of the Thukela river experienced a series of political and social upheavals which completely transformed the political map of the region.[1] These upheavals are unproblematically regarded in the literature as having been caused by 'invasions' of Zulu armies from across the Thukela. They are seen as part of a series of wars and migrations, allegedly set in motion by the explosive expansion of the Zulu kingdom, which disrupted life over a much wider area of south-east Africa. Since the late 1960s, these wars and migrations have almost universally come be labelled as the 'mfecane' or 'difaqane'. The notion of the mfecane is now deeply entrenched as an organizing concept round which much of the history of southern Africa in the first half of the 19th century is written.

In a series of papers and articles written since 1983, Julian Cobbing has formulated a radical and sweeping critique of the whole concept of the mfecane.[2] While not

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1. This chapter is a revised and expanded version of a paper, entitled 'Political mythology and the making of Natal's mfecane', which was presented at seminars at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1988 and the University of Cape Town in 1989. My thanks go to a number of colleagues, particularly Julian Cobbing, for their critical comments.

2. J. Cobbing, 'The case against the mfecane', unpubl. paper, University of Cape Town, 1983; 'The case against the mfecane', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984 (a slightly modified version of the UCT paper); 'The myth of the mfecane', unpubl. paper, University of Durban-Westville, 1987; 'Jettisoning the mfecane (with

denying that the history of African societies in the early 19th century was marked by a rising level of violence, he rejects the particular significance which white writers since at least the mid-19th century have ascribed to this phenomenon. He argues that it was a continuation of conflicts which had begun long before the 1810s, conflicts whose primary causes are to be sought not in the expansion of the Zulu kingdom but in the intersection of forces emanating from two other epicentres of upheaval. These were the eastern Cape, where first Dutch then British settlers and imperialists were engaged in persistent attempts to seize land and labour-power from neighbouring African societies from at least the 1760s onward; and the Delagoa Bay region, where an export trade in ivory, cattle, and slaves was developing from much the same time.

In Cobbing's view the role attributed in the literature to the Zulu is not based on historical evidence: rather it is a product of the search made by imperialist and settler ideologues for a plausible alibi for the colonial- and imperial-based interests whose aggressions were ultimately responsible for the violence and social disruptions of the period. For their own various ideological reasons, subsequent generations of historians, including that of the present, have either been concerned to maintain the alibi, or, at the very least, have done nothing to demonstrate its falsity. From this perspective the notion of the mfecane is nothing but an interest-serving myth. Historians, Cobbing argues, urgently need to abandon not just the term itself, but the whole set of interlinked assumptions, distortions and falsehoods which it embodies, and to address themselves to the business of developing an entirely new analysis of southern African history in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

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perestroika)', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988; 'The mfecane as alibi: thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo', Journal of African History, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 487-519.

For historians currently doing research in this period, Cobbing's critique of mfecane theory raises a host of fundamental issues. Whether one agrees with him or not, it is impossible to sidestep the import of his arguments. Instead of being taking completely for granted, mfecane theory now has to be directly confronted, examined in depth on a region-by-region basis, and either reasserted, modified, or rejected. Against the background of the debates which are beginning to emerge in response to Cobbing's critique, this chapter undertakes a survey of the historiography of the upheavals which took place south of the Thukela in the 1810s and 1820s. Its purpose is to investigate the basis of the established notion that these upheavals were the consequence of Zulu invasions.

2. The stereotype created

Soon after the arrival of the first party of British hunters and traders at Port Natal in 1824, some of them were begining to report that the neighbourhood of the bay was largely empty of population,[3] and to develop and publicize an explanation for this phenomenon. This explanation, to the effect that the previous inhabitants had either been killed or driven out by the Zulu under Shaka a few years before, was beginning to appear in Cape Town newspapers in 1825 and 1826, and in printed books by 1827.[4] At the same time, specific literary images of the

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3. See the letter from Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, in B.J.T. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, 1823-August 1828, South African Archival Records, Important Cape Documents, vol. IV, Pretoria, 1984, p. 37. This letter also appears in J. Chase, ed., The Natal Papers, Cape Town, 1968 (1st ed. Grahamstown, 1843), part I, p. 18; & in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 192.

4. See the extract from the Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser of 4 June 1825 published in Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, p. 51; and the passage from the article by James King, entitled 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement at Port Natal', originally published in the South African Commercial Advertiser of 18 July 1826, and reprinted in Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol. 2, p. 249. The relevant extract also appears in Chase, ed., Natal Papers, part I, p. 21; and in Bird, ed., Annals, vol.

Zulu and of Shaka were beginning to take shape, with the Zulu being described by writers like King and Thompson as the warlike and bloodthirsty agents of Natal's devastation, and Shaka as the ferocious and savage leader who directed them.[5] Over the next decade these ideas were consolidated by a number of other writers - Owen, Pringle, Kay, Boteler, Steedman and, in particular, Isaacs - into literary forms which in their essence have survived to the present day.[6]

Few of these writers had actually set foot at Port Natal, and none of them had been eyewitnesses of the processes of destruction which they adumbrated. The evidence on which they based their descriptions was derived directly or indirectly from African informants, but nowhere in their works is there any mention of the identity of these people, or of the circumstances in which their testimony was obtained and recorded. Most of the historical information which found its way into published accounts was probably collected from members of the groups which the traders found living about Port Natal and in the neighbouring coastal regions. It is germane to make the point here that Port Natal was situated precisely in the one region of Natal which had in fact been overrun by Zulu forces (see pp. 253 ff. below), and it is likely that the generalized depictions of the destruction of Natal which were noised abroad by the traders were a reflection of the particular experiences of informants from this region.

1, p. 93. Both Chase and Bird erroneously give the author as Francis Farewell.

5. Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol.1, pp. 172, 174-5, vol. 2, pp. 248, 249.

6. Robinson, ed., Narrative of Voyages...under the Direction of Captain W.F.W. Owen, vol. 1, p. 71; T. Pringle, African Sketches, London, 1834, p. 362n; Kay, Travels and Researches, pp. 281, 341, 343, 344; T. Boteler, Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia, vol. 2, London, 1835, p. 303; Steedman, Wanderings and Adventures, vol. 2, pp. 200-201; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures,esp. ch. 18. See also the discussion in S.J.R. Martin, 'British images of the Zulu, c.1820-1879', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1982, pp. 22-37.

As a Zulu-centric version of Natal's recent history took root among the traders, so the groups of Africans which were drawn to the bay to seek their protection came to shape their accounts of their own experiences accordingly. The process of reworking their recent history would in many cases have entailed only minor amendments, often involving simply the substitution of the Zulu for other agents of destruction. Another factor in the making of the image of the Zulu as the general destroyers of the region was very probably filtering of information on the part of the 'coloured ' interpreters whom the traders had brought with them, and whom they had to use in communicating with the local inhabitants until they had themselves learnt the language. As servants and dependents, the interpreters very likely had their own particular interest in communicating a version of history palatable to their masters. It is likely, then, that a history which attributed the devastation of Natal to the Zulu under Shaka gelled comparatively quickly, both among the traders and among the various categories of their clients and adherents. In the discourse of the Zulu themselves with the traders there would have been nothing, one imagines, to dispel the notion of Shaka and his armies as conquerors and overlords of the regions south of the Thukela.

For their own part, the traders would have had no incentive to be critical of this notion, and every interest in formulating and propagating the idea that Natal was largely empty of inhabitants, and that Shaka and the Zulu had been the agents of their dispersal or destruction. From the very first, the leading traders at Port Natal were concerned not only to open up commerce with the Zulu but also to try to establish rights to large tracts of territory round Port Natal.[7] In the face of the express

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7. H.F. Fynn, The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, ed. J. Stuart & D.McK. Malcolm, Pietermaritzburg, 1950, pp. 86-8; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 142, 180-1; Leverton, Records of Natal, vol. 1, letter from Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, pp. 37-40, and notarial deed signed by J.A. Chabaud, 29 July 1828, pp. 247-8.

reluctance of the Cape government to sanction the acquisition of territorial possessions,[8] they attempted to minimize possible objections to their proceedings by asserting the claim that the land in question was virtually uninhabited.

If the Port Natal traders had a direct material interest in propagating the 'myth of the empty land', so too did the Cape merchants who in large part financed their early trading ventures.[9] In the late 1820s and early 1830s the rising commercial class and its associates in both the eastern and the western Cape were beginning to exert pressure on the British authorities in Cape Town and London to annex Natal and establish it as a colony of British settlement. This class's spokesmen used the notion of a depopulated Natal to underpin their arguments for the desirability of annexation.[10]

Propagation of the myth of the empty land thus served a clear material purpose. So too did the fostering of the image of Shaka as the cruel and despotic leader of a warlike Zulu nation. Though in writing of Shaka and the Zulu in lurid detail, writers like King and Isaacs clearly had an eye on their reading public, they and others also wrote to publicize and propagate the pro-annexationist cause. By depicting the Zulu and their king as a potential threat to the security of the Cape's eastern frontier region, or alternatively as the potential allies of rival powers, they hoped to influence the British authorities

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8. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, letter from Brink to Farewell, 5 May 1824, p. 36.

9. On the financing of these expeditions see Fynn, Diary, ch 3; B. Roberts, The Zulu Kings, London, 1974, pp. 8-19, 75-6, 78-81.

10. Bannister, Humane Policy, appendices 1, 6 & 7; Chase, ed., Natal Papers, pp. 23-30, citing a letter from Bannister to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 May 1829; Chase, ed., Natal Papers, pp. 30-1, citing the Graham's Town Journal of 3 August 1832; P.R. Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, Cape Town, 1955, pp. 5-7, 145-6; Roberts, The Zulu Kings, pp. 222-5.

into annexing Natal and thereby paving the way for the extension of British trade and settlement.[11] Some scepticism was voiced in the Cape Town press about the reality of the image of Shaka put about by the Natal traders,[12] but the idea that the 'numerous and warlike' Zulu were a potential 'threat' to the colony rapidly entered its public discourse.[13]

By the mid-1830s the notion that the territories south of the Thukela had been devastated by the Zulu shortly before 1824 was becoming firmly fixed into a literary stereotype. This notion was essentially the product of Cape merchant interests and their associates. Of the writers so far cited as mainly responsible for fixing it in print, Farewell, King and Isaacs had all traded at Natal, while Farewell and Isaacs had close personal connections with Cape Town's business community.[14] Thompson and Steedman were Cape Town merchants; Bannister, though motivated in his writings partly by humanitarian concerns, was an associate of Farewell's and possibly one of his financial backers, and was later an active member of the South African Land and Emigration Association; Godlonton was 'a man of substance' in the rising eastern Cape

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11. King, 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement at Port Natal', in Thompson, ed., Travels and Adventures, vol. 2, p. 249; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 339.

12. Roberts, The Zulu Kings, pp. 154, 177, quoting the South Africa Commercial Advertiser of 15 November 1828 and 27 December 1828. This 'negrophilist' newspaper was frequently critical of European settler attitudes to, and treatment of, people of colour: see B.A. Le Cordeur, The Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism 1820-1854, Cape Town, 1981, pp. 43, 66.

13. Chase, ed., Natal Papers, p. 27, citing a letter from S. Bannister to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 May 1829; R. Godlonton, Introductory Remarks to a Narrative of the Irruption of the Kafir Hordes, Cape Town, 1965 (1st ed. Grahamstown, 1836), pp. 162-8, 172; Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith in Natal, pp. 149-51, 153-4, 166-8, 171-2.

14. Roberts, The Zulu Kings, p. 18; Herman & Kirby, 'Nathaniel Isaacs: a biographical sketch', in their edition of Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. xi.

business community.[15] Owen had played an important role in stimulating interest among the merchants of Cape Town in the commercial potential of Natal in 1822, and in 1823 seems to have provided Farewell with a chart of the Natal coast, a product of his survey of the previous year.[16]

All these authors directly or indirectly propounded the virtues of the regions beyond the borders of the Cape colony as fields for the expansion of Cape and British commerce. This intention was most explicitly stated by Isaacs in his Travels and Adventures, the last few pages of which formed an encomium to the commercial prospects of Natal. He wrote the book, he stated, partly to meet his readers' interest in 'novelty', but also so that 'the merchant, the speculator, and the capitalist will perceive new sources in which commercial enterprise may be successfully attempted; and new vents for the consumption of the manufactures of the United Kingdom, of which it is desirable to have some clear and unquestionable information'.[17]

From the later 1830s what will from now on be referred to as the devastation stereotype began to be taken up and disseminated by members of another influential body of opinion-moulders and image-builders, the missionaries who were active in southern Africa. Though there might be wide differences of opinion between them as to the benefits or

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15. V.S. Forbes, 'Biographical sketch of George Thompson', in Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol. 1, pp. viii-xiii; Dictionary of South African Biography, vol. 2, entry for Andrew Steedman, p. 706; Bannister, Humane Policy, passim; Chase, ed., Natal Papers, p. 23; A.F. Hattersley, 'Francis George Farewell, and the earliest Natal settlers', Africana Notes and News, vol. 14 (1960-61), pp. 317-18; DSAB, vol. 1, entry for Saxe Bannister, p. 50; Le Cordeur, Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism, pp. 64-5.

16. DSAB, vol. 1, entry on Francis Farewell, p. 286; DSAB, vol. 2, entry on William Owen, p. 529; Roberts, The Zulu Kings, pp. 7-8, 10, 12.

17. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 339. For a comprehensive analysis of Isaacs's literary style and an assessment of his book's public impact, see Martin, 'British images of the Zulu', unpubl. thesis, pp. 37-58.

otherwise of the extension of European settlement, they were united in wanting to promote 'civilized' European government. Many aligned themselves with the merchants' call for the 'opening up' of the interior, and at the same time used much the same kind of historical rationale to justify it.[18]

3. The stereotype appropriated

In the 1840s the hopes of merchants and missionaries for the opening up of Natal at last began to be realized. In 1843 Britain annexed the region between the Thukela and the Mzimkhulu, and in 1849-51, several thousand British settlers were established in the new colony to help speed up the process of 'civilizing' it. But, with its progenitors having achieved some of their main goals, the devastation stereotype did not wither away. On the contrary, over the next few decades it was vigorously taken up, embellished and propagated by numerous writers in the service of a new cause - that of the Natal colonists. Though there were often strong differences of opinion between officials, settlers and missionaries over the appropriate mode of ruling the colony's African population, they were by and large united in the notions that the safeguarding and expansion of their various newly acquired estates required the subordination of Africans, who formed the vast majority of the colony's population, to the political tutelage of Europeans.

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18. Kay, Travels and Researches, pp. 281, 341, 343, 344; D. Kotze, ed., Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838, Cape Town, 1950, p. 97; G. Champion, Journal of the Reverend George Champion 1835-1839, ed. A. Booth, Cape Town, 1967, pp. 15, 62; W. Boyce, Notes on South African Affairs, Cape Town, 1971 (repr. of 1st ed., Grahamstown, 1838), pp. x, 171, 173-4; B. Shaw, Memorials of South Africa, Cape Town, 1970 (1st ed. London, 1840), pp. 44-5; T. Arbousset & F. Daumas, Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North-East of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, Cape Town, 1968 (repr. of 1st English ed., Cape Town, 1846), ch. 17, esp. p. 148.

Like colonizing groups everywhere, the Natal colonists sought to justify to themselves and to others both their occupation of lands formerly inhabited by other people, and their status as overlords or would-be overlords of the indigenous peoples. The devastation stereotype was well suited to the version of Natal's history which they proceeded to develop. It justified the presence of European colonists in Natal on the grounds that they had established themselves in a largely empty land. It justified their attempts - ultimately successful - to establish domination over the African population on the grounds that the coming of white rule had put an end to the ravages of the Zulu and inaugurated an era of peace and stability. It justified their continual demands for an increase in the size of the British garrison to defend them against the threat posed by the savage Zulu kingdom across the Thukela.

Probably the first work to be published specifically to propagate the cause of the Natal settlers was J.C. Chase's The Natal Papers, which appeared in Grahamstown in the year of Natal's annexation.[19] Chase was an eastern Cape businessman who, when living in Cape Town, had played an active role in a move initiated in 1833-4 by the merchants of that town to establish a British settlement at Natal.[20] His express purpose in putting the volume together was to defend the settlers of Natal, Boer and British alike, against what he saw as misrepresentations on the part of 'philanthropic' interests.[21] It consisted of a selection of documents relating to the history of Natal from the late 17th century to the British annexation in 1843. Its importance for the present discussion lies in the fact that

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19. J. Chase, The Natal Papers, parts 1 & 2, Grahamstown, 1843, repr. Cape Town, 1968.

20. DSAB, vol. 1, entry for John Chase, pp. 165-7; Le Cordeur, Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism, pp. 126-8.

21. Chase, ed., Natal Papers, p. iii; DSAB, vol. 1, entry for John Chase, p. 166.

for the first time it made readily available to the reading public, both in Britain and in the South African colonies, a body of texts which served to reinforce the devastation stereotype. It drew on Farewell, King, Bannister, and Godlonton to confirm the by then standard literary view that in the 1820s the Zulu had largely exterminated Natal's population.[22] A novel addition, was a statement on the part of H.F. Fynn, in which he estimated that 'not less then 1,000,000 human beings' had been destroyed by Shaka in the course of his wars,[23] a figure which was to be reproduced over and over in the literature.

In the 1850s the newly arrived Natal settlers and would-be settlers themselves began to take up the task of producing a version of the regions's history that was appropriate to their enterprise. As early as 1852 Charles Barter was setting up Isaacs as an authority on the region's pre-European history.[24] The following year a forceful statement of the devastation stereotype appeared in the report of the Harding Commission. The commission was dominated by representatives of the settlers: its declarations on the precolonial history of Natal were of the kind that became common in the literature over the next seventy years. After Shaka had become king, the commissioners reported, the Zulu became 'a desolating scourge to all the surrounding tribes and nations within a circle of 500 miles'. He 'completely conquered the Natal tribes with immense slaughter, devastated the whole country and added it to his dominions, from the Itongati down to St. John's River'. The survivors were carried off and incorporated in small groups into the Zulu people. 'The Natal tribes then ceased to have any separate national existence...'.[25]

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22. Chase, ed., Natal Papers, pp. 16-32.

23. Ibid., p. 20.

24. Barter, The Dorp and the Veld, pp. 64, 190-1.

25. Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal, p. 6.

Stated in these sentences was an important part of the historical creed of an emerging settler society. The last sentence was perhaps the most significant. For intruding settlers, thrown together from disparate backgrounds and attempting to establish, first, a social existence and identity in territory previously inhabited solely by African communities, and second, political domination over the indigenous inhabitants, it was important to minimize in their own eyes the rights to land of the people among whom they settled. The notion that the African societies which had formerly occupied Natal no longer had any coherent existence was clearly convenient to their purpose.

The accounts of Natal's history which emerged from the pens of colonial-based writers like Holden, Shooter and Grout in the 1850s and 1860s served to codify views such as those expressed by the commission.[26] But these writers did not simply reproduce the existing stereotype: they also placed it in a more elaborate historical context. The Cape and British-based originators of the devastation thesis had been concerned primarily to expand the geographical orbit of the Cape's commerce, and had had little interest in investigating Natal's history beyond what was necessary for constructing the thesis in bare outline. The settlers, on the other hand, needed a more elaborate - and denigratory - history of African societies in pre-European Natal: one which spelt out in unmistakable terms that the history of independent African societies was mostly one of wars and destruction. Civilization in Natal had begun with the coming of Europeans: for its impact to be more fully apparent, the barbarism and savagery of 'Zulu' society had to be revealed in detail.

Colonial historians therefore used the snippets of tradition which had been reported to the Harding Commission

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26. W.C Holden, History of the Colony of Natal, Cape Town, 1963 (reprint of 1st ed., London, 1855), pp. 55-7; and The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races, pp. 9-16, 20-28; Shooter, The Kafirs of Natal, ch. 8; Grout, Zulu-land, chs. 7, 8.

by Lewis Grout and Henry Fynn to help create a context for the devastation thesis that extended back into the 18th century and forwards to the Boer victories over the Zulu in the late 1830s and the British annexation in the 1840s.[27] The sequence of themes which they put forward - the rise and fall of Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa, the rise of Shaka, his military and social innovations, his campaigns and conquests, his dealings with the Europeans, his assassination and succession by Dingane, the latter's dealings with the Europeans, the advent of the Boers and the defeat of the Zulu - became fixed into a formula for the writing of early 'Zulu' history which is still being used by some authors in the present.[28]

The circumstantial detail added to the devastation thesis by the first generation of colonial historians served to make it look yet more plausible.[29] So too did the outline history of pre-European Natal-Zululand compiled in 1864 by Theophilus Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal.[30] Shepstone's account was based on information which he had personally obtained from African informants, and was much the most detailed statement of its kind that had yet been drawn up. It was the first to provide evidence for the point first put in print by

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27. The first author to have developed a detailed account of this history seems to have been Shooter: see his Kafirs of Natal, pp. 249-60.

28. J.D. Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, London, 1987, pp. 54-09, 78-81; C. Ballard, The House of Shaka: the Zulu Monarchy Illustrated, Durban, 1988, pp. 13-37.

29. Russell Martin discerns the beginning of a shift in the early colonial period from the notion of 'Shaka as Attila' to the notion of 'Shaka as Napoleon' (see his unpublished thesis, 'British images of the Zulu', pp. 140-7). This had no material effect on the notion of Shaka as the destroyer of Natal.

30. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, part II, pp. 415-20; also in Correspondence Relating to Granting to Natives in Natal of Documentary Titles to Land, Sessional Papers nos. 22 & 23 of the Natal Legislative Council, 1890, Pietermaritzburg, n.d. (1890), pp. 118-29.

Steedman some thirty years before that Shaka's armies had been preceded in Natal by a number of other invading groups.[31] But the significance of this evidence was lost to Shepstone, or else he deliberately chose to play it down, for the thrust of his account was once again to place on Shaka and the Zulu the responsibility for the 'universal terror' which had swept Natal.[32]

Shepstone's 1864 outline was, as far as is known, not published until the 1880s, and then only in obscure government publications. Much more influential on other writers was a rather differently weighted account which he published in 1875.[33] In this second version he eliminated much of the background detail to be found in the first, and focussed more on the careers of Dingiswayo and Shaka. The effect was that Shaka appeared even more strongly as 'the universal enemy'.[34] It was this second account, rather than the first, which was taken up in the next decade by John Bird and reprinted in his influential compilation, The Annals of Natal.[35] Through this medium, Shepstone's account fed into numerous subsequent works.[36] The effect was the affirmation of the devastation thesis by the man who, in his own times and long after, was regarded by

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31. Steedman, Wanderings and Adventures, vol. 2, p. 200.

32. Commission on Laws and Customs, part II, p. 417.

33. In the form of an article entitled 'The early history of the Zulu-Kafir race of south-eastern Africa', which appeared in the Journal of the Society of Arts, 29 January 1875, and was reprinted in the Cape Monthly Magazine, vol. 11 (1875), pp. 95-104; and also in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 155-66.

34. Bird, ed., Annals of Natal, vol. 1, p. 158.

35. See note 33 above.

36. For example J.Y. Gibson, The Story of the Zulus, Pietermaritzburg, 1903, p. 8; R. Russell, Natal: the Land and Its Story, Durban, 1972 (reprint of 12th ed., Pietermaritzburg, 1911, pp. 127-35; W.S. Ferguson, 'The Zulus and Spartans: a comparison of their military systems', Harvard African Studies, vol. 2 (1918), p. 219; E.H. Brookes & C. de B. Webb, A History of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1965, pp. 7-8.

European settlers and officials as the foremost authority on 'Zulu' custom and history.

Of the long list of authors who wrote on Natal's pre-settler history in the period from the 1850s to the 1920s, only two have been found in this study to have gone counter to the devastation thesis. Both, perhaps significantly, were non-Natalians. A. Wilmot, a member of the Cape Legislative Council, wrote very much against the current of his time in describing Shaka as a 'proud monarch'.[37] Even more unusually, J.C. Voigt, a Cape-born doctor and writer and a strong opponent of British imperialism,[38] made a point of arguing that the image of Shaka as he was commonly depicted was overdrawn, and that the Zulu king had been no worse a despot than many other African rulers before and after. As an administrator he had been a 'genius'; he was as much the Alexander as the Attila of his age. Sixty years before the term became fashionable, Voigt went so far as to describe Shaka's system as one of 'nation-building'.[39]

But the few notes of dissonance struck in works like these went almost unheard in the chorus of settler voices, made all the more strident as the century drew to a close by the rising influences of European pseudo-scientific racism, nationalism, and imperialism. In the late 19th century, as an alliance of British imperial interests and white settler interests in southern Africa set out to bring the sub-continent's African societies once and for all under white domination, the stereotype began to penetrate more widely. The events of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, particularly, awakened a wide metropolitan interest in the 'Zulu', and stimulated the publication of a number of books and articles which touched on Zulu history, including the

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37. A. Wilmot, The Story of the Expansion of Southern Africa, Cape Town, 1895, p. 126.

38. DSAB, vol. 3, Cape Town, 1977, entry for J.C. Voigt, p. 823.

39. J.C. Voigt, Fifty Years of the History of the Republic in South Africa (1795-1845), vol. 1, Cape Town, 1969 (reprint of 1st ed., London, 1899), pp. 185-92.

supposed events of Shaka's reign.[40] From this time onward the stereotype moved beyond the accounts of colonial historians and local travellers to become established in reference works ranging from Natal schools text books to the Encyclopaedia Britannica,[41] and to become almost universally accepted in literary discourse on southern Africa.

As Natal's white settlers moved towards obtaining 'responsible government' in the period after the Anglo-Zulu war, so their political leaders saw fit to support the production of a compilation of historical documents which was in effect a charter to underpin white claims to the region. This was the two-volume work, The Annals of Natal, edited, as mentioned above, by John Bird. A century later, this is still a much used source-book on the history of Natal before the establishment of British colonial rule. Several of the early literary expressions of the devastation thesis, including virtually the whole of a vituperative chapter by Isaacs on Shaka, were reprinted in this work.[42] Lengthy excerpts from the hitherto unpublished papers of H.F. Fynn also appeared in it,[43] as did a set of brief notes on the histories of the 'tribes' of Natal written in the 1860s by Theophilus Shepstone, but published by Bird without attribution.[44] The whole served to entrench many of the settler myths about the processes by which they had come to be established in the colony. In his editorial introduction, Bird himself provided a

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40. On British images of the Zulu at this time see Martin, 'British images of the Zulu', unpubl. thesis, ch. 6.

41. H. Bryan, Our Country: an Elementary History of Natal, London, n.d. (1909), pp. 28-31; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., vol. 24, Edinburgh, 1888, p. 828; and 11th ed., vol. 28, Cambridge, 1911, pp. 1051-52.

42. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1. See esp. pp. 93, 103-5, 155-83, 191-3.

43. Ibid., pp. 60-71.

44. Ibid., pp. 124-53. On the circumstances in which these notes were produced, see pp. 101-6 below.

particularly neat example of the ideological function served by the devastation thesis in late-19th-century Natal. The depopulation of Natal by the Zulu, he wrote,

> was destined to become a few years later the direct cause of its being sought as a settlement by the African Dutch and, eventually, by British colonists: the remnants of the aboriginal inhabitants did not return to it, until their land had passed into the possession of the white race.[45]

In the mid-19th century the stereotype had been appropriated by newly arrived white settlers for essentially defensive purposes while they sought to establish themselves in what they perceived as a hostile social environment. In the late 19th century, it served equally well in their ideological offensive against the African communities whose remaining political and economic autonomy they were seeking to destroy.

4. The stereotype reinforced

Until this time the stereotype had remained based on meagre and tenuous empirical evidence, and set mainly in the context of the history of the Natal region. It existed very much as a formula reproduced by rote rather than as scientifically argued history. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries it was for the first time given powerful intellectual underpinning. On the one hand, the voluminous writings of George McCall Theal rooted it firmly in the wider context of southern African history. On the other, the works of Father Alfred Bryant on 'Zulu' history served to broaden its purportedly factual base.

Except for his very earliest work, Theal's histories were strongly pro-settler in their slant.[46] Like other

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45. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

46. For assessments of Theal's career and influence as a historian, see C. Saunders, 'George McCall Theal and Lovedale', History in Africa, vol. 7 (1981), pp. 155-64; C. Saunders, 'The making of an historian: the early years of George McCall Theal', S.A. Hist. Jnl., no. 13 (1981), pp. 3-11; C. Saunders, The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class, Cape Town, 1988, chs. 1-4; L.M. Thompson, The Political Mythology of Apartheid, New Haven, 1985, pp. 54-7, 133-8, 182-3; D.

settler historians before and after him, he made no changes to the essentials of the stereotype, but an immensely important innovation on his part was to detach it from the history of the Natal region and set it in a new context. Most previous writers had treated the pre-European history of Natal as part of the overall history of that region: it formed part of a chronological sequence that began with the career of Dingiswayo, went on through the career of Shaka, the reign of Dingane, the coming of the Boers, and ended with establishment of British colonial rule. In Theal's works, by contrast, the upheavals in Natal before and after 1820 were treated as part of the history of the African societies of southern Africa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In his main work, this history was covered in a block of chapters which broke into a sequence of chapters of the history of European settlerdom and officialdom at the Cape.[47]

With hindsight it can be seen that this structuring established the preconditions for the emergence of mfecane-theory. By sharply segregating the histories of African and European societies in southern Africa, it allowed the impact of pre-1820s European settler and imperial influences on African societies largely to be side-stepped, and the violence of the 1820s to be attributed to purely 'African' causes. By linking the history of the Zulu kingdom in this period ethnically with that of other African societies across southern Africa rather than regionally with that of neighbouring societies, both African and European, in eastern southern Africa, it allowed the rise of Shaka and the Zulu kingdom to be portrayed as the spark which touched off a holocaust of

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Schreuder, 'The imperial historian as "colonial nationalist": George McCall Theal and the making of South African history', in G. Martel, ed., Studies in British Imperial History: Essays in Honour of A.P. Thornton, London, 1986, pp. 95-158.

47. G.M. Theal, History of South Africa since 1795, vol. 1, London, 1908, chs. 14, 15.

intra-African violence across the whole sub-continent. Where, in the earlier literature, the devastations supposedly caused by Shaka had often been projected as having been confined to the eastern coastal regions, from Theal's time onward they were universally seen as having affected much of the interior as well. The devastation in Natal now came to be seen as simply one aspect of a wider series of wars and migrations.

Schreuder has suggested that Theal's sub-continent-wide perspective on history was rooted in the movement towards the creation of a common anti-imperial colonial identity which was beginning to emerge among the English-speaking commercial classes and Afrikaner rural interests in the Cape in the last two decades of the 19th century.[48] In Theal's view, the central theme of southern African history was the march of European civilization, carried by Boer and British colonists together, across the sub-continent in the face of resistance from barbaric African tribes and of 'meddling' on the part of the British imperial government.[49] The vision that he projected was that of a united 'South Africa' as 'a great dominion of European settlement, served by black labour from the tribal reservations, and ruled by a white elite drawn from both Anglo-Saxon and Dutch traditions'.[50] As Schreuder puts it, 'It was Theal, in fact, who historically invented white "South Africa"',[51] and his history provided an important element in the emergence of an ideology of colonial nationalism and white supremacy.[52]

Theal's treatment of the history of African societies, it is suggested here, was a necessary counterpart of his

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48. Schreuder, 'The imperial historian as "colonial nationalist": in Martel, ed., Studies in British Imperial History, pp. 98, 114-15.

49. Ibid., pp. 97-8, 19-33, 138-47.

50. Ibid., pp. 98 (emphasis in original).

51. Ibid., p. 97.

52. Ibid., p. 96.

concern with the white colonial civilizing mission. If white colonists were to be seen as the bearers of civilization, then, in a pioneering colonial nationalist historiography that was emerging when the process of bringing African people under the control of white settlers was by no means over, its was important to demonstrate in some detail that the culture of African peoples was barbaric, and their history largely one of war and destruction. The 'Zulu devastations' posited by Theal thus formed a convenient backdrop to what he saw as the essentially civilizing mission of the Great Trek.

If Theal provided the devastation stereotype with a new context, he added nothing to it by way of new detail. The first author to go much beyond the sketchy descriptions of it contained in the settler literature was Father A.T. Bryant, whose career as a writer of history overlapped with the latter part of Theal's. The historical works which he published from 1905 onward on the pre-European history of the Natal-Zululand region were far more detailed than any previous work on the subject, and established him as the leading authority in the field. As indicated in the previous chapter, after its publication in 1929, his Olden Times in Zululand and Natal rapidly became, as it still largely remains, a standard source of reference.

Like Bryant's other works, Olden Times is universally regarded as being based on the oral traditions which, the author indicates in its preface, he collected over a period of some forty years. In fact, as far as his account of the upheavals of the 1810s and 1820s is concerned, detailed analysis of his sources reveals that it was almost entirely derived from other published sources.[53] Though it gave a much more elaborate account of the upheavals than any previous work had done, there was virtually nothing original in it by way of information or insights. This was not, however, apparent at the time, and the overall impact

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53. The analysis is presented in the following chapter.

of Olden Times was to cement the stereotype ever more firmly into the literature.

Though Bryant was well aware that several non-Zulu groups had in fact been responsible for much of the disruption which took place in Natal in the 1810s and 1820s, and that Zulu incursions south of the Thukela had been confined to a comparatively small area, he all but submerged the role played by these other groups in favour of an emphasis on the doings of the Zulu. His dramatized and often hyperbolical description of Shaka's wars and conquests, one inherited directly from the settler stereotype, underscored the idea that Shaka and his 'Zulu murderers' were the main destroyers of Natal.[54] In addition, Bryant's method of presenting the region's history through a recital of the individual histories of the numerous chiefdoms of Natal had the effect of repeatedly bringing Shaka and the Zulu into the narrative in the role of conquerors, exterminators, and tribute-takers. In short, in adding a considerable amount of new, if repetitive, detail to the stereotype, Bryant's apparently authoritative account served to give it an empirical respectability which helped it to lodge itself firmly in the works of later writers.

5. The stereotype sanctified

By the 1920s, settler historiography was beginning to be challenged on many fronts by the work of liberal academic historians based in the country's English-language universities. These historians showed little interest, however, either in regional history or in the history of autonomous African societies. In consequence, the writings of authors like Theal and Bryant on these subjects were allowed to survive as standard sources, and the devastation stereotype became firmly incorporated, even if in attenuated form, into the growing corpus of liberal academic historiography.

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54. The phrase occurs in his 'Sketch', Dictionary, p. 49*.

The explanation for this needs to be sought in the nature of the problems with which liberal intellectuals in South Africa were grappling at this time. The emergence of liberal historiography in the post-World War I era was taking place against the background of the erosion of the bases of the old agrarian-commercial order in southern Africa, the spread of poverty in the African reserves, the large-scale migration of Africans to the urban areas and the resultant problems of social control, and the formation of potentially formidable, if unstable, political alliances between sections of the exploited African proletariat and frustrated and militant elements of the emerging African petty bourgeoisie. For liberal intellectuals these developments posed a profound dilemma.[55] On the one hand they were concerned about the possible political consequences of increased legal entrenchment of discrimination against Africans, and of the increasing suppression of the material and political aspirations of the African 'elite'. On the other, they were fearful about the threat which, to their minds, the processes of African urbanization and proletarianization presented to 'civilized values' (read 'capitalist order') in South Africa. The response of the historians among them was two-fold.[56] In

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55. On the nature of South African liberalism between the wars see P. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism, Johannesburg, 1984, chs. 1-3; S. Dubow,'"Understanding the native mind": the impact of anthropological thought on segregationist discourse in South Africa, 1919-1933', unpublished conference paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984', pp. 1-22; S. Dubow, 'Race, civilisation and culture: the elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years', in S. Marks & S. Trapido, eds., The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa, London, 1987, ch. 2. Less critical studies are R. Elphick, 'Mission Christianity and interwar liberalism', in J. Butler et al., eds., Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect, Middletown, Conn., & Cape Town, 1987, ch. 3; and J. Butler, 'Interwar liberalism and local activism', in Butler et al., eds., Democratic Liberalism, ch. 4.

56. On liberal historiography from the 1920s to the 1950s see M. Legassick, 'The frontier tradition in South African historiography', in S. Marks & A. Atmore, eds., Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa, London, 1980, ch.

reaction against the racism of settler historiography, they turned their attention to the history of 'race relations' in South Africa, and, to enable liberals the better to grapple with the complex ramifications of the 'native problem', they began to focus on the nature of the historical forces which, as they saw it, had drawn Africans and whites into a common society. Those fields of history which offered little or nothing by way of an explanation of these issues tended to be neglected.

As a result, research into precolonial history, whether locally focussed as in Bryant's works, or broadly focussed as in those of Theal, virtually died out. This meant that the devastation stereotype escaped the critical scrutiny of the first generation of academic historians to emerge in South Africa. With their main fields of interest lying elsewhere, these historians were content to absorb Theal's generalized view of the 'Zulu devastations' into their own work, even if in the process they were concerned to strip it of its more racist forms of expression. Thus in the works of writers like Walker, Agar-Hamilton, Macmillan, Hattersley, De Kock, De Kiewiet and others, the notion remained quite unchallenged that Natal had been swept almost clear of inhabitants during wars of extermination waged by Shaka and the Zulu. For many of these writers, the history of these upheavals was simply an appendage of the history of the Cape eastern frontier; for others it was a preface to the Great Trek.[57]

2; C. Saunders, 'Liberal historiography before 1945', in Butler et al., eds., Democratic Liberalism, ch. 7; J. Butler & D. Schreuder, 'Liberal historiography since 1945', in Butler at al., eds., Democratic Liberalism, pp. 148-56; Saunders, Making of the South African Past, chs. 5-9.

57. E. Walker, A Modern History for South Africans, Cape Town, 1926, p. 225; E. Walker, A History of South Africa, London, 1928, pp. 182-3; J. Agar-Hamilton, The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers, Cape Town, n.d. (1928), pp. 2-3; W.M. Macmillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton: the Making of the South African Native Problem, London, 1929, pp. 13-14; A.F. Hattersley, South Africa 1652-1933, London, 1933, p. 75; M.H. de Kock, The Economic Development of South Africa, London, n.d. (1936), p. 32; C.W. de Kiewiet, A History of South Africa Social and Economic, Oxford, 1941, pp. 49-50.

The stereotype did not survive in early liberal historiography simply by default. Part of the neglect of African history by liberal historians from the 1920s onward must also be put down to their elitist attitude to the culture of the African underclasses, and to their ambivalence on the issue of what political rights to accord to Africans.[58] Even if liberals rejected the notions put forward by racial theorists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the effect that the African 'race' was incapable of 'catching up' with the civilization of the European race, until at least the 1950s many of them still thought of cultural differences in strongly evolutionist and hierarchical terms. Africans were expected to 'adapt' their own cultures in the direction of European culture, and, in effect, to reject their own past, which had little, if anything, to do with 'progress'. From the 1920s, African history was largely discounted by liberal intellectuals, and the study of African societies was increasingly seen as belonging to the emerging discipline of anthropology rather than to history.

For their part, the social anthropologists who were being appointed to posts in South Africa at this time were by and large much more concerned with the nature and operation of African 'social systems', and with the interaction between different 'cultures', than they were with history.[59] The result was a marked dehistoricizing of what by the 1920s was coming to be called African

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58. On this ambivalence see Rich, White Power, passim; Saunders, 'Liberal historiography before 1945', in Butler et al. eds., Democratic Liberalism, pp. 139, 145; Butler & Schreuder, 'Liberal historiography since 1945', in Butler et al, eds., Democratic Liberalism, pp. 154-6; D. Irvine, 'The Liberal Party, 1953-1968', in Butler et al., eds., Democratic Liberalism, pp. 117-19, 125-30.

59. Rich, White Power, ch. 3; Dubow, '"Understanding the native mind"', unpubl. paper, pp. 2-9; Dubow, 'Race, civilisation and culture', in Marks & Trapido, eds., The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism, pp. 80-88.

studies, and the entrenchment of the ahistorical sociologies of African societies which had begun to emerge early in the century.[60] Now that autonomous African societies had been thoroughly subjugated, their versions of history did not have to be contested as fiercely as had been the case in the era of white settlement; to a large extent their new overlords could simply disregard their history altogether.

In the years between the two world wars, one of the central concerns of South African liberal intellectuals was to try to identify the 'problems' in white-black 'race relations' which were seen as preventing orderly social evolution towards the 'civilized' society which they ardently hoped for. Liberal historians were concerned to look for the historical roots of those problems as one means of working towards their solution. After the National Party's electoral victory of 1948, and the further entrenchment of racial discrimination and repression, the problem for these historians came to be to explain why whites had taken the 'wrong road' and refused to share power with blacks. The focus of their work swung further towards white political and constitutional history, with a concomitant further decline in the attention paid to the history of African societies.[61]

If early liberal historiography showed little interest either in the history of African societies, or in the history of Natal before the advent of Europeans, these subjects received even less attention in the Afrikaner nationalist historiography that was emerging from the early years of the 20th century onwards. Whether it was in

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60. In works such as D. Kidd, The Essential Kafir, London, 1904; D. Kidd, Kafir Socialism, London, 1908; S. Olivier, White Capital and Coloured Labour, London, 1906, ch 9; M. Evans, Black and White in South-East Africa, London, 1911.

61. Saunders, 'Liberal historiography before 1945', in Butler et al., eds., Democratic Liberalism, p. 147; Butler & Schreuder, 'Liberal historiography since 1945', in Butler et al., eds., Democratic Liberalism, pp. 151-4, 160-1.

popular histories or in the works of the professional historians who were becoming established in the Afrikaans-language universities after World War I, the focus of this historiography was overwhelmingly on the history of Dutch-Afrikaner societies from the Great Trek to the South African war of 1899-1902. So far as it touched on the history of pre-Trek Natal, it simply reproduced the stereotypes entrenched by Natal settler historiography and by Theal and other contemporary writers, though now placing them in the context of Voortrekker history rather than in the context of Natal's history or the history of African societies. In this context, the devastation stereotype served conveniently to portray Natal as having been emptied of population before the coming of the Voortrekkers.[62] Together with contemporary liberal historians, then, Afrikaner nationalist historians carried the devastation stereotype, set in the context of settler history, from the early 20th century through into the 1960s.

6. The stereotype africanized

It was not until the 1960s that there was a revival of interest in the writing of the history of the African societies of southern Africa. The main stimulus to this development was the revolution in African historiography which accompanied the political decolonization of most of the continent north of the Zambezi in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[63] The emergence of African nationalist

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62. S. Gie, Geskiedenis vir Suid-Afrika, vol. 2, Stellenbosch, 1928, p. 306; E. Jansen, Die Voortrekkers in Natal: Opstelle, Cape Town, 1938, p. 1; A. du Plessis, 'Die republiek Natalia', Archives Year Book for South African History, 1942, part I, Cape Town, 1943, ch. 1; A. van der Walt, 'Die Groot Trek tot 1838', in A. van der Walt et al., eds., Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika, vol. 1, Cape Town, 1951, p. 264.

63. On the development of Africanist historiography see P.D. Curtin, African History, American Historical Association publ. no. 56, New York, 1964, pp. 1-8; T. Hodgkin, 'Where the paths began', in C. Fyfe, ed., African Studies since 1945: a Tribute to Basil Davidson, London, 1976, pp. 6-16; I. Wallerstein, 'The evolving role of the Africa scholar in African studies', Canadian Jnl. Afr.

movements and the ending of colonial rule outside the white-dominated states and colonies of the south generated an eager demand among African political activists and students, and among sympathizers in Europe and North America, for a 'decolonized' African history, one which would rescue Africans from the virtual oblivion to which they had been consigned by colonial historiography, and one which emphasized African 'achievements'. In the 1960s, an alliance of African nationalist and metropolitan liberal historians made the writing of this kind of history something of a growth industry at universities in Europe, North America and in black-dominated Africa.

The tendency in much of this history was to romanticize 'traditional' African culture, and to emphasize the continuities in African history between the precolonial past and the postcolonial present, with the period of European colonial rule being seen as a period of corruption and disruption of African culture and 'development'. Favourite themes were the emergence of great states in precolonial Africa, the mounting of resistance to European conquest and colonial subjugation, the growth of African nationalism, and the role of leaders, past and present.

Within this context there was published in 1966 the first work since Theal's to attempt a broad synthesis of the history of the upheavals which had taken place in south-east Africa in the 1820s and 1830s. This was J.D. Omer-Cooper's full-length study, The Zulu Aftermath: a Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Bantu Africa. In important respects Omer-Cooper's account was similar to Theal's. It saw the violence of the period as having emanated from a single epicentre, the Zulu kingdom, and as having radiated outward across much of southern and central Africa. Drawing on ideas previously put forward by writers

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Studies, vol. 17 (1983), pp. 9-16; C. Neale, Writing 'Independent' History: African Historiography, 1960-1980, Westport, Conn., 1985, ch. 1.

like Gluckman,[64] Omer-Cooper attributed the ultimate causes of the upheavals to a build-up of population pressure in south-east Africa in the later 18th century, rather than to the personality of Shaka, as Theal had done. He went beyond Theal in seeing the effects of the violence as having extended over wide areas of Central Africa, and as having persisted into the latter half the 19th century. But, as the title of his book indicates, like Theal he was looking for a compendium explanation to cover what he saw as a single historical phenomenon.[65]

In two respects, though, Omer-Cooper introduced major innovations into the treatment of the subject. In the first place, in sharp contrast to Theal, who had emphasized the violence and bloodshed that had accompanied the upheavals in order to portray them as an indication of African barbarism and savagery, Omer-Cooper depicted them in positive terms as marking 'one of the great formative events of African history', as an episode of 'nation-building' on the part of 'a galaxy of great leaders'.[66] In the second place, he gave the upheavals a single label, one which has stuck both in academic and in popular usage ever since. This was the term 'mfecane', which he gave as meaning 'the wars and disturbances which accompanied the rise of the Zulu'.[67] The word had been used sporadically in the literature since the 1920s, though without a clearly defined meaning.[68] Omer-Cooper both standardized its meaning and projected it into general usage. In The Zulu Aftermath the compendium concept which had emerged in Theal's works in the late 19th century, and which in attenuated and sanitized form had been incorporated into

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64. Gluckman, 'The kingdom of the Zulu', in Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, eds., African Political Systems, p. 25.

65. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, introduction & pp. 19-27.

66. Ibid., pp. 4-7.

67. Ibid., p. 5n.

68. Cobbing, 'The case against the mfecane', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 5.

liberal historiography from the 1920s onward, was greatly amplified, given a positive gloss, and labelled for convenient usage.

In his treatment of the region south of the Thukela, to which he devoted a chapter, Omer-Cooper drew heavily on Bryant's Olden Times in Zululand and Natal to produce a much more detailed account than Theal had been able to do.[69] His was the first academic history to indicate clearly that Shaka's armies had been preceded into Natal by 'waves' of non-Zulu invaders (Bulpin, also drawing on Bryant, had previously done the same thing in a popular account[70]), but the paradigm within which he was working prevented him from using the evidence at his disposal to break with the devastation stereotype. With his main focus on the 'building' of great states by great leaders, he was little concerned to look at the separate histories of the societies that became subject to them. By his own account, Omer-Cooper was not interested in trying to unravel the history of Natal before the period of upheavals.[71] The result was that he ended up, as Bryant had done, by making the Zulu his main actors, and leaving the societies of Natal, together with their non-Zulu assailants, as all alike the victims of the mighty, all-conquering Zulu state. The Zulu Aftermath served to give the devastation stereotype further academic respectability, and, by presenting it as an integral part of the long-established and now revamped notion freshly packaged as the 'mfecane', to publicize it more widely than ever. From this time on, the history of the stereotype was closely intertwined with that of mfecane-theory.

Few works on southern African history have had so immediate and widespread an effect as The Zulu Aftermath. As Cobbing has pointed out, within a few years of the

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69. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, ch. 10.

70. T.V. Bulpin, To the Shores of Natal, Cape Town, n.d. (1953), pp. 40-7.

71. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, p. 33n.

book's publication both the term mfecane (or difaqane) and the notion that the mfecane was one of the central events of southern African history had become embedded in Africanist discourse outside South Africa.[72] It was widely established in general histories of Africa,[73] in academic articles and monographs,[74] in the Encyclopaedia Britannica,[75] and in university and schools text books.[76]

In South Africa, the emergence of an academic Africanist historiography lagged some years behind its development elsewhere. In the 1960s liberal and Afrikaner nationalist historians alike remained primarily concerned with white political and, to a lesser extent, social history. The devastation stereotype lived on in their works in much the same forms as it had been cast by academic historians in the 1920s. Thus the first general history of Natal to be published since Russell's work early in the century, Brookes and Webb's History of Natal, which appeared in 1965, drew uncritically on Bryant for its interpretation of

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72. Cobbing, 'The case against the mfecane', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, pp. 5-7; Cobbing, 'The myth of the mfecane', unpubl. paper, pp. 8-9.

73. For example R. Hallett, Africa to 1875: a Modern History, Ann Arbor, 1970, pp. 239-40; R.W. July, A History of the African People, London, 1970, pp. 232-7; H.A. Gailey, History of Africa from 1800 to Present, New York, 1972, pp. 72-8.

74. For example W.F. Lye, 'The difaqane: the mfecane in the Southern Sotho area, 1822-24', JAH, vol. 8 (1967), pp. 107-31; several of the articles in Thompson, ed., African Societies; L. Thompson, 'Co-operation and conflict: the high veld', in L. Thompson & M. Wilson, eds., Oxford History of S.A., vol. 1, Oxford, 1969, ch. 9; R.K. Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa, Cape Town, 1978, pp. 3, 7, 9.

75. S.M. (Shula Marks), article on history of southern Africa in Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 17, Chicago, 1974, p. 281.

76. For example, R. Oliver & A. Atmore, Africa since 1800, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1972, p. 55; J.D. Omer-Cooper et al., The Making of Modern Africa, vol. 1, London, 1968, ch. 8; G.S. Were, A History of South Africa, London, 1974, ch. 5; G. Parker & P. Pfukani, History of Southern Africa, London, 1975, ch. 5.

the regime's precolonial history.[77] So too did the popularizers, such as Bulpin, Ritter, Binns, Becker and Morris who in those years were helping to revive interest in the history of Natal and Zululand, and who, in advance of local academics, were tackling topics in the history of African societies.[78]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s South African academics began to catch on to the notion of the mfecane. The first to do so were Afrikaner nationalist historians, who were quick to spot the support which mfecane-theory lent to the ideologically important notion that the first white settlers in the interior of southern Africa had moved into a land largely depopulated by inter-African warfare.[79] A little later, under the influence of overseas Africanists, liberal writers began to incorporate the mfecane into their work as the fons et origo of the processes of African 'state-formation' (another term for 'nation-building') round which they wrote the history of African societies in south-eastern Africa in the first half of the 19th century.[80] They were followed by some African

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77. Brookes & Webb, History of Natal, pp. 7-14.

78. T.V. Bulpin, Shaka's Country, Cape Town, 1952, and To the Shores of Natal, Cape Town, n.d. (1953); E.A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu: the Rise of the Zulu Empire, London, 1955; C.T. Binns, The Last Zulu King: the Life and Death of Cetshwayo, London, 1963, and Dinuzulu: the Death of the House of Shaka, London, 1968; P. Becker, Rule of Fear, London, 1966; D.R. Morris, The Washing of the Spears, London, 1966.

79. C.F.J. Muller, 'The period of the Great Trek, 1834-1854', in C.F.J. Muller, ed., Five Hundred Years: a History of South Africa, Pretoria & Cape Town, 1969, p. 125; D. Ziervogel, 'The natives of South Africa', in Muller, ed., Five Hundred Years, pp. 445-8; F.A. van Jaarsveld, Van Van Riebeeck tot Verwoerd 1652-1966, Johannesburg, 1971, ch. 7; J.P. van S. Bruwer, article on Shaka in Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, vol. 9, Cape Town, 1973, p. 598; C.F.J. Muller, Die Oorsprong van die Groot Trek, Cape Town, 1974, esp. pp. 74-83.

80. For example, the present author's Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg 1840-1870, Pietermaritzburg, 1971, pp. 15-17; several of the articles in C. Saunders & R. Derricourt, eds., Beyond the Cape Frontier, London, 1974; C. de B. Webb, 'Of orthodoxy, heresy and the difaqane', unpublished paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1974, and 'The Mfecane', in Perspectives on the Southern African Past,

nationalist writers, particularly those sympathetic to Zulu ethnic nationalism, for whom the 'nation-building' aspects of the mfecane were an obvious attraction.[81]

By the later 1970s the mfecane was an established 'fact' of southern African history. Though by then a reaction against the more uncritical assumptions and assertions of Africanist history was manifesting itself among liberal and radical-revisionist historians alike,[82] the mfecane lived on in South Africa and abroad virtually unchallenged.[83] In 1983 mfecane-theory was reproduced in standardized form in the first academic dictionary of South African history to be published.[84] In 1986 it achieved coffee-table status,[85] and in 1987, some twenty years on from The Zulu Aftermath, it was re-invigorated by Omer-Cooper himself in a new text book on South African history.[86] In the late 1980s

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Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1979, ch. 9; T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa: a Modern History, 1st ed., Johannesburg, 1977, pp. 10-17.

81. E.g. J.K. Ngubane, 'Shaka's social, political and military ideas', in D. Burness, ed., Shaka King of the Zulus in African Literature, Washington, D.C. 1976, pp. 140, 147.

82. T.O. Ranger, 'Towards a usable African past', in Fyfe, ed., African Studies since 1945, pp. 17-30; A. Triulzi, 'Decolonizing African history', in R. Samuel, ed., People's History and Socialist Theory, London, 1981, pp. 286-97; A. Temu, & B. Swai, Historians and Africanist History : a Critique, London, 1981, passim; Neale, Writing 'Independent' History, passim; D. Newbury, 'Africanist historical studies in the United States: metamorphosis or metastasis?', in B. Jewsiewicki & D. Newbury, eds., African Historiographies: What History for Which Africa?, Beverly Hills, 1986, ch. 12.

83. Besides Cobbing's work, the only critique so far to have been published is a derivative article by V.E. Satir entitled 'The Difaqane: fact vs. fiction', Educational Journal, vol. 55, no. 2 (1983), pp. 6-10.

84. C. Saunders, Historical Dictionary of South Africa, Metuchen, N.J., & London, 1983, pp. 107-8.

85. R. Edgecombe, 'The Mfecane or Difaqane', in T. Cameron & S.B. Spies, eds., An Illustrated History of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1986, ch. 9.

86. Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, ch. 4.

liberals, radicals, African nationalists, and Afrikaner nationalists continued in an unlikely, if unwitting, alliance, some propounding, some merely accepting, but virtually none challenging the validity of the notion of the mfecane.

Mfecane-theory emerged at a time when historians outside southern Africa were seeking to break away from racist and patronizing colonial cliches about African culture and African history. It is easy to understand why the notion of the mfecane as a period of African nation-building caught on so rapidly among them, and why it survives today in the uncritically Africanist histories that continue to be produced. It is easy, too, to understand the continuing attraction of mfecane-theory's 'depopulation' thesis for the ideologues of apartheid.

More problematic is the failure of contemporary critical liberal and radical-revisionist scholarship to challenge mfecane-theory. At a superficial level this failure can be explained in terms of the general decline of interest among scholars abroad in African history since about the mid-1970s.[87] Researchers are thinner on the ground than they used to be in the days of the Africanist boom, and they have had little incentive to tamper with what appears to be a coherent and firmly grounded set of notions which puts the precolonial African states of southern Africa firmly on the historical map. In South Africa itself, after a brief flowering in the 1970s, interest in the region's precolonial history has waned as liberal and radical historians have increasingly focussed their research and debates on the effects of capitalist penetration in southern Africa from the late 19th century onward. Partly, then, mfecane-theory survives today by default.

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87. Ranger, 'Towards a usable African past', in Fyfe, ed., African Studies since 1945, p. 17; P.D. Curtin, 'African History', in M. Kammen, ed., The Past before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States, Ithaca & London, 1980, p. 115.

But, at a deeper level of explanation, it survives, as Cobbing has argued, largely because it functions to obscure the processes by which whites came to be politically dominant and in possession of most of the land south of the Limpopo river.[88] By omitting the role of white agency in the upheavals of the 1820s and 1830s, and by attributing them ultimately to the rise of the Zulu kingdom, mfecane-theory is able to portray them as a consequence of internecine African conflict. African agency thus becomes responsible for opening the way for the penetration of white settlers into a largely 'empty' interior, and the land-grabbing of whites later in the century can be down-played. Cobbing's argument perhaps overstresses the strength and cohesion of white settler societies in the 19th century, but its central point seems essentially correct. For liberal defenders of the capitalist order in South Africa, as well as for the ideologues of the country's bantustan policies, mfecane-theory helps to provide a convenient explanation of the historical basis of South Africa's present-day patterns of land distribution.

Among radical historians too mfecane-theory survives today partly for ideological reasons. The structuralist theories which were dominant among radical writers in South Africa in the 1970s did not encourage detailed scrutiny of historical evidence. While the reaction on the part of many contemporary radical historians against the often reductionist analyses that were generated by their predecessors has made for the production of a far more textured and nuanced kind of history, it has also meant a loss of much of the political punch which radical history carried a decade ago. With their focus often on microstudies, and with their tendency to be suspicious of schematizing and generalization, present-day radical historians are often less overtly concerned than the

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88. Cobbing, 'The case against the mfecane', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, pp. 1, 7-8, 16, and 'The myth of the mfecane', unpublished paper, pp. 1, 9-10, 30.

previous generation was to identify and hammer away at the ideological props, such as mfecane-theory, which help sustain the current racial and social order in South Africa.

7. Conclusion

A hundred and sixty years after it first surfaced, the devastation stereotype lives on, embedded now in mfecane-theory. Cape merchant interests created it in the 1820s and 1830s on the basis of hearsay evidence. Natal settlers from the 1840s onward, the first South Africanists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and Afrikaner nationalist historians from the early 20th century onward all had a common vested interest in keeping it alive. Early liberal historians in South Africa, with their attentions elsewhere, incorporated it as an element in what they saw as the not very important history of the country's African underclasses. Later liberal historians, first outside and then inside South Africa, helped resuscitate and reconstruct it in a way that made it acceptable to emerging African nationalist elites. After a brief period of concern with developing new approaches both to pre-industrial history and to the macrohistory of southern Africa, the majority of radical historians turned away towards the more recent past and towards a less deliberately politicized social history, leaving the stereotype intact. Present-day writers of all shades of opinion continue to pick it up from the previous literature and to incorporate it into their own work without attempting to seek empirical verification for it. Natal's mfecane exists today by virtue not of historical argumentation but of uncritical repetition of a colonial-made myth.

The primary evidence on which the stereotype is based is minimal in extent: a few sentences in tendentious accounts written by traders at Port Natal in the 1820s; the brief notes on 'Shaka's wars' recorded by colonial ideologues -

Grout, Fynn, Shepstone - in the 1850s and 1860s. Traditions on the subject published in Zulu by Fuze and Stuart in the 1920s (see pp. 13, 16 above) were fed into the version of the stereotype produced by Bryant in his Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, but the original texts remained quite outside either the ken or the field of interest of the academics who dominated the production of South African history from this time onward.

The writings of materialist historians since the mid-1970s on the emergence of the Zulu state, together with the evidence available in the James Stuart Collection, provide the basis for an entirely new rendering of the history of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the 1810s and 1820s. But before this can be put forward, the process of exorcising the devastation stereotype has to be taken a step further. So long as Bryant's magisterial and apparently authoritative account of the 'Zulu devastations' of Natal is allowed to stand unchallenged, so long will the stereotype be able to survive alongside any new interpretation put forward. Bryant is far too deeply entrenched as an authority simply to be brushed aside: his account has to be confronted in detail. The next chapter therefore moves on to a critical analysis of Bryant's treatment of the upheavals which took place south of the Thukela in the 1810s and 1820s.

CHAPTER 3

THE 'DEVASTATIONS' OF THE 1810s AND 1820s: A CRITIQUE OF BRYANT'S ACCOUNT

1. Bryant's account: an outline

As indicated in the previous chapter, Bryant presents his account of the upheavals of the 1810s and 1820s mainly through the medium of numerous individual 'tribal' histories. Nowhere in Olden Times does he put forward a coherent narrative history of the period: an integrated account therefore has to be recovered from numerous different points in the text. A reconstruction of his exposition indicates that between about 1818 and 1822 or 1823 most of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region was laid waste by four successive 'waves' of invaders fleeing from political turmoil north of the Thukela caused primarily by the aggressive expansion of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka. These waves were followed by a series of campaigns mounted into Natal by Zulu armies. By about 1823-4, according to Bryant's reckoning, most of the region was a desolate waste.

The first wave was set in motion by the Ndwandwe, who, for reasons which Bryant does not explain, fell upon the nearby Ngwane and 'drove them in headlong panic' out of their territory in what is now the Vryheid area.[1] Under their chief, Matiwane kaMasumpa, the Ngwane fled south-westward into the territory of the Hlubi, killed their chief, and scattered his people. Turning to the south, the Ngwane then cut their way through the Bhele chiefdoms, and made their way to the upper Thukela region. Here, after expelling the Zizi inhabitants, they proceeded to

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1. OT, p. 138.

re-establish themselves.[2] In front of them, numbers of displaced Hlubi, Bhele and Zizi made their way southwards through upland Natal and across the Mzimkhulu, in turn ejecting peoples like the Tholo whom they found in their way.[3] Some of these refugees remained in the Mzimkhulu-Mzimvubu region; others continued southward to find protection among the Gcaleka Xhosa.[4]

The second wave of 'slaughter and devastation' was begun in about 1820 by the Thembu of the lower Mzinyathi-Thukela region.[5] After repelling a Zulu attack, the Thembu, under their chief Ngoza kaMkhubukeli decided to seek safety in flight. Crossing the Thukela, the Thembu 'horde' swarmed southwards through the Natal midlands, killing and plundering and destroying. It then made its way through what is now East Griqualand, and crossed the Mzimvubu into the territory of the Mpondo. After an initially hospitable reception, the Thembu were attacked by the Mpondo, who killed Ngoza and scattered his people. Some remained in the vicinity; others eventually made their way to the Zulu chiefdom and gave their allegiance to Shaka.[6]

The third trail 'of blood and ruin and miseries inexpressible' was drawn across Natal in about 1821 by the Chunu under Macingwane kaJama.[7] The Chunu territory bordered on the east the region abandoned by the Thembu, and, soon after the flight of the latter, the Chunu too decamped southwards en masse to escape a threatened Zulu attack. '(F)uriously driving before them their wealth of cattle, murdering, plundering, capturing anything and anybody, as opportunities offered or occasion compelled',[8]

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2. Ibid., pp. 138-9, 150, 253, 347-8, 357, 368-9.
3. Ibid., pp. 150, 347, 357-8.
4. Ibid., pp. 150, 347, 358.
5. Ibid., p. 253.
6. Ibid., pp. 253-8.
7. Ibid., p. 267.
8. Ibid., p. 268.

the Chunu crossed the Thukela and forced their way through the chiefdoms of the midlands along a route which took them a little to the east of that followed by the Thembu. On reaching the Mzimkhulu river in the vicinity of what is now Creighton, they halted and began to settle themselves into a new 'Eden'. A season later they were attacked by a Zulu army, pursued to Nsikeni hill near what is now Swartberg, and cut to pieces. Macingwane himself, with a small following, managed to escape, but, while making his way back to the Zulu kingdom, where he intended to cast himself on Shaka's mercy, he was killed by cannibals. A number of his adherents, including some of his sons, eventually reached the Zulu country and submitted to Shaka.[9]

The fourth wave was composed of a 'confederacy' of the Dunge, Fuze, Nyamvini and, for a while, Bombo chiefdoms from the upper Mvoti region, together with two Nhlangwini chiefdoms from the middle Thukela and the Memela from the Ndaka (Sundays) river. Left exposed to Zulu attacks by the flight of the Thembu and Chunu, these chiefdoms had made an alliance in order to force their way through the chiefdoms which barred their way to the south. Shortly after the flight of the Chunu, the confederates struck out along a nearly similar route. After fighting their way to the Mkhomazi river, they split up, with the Nhlangwini and Memela continuing southwards across the Mzimkhulu, while the rest retraced their steps to the territories which they had formerly occupied.[10]

The ravages of the Ngwane, Bhele, Thembu, Chunu and confederacy between about 1818 and 1821 left most of inland Natal a howling wilderness. '(I)n pursuit of all', according to Bryant, 'came the armies of Shaka, roaming and ravaging wherever human beings or cattle presented

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9. Ibid. pp. 267-72.

10. Ibid., pp. 376-80, 409, 491, 551. The word 'confederacy' first occurs on p. 377.

themselves for capture or attack'.[11] In about 1821 a Zulu force worked its way up the south bank of the Thukela from Ntunjambili mountain (near what is now Kranskop) to about the confluence of the Thukela and Mpofana (Mooi). It broke up some of the chiefdoms of this region, drove out others, and forced the rest to give their allegiance to Shaka.[12] At much the same time another force destroyed the chiefdoms of the lower Mngeni region.[13] What was possibly the same force broke up the Thuli chiefdom between the Mngeni and Mkhomazi.[14] In 1822 Shaka launched an expedition to attack the Ngwane under Matiwane who had established themselves on the upper Thukela some four years before, and drove them over the Drakensberg onto the highveld.[15] In the same year the Zulu attacked the Fuze on the mid-Mvoti, and, possibly in a separate campaign, devastated most of the lower Mvoti valley.[16] In 1824 the Cele on the lower Mvoti were subjugated, and the neighbouring Ndlovu broken up. Also in that year, the Bombo south of the middle Mvoti were dispersed.[17] By the time the first white traders arrived on the scene in 1824, the devastation of Natal was complete.

2. The theory of the 'four waves'

Bryant's account as outlined above has remained virtually unchallenged for sixty years, and, on an uncritical reading, seems as if it must remain the last word on its subject. Embedded as it is in the volume's nearly 700 pages of apparently authoritative text, and presented in chapters with such resounding titles as 'The battles and

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11. Ibid., p. 555.
12. Ibid., pp. 409, 507, 510-14,520-3.
13. Ibid., pp. 555-7.
14. Ibid., p. 503.
15. Ibid., pp. 139-40, 557.
16. Ibid., pp. 254, 491-2, 525, 530, 532, 535.
17. Ibid., pp. 537,538-40, 545, 552-3, 554.

barbarities of the redoubtable Matiwane', 'The Cunus flee from the wrath to come', 'Tribal anarchy in Natal', and 'Pandemonium in No-Man's-land continued', it has all the appearances of being based on established fact. The paucity of references to source material leaves the reader with the impression that most of it, like the volume as a whole, is firmly grounded in the oral testimonies which, the author indicates in his preface, he collected over a period of forty-five years of work in 'the Zulu domain'.[18]

Systematic investigation of the structure and sources of Bryant's account in fact reveals a very different picture. A simple count shows that the core descriptions of the 'four waves' and of the 'Zulu campaigns', references to which abound in the text, are contained in a total of less than thirty pages, many of which are replete with Bryant's own inimitable effusions. An initial comparison of the account in Olden Times with the one in his 'Sketch' of 1905, and with the one contained in the articles which appeared in Izindaba Zabantu in 1910-13, turns up some significant differences. The sequence of 'waves of destruction' which Bryant postulated differs from one work to the next, as does the dating of the sequence as a whole. The account which appears in Olden Times begins to look not so much like a definitive statement as like the last in a series of interpretations and re-interpretations of evidence that is rather more meagre and contradictory than the author makes out.

This assessment is confirmed by a probe into the sources of the notion of the 'four waves' which Bryant used as the conceptual framework for his account. Though he nowhere acknowledges it, the notion was not original to his work: it was in fact derived directly from a document researched and written by Theophilus Shepstone as far back as 1863-4. This document, entitled 'Historic sketch of the tribes anciently inhabiting the Colony of Natal - as

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18. Ibid., p. vii.

at present bounded - and Zululand', was, as far as can be ascertained, first published in the report of a Cape government commission in 1883.[19] It was reprinted in at least two other source-books before the publication of Olden Times,[20] and by Bryant's own account he used it in the course of his researches.[21]

Shepstone's 'Historic Sketch', together with its accompanying tables and maps, originally formed one of two enclosures in a despatch on the subject of African land rights in Natal sent by the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, John Scott, to the Secretary of State in London in February 1864.[22] The other enclosure was a document entitled 'Tribes which occupied the territory now forming the Colony of Natal during the time of Dingiswayo's father Jobe, and before they were broken up by Chaka's wars'.[23] This consisted of outline histories, ranging in length from a single line to the equivalent of two printed pages, of ninety-four 'tribes'. Though, unlike the 'Historic sketch', it did not carry a signature, Scott in his despatch identified the author as Shepstone.[24] This

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19. Commission on Laws and Customs, part II, pp. 415-20. The succession of what Shepstone was the first to call 'waves' of devastation is outlined on pp. 416-17.

20. Correspondence Relating to Granting to Natives in Natal of Documentary Tribal Titles to Land, (1890?), pp. 118-29; F. Brownlee, ed., The Transkeian Native Territories: Historical Records, Lovedale, 1923, pp. 82-91.

21. OT, p. 91.

22. The despatch (no. 34, Scott to Newcastle, 26 February 1864) and its enclosures (minus maps) were published as Sessional Paper no. 23 of the Natal Legislative Council, 1890, in Correspondence Relating to...Tribal Titles to Land, pp. 52-136.

23. The document appears in Correspondence Relating to... Tribal Titles to Land, pp. 95-117. It was first published under a slightly different title in 1888 in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 124-53.

24. Scott to Newcastle, 26 February 1864, in Correspondence Relating...to Tribal Titles to Land, pp. 54, 91.

collection of tribal histories formed the main empirical basis on which the 'Historic sketch' was written.

Scott stated that both documents had been researched and written at the behest of the Natal colonial government. They had been prepared in order to provide the government with a fuller and more accurate picture of the historical basis of African claims to land in Natal than was available in the report of the Harding Commission of 1852-3.[25] According to the Lieutenant-Governor, the historical information recorded in the two documents had been acquired from African informants summoned to Pietermaritzburg specifically to give evidence on the region's history. Recording and collating it had taken Shepstone 'many months' of 'tedious work'.[26]

Very little information on the identities of the informants or on the circumstances in which Shepstone's interviews with them were conducted can be gleaned from the collection of tribal histories. More informative is a hand-written draft of the ninety-four tribal histories which is to be found in Shepstone's surviving private papers in the Natal Archives.[27] In this document, forty-one of the histories are accompanied by the names of what appear to be Shepstone's original informants, together with brief biographical notes, and the dates - all falling in September 1863 - on which their testimony was given. The total number of informants named is eleven. Elsewhere in this document appears a list, entitled 'Names of persons in presence of whom and by whom information was given upon which the sketches dated the 7th September were made'.[28] This list contains fourteen names, including the eleven whose names appear with the histories. All of them, according to Shepstone, were 'actors in the scenes

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25. Ibid., pp. 54-5.

26. Ibid.

27. Natal Archives, T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 89-154.

28. Ibid., p. 149.

described'.[29] Most of them he gives as being between 50 and 65 years of age. The oldest of them would thus have been born in the last years of the 18th century, and the youngest early in the second decade of the 19th century. Hence at the time of the events which Shepstone describes they would have been young children or youths.

Even allowing for the fact that in the case of fifty of the ninety-four histories the informant is not identified, and that Shepstone's informants could well have numbered more than fourteen, it is clear that his information base was very shallow. In the case of thirty-one of the histories where the informant is known, he seems to have relied for each history on statements made by a single informant; in nine cases, that of two informants; and in one case, that of three.[30] The evidence as to the degree of his own intervention in drawing up the histories is contradictory. According to Shepstone himself, they 'were written down from the lips of the narrators, and, as near as possible, in their words'.[31] Scott, on the other hand, commented in his covering despatch that 'These sketches might have been made much fuller and more interesting, but, as they have been made for a special purpose, they have been purposely abridged as much as possible'.[32] Either way, the important point is that Shepstone had not been conducting research specifically into the history of the upheavals supposedly caused by Shaka. His main purpose was to establish the geographical location before the advent of European settlers in Natal of the 'tribes' which were to be found in Natal at the time his interviews were conducted. Information on the upheavals was a by-product of his historical enquiry.

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29. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 2, p. 420.

30. See his attributions of individual histories in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 103-46.

31. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 153.

32. Correspondence Relating to...Tribal Titles to Land, p. 54.

In drawing up his outline histories, Shepstone had available to him at least one and probably two other similar documents. These had been produced by Lewis Grout and James Perrin respectively. Grout's collection, as presented to the Harding Commission of 1852-3, and published in its proceedings, was, by his own account, put together from testimony obtained from thirty or more African informants, and from records obtained from 'other sources', by which he probably meant records made over the years by fellow missionaries.[33] He names thirteen of his informants and gives biographical information on nine of them, six in some detail and three more briefly. His evidence formed the basis of the list of tribes and their former locations which was published in 1857, with acknowledgement to the author, by Joseph Shooter in his The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country.[34]

Perrin's undated collection consisted of very brief historical notes on fifty-four tribes, mostly from southern Natal.[35] In the manuscript copy which is to be found in the Garden Papers, he gives the names of nineteen of his informants, three of whom, including Lewis Grout, were missionaries, and one of whom, H.F. Fynn, was a government official. Of the fifteen Africans whom he identifies, four are also named in Grout's list of informants. Perrin, who later made something of a name for himself as a lexicographer,[36] had arrived in Natal in 1849,[37] and an annotated list of the tribes of Natal based

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33. Grout's evidence to the Harding Commission was published in NGG, no. 215, 18 January 1853. It includes information on his sources. See also the comments in L. Grout, The Autobiography of the Rev. Lewis Grout, Brattleboro, Vt., n.d. (1905?), pp. 26-7.

34. London, 1857, pp. 376-82.

35. Garden Papers, list of 'Aboriginal tribes', pp. 826-83.

36. DSAB, vol. 2, entry on James Perrin, pp. 540-1.

37. My thanks to Shelagh Spencer for this information: personal communication, 4 Oct. 1989.

on his researches was published in 1856:[38] his notes on tribal histories were therefore produced at some stage between these two dates. Certainly by 1853 he had produced a map of tribal locations in Natal, [39] and it may be that his historical notes had been produced by this date as well. As far as is known they remained unpublished, but as the author was appointed to a clerkship in Shepstone's office in 1853,[40] it is likely that Shepstone would have known of them and had access to them.

In addition to the historical notes produced by Grout and Perrin, Shepstone had available to him a list of fifty-six Natal tribes and their individual locations before the upheavals of the early 19th century compiled by H.F. Fynn and presented by him in his evidence to the Harding Commission.[41] To what extent he drew on these sources is impossible to say. A comparison between the historical notes written by Grout, Perrin and Shepstone reveals a sufficient number of differences between them to suggest that Shepstone did not draw directly on the work of his two predecessors. His coverage extended to ninety-four tribes, as against the seventy of Grout and the fifty-four of Perrin, and paid much more attention than either had done to the tribes of inland Natal. Where Shepstone's accounts overlapped with those of the other two, he tended to emphasize different points of detail. None of his fourteen identified informants is among those named by Grout or by Perrin.

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38. In Petermann's Geographische Mittheilungen, part x, 1856. See the reproduction of part of this list in W.H.I. Bleek, Zulu Legends, ed. J. Engelbrecht, Pretoria, 1952, between pp. 40 & 41; also W.H.I. Bleek, The Natal Diaries of Dr W.H.I. Bleek 1855-1856, ed. O.H. Spohr, Cape Town, 1965, pp. 41-6.

39. Garden Papers, p. 23, letter from Perrin to Garden, 11 March 1853.

40. Garden Papers, p. 1198, letter from Perrin to Garden, 9 September (1853); Natal Blue Book, 1854, p. 150.

41. Fynn's evidence was published in NGG, no. 221, 1 March 1853.

In sum, Shepstone's histories were the product mostly of the testimony given him by his own informants. Certainly, though, he used the published evidence of Grout and Fynn as checks on these histories. In the covering despatch previously referred to, Lieutenant-Governor Scott commented that Grout's historical sketches were overall 'surprisingly correct' and that they were in accordance with Fynn's evidence,[42] which, in turn, he saw as having been 'a valuable statement of facts'.[43] It is unlikely that Scott himself was in a position to make independent judgements of this kind: almost certainly his comments were echoing the opinions of Shepstone.

In producing his histories, Shepstone was, as indicated above, working to an official agenda. As Scott's despatch makes abundantly clear, his research was motivated primarily by the need to disprove white settler arguments that most Africans in Natal had no valid claims to permanent occupation of land in the colony. To this end he was no doubt glad to make the fullest possible use of those of Grout's and Fynn' statements which assisted his purposes, to the extent, it seems, of glossing them without too much criticism. Perrin, for his part, had rather different opinions. Grout's list of tribes, he wrote to an acquaintance, contained numerous omissions and inaccuracies, and his sources of information had been limited and imperfect.[44]

The lineage of the 'four waves' theory can now be reconstructed. It was based on historical information given in the latter months of 1863 by at least eleven and possibly more African informants to Theophilus Shepstone in his capacity as Secretary for Native Affairs. All his informants apparently had first-hand knowledge of at least

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42. Correspondence Relating to...Tribal Titles to Land, p. 88.

43. Ibid., p. 87.

44. Garden Papers, p. 25, letter from Perrin to Garden, 11 March 1853.

some of the events of which they spoke. There are no records of the circumstances in which their testimony was collected, and thus no way of determining how far they were led by Shepstone's line of questioning. Shepstone was working with an official briefing to collect information that would enable the colonial administration to assess the rights of the various 'tribes' of Natal to occupy land in Natal: he was not specifically investigating the conflicts of the early 19th century. In a context in which tribes had long since come to constitute the basic units in which Africans were administered in Natal, Shepstone set out his findings in the form of brief outlines of ninety-four separate tribal histories. On the basis of these histories, many of which were written up from testimony given by a single informant, he proceeded to produce his sketch of the history of the Natal region from the late 18th century to the 1840s.

Shepstone's researches indicated to him that the established notion of the tribes of Natal as virtually all having been dispersed or annihilated by Shaka's Zulu armies needed a certain degree of modification. The testimony which he collected from some of his informants suggested that many of the tribes had been broken up, or at the very least disturbed, not by the Zulu but by one or other of at least four non-Zulu groups of 'refugees' from north of the Thukela, and one from the Natal midlands. When he wrote up this information in his 'Historic sketch', in keeping with the well-established settler stereotype which saw the Zulu as having been the devastators of Natal, he depicted these groups as successive 'waves' of refugees - in order, the Ngwane, the Chunu, the Thembu, and what Shepstone called a 'confederacy' of small chiefdoms - from actual or threatened Zulu attacks in the time of Shaka. Hence the chronology which he developed had Shaka as becoming chief of the Zulu in c.1810, the flight of the first three waves

as taking place in c.1812-13 (the date of c.1819 given on p. 416 of his account is a misprint), and the flight of the fourth in 1814.[45] How Shepstone arrived at these datings is not known. The processes by which he worked out the particular sequence of 'waves' which he described is somewhat clearer. The flight of the Ngwane had supposedly taken place when Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa was still alive;[46] obviously it should stand first. The flight of the Chunu and Thembu, according to one of his informants, had stimulated the flight of the confederacy, so logically this belonged at the end of the sequence.

Shepstone's 'Historic sketch' was first published in 1883. Five years later his collection of tribal histories was put into print in Bird's Annals of Natal.[47] These two sources, though unacknowledged, formed the main basis of the account of the upheavals in the Natal region in the early 19th century given by Bryant in his 'Sketch of the origin and early history of the Zulu people', published in 1905.[48] In this account Bryant adopted Shepstone's notion of 'waves of violence' having rolled through Natal, although in presenting the sequence as Ngwane-Thembu-Chunu-'confederacy' (the term itself was lifted from Shepstone[49]), he inverted the order of Shepstone's waves two and three. His dating of these events was contradictory. When describing the first wave, which, following Shepstone, he dated to 1812, he indicated that Shaka had already commenced his reign. At a later point he stated that Shaka had begun to rule eight years before the coming of white traders to Port Natal in 1824, which

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45. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, pp. 416, 417, 418.

46. Ibid., p. 416.

47. See note 23 above.

48. In his Dictionary, pp. 12*-66*, esp. pp. 39*-49*.

49. For Shepstone's use of the term 'confederacy' see Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 131, 132, 136, 146, 147, 149; Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, p. 417.

would have put the date of the chief's accession at 1816.[50]

In his next important historical work, constituted by the articles which he published in Izindaba Zabantu in 1910-13, Bryant presented a different sequence of waves and a different chronology. The first wave was composed of the Chunu, and was dated to about 1816.[51] In the same year followed the flight of the confederacy,[52] and some two years later, in about 1818, the flight of the Thembu.[53] The fourth wave consisted of the Ngwane, and was dated by Bryant to about 1819.[54]

By the time Bryant came to write Olden Times he had rethought his ideas, for in this work he reverted to the notion that the Ngwane had constituted the first wave, with the Thembu, Chunu, and confederacy following in that order. The dating of the sequence shifted yet further forward in time. The flight of the Ngwane was now dated to c.1818, that of the Thembu to c.1820, that of the Chunu to c.1821, and that of the confederacy also to c.1821.[55]

The table that follows summarizes the history of the placing and dating of the four waves by Shepstone and Bryant.

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50. Bryant, Dictionary, pp. 39*, 48*.

51. HZ, pp. 35, 81.

52. Ibid., pp. 40, 41, 69.

53. HZ, p. 45.

54. Ibid., p. 25.

55. In Olden Times the flight of the Ngwane is dated on pp. 136, 150, 347, 368, 377; that of the Thembu on pp. 253, 369, 376, 419, 555; that of the Chunu on pp. 267, 376, 519, 548; and that of the confederacy on pp. 380, 409, 551, 552.

	Shepstone (1883)	Bryant (1905)	Bryant (1910-13)	Bryant (1929)
1st wave	Ngwane 1812-13	Ngwane 1812	Chunu 1816	Ngwane 1818
2nd wave	Chunu 1812-13	Thembu	Confed. 1816	Thembu 1820
3rd wave	Thembu 1812-13	Chunu	Thembu 1818	Chunu 1821
4th wave	Confed. 1814	Confed.	Ngwane 1819	Confed. 1821

In sum, Bryant's notion that four successive waves of devastation had passed through the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region was not based on his own researches into African oral tradition: it was derived directly from Shepstone. The latter had conceived it some sixty-five years before the publication of Olden Times on the basis of an exiguous body of information derived from brief interviews with a handful of informants who, quite possibly, had been led by their interlocutor's particular line of questioning. He had interpreted this information in a way which harmonized with, and served to reinforce, the established devastation stereotype. Operating within the same broad tradition of settler-created history, Bryant appropriated without acknowledgement not only the framework but also the content of Shepstone's interpretation. To it he made some minor modifications and additions, drawn for the most part from other published works. The next four sections of the chapter will demonstrate in detail the extent to which Bryant's narrative of each of the four 'waves' of violence which he recognized was based on previously published sources, of which much the most important was Shepstone's collection of tribal histories.

3. The first wave

In writing his account of the history of the Ngwane in the 1810s and 1820s, Bryant had available to him published

sources which were unusually numerous by comparison with those that were available on the histories of other contemporary chiefdoms in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region. This was because the destruction of the chiefdom by British and Cape colonial forces, in alliance with Thembu, Gcaleka and Mpondo contingents, at the battle of Mbholompo in what is now the Transkei in 1828 had generated a colonial mythology which produced numerous printed texts on this event and on the supposed history of the Ngwane.[56] In his account, which forms chapter 16 of Olden Times, Bryant cited fifteen published sources. A number of others, which he did not cite, were also available at the time when he wrote the book.

In keeping with his usual practice, Bryant did not footnote his account except to acknowledge direct quotations, but it is clear that it was based almost exclusively on research into published material rather than into oral tradition. His most important source on the first phase of the Ngwane migration was Ayliff and Whiteside's History of the Abambo, published in 1912, which in turn drew heavily on an article published by W.C. Scully in The State in 1909.[57] This, in turn, by Scully's own account, was based largely on statements taken in 1895 from Dick Simanga, a half-brother of Matiwane, the Ngwane chief in the early 19th century.[58] Bryant added snippets from Shooter's The Kafirs of Natal, Holden's The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races, and Ellenberger and Macgregor's History of the Basuto, the last-named of which

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56. For a critical analysis of this mythology see Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 490-2, 500-503.

57. J. Ayliff & J. Whiteside, History of the Abambo, Cape Town, 1962 (reprint of 1st ed., Butterworth, 1912), pp. 7-10; W.C. Scully, 'Fragments of native history. IV. The Amahlubi and the Amangwane. I', The State, vol. 2 (1909), pp. 284-92.

58. Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 284.

drew in part from Theal's Basutoland Records.[59] Theal, writing on Ngwane history in the early 1880s, had had three recently published testimonies of African informants to draw on: it is likely that he used them all. These were the statements of Platje Mhlanga, Mehlomakhulu, and Moloja, all of whom had participated personally in the events which they described.[60] In addition, Bryant included an anecdote drawn from James Stuart's Zulu reader uBaxoxele, the narrator of which (in 1903) had been Mashwili kaMngoye.[61]

Comparison of these sources reveals an altogether fuzzier and more contradictory picture of the displacement of the Ngwane and the first stages of their migration than Bryant gave out in Olden Times. Though all the sources which locate where the Ngwane lived before their expulsion agree that they occupied territory in the north-west of what is now the Natal-Zululand region, and that they were ejected from it in the course of an attack by another group or other groups, they differ markedly as to the identity of these assailants. Bryant himself presented three different views in his successive historical works. In his 'Sketch' he stated that the Ngwane were driven out by Shaka and the Zulu either with the sanction or on the express orders of their overlord Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa.[62] In his article in Izindaba Zabantu, he had the Ngwane ejected by Zwide's Ndwandwe, who were in flight

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59. Shooter, Kafirs of Natal (1857), p. 216; Holden, Past and Future (1866), p. 21; D.F. Ellenberger & J.C. Macgregor, History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern, London, 1912, pp. 119, 130; G.M. Theal, ed., Basutoland Records, vol. 2, Cape Town, 1964 (reprint of 1st ed., Cape Town, 1883), pp. vi, vii.

60. An Aged Fingo (Platje Mhlanga), 'A story of native wars', Cape Monthly Magazine, Jan.-June 1877, pp. 248-52; Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement of Mathlomahulu', Cape Monthly Magazine, July-Dec. 1880, pp. 163-4; Moloja, 'The story of the "Fetcani horde"', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), pp. 267-75.

61. J. Stuart, ed., uBaxoxele, London, 1924, pp. 30-1.

62. Bryant, Dictionary, p. 39*.

after having been defeated in battle by the Zulu.[63] In Olden Times, as indicated above, it was still the Ndwandwe who were immediately responsible for ousting the Ngwane, but they were not in flight from the Zulu and the reason for the attack was not given.

Bryant's contradictory accounts reflected the lack of consensus in the primary published sources and in the secondary accounts which were based on them. Some of the primary sources claimed that the Ngwane had been driven out by the Ndwandwe;[64] another, by a combination of Ndwandwe and Zulu;[65] another, by a combination of Mthethwa and Zulu;[66] another, by a combination of Mthethwa, Zulu and other chiefdoms;[67] others, by the Zulu alone.[68] The authors of early 20th-century histories picked on one or other of these accounts and, usually without further explanation, incorporated them into their own works as uncontested fact. Thus Theal had the Ngwane expelled by the Zulu; Ellenberger and Macgregor had them expelled by the Ndwandwe; and Ayliff and Whiteside, following Scully, had them expelled by the Mthethwa and others.[69] Bryant's

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63. HZ, pp. 14, 25, 33, 35.

64. Moloja, 'Fetcani horde', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268. See also South African Library, Cape Town, G.W. Stow Collection, undated ms. entitled 'The intrusion of the stronger races', p. 206 (information given by Dick Timango/Simango, who was very probably the same person as Scully's informant: see p. 111 above).

65. Mhlanga, 'Story of native wars', Cape Monthly Magazine, Jan.-June 1877, p. 249.

66. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 2, p. 416.

67. Simanga, in Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), pp. 285-6, 290.

68. Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement', Cape Monthly Magazine, July-Dec. 1880, p. 163; Khawulela's statement in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 1, p. 166; Nombiba, Mnguni and Mhlelwana in Shepstone's notes on history of the Bhele in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142 (the informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 137); Fuze, The Black People, pp. 16, 23, 50-1.

69. Theal, History of S.A. since 1795, vol. 1, p. 379; Ellenberger and Macgregor, History of the Basuto, p. 119; Ayliff & Whiteside, History of the Abambo, p. 7.

account of the expulsion and flight of the Ngwane in Olden Times represented an attempt to resolve the contradictions in the existing literature: it was not based on research into oral tradition. There is nothing in his account to suggest that his version is more firmly grounded in empirical evidence than any other: it has to be read not as a definite statement but as one derived account among a number of others.

While there was little unanimity in Bryant's sources as to the causes of the displacement of the Ngwane, there was a somewhat greater measure of agreement among them about what occurred in the first stage of their flight. A number of informants stated that after being ejected from their territory, the Ngwane had attacked their Hlubi neighbours to the south-west and in turn driven them out.[70] Some claimed that the Ngwane had then proceeded to establish themselves in the newly vacated territory.[71] Others stated that they had continued southwards and eventually established themselves in the region of the upper Thukela, in the process ejecting groups like the Bhele and Zizi.[72] Like Bryant, most sources were of the

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70. Timango, in Stow, 'Intrusion of the stronger races', unpublished ms., pp. 196, 206; Mhlanga, 'Story of native wars', Cape Monthly Magazine, Jan.-June 1877, p. 249; Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement', Cape Monthly Magazine, July-Dec. 1880, p. 163; Moloja, 'Fetcani horde', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268; Simanga, in Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), pp. 288-9; anonymous informant or informants in Shepstone's notes on history of the Hlubi, in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 141.

71. Timango, in Stow, 'Intrusion of the stronger races', unpublished ms., p. 206; Simanga, in Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 289.

72. Moloja, 'Fetcani horde', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268; Khawulela's statement in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 1, p. 166; Nombiba, Mnguni & Mhlelwana, in Shepstone's notes on history of the Bhele in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142 (informants identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 137); Ntulo, in Shepstone's notes on history of the Zizi in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142 (informant identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 138).

opinion that after an interval the Ngwane had been driven over the Drakensberg onto the highveld by the Zulu.[73]

As for the peoples supposedly displaced by the retreating Ngwane, several sources stated, like Bryant, that many Hlubi also crossed the Drakensberg onto the highveld.[74] There is much less information on the Bhele and Zizi. Three of Shepstone's informants stated, according to his gloss, that most of the Bhele had 'found their way to the Cape frontier'.[75] Another stated that the Zizi had also 'migrated towards the Cape Colony'.[76] Another Zizi source stated that after being attacked by the Ngwane, the Zizi had submitted to Matiwane and accompanied him on his move to the highveld.[77]

Secondary accounts published before the appearance of Olden Times had developed a broad consensus as to the course of Ngwane history in the period under review. The Ngwane had been driven out of their territory, for reasons that were not described, by a powerful antagonist, if not the Zulu then perhaps the Mthethwa or Ndwandwe. The Ngwane had then fallen on the Hlubi and driven them over the Drakensberg. A little while later the Ngwane had been

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73. Timango, in Stow, 'Intrusion of the stronger races', unpublished ms., pp. 197, 207; Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement', Cape Monthly Magazine, July-Dec. 1880, p. 163; Moloja, 'Fetcani horde', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268; Simanga, in Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), pp. 290-1.

74. Timango, in Stow, 'Intrusion of the stronger races', unpublished ms., pp. 196-7; Mhlanga, 'Story of native wars', Cape Monthly Magazine, Jan.-June 1877, p. 249; Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement', Cape Monthly Magazine, July-Dec. 1880, p. 163; Moloja, 'Fetcani horde', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268; anonymous informant or informants in Shepstone's notes on history of the Hlubi in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 141.

75. Nombiba, Mnguni & Mhlelwana, in Shepstone's notes on history of the Bhele in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142.

76. Ntulo, in Shepstone's notes on history of the Zizi in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142.

77. Khawulela's statement in Commission on Laws and Customs, p. 166.

attacked by the Zulu in the territory which they had newly occupied under the Drakensberg, and in turn had been forced to retreat onto the highveld.[78] If Bryant's account varied in minor details, in its general thrust it was very much in line with the published sources on which it was based.

4. The second wave

Bryant's account of the destructive migration of the Thembu through the Natal midlands was based almost entirely on two previously published sources: Shepstone's tribal histories as they appeared in Bird's Annals of Natal, and the account of the flight of the Thembu under their chief, Ngoza kaMkhubukeli, which appeared in James Stuart's Zulu reader uHlangakula, published in 1924.[79] This latter account was drawn virtually verbatim from the record which Stuart had made of testimony given to him by Lugubhu kaMangaliso in 1916.[80] Though he acknowledged his use of Stuart, Bryant nowhere indicated that he had used Shepstone as a source.

Both Shepstone, who did not name his informant or informants on Thembu history, and Lugubhu gave broadly similar accounts of the nature of the processes which sent the Thembu pushing their way southward from the region of the lower Mzinyathi (Buffalo) river. According to Shepstone, before their migration most of the Thembu had lived on the left bank of the river and were tributary to the Buthelezi. When Shaka overcame the Buthelezi, the

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78. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, p. 416; Theal, History of S.A. since 1795, vol. 1, pp. 379-80; Ellenberger & Macgregor, History of the Basuto, pp. 119, 124, 130; Ayliff & Whiteside, History of the Abambo, pp. 7-10.

79. Stuart, uHlangakula, pp. 13-19.

80. Stuart's orginal notes of Lugubhu's evidence on this topic are to be found in JSC, File 57, nbk. 14, pp. 31-46. A translated and annotated rendering appears in JSA, vol. 1, pp. 284-7.

Thembu retreated across the Mzinyathi into the country of the Khuze. They defeated the Khuze, killed their chief, and occupied their territory. In response to entreaties from the Khuze, Shaka sent a force to drive the Thembu out. The latter succeeded in repulsing the Zulu army, but, anticipating a further attack, retreated southwards across the Thukela and so began their career of destruction.[81]

According to the account recorded by Stuart from Lugubhu, Shaka's attack on the Thembu was a response to a challenge made to him by Ngoza. In this version of the story, the Zulu were also driven back, but succeeded in making off with the Thembu cattle. The Thembu then retreated, fell upon the Khuze, and defeated them. After this they took to flight to the southward.[82]

Though Bryant had mentioned the flight of the Thembu in his 'Sketch' of 1905, he did not go into details. In the account which he published in Izindaba Zabantu, he reproduced Shepstone's explanation as to why the Thembu had taken to flight,[83] but in Olden Times he began the story slightly differently. In this work the Thembu were still regarded as having been tributaries to the Buthelezi, but were seen as having lived on the south side of the upper White Mfolozi river. After Shaka's defeat of the Buthelezi, the Thembu had made off to the left bank of the Mzinyathi and settled there. Bryant did not identify the previous inhabitants of the territory which the Thembu thus occupied. After a while, fearful of Shaka's ever-growing power, the Thembu moved across to the right bank of the river. They were opposed by the Khuze, but defeated them in a battle (Bryant's account of which was drawn directly from uHlangakula[84]), and settled in their

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81. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 143-4.

82. Stuart, uHlangakula, pp. 13-17.

83. HZ, pp. 44-5, 48-9.

84. OT, p. 247; Stuart, uHlangakula, pp. 16-17; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 286.

territory.[85]

Bryant's description of this initial phase of the migration of the Thembu was basically an amalgam of Shepstone's and Stuart's accounts. His account of the flight of the Thembu through Natal was pieced together from a number of the histories recorded by Shepstone, with a few snippets incorporated from Stuart. (The title of chapter 31 of Olden Times, 'The trail of the Tembus', was a translation of the final words of Lugubhu's testimony as published in uHlangakula, '...umkondo wa ba Tembu'.[86]) After having the Thembu cross the Thukela, Bryant had them attacking and breaking up the Ncwabe chiefdom.[87] This, according to Shepstone's informants, Thethwa and Nyandeni, lived near the lower Mpofana (Mooi) river and was 'driven by Ngoza in his escape from Shaka'.[88] Then, at the headwaters of the Mpanza, the Thembu attacked the Xesibe,[89] who were given by Shepstone's informant Magwaza as also having been 'driven by Goza'.[90] Bryant followed Magwaza in having the Xesibe go off to seek sanctuary from the Fuze near what is now Greytown.[91] In his Izindaba Zabantu article, like Magwaza, he had the Xesibe remaining with the Fuze; in Olden Times, however, he had them returning to their own territory once the Thembu had passed by.[92] According to Magwaza, the Xesibe had taken refuge with the Fuze on a previous occasion when attacked

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85. OT, pp. 242, 246-8, 249-50, 253.

86. OT, p. 252; Stuart, uHlangakula, p. 19.

87. OT, p. 253.

88. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 145. The informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 141.

89. OT, p. 254.

90. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 135. The informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 115.

91. Ibid.; OT, p. 254.

92. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 135; HZ, p. 61; OT, p. 254.

by Shaka. Bryant repeated this story in Izindaba Zabantu, but omitted it from his account in Olden Times.[93]

Next, according to Bryant, the Thembu fell on the Wushe chiefdoms which occupied the Karkloof-Dargle-Howick region, and uprooted them. Most were broken up, though one, under the Wushe paramount, proceeded to give its allegiance to Ngoza.[94] Here again Bryant's source was Shepstone.[95] At this point in the construction of his narrative, Bryant encountered a problem, in that his two sources differed on the details of what had happened after this attack. According to Shepstone's notes on the history of the Khuze, numbers of Khuze and other Dlamini had joined Ngoza after he had defeated them.[96] On his arrival in what is now the Pietermaritzburg region, these Dlamini proceeded to attack the Nkabane and the Nqondo, who lived in the country between Pietermaritzburg and Richmond.[97] Bryant could not have the whole of Ngoza's party moving in this direction, for, according to Stuart's account, Ngoza had taken a different route, going up-country from the Howick region towards Mpendle, and then through the Bulwer area to to the region across the Mzimkhulu and eventually to the Mpondo country.[98] He solved the problem by splitting Ngoza's following. 'After crossing the Mngeni, the Tembu-Dhlamini partnership was for the nonce dissolved', the reader is told. One group,

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93. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 135; HZ, p. 60.

94. OT, p. 256.

95. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 140, 141. Shepstone's informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 128, 129, 132, as Thethwa and Nyandeni.

96. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 143. The informant is identified as Gayeni in T. Shepstone Papers, vol 89, p. 139.

97. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 146. The informant is identified as Nyandeni in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 143, 144.

98. Stuart, uHlangakula, p. 18; also JSA, vol.1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 287.

consisting of the Dlamini, moved through the Pietermaritzburg-Richmond area and was then conveniently lost to view. The other, under Ngoza, parted from the Dlamini 'above the Howick Falls' and took the up-country route postulated in Stuart's account.[99]

It is not clear where Bryant obtained his evidence on the career of the Thembu once they had crossed the Mzimkhulu river. Shepstone's notes on Thembu history stated that on his arrival in the country of the Mpondo Ngoza had proceeded to attack them. In the battle that followed, Ngoza's force was overcome and the chief himself was killed. His following then broke up, with numbers eventually making their way back to the Zulu kingdom and giving their allegiance to Shaka.[100] Although without depicting Ngoza as the aggressor, the account published by Stuart in uHlangakula also stated that the chief had been killed by the Mpondo and that his following had dispersed.[101] In Izindaba Zabantu, Bryant, following Shepstone, had also cast Ngoza as the aggressor. Ngoza's 'wandering multitude' had come up against the 'large and formidable' Mpondo tribe under Faku; he aspired to conquer the Mpondo, but was killed in battle with them.[102] In Olden Times, by contrast, it was the Mpondo who were the aggressors. At first they received the Thembu hospitably, but after or three years Faku's suspicions of Ngoza's intentions began to grow, and in about 1822 or 1823 the Mpondo attacked the Thembu and drove them off. After wandering about in the region south of the Mzimkhulu for some years, many Thembu returned northwards to submit to the Zulu monarch.[103] In Izindaba Zabantu Bryant put their return as having taken place about the time of Dingane's

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99. OT, pp. 256-7.

100. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 144.

101. Stuart, uHlangakula, p. 18; also JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 287.

102. HZ, pp. 45-6.

103. OT, p. 258.

accession, i.e. 1828; in Olden Times he dated it to about 1826-7.[104]

Overall, Shepstone's and Stuart's (i.e. Lugubhu's) accounts of the flight of Thembu were broadly in accord. Bryant's narative in Olden Times brought in certain minor idiosyncracies, but did not diverge from its two major sources to any marked extent. There is nothing in his version to suggest that much by way of oral tradition independently collected by himself went into it.

5. The third wave

As in his account of the Thembu migration, Bryant relied primarily on Shepstone's histories for his description of the movement of the Chunu through Natal. Less clear, though, are the sources of his information of how and why they were initially propelled over the Thukela river. Probably drawing in the first instance on a statement in Fuze's Abantu Abamnyama, Bryant in Olden Times had the Chunu as 'a clan of considerable size' which lived in the region of the Thaleni mountain near the Nsuze river.[105] In his earlier historical accounts, possibly using information obtained personally from Fuze, with whom he was on good terms,[106] Bryant claimed that the Chunu had fled after having been attacked and defeated in battle by the Zulu.[107] But by the time he came to write Olden Times, he had changed his position. There was, he stated explicitly, no record in tradition of the Zulu having invaded Chunu territory or having fought the Chunu. The removal of the Chunu stemmed from fear on the part of their chief, Macingwane, that he was about to suffer retribution for having harassed Shaka's father, Senzanga-

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104. HZ, p. 46; OT, p. 258.

105. Fuze, Black People, pp. 15, 23, 52; OT, pp. 262, 264.

106. OT, p. 498.

107. Bryant, Dictionary, p. 42*; HZ, p. 35. See also the statements in Fuze, Black People, pp. 23, 52.

khona, and for having refused asylum to Shaka and his mother during Shaka's childhood. The factor which precipitated his flight was the Zulu attack on the neighbouring Thembu and the retreat of the latter to the southward.[108]

Bryant's assertion that Macingwane had been 'a constant persecutor' of Senzangakhona is probably based on a statement in Fuze to the effect that the two had fought on a number of occasions.[109] The notion that Shaka had sought asylum among the Chunu may be based on a statement to this effect in Holden's Past and Future of the Kaffir Races.[110] Why Bryant should have changed his mind about the causes of the Chunu migration is not clear.

In the course of their flight southwards, wrote Bryant, the Chunu forced their way successively through the territories of the Bomvu, and then, once they were across the Thukela, through those of the Nadi, Dunge, Shinga, Nyamvini and Bombo.[111] The basis for this account was probably Shepstone's brief statement, reflecting information given to him by Nombiba, that when the Chunu fled they had passed through the Nyamvini country on the middle Mvoti before passing through the region of what is now Pietermaritzburg.[112] There is no mention of the Chunu in Shepstone's notes on the histories of the other five chiefdoms named above. Bryant presumably listed them because their territories, as located by Shepstone in his histories, lay on the line of march which he felt the Chunu would have taken from their home territory, via the middle Mvoti, to the Pietermaritzburg region. In his 'Sketch', Bryant had had the Nyamvini being driven out by the Chunu;[113] in Olden Times he reverted to Shepstone's

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108. OT, pp. 266-7, 403.

109. Fuze, Black People, p. 52.

110. Holden, Past and Future, pp. 11-12, 26.

111. OT, p. 268.

112. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 131. The informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 105.

113. Bryant, Dictionary, p. 42*.

statement that the Chunu had merely 'passed through' their territory.[114]

'We next hear of the Cunu horde in Wusheland', Bryant continued.[115] Since the dispersal of the Wushe chiefdoms by the Thembu the previous year, he told his readers, the middle Mngeni region had been dominated by the Zelemu, who lived near Otto's Bluff on the northern outskirts of what is now Pietermaritzburg. On the advent of the Chunu, the Zelemu allied with them (elsewhere in Olden Times Bryant stated that whether the Zelemu did this willingly or unwillingly is not clear[116]), and accompanied them as far as the Lovu river, some fifty kilometres to the south. This scenario was different from the one described in Izindaba Zabantu, where the flight of the Chunu did not affect the Zelemu. The latter were subsequently driven south by the confederacy, and only after this event were the Wushe chiefdoms broken up by the Thembu.[117] In Olden Times the Zelemu remained on the Lovu, while the Chunu swung inland towards the Drakensberg. After destroying a section of the Tolo, they returned to the upper Lovu-Mkhomazi region, where they broke up the Yobeni and the Ntambo. A section of the Chunu here split off to settle in the Lufafa region, but the main body pressed on to the south. After driving the Nxasane from their territory in what is now the Creighton area, it halted and proceeded to settle there.[118]

Bryant's statement that the Zelemu, or Bhaca as he calls the composite group which came to be formed under the chief Madikane, lived at Otto's Bluff derived from Shepstone.[119] Where the rest of his information on this

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114. OT, p. 268.

115. Ibid.

116. OT, p. 374.

117. HZ, pp. 41, 45.

118. OT, pp. 268-70.

119. Bird., ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 136. The informant is identified as Nombiba in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 119.

group came from is not clear, for Shepstone had it '(f)irst driven by the confederacy', i.e. Bryant's fourth wave, which passed through the area some time after the Chunu.[120] Possibly drawing from Shepstone, an article by Scully on Bhaca history, to which Bryant would have had access, said much the same thing.[121] On the other hand, the statement that the Bhaca had gone off with Chunu receives some support in the evidence given by two of Stuart's informants;[122] it may be that Bryant had independently picked up similar information. His statement that the Zelemu/Bhaca had remained in the region of the Lovu may have been adopted from Scully, who had described the Bhaca as having halted near the Mkhomazi.[123]

The career of the Chunu from the Lovu-Mkhomazi region to the Mzimkhulu as described by Bryant was put together from Shepstone's histories. There was nothing, though, in Shepstone to justify Bryant's assertion that the Chunu had changed course towards the Drakensberg, destroyed a section of the Tolo, under a chief named Nomabunga, which lived near Mount Erskine, and then returned to the Mkhomazi area.[124] Mount Erskine overlooks the upper Mpofana (Mooi) river, and a diversion of this nature would have taken the Chunu on a two-hundred-kilometre trek at right angles to their previous line of march and over broken, hilly country. Shepstone in fact did not identify Nomabunga's group as Tolo, and he located it not near Mount Erskine but in the region of the upper Mkhomazi,[125] which is where Bryant had the Chunu in the first place.

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120. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 136.

121. W.C. Scully, 'Fragments of native history: the Amabaca', The State, vol. 1 (1909), p. 674.

122. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 60; evidence of Magidigidi, p. 85.

123. Scully, 'Fragments: the Amabaca', The State, vol. 1 (1909), p. 675.

124. OT, p. 268.

125. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 147.

The subsequent attacks made on the Yobeni, the Ntambo and the Nxasana (whom Shepstone calls the Cekwana) were all mentioned in Shepstone's histories.[126]

Bryant was not the first to use Shepstone's histories to reconstruct the flight of the Chunu. The brief account in Holden's Past and Future of the Kaffir Races, first published in 1866, also seems to have used Shepstone as a source. In this case, though, the reference would have been to a copy of Shepstone's unpublished notes, and not to his histories as published in Bird's Annals of Natal, which appeared only in 1888.[127] The name of Holden's 'Kalipinombuya' tribe is derived from the names Mkhaliphi and Boyiya, who are given by Shepstone as chiefs of the Nyamvini and Dunge respectively. Holden's 'Ngwanavizi' is Ngcwanikazi, chief of a section of the Ntambo; 'Umcabesa' is Machibise; 'Umabutyana' is Mabutshana, chief of the Yobeni; and 'Unomatiti' is Nomathithi, chief of another section of the Ntambo. All these groups and personages feature in Shepstone's histories.[128]

In his newly acquired domain near the Mzimkhulu, Bryant went on, the Chunu chief Macingwane began to make 'further additions to the already considerable multitude amassed on the journey down'.[129] The only group that he actually mentions by name as having given its allegiance to Macingwane was the Dlanyoka; the information on this he derived from Shepstone.[130] In the process of expanding his chiefdom Macingwane also drove out a group of Shwawu; again Bryant's information came from Shepstone.[131] Bryant

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126. Ibid., pp. 147-8.

127. Holden, Past and Future, pp. 26-7.

128. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 131, 132, 137, 147, 148.

129. OT, p. 270.

130. OT, 561; Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 140. Shepstone's informant is identified as Nombiba in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 126.

131. OT, p. 270; Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 148.

also suggested that at this time Macingwane's strength was further augmented by a renewed alliance with the Bhaca, who, he maintained, had been left behind at the Lovu, and had subsequently been pushed further southwards by the confederacy which formed his fourth 'wave'. His presentation left room for doubt that such an alliance was actually established, for he said nothing at all about it in his account of Chunu history, and brought it in only obliquely in his discussion of the history of the Bhaca, who were presented as having become junior allies of the Chunu.[132] Again his information was derived from Shepstone, who had recorded that the Bhaca had been driven south by the confederacy, and that they had settled across the Mzimkhulu. Here they had 'to some extent' come under the authority of Macingwane.[133]

The growing power of Macingwane, according to Bryant, soon attracted the attention of Shaka. In his account, a Zulu army chased the Chunu up the Mzimkhulu and across it to Nsikeni mountain in what is now East Griqualand. Here the Zulu caught up with the Chunu, massacred their women and children, and seized their cattle, thus effectively destroying the chiefdom. Macingwane himself, with some of his sons, escaped, and then resolved to make his way back to the Zulu kingdom and submit to Shaka. To avoid the peoples whom the Chunu had attacked during their passage through Natal, he took an upland route, but was killed by cannibals on the way. Numbers of his adherents, including two of his sons, eventually reached Shaka's country and become subject to him.[134]

The sources of Bryant's information on this section of Chunu history are not clear. Shepstone, whose concern was with the chiefdoms that had inhabited the region which

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132. OT, pp. 270, 377-8, 380, 383.

133. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 131-2, 136. The informant is identified as Nombiba in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 105, 119.

134. OT, pp. 270-1.

became the colony of Natal, did not collect information specifically on the history of the Chunu. Fuze had several snippets in his Abantu Abamnyama which were consistent with Bryant's account,[135] and Holden, without indicating his sources, wrote of a great battle on the Mzimkhulu in which Macingwane was killed.[136] Other than these, no published sources on Chunu history have been found which Bryant could have used.

The historicity of the initial phases of Bryant's third wave rests on minimal evidence. The sources on the reasons for the Chunu migration are contradictory, and the evidence for the first stages of their movement virtually non-existent. For his description of the later stages, Bryant relies primarily on Shepstone, who seems to have derived most of his information from a single informant, Nombiba. This is not to argue that the migration of the Chunu through the midlands of what is now Natal did not take place, but the way is clearly wide open for a different interpretation based on a wider range of sources than those used by Bryant.

6. The fourth wave

If Bryant's accounts of the second and third wave draw heavily on Shepstone, his description of the fourth wave is based almost entirely on that single source. The notion that after the flight of the Chunu a 'confederacy' of small chiefdoms formed in order to force its way through the Bhaca who barred their way to the south again seems to rest on the testimony of Nombiba alone. In outlining to Shepstone the history of the Nyamvini, he identified the members of the confederacy as the Bhele, two sections of Nhlangwini, three sections of Dunge, the Nyamvini and the Fuze. These, he claimed, were groups which had been left exposed to Zulu attacks by the flight

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135. Fuze, Black People, pp. 19, 23, 52-3.

136. Holden, Past and Future, p. 27.

of the Chunu. Their initial attack on the Bhaca was repulsed, but with the assistance of the Gwenyane people, they returned to the attack and succeeded in forcing their way through.[137] Shepstone obtained further information on the histories of the Fuze and of the Khuze-Nhlangwini from two other informants, Magwaza and Gayeni respectively, but in his notes on these histories there is no mention of any of the events spoken of by Nombiba.[138] Nor are they mentioned in his notes on the history of the Bhele as obtained from Nombiba, Mnguni and Mhlelwana.[139]

A number of confusing variations emerge as between Bryant's successive accounts of the fourth wave. In his 'Sketch' of 1905, the flight of the Chunu was followed, as in Shepstone's record of Nombiba's testimony, by that of the confederacy, which had been formed to ensure a successful escape to the south 'out of the way of the Zulu terror impending from the north'.[140] In his Izindaba Zabantu article, though, the factor precipitating the flight of the confederacy is the flight of the Ngwane and the Bhele, which is seen as having taken place some time after that of the Chunu and Thembu.[141]

More confusion emerges from Bryant's treatment of the confederacy's attack on the Bhaca. Where Shepstone had the first attack on the Bhaca beaten back, and the second, made with the aid of the Gwenyane, successful, in his 'Sketch' Bryant mentioned only the second, with the Gwenyane appearing as original members of the confederacy.[142] In Izindaba Zabantu, he at one point followed a

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137. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 131-2. The informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 105.

138. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 135-6, 143, 152. The informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 116, 139.

139. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142. The informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 137.

140. Bryant, Dictionary, p. 42*.

141. HZ, pp. 35-6.

142. Bryant, Dictionary, p. 42*.

similar line. He had the confederacy, including the Gwenyane as a later addition, pushing 'unscathed' through the Wushe (i.e. Bhaca) forces, with no mention of a previous defeat.[143] At another point, however, he reverted to Shepstone's accounts: the confederacy was first driven back (this time by the Zelemu, another of the component groups of the Bhaca), then enlisted the support of the Gwenyane and drove the Zelemu before it.[144] In Olden Times Bryant kept to this latter variant, though in this account the confederacy was faced by a 'Zelemu-Wushe combine', and the Gwenyane were renamed the Bombo.[145] He had the confederacy driving the Bhaca back not from the Otto's Bluff region north of Pietermaritzburg, as in Shepstone's account, but from the region of the Lovu river, to which, in his view, they had previously been pushed by the flight of the Chunu.[146]

The identities of the Gwenyane/Bombo and their chiefs are a further source of confusion in Bryant's accounts. Much of it derived from his reading of Shepstone. In the latter's notes the chiefdom was called the Gwenyane and its chief Noqandambedu. A section of it was called the Mbedu, with Manyonyo as chief. Shepstone also identified two Bombo tribes, one under Ndelu and the other under Manyonyo. He gave no indication that either was in any way linked with the Gwenyane.[147] In his 'Sketch', Bryant mentioned only the Gwenyane under their chief Nocandambedu, and said nothing about the Bombo.[148] In one of his Izindaba Zabantu articles he gave the Gwenyane under Noqambedu (sic) as members of the confederacy,[149]

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143. HZ, p. 36.
144. Ibid., p. 41.
145. OT, p. 377.
146. Ibid.
147. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 136, 137, 141, 151.
148. Bryant, Dictionary, p. 42*.
149. HZ, pp. 36, 41.

and then in another he made an identification between the Gwenyane and the Bombo. In this, the chief of the Bombo, Mbedu, was dead by Shaka's time, and his two sons, Manyonyo and Magwenyane, divided his people between them. Magwenyane's section was the one called in by the confederacy to help defeat the Wushe.[150] In Olden Times, Mbedu, or Noqandambedu, was portrayed as still alive and chief of the Bombo, and it was he who assisted the confederacy.[151] The Gwenyane, for their part, did not feature at all in the book.

After the confederacy's defeat of the Bhaca, Shepstone had the Gwenyane (together with Nyamvini and Dunge) returning to their territories near the Mvoti, while the rest of the confederacy moved on to the south.[152] In his 'Sketch' Bryant said nothing of the return of the Gwenyane: the implication was that they remained members of the confederacy.[153] In Izindaba Zabantu they remained in the confederacy until it broke up, upon which they returned home.[154] In Olden Times, Bryant had the Bombo acting like Shepstone's Gwenyane, and leaving the confederacy after its victory over the Zelemu-Wushe, or Bhaca.[155]

Bryant's account of the career of the confederacy after the defeat of the Bhaca was taken straight from Shepstone. In Olden Times, as the confederacy moved on from the Pietermaritzburg-Richmond area, it successively attacked and drove out the Njilo, the Cindaneni, and the Ntshele.[156] In Izindaba Zabantu it also drove out the Ntshangase or Shangase.[157] All four of these groups were

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150. Ibid., pp. 80-1.
151. OT, pp. 377-8.
152. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 131-2.
153. Bryant, Dictionary,, p. 42*
154. HZ, p. 42.
155. OT, pp. 378, 552.
156. OT, pp. 378-9.
157. HZ, p. 41.

given by Shepstone as having been 'driven' or 'dispersed' by the confederacy.[158] Bryant added nothing of substance to Shepstone's brief comments. Then, when, in Olden Times, the confederacy reached the Mkhomazi river, it broke up. Yearning for 'the peace and plenty they had so foolishly relinquished', the Dunge, Fuze and Nyamvini returned 'along the bloody trail of their own wanton slaughter'. The Nhlangwini and Memela, having 'no homeland to look lovingly back to, no flesh-pots but those of wild-beasts and cannibalism', continued their weary march southward to the Mzimkhulu and beyond.[159]

In describing all this, Bryant was once again able to fill several pages on the basis of a few lines of information obtained from Shepstone. His account of the break-up of the confederacy rested on a single sentence in Shepstone's notes on the history of the Dunge, as obtained from Nombiba and Funwayo, to the effect that the Dunge 'was one of the tribes which returned from the Umkomazi, and attempted to occupy their own country'.[160] None of Shepstone's histories of the other tribes of the confederacy mentioned any such event.

Bryant's description of the subsequent histories of the former member-chiefdoms of the confederacy derived partly from Shepstone and partly from his own attempts at reconstruction. An inconsistency emerged in his treatment of the movement of the Nhlangwini and Memela southwards to the Mzimkhulu. At one point in Olden Times they proceeded together as far as the Mzimvubu, where, it seems, they proceeded to settle. Two pages later, the implication of Bryant's text is that they travelled separately, before

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158. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 146, 147, 149. The only informant identified is Nombiba for the Njilo history: see T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 145.

159. OT, pp. 379-80. The quotations are all from p. 380.

160. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1,,p. 132. The informants are identified in T.Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 106.

they began 'plundering, capturing, murdering' in the region between the Mzimkhulu and the Msikaba.[161]

There is nothing in Shepstone about the career of the Nhlangwini and Memela in southern Natal-East Griqualand. It is not clear where Bryant obtained his information on the latter group. His information on the Nhlangwini almost certainly came from brief notes on their history recorded by Gardiner in 1835.[162] For the history of the other members of the confederacy - the Dunge, Nyamvini and Fuze - after its break-up he once again reverted to Shepstone. In the latter's account, the Dunge returned from the Mkhomazi to their home territory, only to be attacked by Zihlandlo of the Mkhize, upon which many of them became cannibals. Bryant's account added very little to this.[163] In Shepstone's notes, the Nyamvini returned home and gave their allegiance to Zihlandlo, who had come under Zulu rule. In Bryant, they returned, were attacked by a Zulu force, and then went off to subject themselves to the Mkhize chief.[164] As far as the Fuze were concerned, Shepstone said nothing about either their flight or their return. In Shaka's time they were attacked by a force of Zulu and forced to take refuge in the Karkloof forests. They were then allowed to re-occupy their former territory as Shaka's tributaries, but, when a violent succession dispute broke out among them, the were once again driven out.[165] All this, with further details

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161. OT,. pp. 380, 382-3.

162. A. Gardiner, Narrative of a Journey to the Zoola Country, Cape Town, 1966 (repr. of 1st ed., London, 1836), pp. 276-7, 312.

163. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 132 (the informants are identified as Nombiba and Funwayo in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 106; OT, pp. 380, 551-2.

164. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 132 (the informant is identified as Nombiba in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 105); OT, pp. 380, 409, 548.

165. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 135-6 (the informant is identified as Magwaza in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 116).

of the succession dispute, was taken by Bryant and added to his account of the return of the Fuze from the Mkhomazi after the break-up of the confederacy.

In writing his account of the fourth wave, Bryant may also have used Scully's account of Bhaca history, in which the Bhaca were pushed out of the Pietermaritzburg region by the Nhlangwini.[166] Theal's similar account, which was very probably another source used by Bryant, was probably also derived from Scully.[167] It is possible that this statement may itself represent a reworking by Scully of information derived from Shepstone's histories.

Bryant's account of the fourth wave is thus seen to rest on very meagre evidence. The displacement of groups like the Nhlangwini, Memela and Bhaca from the Natal midlands seems historically well grounded (see pp. 249 ff below), but whether it took place in the way in which Bryant described is an open question. That such a thing as the confederacy was formed, and that the Dunge, Nyamvini, Fuze and Bombo were involved in it, cannot be regarded as historical fact. Bryant's account of it in the end rests on the testimony given to Shepstone by a single informant, Nombiba. Even if his evidence had a factual base, it is impossible to tell to what extent it was reworked by Shepstone. In addition, there are too many inconsistencies in Bryant's successive versions of the history of the confederacy for its historical existence to be taken as established fact.

7. The 'Zulu invasions'

The basis of Bryant's account of the Zulu invasions of the region south of the Thukela which he saw as having taken place after the passage of the four waves of 'refugees' is once again to be found in Shepstone's histories. Of the

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166. Scully, 'Fragments: the Amabaca', The State, vol. 1 (1909), p. 674.

167. Theal, History of S.A. since 1795, vol. 2, p. 358.

ninety-four tribal histories which he recorded, fifty-one indicate that the tribe concerned had been driven out or destroyed by Shaka. Mostly ignoring the fact that the other forty-three histories did not record Zulu attacks, and in some cases pointed to a different interpretation of the region's history, Bryant used the information which he found in Shepstone's histories to develop further the long-established notion that in the reign of Shaka Natal had been devastated by marauding Zulu armies.

In his sucessive historical accounts, Bryant organized this information in rather different ways. In the 'Sketch' published in his Dictionary he gave no details at all about Zulu operations south of the Thukela. Rather, he wrote in generalized and exaggerated terms of the waves of destruction which had 'rolled from the Zulu country over the face of Natal, obliterating in their course all signs of human life'. In similar vein he stated, 'Then, to make the destruction complete, organized bands of Zulu murderers regularly patrolled the waste, hunting for any stray men and running them down like wild-pig. Thus, struggling in the flood, the hundred Lala clans were borne off to the south and got lost among the Kafir tribes between the Mzimkulu and the Great Fish River...'.[168] In tones reminiscent of Nathaniel Isaacs at his most vituperative, Bryant thus continued, with hardly a historical fact to leaven his outpourings.

In his Izindaba Zabantu articles, Bryant was much more concerned to base his diatribes on apparently empirical foundations. He structured his accounts of clan history round the notion that Shaka had mounted four campaigns in the region south of the Thukela. The first, undertaken in about 1817, was mounted in order to bring under his sway the large number of small clans along the Thukela which lay beteen the Zulu and the Thembu, as a preliminary to an attack on the latter. It was a mostly bloodless campaign,

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168. Bryant, Dictionary, pp. 48*-49*.

consisting of a succession of minor victories, 'each withal bringing its increment of territory and power'.[169] In the course of it, the Cube, Mkhize (Mbo), Ngcolosi, Nxamalala, Zondi and Mpumuza submitted to Shaka without resistance. The Somi fled south to join a related group on the Mvoti river, the Xesibe took refuge with the neighbouring Ngongoma or Fuze, and the Khabela took to the bush and, though they lost their cattle, were able to avoid Zulu rule. The Phephetha alone offered resistance, and were duly attacked and broken up. Thus easily did the southern bank of the Thukela from about Ntunjambili mountain near what is today Kranskop village upstream to about the Mpanza river come under Zulu domination.[170]

In the details of his account, Bryant closely followed Shepstone, whose information was obtained from five identified informants and perhaps others as well.[171] He even dealt with the individual chiefdoms in the same order in which Shepstone did. There was nothing, however, in Shepstone to suggest that the Zulu attacked all these chiefdoms in the course of a single campaign: this was Bryant's own gloss.

Shaka's 'second Natal campaign' took place, according to Bryant, in about 1819. The target on this occasion was the section of Ngongoma or Fuze which lived on the upper Mvoti, and which had recently returned to its home territory after having for a while made off southwards with the confederacy. Leaving their cattle to the Zulu, the Ngongoma fled south to take refuge in the forests of what is now the Karkloof-Boston region. A while later they were permitted to return to their country as tributaries to Shaka. Soon afterwards a violent dispute

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169. HZ, pp. 48-9. The quotation appears on p. 49.

170. Ibid., pp. 49-61.

171. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 128, 133-5. Shepstone's named informants were Mnguni, Sibetshe, Hlephuhlephu, Nombiba and Magwaza; they are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. pp. 107, 109-15.

over the chiefly succession broke out among them, and again the Zulu drove them out, this time for good.[172]

This case provides a particularly graphic example of how, in constructing his narrative, Bryant was apt to set about elaborating on his sources of information in an attempt to dramatize the story. Shepstone's account of the migrations of the Ngongoma/Fuze, which was based on information obtained from Magwaza, reads as follows:

> Driven by Chaka, who took their cattle, they took refuge in the forests under the Karkloof range, and as far as their present residence in the forests of the sources of the Umhlazi. They then got permission from Chaka to occupy their old country, as his people; but they were constantly harassed by his armies, and driven out of it for having entered without his sanction upon a war among themselves on a question of succession; they then moved along the mountain ranges to the Imhlozane Mountain, above the Dargle, and eventually took up their residence where they are at present, at the head of the Umlazi river...'.[173]

In his article in Izindaba Zabantu Bryant recast Shepstone's terse notes to read,

> Still a season, and the unsparing Zulu army forded the Tukela for the second time, and the doom of the Ngongomas of Mahawule was therewith decreed. In vain did Mahawule and his handful of warriors try to stay the onslaught of so insuperable a host. Wisely they took the safe course, and, sacrificing their cattle, found escape for themselves in flight to the forests away to the south at the Karkloof and upper Mlazi.
>
> With submission and spoils any conqueror should be satisfied. Shaka having helped himself to the one, Mahawule soon after tendered him the other, and was thereupon graciously permitted to return with his people and reoccupy his former country. True, residence there was no longer enjoyable. All that was beautiful in life, all its pristine tranquillity and sunshine, had suddenly vanished, and the whole pandemonium of evil spirits had been seemingly let loose on each and driven mankind morally mad. The Zulu armies, debauched with blood and every species of devilry, constantly crossed and recrossed Ngongomaland,

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172. HZ, p. 69.

173. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 135-6. The informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 116.

> ruthlessly killing and destroying as they went. Then in this supreme moment of their distress, as though their cup were not yet full, these pitiable Ngongomas, incapable even now of controlling their racial vice, must needs set to and fight among themselves over such an obvious inanity as their already demolished chieftainship! The impropriety of waging war in the very presence of his own army, and the presumption of settling their political disputes without reference to him, their suzerain, amounted in Shaka's eyes to an intolerable contempt of court, if not indeed to an actual lese majeste. Whereupon he sent down a strong force which drove the whole quarrelsome clan from the country for good and all. Henceforth, these Ngongomas, even as their relatives in the Tukela bush, led the 'simple life' of wild beasts, ranging the hills about the upper Mngeni and Mlazi and living on such fare as the veld and forest could supply.[174]

The attack on the Ngongoma/Fuze was all that constituted Shaka's second campaign as seen by Bryant. The basis for his distinguishing it as a separate campaign seems to have been simply the statement made by Shepstone in his notes on the history of the Xesibe that the latter had taken refuge with the Fuze in the course of Shaka's first campaign, the implication being that the Fuze had not then been attacked.[175]

Shaka's third campaign, as described by Bryant in Izindaba Zabantu, also took place in 1819. After having feasted for a while on cattle taken from the Ngongoma/Fuze, the Zulu returned to make war on other chiefdoms of the mid-Mvoti region. The Mapumulo were broken up, and the Ngangeni, Hlongwa and Bombo/Gwenyane driven out of their territories as refugees.[176] The history of the Nyamvini was treated by Bryant in conjunction with these others; the reader has to scrutinize it carefully to learn that the Nyamvini were not actually attacked by the Zulu, though to a reader skimming the pages of Bryant's account it could easily

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174. HZ, pp. 69-70.

175. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 135.

176. HZ, pp. 74-82.

appear that they were. Again Bryant's information came directly from Shepstone;[177] again there was nothing in the latter to indicate that the chiefdoms mentioned were attacked by the Zulu in the course of a single campaign.

The fourth Zulu campaign as described by Bryant was premised in the same way as he seems to have premised the others. He took a number of chiefdoms which, according to Shepstone, were located within a particular geographical area - in this case the coastal regions and hinterland from the Thukela to the Mkhomazi - and had been attacked by Shaka, and portrayed them as having been the victims of a single Zulu campaign. The fourth campaign, according to Bryant, began with Shaka's intervening in a succession dispute among the Cele on the lower Mvoti. A few weeks later the Zulu force broke up the nearby Ndlovu chiefdom. At much the same time, it destroyed the Somi, the Lumbi, the Zelemu, and the Nkulwini. Moving south, it broke up the Thuli chiefdom between the Mngeni and Mkhomazi, and then, turning up the Mngeni valley, drove out another group of Ndlovu, the Dlanyawo, the Nyamvu and the Dlanyoka.[178] Only in the case of the Thuli did Bryant add information which he had obtained from sources other than Shepstone; for the rest he drew almost entirely on the latter's histories.[179] Shepstone also gave the Dangela, Gwayi, Mbomvane, Nomandla, Shobeni and Vundle, all of which were located on the coast south of the Mkhomazi, as having been destroyed by Shaka.[180] Bryant followed him in simply listing these names, together with those of the Bangane, Mbenge and Mbili, as those of chiefdoms which had

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177. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 127-8, 130, 131, 132, 149. Three informants, Funwayo, Mnguni and Nombiba, are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 103-6.

178. HZ, pp. 84-95.

179. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 124-5, 128, 129, 130, 137-8, 139, 140, 141, 146.

180. Ibid., pp. 148, 149.

been so totally dispersed by the Zulu as to leave virtually no trace of their history.[181]

In Olden Times Bryant did not present his account of the Zulu campaigns systematically as he did in his Izindaba Zabantu articles, but essentially the same conception informed his discussion. The order and dating of the Zulu campaigns were somewhat different, but otherwise the picture of Zulu operations which he presented was very much the same as that in Izindaba Zabantu. Thus in about 1821-22 the Zulu army scoured the Thukela valley, subjugated the Ngcolosi, the Nxamalala, and the Nadi/Zondi, drove the Khabela into the bush, and broke up the Phephetha. A difference was that the Xesibe were not attacked in the course of this campaign; they remained in situ until driven out by the passage of the Thembu.[182]

The second Zulu campaign (although Bryant does not call it such) in Olden Times was the equivalent of the fourth campaign in Izindaba Zabantu. In 1821-22, i.e. in the same period as the first campaign, a Zulu force invaded the Mngeni valley region and broke up the Dlanyoka, the Njilo, the Nkulwini, the Ndlovu, the Nyavu and the Dlanyawo.[183] Also in 1821, Bryant had the Zulu attacking the Thuli, although he did not specifically make this part of the second campaign.[184]

There was something of a contradiction in Bryant's dating of this and the following campaign in Olden Times. Logically it could be expected that the Zulu would have subjected the Mvoti region before proceeding further south to campaign in the Mngeni area. This was how Bryant had it in Izindaba Zabantu, but in Olden Times he inverted the order of campaign. In 1822-23 he had the Zulu invading

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181. HZ,, p. 95.
182. OT, 254, 507, 510, 511, 512, 513, 521, 523.
183. Ibid., pp. 555-6.
184. Ibid., p. 503.

the lower Mvoti area in what was effectively their third campaign in Natal and the partial equivalent of the third campaign as described in Izindaba Zabantu. As in the latter work, the Zulu drove out the Hlongwa and broke up the Maphumulo.[185] For the rest, his account was somewhat different. The Bombo, who were attacked in the third campaign in Izindaba Zabantu, were, in Olden Times, attacked separately at a later date of 1824-25.[186] The Nyamvini, who, as indicated above, escaped a Zulu attack in the pages of Izindaba Zabantu, fell victim to one in Olden Times.[187] This latter account added two further names to the list of chiefdoms attacked in the course of the third campaign: the Shinga, who were not mentioned in Izindaba Zabantu, and the Somi, who in Izindaba Zabantu were attacked during the fourth campaign.[188]

In Izindaba Zabantu, the Zulu attack on the Ngongoma, or Fuze, counted as their second campaign across the Thukela. In Olden Times the Fuze were also attacked separately, but by 'a roaming band of plunderers' under the orders of the Zulu king rather than by a 'Zulu army'.[189] A final difference which may be noted is that where in Izindaba Zabantu the Cele on the lower Mvoti were subordinated to the Zulu at the beginning of the fourth campaign, in Olden Times this took place in what appears to have been a separate expedition dated to about 1823 or 1824.[190] Apart from the attack on the Bombo mentioned above as having taken place in 1824-25, this in Bryant's view, was the final act in the Zulu subjugation and devastation of Natal.

Bryant was not unmindful in Olden Times of the fact that the history of the Zululand-Natal region could be

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185. Ibid., pp. 525, 530.
186. Ibid., p. 552.
187. Ibid., p. 548.
188. Ibid., pp. 532, 535.
189. Ibid., pp. 254, 491.
190. Ibid., pp. 537, 538-40.

seen from a broader perspective. In the earlier 19th century, he wrote, 'a wave of political animosity, panic, fear, or general unrest' had 'invaded the South African native mind'. As he saw it, 'this distemper had entered upon its earlier stages even prior to the days of Shaka and Dingiswayo'.[191] By his own account Bryant was aware, too, as Shepstone in writing his 'Historic sketch' had been aware,[192] that 'the doleful state of chaos and panic' into which Natal had fallen was due not simply to the 'invasions' of the Zulu but also to the passage of the groups of non-Zulu which he had been at pains to describe.[193] But, like Shepstone, he chose to ignore or downplay these perspectives, and to present his historical argument in a way which reinforced the entrenched view that Natal had been devastated by Shaka's armies. Shepstone had used three literary devices to do this. In the first place he had presented Shaka as either an accomplice (in the case of the first wave) or as the main aggressor in the events which had set the waves of destruction in motion. In the second place, as was by the mid-19th century a standard practice, he had described the persona of the Zulu king in lurid and emotive terms. Shaka, he wrote, was a 'dreaded chief', the cause of 'universal terror', the exterminator of men, women and children. In the third place, without adducing any firm evidence, he had asserted that after the passage of the four waves of destruction, Natal had 'annually been traversed by Zulu armies', to the point where organized community life had ceased to exist, and starvation and cannibalism were the order of the day for the handfuls of refugees who clung on in forests and other hiding places.[194]

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191. Ibid., p. 147.

192. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, p. 417.

193. OT, p. 376.

194. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, pp. 417-18.

Bryant used the same techniques in his own work. In Olden Times Shaka was seen as the fons et origo of the 'cataclysmic political upheaval' in Zululand from which great waves of destruction 'radiated out and spread to every point of the compass throughout Bantuland'.[195] Though his main account of the displacement of the Ngwane quite clearly placed the responsibility for this event on the Mthethwa and Ndwandwe,[196] at another point he was nevertheless able to implicate Shaka by listing this event as the first in a series of 'disastrous experiences' which emanated from Shaka's 'stirring up the forces of evil'.[197] The man who caused this havoc was, in Bryant's terms, a bloodthirsty tyrant, a savage genius, 'the Timur and Attila of his race'.[198] Olden Times, which is in some ways a political biography of Shaka, is studded with accounts of atrocities which he is supposed to have committed.

Anything more than a cursory reading of Shepstone's histories reveals that, according to this source, at least, the incursions of the Zulu into the region south of the Thukela were for the most part confined to the territory lying between the lower and mid-Thukela and the Mngeni. When the areas which Bryant described as having been invaded by the Zulu are actually located on the map, the same picture emerges from the pages of Olden Times. But thanks to the absence of a connected narrative, this fact is not clear to the ordinary reader: the impression which the book leaves is that the Zulu looted and murdered over the entire region. That this was very much the impression which Bryant wanted to create was clear from the way in which he inserted generalized descriptions of Zulu raiding into the narrative. Thus in a series of

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195. OT, pp. 252, 376.

196. Ibid., pp. 137-9.

197. Ibid., p. 252.

198. See esp. ch. 64 of Olden Times. The quotation is from p. 171.

chapters on the clans of the Natal region, he mentioned the successive invasions of the Thembu, Chunu and confederacy, and then went on, '...and in pursuit of all came the armies of Shaka, roaming and ravaging wherever human being or cattle presented themselves for capture or attack'.[199] In similar unspecific vein he asserted that 'whichever way the roaming Zulu army moved, clan was driven upon clan, each in turn annihilating the other in their common struggle to escape...'.[200]

Through repetition of this kind, the idea was reinforced that the Zulu were the devastators of Natal, when, except in two instances,[201] no firm evidence whatever was put forward to sustain the view that they were active anywhere outside the easternmost parts of the region. By Bryant's own account, the notion of the general 'Zulu invasions' is baseless. It is a product of a projection of the devastation stereotype rather than of a historical enquiry.

8. The problem of chronology

The final issue considered in this chapter is the validity of the chronology which Bryant projected as established fact in Olden Times. Given the absence of contemporary documentation of the events which he was describing, the question becomes salient of how he arrived at his datings, and how reliable his estimates were. This is all the more so because, as already noted, his estimates changed over time. In his 'Sketch' he had placed the period of the upheavals south of the Thukela as beginning in 1812; in Izindaba Zabantu he had placed it in the period c.1816-1819; and in Olden Times he moved it still further forward to the years c.1818-1821.

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199. OT, p. 555.

200. Ibid., p. 551.

201. These two instances concern the expeditions supposedly sent in the early 1820s against the Chunu on the Mzimkhulu and against the Ngwane on the upper Thukela: see below, pp. 284-6.

Bryant's development of the chronology which he used in his early work needs to be understood against the background of previous attempts to date the 'wars of Shaka'. The earliest writers on the subject provided very few absolute datings in their accounts, partly no doubt because of the difficulty of making accurate estimates, but also because most of them had little sense that African societies had much of a history to record and were therefore not particularly concerned to establish a clearly dated chronology of events. The earliest attempt at dating Shaka's reign seems to have been the statement published in 1826 by J.S. King, one of the traders operating at Port Natal, to the effect that Shaka had then been ruling for about eight years. This originally appeared in an article which he published anonymously in the South African Comercial Advertiser, and was reprinted in 1827 in Thompson's Travels and Adventures.[202] In 1835 Gardiner recorded a statement from Nhlangwini informants that their people had been driven away from the region of the Thukela river during 'the devastating wars of Charka' about fifteen years before. It was probably this statement, as published in Gardiner's Narrative the following year,[203] which formed the basis of the assertions made by Holden and Shooter in the 1850s that Shaka's forces had invaded Natal in about 1820.[204]

In his 'Historic sketch', drawn up in 1864, Shepstone adopted a rather earlier chronology. He must have known of King's estimate, for, besides having appeared in Thompson's book, it appeared in an extract from King's article which had been reprinted in Chase's well-known Natal Papers in 1843.[205] For reasons which are not clear

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202. Thompson, Travels and Adventures, pp. 248-9.

203. Gardiner, Narrative, p. 312.

204. Holden, History of the Colony of Natal (1855), pp. 41, 56; Shooter, Kafirs of Natal (1857), p. 260.

205. Chase, ed., Natal Papers, p. 21. Chase erroneously attributed the article to Farewell.

Shepstone pushed the date of Shaka's accession back to about 1810.[206] The ensuing upheavals in Natal he dated to the period 1812-1814,[207] an estimate which he adhered to in the article on the pre-European history of Natal which he published in 1875.[208] The influence of Shepstone's dating on subsequent works can be seen in Russell's well-known textbook on the geography and history of Natal, which first appeared in 1891 and went through numerous subsequent editions. Russell combined Shesptone's estimates for the beginning of Shaka's reign in 1810 and for the beginning of the wars in Natal in 1812 with the date of 1820, presumably derived from Holden and Shooter, for the end of the wars.[209]

In his earliest historical account, the 'Sketch' of 1905, Bryant adopted Shepstone's dates for the beginning of Shaka's reign and for the beginning of the period of upheavals south of the Thukela.[210] Apparently without realizing the contradiction, later in the same narrative he stated that the arrival of British traders at Port Natal in 1824 had taken place eight years after Shaka's accession, which he thus implicitly placed in 1816.[211] Bryant also adopted Shepstone's notion that the flight of the Ngwane and of the confederacy had respectively constituted the first and fourth 'waves' of refugees set in motion through Natal. For reasons which are not clear, he reversed Shepstone's second and third waves, and had the Thembu making off southwards before rather than after the Chunu.[212]

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206. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 2, p. 416.

207. Ibid., pp. 417, 418.

208. Shepstone, 'Early history of the Zulu-Kafir race', in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 158, 164.

209. Russell, Natal (1st ed.), pp. 130, 131, 135.

210. Bryant, Dictionary, pp. 38*, 39*.

211. Ibid., p. 48*.

212. Ibid., pp. 41*-43*.

The uncertainties and contradictions inherent in Bryant's chronology emerge more clearly still in his series of Izindaba Zabantu articles. At one point early in the series he had the Chunu as the first wave, the Thembu as the second, the Ngwane as the third, and the confederacy as the fourth.[213] More generally, though, in this work, the dating which he assigned to the individual waves gave the sequence as Chunu-confederacy-Thembu-Ngwane. The revision of the sequence from that used in the 'Sketch' seems to have hinged on a single piece of evidence, whose source was not given. This was a statement to the effect that the flight of the Ndwandwe from the Zulu, an event which was seen as having in turn precipitated the flight of the Ngwane into Natal, took place 'seven summers' before the battle of Ndololwane.[214] Nathaniel Isaacs, whose book was well known to Bryant, recorded that this battle had taken place in 1826;[215] by Bryant's reckoning, the flight of the Ngwane had thus taken place in c.1819.[216] In accepting this dating, Bryant created a problem for himself. If the Ngwane had in fact formed the first wave, as he had maintained in his 'Sketch', then the latter waves would have to be dated to the early 1820s, a dating which, at that stage in his thinking, Bryant appears to have regarded as too late in time. He therefore shifted the flight of the Ngwane to the last place in the sequence, and, so as not to have too large a time-gap between this wave and the others, shifted the rest of the sequence from the early to the late 1810s. The flight of the Chunu and of the confederacy was now placed in 1816, and that of the Thembu in 1818.[217] Why the 'Sketch's' sequence of Thembu-Chunu-confederacy now

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213. HZ, pp. 35-6.
214. Ibid., p. 15.
215. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 60.
216. HZ, pp. 25, 33, 35.
217. Ibid., pp. 40, 45, 81.

became Chunu-confederacy-Thembu is not indicated.

This revised dating created anomalies in Bryant's chronology of which he was not always aware. Though he had shifted the dates of 'Shaka's wars' forward in time, he still saw Shaka's reign as having begun in c.1810.[218] There was thus a gap of half a dozen years between his accession and the first wave. An even longer gap emerged between, on the one hand, his accession, and on the other, his first campaign across the Thukela and his attack on the neighbouring Qwabe, which Bryant dated to c.1817 and c.1818 respectively.[219] This stood in contrast to the picture of Zulu expansion which Bryant described in his 'Sketch',[220] and which, for that matter, had emerged in much of the previous literature. In these works the impression had been given that no sooner had Shaka come to power than he had begun his career of conquest of other chiefdoms.

Another problem which emerged from Bryant's fixing the date of the flight of the Ngwane at c.1819, a problem of which he was aware, had to do with the identity of the group which had displaced them. In his 'Sketch' Bryant had had the Ngwane driven out in c.1812 on the orders of Dingiswayo, chief of the Mthethwa, who, the reader was told, had died in c.1818.[221] In Izindaba Zabantu, the date of Dingiswayo's death was given as 1817.[222] It was logically impossible to caste him as the main agent in an event which Bryant now saw as having taken place two years later, so Bryant had to invoke another agency. In the event, for reasons that he did not explain, he proceeded to have the Ngwane driven out by the Ndwandwe, who in turn were in flight after defeat at the hands of the Zulu.[223]

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218. Ibid., p. 84.
219. Ibid., p. 61.
220. Bryant, Dictionary, pp. 41*-46*.
221. Bryant, Dictionary, pp. 39*, 43*.
222. HZ, p. 48.
223. Ibid., pp. 14, 25, 33, 35.

By the time he came to write Olden Times, Bryant had modified his ideas on the chronology of the Shakan period yet again. There were two key changes that need to be noted. One was his acceptance of a date of c.1816 for Shaka's accession. This, by his own acknowledgement, derived from an undated excerpt, published in Bird's Annals of Natal, from the previously mentioned article written by J.S. King, to the effect that at the time of its writing Shaka had been reigning for about eight years.[224] Bryant assumed that the original piece had been written in 1824, when the first British traders had arrived at Port Natal: as indicated above (see p. 144), it had in fact been written by King in 1826.

The other important change of chronology as reflected in Olden Times had to do with the both the sequence and the dating of the four waves. This change was necessitated by Bryant's reversion to the view that the Mthethwa chief Dingiswayo had been instrumental in causing the flight of the Ngwane. This switch of opinion was in turn most probably due to the publication in 1924 of new information on the life of Dingiswayo in James Stuart's uBaxoxele, a book which Bryant acknowledged as one of his sources.[225] Among Dingiswayo's campaigns, as described in some detail by Stuart's informant, Mashwili kaMngoye, was one against the Ngwane.[226] Logically this campaign had to be placed in time before the death of Dingiswayo at the hands of the Ndwandwe, an event which itself logically had to precede the destruction of the Ndwandwe chiefdom by the Zulu. This latter event, according to Bryant's account in Izindaba Zabantu as mentioned above (p. 146), could be absolutely dated to c.1819. In Olden Times Bryant

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224. OT, p. 93. The extract is in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 93. It was presumably lifted by Bird from Chase's Natal Papers, for it repeats Chase's erroneous attribution of the extract to Francis Farewell. Bryant reproduces Bird's and Chase's mistake. See also note 205 above.

225. OT, p. 137.

226. Stuart, ed., uBaxoxele, pp. 29-31.

retained this date, and, working back from it, dated the death of Dingiswayo to c.1818,[227] and his defeat of the Ngwane and their flight into Natal to the same year.[228]

Having fixed the date of Shaka's accession at c.1816 and the flight of the Ngwane at c.1818, Bryant then had to decide where to fit in the other three waves. To keep to the dating of 1816-1818 which he had used in Izindaba Zabantu would have meant compressing the events which surrounded Shaka's accession, together with the movement of all four waves, into the space of two years. It would also have meant having Shaka beginning his career of conquest at a time when he had only just succeeded to the chiefship and would hardly have had the opportunity to organize and mobilize the necessary force. Bryant's solution was to revert to the sequence of waves which he had postulated in his 'Sketch', so that the flight of the Ngwane in c.1818 now marked its beginning instead of its end, and to shift the rest of the sequence further forward in time. The flight of the Thembu was now placed in 1820, the year after the Zulu-Ndwandwe conflict, that of the Chunu in 1821, and that of the confederacy in the same year. An important factor in Bryant's decision to go back to placing the flight of the Thembu before that of the Chunu was probably the publication in 1924 of Stuart's uHlangakula. In a detailed account, which Bryant used as one of his sources,[229] the Thembu were described as having moved off to the south before the Chunu.[230]

The best that can be said of the chronology developed by Bryant through his successive accounts is that it is highly uncertain. It is based largely on guesswork rather than argumentation from evidence, and remains full of ambiguities and inconsistencies. His apparently arbitrary

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227. Ibid., pp. 158, 166.
228. Ibid., pp. 136, 139.
229. OT,, p. 247.
230. Stuart, ed., uHlangakula, pp. 13-19.

alteration of the sequences of 'waves', and of the dates which he assigned to them, marks his whole working method as suspect. There is nothing in is various accounts to indicate that any one of his estimates is more reliable than another, and his attribution of dates to specific events cannot be taken as evidence that those events actually happened. All in all, his attempts to strengthen his narrative's appearance of authenticity by placing it in a dated chronological framework should be treated with the greatest caution.

9. Bryant's account: a general assessment

The most significant finding of the investigation conducted above is that Bryant's account of the upheavals which took place south of the Thukela in the early 19th century was almost entirely derivative. Far from being based on oral traditions collected by Bryant himself, as most readers of Olden Times have probably assumed ever since the book was published, it was drawn mainly from previously published sources. The most important of these were Shepstone's 'Historic sketch', from which Bryant took the conceptual framework which he used, and Shepstone's brief histories of the 'tribes' of Natal, from which, without acknowledgement, Bryant obtained most of the empirical information which went into his account. In effect, his treatment of the upheavals was largely plagiarized.

Shepstone's histories were based on testimonies which he had collected from a dozen, perhaps more, African informants. He recorded very little by way of biographical detail about them or of the circumstances in which his interviews with them took place. It is thus difficult to assess the worth of his histories as primary source material, but, even if they are accepted as useful, it is clear that Bryant's account was grounded in very meagre evidence.

Much more problematic than the nature of the sources which Bryant used is the nature of the conceptual

framework which gave his narrative shape. The notion that in the late 1810s and early 1820s Natal was largely devastated by waves of refugees set in motion by Zulu aggression, followed by a series of Zulu campaigns, leaves too many questions unanswered, and in fact is contradicted in important respects by Bryant's own account. There is little doubt that at various stages groups like the Ngwane, Thembu and Chunu pushed their way through parts of the territories south of the Thukela in order to escape from an arena of intensifying conflict. But precisely what role was played by the Zulu in these conflicts, why, when and how these and other groups migrated, and what impact their movements had on the region, are questions which Bryant, with his fixation on 'great man' and Zulu-centric explanations of historical change, and on the colonial-made devastation stereotype, could hardly begin to ask, let alone to answer.

As far as the 'Zulu invasions' are concerned, there is enough evidence in the pages of Olden Times itself to contradict the notion, which Bryant was at pains to foster, that Zulu armies murdered and pillaged across the length and breadth of Natal. A close reading of his account makes clear that the Zulu military activities of which he spoke were concentrated mainly in the comparatively small area between the middle and lower Thukela and the lower Mngeni or perhaps the lower Mkhomazi. Similarly, Bryant's own account indicated that neither the Zulu nor any other group 'depopulated' the region south of the Thukela. It is likely that in many locations there was at particular times a sudden and substantial drop in population as the inhabitants fled from threatened destruction at the hands of the Zulu or other enemies. But Bryant's deliberate focus on events of this kind prevented him from making more of the evidence, which he himself adduced, that they were not universally or uniformly experienced south of the Thukela. By his own account, many of the chiefdoms of the Thukela-Mvoti area

remained in situ under Zulu domination,[231] while other groups, which he usually labelled as 'cannibals', survived in parts of the midlands and of the Thukela-Mzinyathi area.[232] A different interpretation of the region's history would have much more to say about these communities than Bryant does.

Related to Bryant's portrayal of the 'depopulation' of Natal was his treatment of the history of the large numbers of 'refugee' communities which he saw as having streamed southward away from the Zulu menace. In Olden Times the region south of the Mzimkhulu river became something of a dumping-ground for these groups, for once Bryant had them across the river he tended to lose interest in them. Either he pushed them off further south to become 'Fingoes' among the Xhosa chiefdoms,[233] or he had them involved in further rounds of internecine conflict. Bryant himself indicated that these struggles persisted in the Mzimkhulu-Mzimvubu region throughout the 1820s,[234] and it is clear even from his cursory treatment of them that their outcome was important for the subsequent history of the region north of the Mzimkhulu. But, again because of his Zulu-centric focus, he could only portray them as marginal to the conflicts with which he was primarily concerned.

Because he could not conceive of the Zulu state as founded on anything except violence and coercion, Bryant was similarly oblivious to the import of the evidence which he himself recorded that, far from setting out to depopulate the whole region south of the Thukela, the Zulu leadership was active in establishing expanded tributary chiefdoms in the southern marches of the region over which it sought to exercise authority. In the region between

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231. OT, pp. 507, 511, 521, 523, 530, 540, 545.
232. Ibid., pp. 58, 248, 271, 348, 377, 410, 551-2, 559.
233. See for example OT, pp. 270, 349, 387.
234. Ibid., p. 380.

the Thukela and the Mzinyathi, Bryant told his readers, Jobe kaMaphitha of the Sithole set up 'a magnificent dukedom' under Shaka's patronage.[235] Further down the Thukela, Zihlandlo kaGcwabe of the Mkhize was encouraged by Shaka to extend his authority southwards across the river into the upper Mvoti region.[236] On the lower Mvoti, Shaka intervened in a Cele succession dispute in favour of Magaye, who henceforth was also able 'to bask in Shaka's graces'.[237] These developments were all of a piece with Zulu expeditions, which Bryant described but whose political purpose he could not appreciate, to destroy potential rival states in the region, such as that of the Thembu on the Mzinyathi, of the Chunu on the Mzimkhulu, of the Ngwane on the upper Thukela, and of the Thuli in the Mngeni-Mkhomazi region. Zulu policies in the territories south of the Thukela were altogether far more complex than Bryant could allow for.

With his focus on Zulu agency, and on militarism, Bryant was quite unable to place the events which he described in the context of the sweeping political changes which had been taking place across south-eastern Africa from at least the later 18th century onward, nor even against the background of the more localized conflicts that were taking place among the chiefdoms of the Thukela-Delagoa Bay region. By uncritically placing himself within the settler tradition of writing the region's history, Bryant precluded any possibility of developing a more broadly-based analysis. His narrative ended up as a largely fictionalized interpretation of threadbare evidence. Its status as a definitive or even a reliable account must be rejected.

In 1966, the same year that Omer-Cooper launched the notion of the mfecane into general historical discourse, Donald Morris wrote of Bryant's major work:

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235. Ibid., pp. 259-60.

236. Ibid., pp. 405, 409-12.

237. Ibid., p. 540.

> Olden Times in Zululand and Natal...depends primarily on tribal lore garnered during four decades of exhaustive interviews with native elders.... (I)t is safe to say his work will never be exceeded. Almost everything published on the subject since depends on him....[238]

Morris's encomium exemplifies the kind of reverential attitude to Bryant's work which has allowed it to stand virtually unchallenged for sixty years. The present chapter has sought to collapse the notion that Bryant can be taken as an authority on the history of the upheavals which took place in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the early 19th century. With the notion of the Zulu 'devastations' exposed as a colonial-made myth, and with the myth's chief empirical prop now demolished, the way is open for the development of a new interpretation of this history. This exercise will be taken up in the next two chapters.

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238. Morris, Washing of the Spears, 1966 ed., p. 618.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS NORTH OF THE THUKELA IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

1. The intensification of conflict in the Delagoa Bay-Thukela region

Chapter 1 above described the processes of political change which were taking place in the valleys of the Thukela and Mzinyathi and in the territories to the south in the late 18th century and perhaps the first years of the 19th. The main developments dealt with were, first, the expansion of certain of the chiefdoms of the middle and lower Thukela and the upper Mzinyathi, and, second, the migrations from north of the Thukela of the Thuli and the Cele, and their establishment of two new paramountcies in the coastal regions. These developments, it was argued, were to a greater or lesser extent responses to the processes of political centralization and territorial expansion which were taking place in this period in the region to the north from the Thukela to Delagoa Bay and beyond.

In the first two decades of the 19th century, political conflict among the newly enlarged polities of the Delagoa Bay-Thukela region greatly intensified. As has been argued in chapter 2 above, the repercussions as they were felt south of the Thukela have usually been described in the literature in terms of a series of wars, raids and population movements which were stimulated in the first instance by the expansion of the Zulu state, and which culminated in the early 1820s with the establishment of unquestioned Zulu domination over the territories between the Thukela and the Mzimkhulu. Very little attention has been paid to the specifics of the political changes which took place in this area, or to their more immediate

causes: generally speaking, they are presented simply as the automatic result of the growth of the despotic and militaristic Zulu state. Virtually no notice has been taken of factors other than that of Zulu expansionism, and, even where they avoid racist stereotypes about Zulu bloodthirstiness and Shaka's mania for power, the vast majority of conventional accounts hardly begin to analyze the extension of Zulu power south of the Thukela in historical terms. If the forces which made for political change in this region in the 1810s and 1820s are to be better understood, the nature of the conflicts which were taking place north of the river after about 1800 needs first to be examined in some detail. This chapter presents an analysis of political developments in the region from Delagoa Bay to the Thukela in the early 19th century, with a focus on the area south of the White Mfolozi.

By 1800 there were at least seven large if loosely-structured paramountcies in the Delagoa Bay-Thukela region. These were the Tembe, Mabhudu, Dlamini, Ndwandwe, Hlubi, Mthethwa and Qwabe chiefdoms. In all of these the powerholding groups were attempting to consolidate and extend the scope of their authority, and, in the case of the Dlamini, Ndwandwe and Mthethwa at least, to expand the territories under their control. On their margins were numerous smaller chiefdoms whose rulers' policies were no doubt largely concerned with the business of trying to maintain as far as possible their often precarious independence. At Delagoa Bay, the Portuguese in their fortified trading post remained an important if only sporadically forceful presence.

Immediately south of Delagoa Bay, in the region about the Maputo river, the political scene was dominated by continuing rivalry for control of the trade routes to the bay between the Tembe chiefdom and the offshoot Mabhudu chiefdom. The Tembe, under the rule of Muhadane since the early 1790s, occupied the coast and its hinterland between

the Tembe and Maputo rivers, while the Mabhudu, who were ruled by Makhasane from the late 1790s onward, dominated the territory to the east of the Maputo and Phongolo rivers from the borders of Tembe southwards to about the region of Lake Sibayi.[1] Smith sees Makhasane as having operated from a position of relative political weakness at this time; Hedges, on the other hand, depicts him as the leader of a strong and expanding chiefdom.[2] Certainly by the early 19th century the Mabhudu had developed at least partially militarized amabutho, which provided the ruling house with an important source of military and political power.[3] Another basis of their power continued to be the Delagoa Bay trade, with the Mabhudu chiefdom being well placed geographically for its rulers to act as intermediaries in the commerce with the Portuguese which the Mthethwa chief Dingiswayo was at this time concerned to expand.[4] On the basis of a few snippets of information in Fynn's Diary, both Smith and Hedges see Makhasane and Dingiswayo as having formed a military and trading alliance.[5]

To the west of the Mabhudu chiefdom, the intrusive Dlamini, who by the early 19th century were ruled by Ndvungunye, were trying to consolidate their rule over what is now southern Swaziland. At the same time they were seeking to shake off the suzerainty which the

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1. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 214, 223-4; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 140, 152n, 153-4.

2. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, p. 247; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 140, 153.

3. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 153-4; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahungane and Nkomuza, pp. 147, 148.

4. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 247-8; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 187.

5. Fynn, Diary, pp. 7, 10; Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, p. 247; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 153.

Ndwandwe under Zwide claimed over them, and in the process coming more and more into conflict with their nominal overlords. It seems to have been at this time that the first Dlamini amabutho were established.[6]

For their part the Ndwandwe were also engaged in a process of vigorous territorial expansion and political consolidation. Smith, citing Bryant, sees the main direction of their movement as having been from the coastal regions westward into the uplands, but he seems in fact to be confusing the expansion of the Ndwandwe with that of the Mthethwa.[7] More to the point is Hedges's analysis, which, read in conjunction with that of Bonner, suggests that in the early years of the 19th century the Ndwandwe were attempting to expand their power on two fronts from their territorial base in the Magudu-Nongoma region. To the north-west they were engaged in a struggle with the Dlamini for domination of the mid-Phongolo valley. To the east and south-east, in the region from the southern Lubombo to the west of Lake Saint Lucia, they were trying to extend effective control over three tributary chiefdoms, the Gasa, the Msane and the Jele. Probably because they were strategically situated on the trade route between Delagoa Bay and the Mthethwa country, these chiefdoms were, Hedges argues, able to maintain a considerable degree of autonomy.[8] The efforts of the Ndwandwe to reduce it were probably an important factor in bringing the latter into increasing confrontation with the Mthethwa.

Like the ruling groups in the other major chiefdoms of the region, the Ndwandwe chiefly lineage had, at least by

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6. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 24-6.

7. Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, p. 185, citing Bryant, Olden Times, p. 137, which refers to the expansion of the Mthethwa, not of the Ndwandwe.

8. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 159-65. See also Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 25-6.

Zwide's time, established a degree of centralized control over the amabutho of the territory which it dominated.[9] If Zwide's reputation as a fighter is anything to go by,[10] the Ndwandwe amabutho had a greater military inflection than those of their neighbours, partly because of the particular circumstances in which the Ndwandwe state had come into being in the later 18th century, and partly because of the rivalries which were developing in the early 19th century between it and its more expansionist neighbours.

Chief among these was the Mthethwa state under Dingiswayo, who, Hedges thinks, had been ruling since the 1790s.[11] Historians since the mid-19th century have presented Dingiswayo as a key figure in the political developments which took place north of the Thukela in the early years of the century; he retains this role in the very differently oriented analyses presented in recent academic studies.[12] In seeking to understand Mthethwa expansionism in the early 19th century, academic historians have come up with a range of different explanations. Smith suggests that Dingiswayo's prime imperial concern was to establish control over the trade route to the north as a means of strengthening the Mthethwa state. To this end he made an alliance with the Mabhudu, and also sought to expand Mthethwa domination inland over the region south of the White Mfolozi.[13]

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9. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 186.

10. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, p. 23; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Luzipho, p. 354; Bryant, Olden Times, p. 162.

11. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 186n, 199.

12. The most important recent studies of Mthethwa history in the time of Dingiswayo are those of Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 183-93; and Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 120-38.

13. Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, pp. 183-5.

Hedges sees Mthethwa expansion from the territory in the coastal lowlands south of the Mfolozi as having taken place in several phases, with strategic issues initially having been more important than the trade factor. In the first phase the Mthethwa extended their control into the hills round the sources of the Nseleni as a move to eliminate potential threats to the stability of the Mthethwa polity at a time when it was facing a challenge from the Qwabe state on its southern border. The assistance of a force of Mabhudu was decisive, Hedges argues, in enabling the Mthethwa to fight off the Qwabe.[14] In the next phase, the Mthethwa sought to establish control across the Black Mfolozi in the territory east of the Mona river. This move, which brought Mthethwa power to the borders of the Ndwandwe sphere of influence, was undertaken to extend control over the northern trade route.[15] The final phase of Dingiswayo's expansion saw the Mthethwa extend their domination westward between the White Mfolozi and the Mhlathuze. Though Hedges describes this process in some detail, he offers no explanation for it.[16]

Like Hedges, Hamilton distinguishes several phases of Mthethwa expansion in Dingiswayo's reign, though her analysis is considerably more detailed and generally more nuanced than his. The first phase, in her view, was one of consolidation north of the Mfolozi. This she sees as having been undertaken for strategic reasons, and not, as Hedges argues, to establish control over the trade route to the north.[17] In the second phase, Dingiswayo moved to extend his control over the coastal plain from the Mfolozi southwards. He was motivated, Hamilton suggests, by two main concerns. One was to secure Mthethwa domination of

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14. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 153.
15. Ibid., pp. 186-7.
16. Ibid., pp. 187-90.
17. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 123.

what was a region of relatively high rainfall, good agricultural land, and varied grazing. The rise of Mthethwa interests in this region reflected the shift which had for some time been taking place in the Delagoa Bay trade from ivory to cattle. 'With the shift to the coast', Hamilton argues, 'the Mthethwa effectively exchanged elephant country for cattle country'.[18]

A more immediate concern of Dingiswayo's in expanding southwards, Hamilton argues, was to eliminate the threat to his position which was posed by the presence in the Qwabe country of one of his half-brothers, who was a rival claimant to the Mthethwa chiefship.[19] There is some doubt about the validity of the tradition on which this argument is based,[20] but there seems little doubt that from early in Dingiswayo's reign, if not before, the Mthethwa and Qwabe were increasingly coming into conflict, and that the immediate cause was the Mthethwa ruling house's pursuit of its political ambitions in the south and west.

The third phase of Mthethwa expansion as described by Hamilton opened when Dingiswayo began to extend his chiefdom from the coastal lowlands westward into the interior between the White Mfolozi and the Mhlathuze. In contrast to Smith, who sees this move as having been undertaken to control the trade route to the north,[21] Hamilton regards it as having been made primarily for strategic reasons. It was, in her view, aimed in the first instance at containing the threat to the stability of the Mthethwa chiefdom's western borderlands which was posed by the expansion of the Buthelezi chiefdom in the region south of the mid-White Mfolozi.[22] This hypothesis

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18. Ibid., p. 126.

19. Ibid., pp. 120, 122.

20. Stuart, ed., uBaxoxele, pp. 22-3; OT, p. 90. See also the discussion in Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 145, n.69.

21. Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, p. 185.

22. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 127.

merits attention, but the evidence in support of it is very meagre. All it consists of is a few passing references in Bryant's Olden Times to the Buthelezi's having defeated and oppressed the Zulu chiefdom, and having received the allegiance of sections of the Bisini and the Thembu.[23] There is nothing directly in support of this hypothesis to be found in the statements recorded by Stuart.

Hedges, for his part, maintains that before the intrusion of the Mthethwa, the Zulu had been dominant in the region, and that both the Zulu and the Buthelezi had been 'intermittently dominated' by the Chunu.[24] Though there are no references to this on the page of Olden Times which he cites as a source, the notion that in the early 19th century the Chunu chiefdom, which was located about the upper Nsuze river, was engaged in a process of expansion receives support elsewhere in Olden Times and also in the traditions recorded by Stuart. At much the same time, according to evidence in both Bryant and Stuart, the Mkhize (or Mbo) chiefdom, which bordered that of the Chunu to the south, was also expanding.[25]

The expansion of these two chiefdoms, and possibly the Buthelezi as well, was probably taking place at about the time when, to the north, the growing power of the Ndwandwe was beginning to be more directly felt by their neighbours. It was evinced particularly by their launching a series of successful raids against the Dlamini.[26] In this situation the Mthethwa rulers sought to extend their control over the chiefdoms to the west in the region about the mid-White Mfolozi in order to pre-empt the possible expansion into it of the the Ndwandwe on the one hand and

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23. OT, pp. 28, 56, 114, 131, 242, 246.

24. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 189.

25. The evidence for the expansion of the Chunu and the Mkhize is considered in the next section of the chapter.

26. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 25-8.

perhaps the Chunu and the Buthelezi on the other. In a series of campaigns in perhaps the first half of the 1810s, Mthethwa forces pushed inland between the White Mfolozi and the Mhlathuze, and forced the Langeni, Buthelezi, Zulu, Qungebeni, Sibiya and other chiefdoms of the region to submit to Dingiswayo.[27]

At this point the main thrust of Mthethwa expansion was re-directed northwards across the White Mfolozi. The reasons for this move are not discussed in either the primary or secondary literature: most probably it was aimed at trying to prevent the growth of Ndwandwe influence south of the Black Mfolozi, and perhaps even to push back the southern frontiers of the Ndwandwe chiefdom. First a section of the Mbatha was subordinated, then the Dlamini section of the Buthelezi, and then, in a move which took Mthethwa forces across the Black Mfolozi to the very borders of Ndwandwe territory, a section of the Khumalo on the isiKhwebezi river.[28] Here, for the time being, Mthethwa expansion seems to have come to a halt.

The Mthethwa advance into the interior transformed the political scene between the White Mfolozi and the Mhlathuze, and sharply raised the political temperature in neighbouring regions. In place of the numerous small chiefdoms which had previously jostled for local influence was now a single enlarged polity, which if still very loosely structured, was far more powerful than any of its neighbours, and was under the overlordship of a politically ambitious and expansionist ruling group. In the next two sections of the chapter the impact of these developments on the politics of the regions to the south and to the north respectively of the expanded Mthethwa chiefdom will be considered.

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27. OT, pp. 55, 102; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 187, 189; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 128-9.

28. OT, pp. 28, 102, 172, 224, 420, 421; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 189; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 129; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 182; vol. 4, evidence of Ndukwana, p. 278.

2. The rise of political tensions along the lower Thukela

Although the evidence is thin, the expansion of the Mthethwa chiefdom under Dingiswayo in the first ten or fifteen years of the 19th century seems to have sharpened conflicts within and between the chiefdoms of the adjacent lower Thukela region. Depending on local circumstances, it served to undermine the powers of some ruling groups, and to buttress those of others. Among the larger chiefdoms which had begun to consolidate towards the end of the 18th century, it stimulated further attempts at territorial expansion.

The impact of Mthethwa expansion was most directly felt among the Qwabe. In the early 19th century the Qwabe chiefdom, unlike the emergent states of the Mthethwa, Ndwandwe and Dlamini, remained essentially an alliance of partially autonomous groups. Where, in the other three polities, clear political and social distinctions were beginning to develop between a dominant cluster of notionally related lineages and a distinct group of subordinate chiefdoms, no such cleavage can be discerned among the groups which made up the Qwabe chiefdom.[29] Though in the last years of the 18th century or the early years of the 19th, the paramount chief, Khondlo, had apparently formed at least two amabutho, and though his successor Phakathwayo formed at least two more,[30] the authority of the Qwabe chiefs over subordinate groups seems to have been considerably less than that of their counterparts in polities like that of the Mthethwa.

This was clearly illustrated in the course of the crisis which blew up in the Qwabe polity sometime in the early 19th century when the succession to Khondlo was

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29. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 160.

30. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Khambi, p. 210; Stuart, ed., uBaxoxele, evidence of Mashwili, p. 28; OT, pp. 99, 185, 198.

contested by two of his sons, Nomo and Phakathwayo. The dispute did not remain restricted to the ranks of the chiefly house; it turned into a quarrel between, on the one hand, supporters of Khondlo and of his nominated heir, Nomo, and, on the other, a group of Qwabe notables who sought to curtail the scope of the chief's authority by resisting his choice of heir and asserting the claims of a rival.[31] The conflict was exacerbated, to the level of a virtual civil war, by the intervention of the Mthethwa. The nature and outcome of this intervention are not entirely clear: Hedges argues that the Qwabe were able to resist Mthethwa attempts to establish domination over them, while Hamilton maintains that Dingiswayo succeeded in asserting rights of suzerainty over the victorious candidate, Phakathwayo.[32] There is no doubt, though, that Mthethwa pressure was a major factor in intensifying internal struggles among the Qwabe, and perhaps in weakening still further the powers of the chief.

A symptom of the political problems, both internal and external, which the Qwabe leadership was facing by this time can be seen in the attack which Phakathwayo made on the Makhanya section of the chiefdom. As previously described (p. 57 above), the Makhanya had crossed to the south bank of the Thukela a little before or after 1800, and lived largely autonomously of the Qwabe chief. Phakathwayo's attack, which was beaten off by the Makhanya, is presented by Stuart's informant, Mbovu kaMshumayeli, as having been simply a cattle-raid,[33] but more probably it represented an attempt on the part of the Qwabe chief to shore up his crumbling authority over one of the groups which in his eyes owed him allegiance. Though there is no evidence as to the responses made to the Qwabe attack by the chiefdoms which neighboured the

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31. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 160-1.

32. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 191; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 125.

33. JSA, vol. 3, pp. 26, 35-6.

Makhanya to the south and west - the Cele, Somi, Nganga, Seleku, Maphumulo and others - their leaders were no doubt constrained to keep a more wary eye than ever on goings-on north of the Thukela.

Another example of how increasing political pressures were making themselves felt among the chiefdoms of the lower Thukela region in the early 19th century is reflected in developments in the Ngcobo chiefdom, which was situated on the north bank of the Thukela about the lower Nsuze river. Though early 20th-century sources on the history of the Ngcobo chiefdom characterize it as having been a 'large' or 'great' tribe in former times,[34] their descriptions were fairly certainly all coloured by the success with which, in the course of the 19th century, some of the senior Ngcobo sections and their offshoots had re-established themselves south of the Thukela under Natal colonial rule.[35]

Like the Qwabe polity, the Ngcobo chiefdom consisted of a number of partially autonomous sections claiming a genealogical relationship to, and recognizing the ritual seniority of, a paramount chief, and resisting his attempts to assert more than a minimal degree of political authority. Recorded traditions give the names of a dozen or more sections of the Ngcobo which appear to have existed in the early 19th century,[36] but, if anything, the chief of the senior section of the Ngcobo, the Nyuswa, had even less authority over his subordinates than did his Qwabe counterpart. The traditions of the various Ngcobo sections as synthesized by Bryant in Olden Times indicate that groups like the Qadi and Ngongoma acted virtually independently of the Nyuswa chiefs in the early 19th

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34. Fuze, Black People, p. 16; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 53; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 39.

35. See Bryant, OT, ch. 46 passim.

36. Fuze, Black People, pp. 16, 68; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 32-3, 41-2; JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Msime, p. 49.

century.[37] Even if the Ngcobo chiefdom was larger than some of its neighbours, like the Cube to the north and the Hlongwa, Ngcolosi and Khabela to the south, its size bore little relation to its internal cohesion. Bryant's view was that in the early 19th century the Ngcobo formed not a single polity but rather 'a family of tribes, each with its own separate location, its independent chief, and in several (cases, its own) distinguishing cognomen'.[38]

As well as facing the problems of trying to maintain its authority over nominally subordinate groups, by the 1810s at the latest the Nyuswa leadership was having to deal with unprecedented external pressures. On its eastern borders the Mthethwa and Qwabe were in open conflict, to the north the Mthethwa were looming ever larger, and to the north-west the Mkhize chiefdom was also engaged in a process of territorial expansion. One response of the Nyuswa chiefly house was to try to tighten its rule over its adherents through extending the amabutho system: this is suggested by a tradition that Sihayo kaMapholoba, who became chief probably in the later 1810s, had at least one ibutho.[39] Whether its members were drawn from the Nyuswa section alone or from other sections of the Ngcobo as well is not indicated. The attack which Sihayo is said to have made on a section of the Qadi may also have stemmed from the increased concern of the Nyuswa leaders to assert control over subordinate groups.[40]

Another response on the part of the Nyuswa to the rising political pressures which they were experiencing is probably to be seen in an attack which, according to Funwayo, the Nyuswa made on the Hlongwa across the Thukela to the south.[41] In the course of it the Hlongwa were

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37. OT, pp. 487-94.

38. HZ, p. 64.

39. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Msime, p. 49.

40. OT, p. 487.

41. Funwayo's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Hlongwa history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 127. (The informant is identified in Shepstone's text). See also HZ, pp. 67, 79; OT, pp. 524-5.

driven out of their territory. If Funwayo's account is correct, this event was of considerable significance, for here was no mere cattle raid, nor even the political subordination of one chiefdom by another, but the physical expulsion of at least part of a community from the land which it occupied. Even if, as is likely, it was the Hlongwa ruling group and its adherents who fled, rather than the people as a whole, its migration was a symptom of the degree to which political tensions were rising in the early 19th century on both sides of the lower Thukela.

Upstream of the Ngcobo on the northern side of the Thukela was the Mkhize chiefdom. In the early 19th century it was, in Bryant's words a 'powerful clan', with Zihlandlo kaGcwabe as a 'strong chief'.[42] As indicated in chapter 1 above (p. 36), Gcwabe, who ruled in the later 18th century, is said to have had at least four men's amabutho; Zihlandlo apparently formed another four.[43] Though the evidence is patchy and contradictory, the Mkhize seem to have been actively trying to establish their domination over certain of their neighbours by Zihlandlo's time. According to Bryant in Izindaba Zabantu, the Somi, who lived across the Thukela, were tributary to Zihlandlo; in Olden Times, though, he has them living on the lower Thukela and makes no mention of any relationship with the Mkhize.[44] Mbokodo kaSikhulekile, whose membership of the Mkhize chiefly house no doubt coloured his view of Mkhize history, told Stuart that a section of the Mkhize had fought several times against the Ndlovu, and had eventually succeeded in killing their chief, Mpongo, and in bringing some of his people under their rule.[45] Fuze, followed by Bryant, claims that it was the Chunu who killed Mpongo, but Bryant

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42. HZ, p. 50.
43. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 15.
44. HZ, p. 52; OT, p. 535.
45. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 10.

goes on to state that after the death of their chief the Ndlovu had sought refuge with Zihlandlo.[46]

A problem that arises in interpreting this and similar traditions relating to the expansion of the Mkhize relates to the dating of the events described. As will become evident in the next chapter, numerous traditions recorded in the literature indicate that Zihlandlo subordinated various polities in the mid-Thukela region in the period before the destruction of his chiefdom by the Zulu chief Dingane early in the 1830s. Most of the events described probably took place during the reign of Shaka, when the Mkhize chiefdom was expanding rapidly as a client polity of the Zulu state, but others may well have occurred during the pre-Shakan period of Mkhize expansion. In some cases it is difficult to date the subordination of a particular polity securely to either phase, and it may be that some of the episodes in the expansion of the Mkhize which are ascribed to the reign of Shaka actually took place earlier. In the case of the Ndlovu, Bryant's account implies that they took flight to the Mkhize before the southward migration of the Chunu, which indicates that they submitted to Zihlandlo either very early in Shaka's reign or before it.

Another group which seems to have been subordinated by Zihlandlo before the rise of the Zulu power was a section of the Ximba which had previously formed part of the Chunu chiefdom.[47] In the early 19th century the Chunu, whose heartland was the region about the upper Nsuze river, were also engaged in a process of expansion, and it is likely that during this period they and the Mkhize to the south were increasingly coming into confrontation. According to Mbokodo, the two chiefdoms fought each other on at least two occasions, apparently on more or less equal terms.[48]

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46. Fuze, Black People, p. 15; OT, pp. 264-5.
47. OT, p. 262.
48. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 12, 18.

That their chiefly houses regarded each other as of equal standing is indicated by the tradition that Zihlandlo's mother was possibly a woman of the Chunu.[49] After the migration of the latter group, Bryant maintains in Izindaba Zabantu, Zihlandlo became 'suzerain' of the Cube, whom the author sees as a 'small and insignificant remnant' of the Chunu.[50] In Olden Times, however, Bryant is more equivocal about the genealogical relationship between Chunu and Cube, and says nothing about the latter's having submitted to Zihlandlo, who now appears in the guise of 'neighbour' rather than of suzerain.[51]

At some stage the Mkhize may have experienced an attack by the Mthethwa. Though Bryant could find no satisfactory evidence that the Mthethwa 'ever made the acquaintance or obtained the allegiance' of the Mkhize and other chiefdoms of the mid-Thukela region,[52] Mbokodo told Stuart, with some circumstantial detail, of a fight between the Mthethwa and Mkhize which had taken place when Shaka Zulu was in the Mthethwa army.[53] The outcome of the battle is not recorded, but if in fact Dingiswayo ever claimed suzerainty over Zihlandlo, the Mkhize were effectively able to maintain their independence.

Statements to the effect that the Chunu chiefdom was of unusual size and power in the early 19th century are to be found in several sources. Fynn described it as having been a 'powerful...tribe' at this time.[54] 'The Chunu clan', Fuze wrote, 'was very powerful during the reign of Macingwane', and subordinated several other groups at this time. The chief himself had a reputation for ferocity and

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49. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mandlakazi, pp. 24-5.
50. HZ, pp. 49-50.
51. OT, p. 415.
52. OT, pp. 102-3, 266.
53. JSA, vol. 3, p. 19.
54. Fynn, Diary, p. 14.

cruelty.[55] Bryant's depiction of the nature of Macingwane's rule in Olden Times was drawn very largely from Fuze,[56] but in his Izindaba Zabantu articles, the publication of which predated the publication of Fuze's book, he independently described the Chunu as having been a 'great' and 'powerful' tribe.[57] Between them, Fuze, Bryant, Magidigidi kaNobhebe and Mbovu kaMshumayeli list sixteen sections of the Chunu chiefdom, at least ten of which are given as claiming to be related to the chiefly house.[58]

Two chiefdoms are named in surviving traditions as having been attacked by Macingwane. One was that of the Ndlovu under Mpongo kaZingelwayo, who, Fuze claims, was killed by the Chunu.[59] The other was that of the Zulu under Senzangakhona kaJama. Fuze records that Macingwane was 'in the habit of fighting Senzangakhona and defeating him',[60] and Baleka kaMpitikazi, Baleni kaSilwana and Mqayikana kaYenge respectively told Stuart that Macingwane had 'troubled' the Zulu chief, that Senzangakhona had fought and defeated the Chunu, and that the two had burnt each other's imizi.[61] There is nothing to indicate that the Chunu were able to establish effective domination over either chiefdom. The evidence suggests that the Chunu chiefdom was expanding through a process of incorporation rather than of conquest, although the degree of control

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55. Fuze, Black People, pp. 15, 23, 52-3. The quotation is from p. 23.

56. OT, pp. 264-7.

57. HZ, pp. 49, 68.

58. Fuze, Black People, p. 15; OT, pp. 262-4; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 90; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 39.

59. Fuze, Black People, pp. 15, 52. Bryant, OT, pp 264-5, follows Fuze's account.

60. Fuze, Black People, p. 52; also Bryant, OT, p. 266.

61. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleka, p. 5; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleni, pp. 21-2; JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 23.

exercised by the chiefly house over the subordinate sections was probably tighter than in, for example, either the Qwabe or the Ngcobo chiefdoms. This is indicated by Magidigidi's evidence to the effect that Macingwane had five amabutho, each of which was stationed at a particular chiefly umuzi.[62] Magidigidi names eight of these imizi,[63] which were probably strategically located about the chiefdom the better to enable the Chunu leadership to exercise control over the territory under its domination.

Citing an unpublished biography of Shaka written by Stuart, Hamilton contends that in the course of Mthethwa expansion into the interior Dingiswayo was able to establish his suzerainty over the Chunu.[64] Stuart's information on this point was almost certainly taken from a detailed account of Dingiswayo's conquests given to him by Mashwili kaMngoye. As a grandson of Dingiswayo, and as chief of a section of the Mthethwa under the Natal colonial government, Mashwili is highly likely to have exaggerated the extent of Mthethwa conquests in the heyday of their power in the early 19th century.[65] Nothing has been found in the rest of Stuart's notes to support this account, and, for his part, Bryant states categorically that he had found no satisfactory evidence that Dingiswayo had obtained the allegiance of the Chunu.[66] If the Mthethwa chief did at some stage claim suzerainty over the Chunu, there is no evidence that he was able to give his claim any effect.

There seems little doubt, though, that the rising level of conflict within and between the chiefdoms of the

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62. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 86.

63. Ibid.

64. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 125, 129. Hamilton's account contradicts itself on an important issue: it first states that Macingwane was obliged to surrender his isigodlo to Dingiswayo, and then that he was permitted to retain it.

65. Mashwili's evidence was published by Stuart in his uBaxoxele, pp. 14-42. See esp. p. 31.

66. OT, pp. 102-3, 266.

Mhlathuze-Thukela region were largely a consequence of the Mthethwa advance into the interior between the White Mfolozi and the Mhlathuze. The effects of the developing confrontations between the major polities on both sides of the White Mfolozi were thus, by the mid-1810s at the latest, beginning to be felt among the chiefdoms several removes to the south. What the consequences for the chiefdoms of this region would have been if Dingiswayo had turned his attentions southwards is a matter for speculation; as it was, Mthethwa concerns were much more with their frontiers on the Mfolozi rivers. The next section of the chapter deals with their attempts to consolidate their power in the interior, and the outcome of their expansion northwards.

3. Confrontations in the mid-White Mfolozi region

After their push into the interior, and then their rapid thrust northwards across the White and Black Mfolozi rivers, the Mthethwa paused to consolidate their hold on the large extent of territory which they had brought under their sway. Over most of this area, Hamilton argues in the course of the most thorough analysis yet made of the subject, Mthethwa rule was relatively lightly felt. Chiefs had to acknowledge Mthethwa paramountcy, and in some cases submit to a degree of superintendence by Mthethwa-appointed izinduna; they had to pay tribute to their new overlord, usually in the form of cattle or agricultural produce; and they had to give up their powers of conducting important public rituals. The more recalcitrant among them were put to death and replaced by relatives who were amenable to Mthethwa overrule. But - crucially - tributary chiefdoms were usually left with enough cattle for breeding purposes, and their manpower was not drawn off and pressed into service of the Mthethwa state through the amabutho system.[67] Hamilton does not

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67. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 121-31.

commit herself directly on the important issue of whether this policy was a result of reluctance on the part of the Mthethwa rulers to dilute the membership of the central body politic, or of its inability to coerce subordinated chiefdoms beyond a certain point.[68] Her argument that Mthethwa forces had become heavily overextended during their advance into the interior suggests that the latter was the case.[69]

Certainly it was the weakness of the central Mthethwa state power which led its leaders to try to tighten their control of the more vulnerable borderlands of their newly acquired domain by setting up trusted adherents as local marchlords with considerably more powers than other tributary chiefs were allowed. In the north-east, where Mthethwa territories abutted on those of the Ndwandwe, Dingiswayo assisted Nqoboka kaLanga, who had lived for a while in exile at the Mthethwa court, to usurp the chiefship of the Sokhulu. In return Nqoboka was required to maintain and extend Mthethwa control of the region about the lower Mfolozi.[70] Similarly, in the west the Mthethwa chief helped Shaka, a son of the Zulu chief Senzangakhona who had spent much of his earlier career among the Mthethwa, to seize the Zulu chiefship from the designated heir on the death of his father.[71] As Bryant puts it, Shaka was set up as 'Dingiswayo's special protégé and up-country agent', and allowed a 'special measure of freedom' so long as he was prepared to rule in the interests of the Mthethwa.[72]

The installation of Shaka inaugurated a new period of rapid political change and of sharply intensified conflict in the mid-White Mfolozi region. As Hamilton writes, it

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68. Ibid., pp. 122-3, 133-5.
69. Ibid., pp. 132-3.
70. Ibid., pp. 131-2; OT, pp. 109-10.
71. Ibid., pp. 132-3.
72. OT, p. 129.

injected 'a new military imperative into the western reaches of Dingiswayo's domain', with Shaka being required 'both to remodel the existing military structures along the lines of the Mthethwa army, and to expand the strength of the armed forces at his disposal'.[73] The military inflection of Shaka's rule was enhanced, she argues, by the fact that he faced strong opposition from within the Zulu chiefly house. To secure his position, he sought in the first instance to restructure the Zulu chiefdom's own amabutho system in a way which strengthened his control over his subjects.[74]

Describing the details of the process of restructuring, the initial stages of which were implemented with support from the Mthethwa, is beyond the scope of this study. The significant point is that it provided Shaka with the military means to begin bringing neighbouring chiefdoms under Zulu domination. In the name of the Mthethwa chief, but also in pursuit of his own political ambitions, he conducted a series of campaigns which soon made the Zulu the dominant force in the region between the upper Mhlathuze and the mid-White Mfolozi region occupied by the Langeni, Qungebeni, Buthelezi, Mbatha and other groups. Shaka was allowed by Dingiswayo to keep a portion of the tribute in cattle which he extracted for his Mthethwa overlord from the newly subordinated chiefdoms, but, perhaps more significantly in political terms, he was permitted to incorporate their men into his revamped amabutho, and numbers of their women into his izigodlo.[75] Within a brief space of time the Zulu chiefdom had become a new regional power which, though comparatively small in territorial terms, was politically more centralized than any other local polity, and thus much more capable of effectively mobilizing its manpower for expansionist purposes.

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73. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 335.
74. Ibid., p. 335 ff.
75. Ibid., pp. 135-6; OT, pp. 125-33, 225-7.

There were however limits within which Shaka had to operate if he was not to be judged an over-mighty subject by Dingiswayo, and deposed and probably put to death. Zulu sub-imperialism was kept within the bounds of territory effectively subordinated to Dingiswayo: it does not at this stage seem to have been directed north of the White Mfolozi, west of the Babanango region, or southward into the Thukela valley. Dingiswayo's main strategic aim in assisting this satellite power into being had been to establish a bulwark against Ndwandwe expansion, and independent Zulu ventures in other directions were not to be tolerated, especially at a time when the Mthethwa leadership was planning to resume its advance to the northward.

Since the publication of Bryant's Olden Times, the immediate target of Mthethwa attentions in the north has usually been depicted as the Ngwane chiefdom of Matiwane kaMasumpa, situated in what is now the Vryheid region. It is difficult to understand why Dingiswayo and his advisers should have aspired to attack a chiefdom so remote from the borders of their effective sphere of influence, especially as an expedition sent against the Ngwane would have been highly vulnerable to a flanking attack by the hostile Ndwandwe. The story that the Ngwane were attacked by the Mthethwa needs to be treated with caution. Bryant's account is, by his own acknowledgement, drawn from the evidence of Mashwili kaMngoye as published by Stuart in uBaxoxele.[76] As indicated earlier in this chapter, Mashwili's treatment of Mthethwa history may exaggerate the extent of Dingiswayo's power. The only other existing statements which implicate the Mthethwa in an attack on the Ngwane are cursory and ambiguous.[77] There is, in short, no convincing evidence that such an attack took place.

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76. OT, p. 137; Stuart, ed., uBaxoxele, pp. 29-31.

77. See the sources cited on p. 113 above; also Fynn, Diary, p. 318.

There is however no reason to doubt that, once they had established a relatively secure power base in the form of the client Zulu chiefdom on the mid-White Mfolozi, the Mthethwa leaders for the first time felt able to confront the Ndwandwe in the interior about the Black Mfolozi. Whether they were seeking actively to challenge Ndwandwe domination of the region or, on the other hand, to pre-empt Ndwandwe expansion, is an issue which needs further investigation. An important factor which shaped their policies in this region was, it can be postulated, the existence of good relations between themselves and the main power in the region to the west of the Ndwandwe state, the Hlubi chiefdom. Dingiswayo would not have risked an advance northward, thus exposing his western flank to the Hlubi, without their support or at least their neutrality. Although the Hlubi chiefdom had become weakened by internal dissensions since the death of Bhungane, probably in the early years of the century, it remained an important political force. Like the Qwabe and Ngcobo chiefdoms, it was not a cohesive conquest state: it remained an alliance of notionally related groups which, even if recognizing the paramountcy of the Hadebe chief, to a greater or lesser extent acted autonomously of him.[78] Bhungane's successor Mthimkhulu apparently attempted to assert a greater degree of chiefly control over his adherents through both men's and women's amabutho,[79] but he seems to have exercised even less authority over his subordinates than did Phakathwayo of the Qwabe. Where the latter had been able to drive out his main rival for the chiefship, Mthimkhulu proved unable to do.[80]

The Hlubi chiefdom was in essence still largely a defensive alliance held together by antipathy towards a

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78. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, esp. pp. 14, 16, 17, 19, 21; Wright & Manson, Hlubi Chiefdom, pp. 9-11.

79. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, pp. 20, 23; Wright & Manson, Hlubi Chiefdom, p. 11.

80. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, p. 28; Wright & Manson, Hlubi Chiefdom, p. 10.

common set of opponents. By the 1810s, if not before, this antipathy was focussed primarily on the Ndwandwe chiefdom. It was much closer to Hlubi territory than was any other major power, and, if tradition is to be believed, its leadership had acquired a reputation for treating its enemies far more harshly than did, for instance, the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo.[81] The expansion of the Ndwandwe chiefdom in the early 19th century is likely to have caused considerable apprehension among the Hlubi leaders, and they probably welcomed the advent of the Mthethwa in the interior as bringing a powerful potential ally within closer reach.

With the region south of the White Mfolozi now securely under control, with their north-western borders safe-guarded by a friendly power, and with close commercial links established with the Mabhudu to the north, the Mthethwa were threatening to encircle the Ndwandwe on three sides. To the north the Ndwandwe were engaged in a struggle with the Dlamini across the Phongolo river,[82] and to the west with some of the Khumalo chiefdoms in the upper Mkhuze-Black Mfolozi region.[83] The response of the Ndwandwe to the Mthethwa challenge was to launch a series of counter-attacks against the more exposed chiefdoms on the peripheries of the Mthethwa sphere of influence. To the west they attacked the Khumalo under Donda, defeated them and killed their chief.[84] Further west, the Ntshali under Mlotha suffered a similar fate.[85] Then, in a fierce attack reminiscent of their campaigns against the Dlamini

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81. On the contrasts between Zwide's and Dingiswayo's styles of leadership see Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 124, 125, 126, 129, 131-2; Bonner, 'Early state formation among the Nguni: the relevance of the Swazi case', unpubl. paper, pp. 2-3, 9-10.

82. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 27-8.

83. OT, pp. 172-3, 421.

84. Ibid., p. 172.

85. Ibid., p. 162; Fynn, Diary, p. 150.

under Sobhuza, the Ndwandwe swept down on Matiwane's Ngwane, with the result that the chief and many of his adherents abandoned their territory and made off to the westward.[86] Probably after these campaigns, the Ndwandwe fell on the Nxumalo on their south-eastern border with the Mthethwa and put their chief to death.[87] In the face of Ndwandwe aggression, Dingiswayo mobilized his forces and apparently launched an invasion of Ndwandwe territory. The outcome was that the Mthethwa chief was captured and killed by the Ndwandwe, and his army defeated and driven back in disorder.[88]

These events significantly transformed the political scene north of the Thukela. Some traditions state that Shaka had been summoned to assist the Mthethwa army with his own forces, but had held back from doing so.[89] If this was a deliberate ploy to try to throw off Mthethwa domination, it proved successful, for, after the death of Dingiswayo and the defeat of the Mthethwa army, the Zulu chiefdom was effectively left as the strongest power between the Thukela and the White Mfolozi. It was, however, far inferior in strength to the Ndwandwe chiefdom, and while Shaka was no doubt concerned to continue expanding his chiefdom and building up his power as rapidly as he could, his immediate aim in the field of foreign policy must have been to try to establish peaceable relations with Zwide. But this was not to be, for the Zulu chiefdom was clearly the major remaining

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86. The sources on the flight of the Ngwane have been discussed in the previous chapter (pp. 111-13). See also the analyses in Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 193; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 136-7.

87. OT, pp. 163-4.

88. Fynn, Diary, p. 11; OT, pp. 164-5; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 193; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 136-7.

89. Fynn, 'History of Godongwana' in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 65; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 137.

obstacle to the consolidation of Ndwandwe domination over the former Mthethwa territories. Soon after the defeat of the Mthethwa, the Ndwandwe launched several raids against the Zulu, which the latter managed to survive only with heavy losses of manpower and cattle.[90]

Faced with the imminent threat of further Ndwandwe raids, the Zulu leadership sought urgently to recoup the losses which the chiefdom had suffered, and to coerce or cajole neighbouring chiefdoms into a defensive alliance against the Ndwandwe. The period that followed the first Ndwandwe raid saw the Zulu moving rapidly to extend and consolidate their domination over the region south of the White Mfolozi, with far-reaching effects on the politics of the region.[91]

4. The expansion of the Zulu chiefdom

To understand the nature of the political changes which followed the Ndwandwe raids southward, it is important that as close a periodization as possible should be established. There is not enough evidence for an absolute chronology of events to be constructed; nevertheless, on the assumption that the Zulu effort to mobilize resistance to the Ndwandwe was shaped by 'the relative strengths and weaknesses of the surrounding chiefdoms, their relative proximity to the Zulu chiefdom, and the resources which they could offer the Zulu',[92] it is possible to suggest a broad sequence of developments. The main sets of events which are of concern here have to do with the Zulu

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90. OT, pp. 174-5, 193-5; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 200; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 247; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleni, p. 17; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, p. 270.

91. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 247; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 200-1.

92. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 247.

subordination of the Qwabe, their subordination of the chiefdoms of the Thukela valley to the south, and their defeat of the Ndwandwe.

So far as it goes, the evidence is reasonably clear that the Zulu attack on the Qwabe took place before the final confrontation between the Zulu and Ndwandwe. There are several statements to this effect in Stuart's records,[93] and as Hamilton has convincingly argued, the resources of men, cattle and grain obtained by the Zulu from the Qwabe would have been crucial in enabling Shaka to rebuild his army to the point where it was able to fight off a Ndwandwe raiding force.[94] In addition, it seems unlikely that the Zulu would have faced up to the major threat from the north without first seeking to eliminate or at least neutralize potential threats from rival chiefdoms on their other borders. For very similar reasons it seems that the subordination by the Zulu of the cluster of chiefdoms to the south must logically have preceded the final round of Zulu conflict with the Ndwandwe.

The main question relating to the sequence of events is thus whether the subordination of the Qwabe preceded or followed that of the Thukela valley chiefdoms. There is no direct evidence that points to an answer, but circumstantial evidence suggests that the Qwabe were dealt with first. The most significant piece of evidence in this regard is provided by the traditions which indicate that at the time of the conflict between the Zulu and the Qwabe the latter were openly contemptuous of the size and strength of the Zulu chiefdom.[95] This, it is contended

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93. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleni, pp. 16-17; evidence of Jantshi, p. 183; vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 61. See also JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 36, and evidence of Mmemi, p. 242.

94. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 172-5.

95. Ibid., pp. 172-4; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, pp. 182-3; vol. 2, evidence of Makhuza, pp. 168-9; evidence of Mandlakazi, pp. 177-8; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, p. 241; OT, pp. 191-2, 196.

here, would have been unlikely if the Zulu had already established domination over large chiefdoms like those of the Chunu, Mkhize and Ngcobo. The traditions also suggest that the Qwabe were defeated by the Zulu in a surprise attack for which the former were completely unprepared: again this would have been an unlikely scenario if the Qwabe had been facing an opponent who had already subordinated the Thukela valley chiefdoms.

The most likely train of events is that, in the face of the threat from the Ndwandwe, the Zulu first struck fast and hard to defeat the Qwabe forces and put the chief, Phakathwayo, to death. Taking advantage of the deep dissensions in the Qwabe chiefly house, they proceeded to install a new chief, Nqetho, who had been in exile in the Zulu country, and who was prepared to acknowledge the overlordship of Shaka and to provide men and cattle for the Zulu forces.[96] After the success of this operation the Zulu moved to eliminate the possible threat posed by the existence of several large and independent chiefdoms on their southern borders, and to bring the region's resources of manpower and cattle under their control. They were probably also motivated by the desire to gain access to its resources of iron, for both the Chunu and their Cube neighbours had a reputation as metal-workers.[97] There is not enough evidence to say in what sequence these southern chiefdoms became the focus of Zulu attention: the assumption here is that they were dealt with in order of their proximity to the Zulu heartland - first the Chunu, then the Mkhize, then the Ngcobo. Given the relative strength of the Chunu, and their position immediately to the south of the Zulu, it is unlikely that the latter would have acted against the other two chiefdoms without first having eliminated the threat from the Chunu.

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96. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 160-74; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 204-5.

97. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 258, 259-60.

As in the case of the Qwabe, the Zulu were able to take advantage of internal disputes in the Chunu chiefdom to obtain political leverage over it.[98] The evidence as to whether the Zulu actually attacked the Chunu is contradictory. As noted in the previous chapter (p. 121), Bryant first claimed that they did, then later denied that there was any record of their having done so. One of Stuart's informants implies that there was no fighting between the two chiefdoms,[99] while several others claim the opposite.[100] The key to resolving this contradiction is probably to be found in the evidence of Magidigidi, who indicates that an attack by the Ndawonde section of the Chunu chiefdom on the neighbouring Cube provoked a Zulu attack on the Ndawonde. Upon this, Macingwane, the Chunu chief took to flight southwards.[101]

The flight of Macingwane and many of his adherents has conventionally been interpreted as a consequence of Zulu aggression. No writer has thought to ask the obvious question: if Zulu policy at this time was one of unbridled aggression, why were the Qwabe also not forced into flight? The answer requires a complete re-orientation of thinking on the nature of the Zulu state at this time, and of the processes by which it expanded. Far from being the cohesive, centralized polity under the rule of a powerful despot which is depicted in the stereotype, it was in reality a loose alliance of chiefdoms hurriedly brought together under the leadership of Shaka, partly by force, partly by persuasion, and partly by a common fear of the Ndwandwe. Shaka's policy at this period, as Hamilton has

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98. Ibid., p. 258.

99. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, pp. 22, 23.

100. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleka, p. 5; vol. 1, evidence of Baleni, p. 18; vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 282; vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 61; evidence of Magidigidi, p. 85; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhehlengana, p. 210.

101. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 85.

demonstrated in detail,[102] was predominantly to try to incorporate, if in varying degrees, neighbouring chiefdoms into the Zulu body politic rather than to eject or destroy them. Recalcitrant chiefs and their close relatives and supporters might be put to death, but the expulsion or destruction of the broad mass of their adherents, apart from probably being beyond the capacity of the embryonic Zulu state to achieve, would have been fundamentally contrary to its need to build up its resources of manpower and womanpower as quickly as possible.

From this perspective, whether or not the Zulu attacked the Chunu, the flight of the latter was not the intended result of Zulu policy. It was the result of a decision made by Macingwane and his advisers to avoid the option of submitting to Shaka, and to try to preserve their chiefdom's independence - and their own lives - by migrating. Far from signalling a victory for the Zulu, it was a defeat, a successful act of resistance on the part of the Chunu which the Zulu were unable to prevent.

What effect the flight of the Chunu had on the Mkhize chiefdom immediately to the south is not recorded, but it was probably an important factor in the decision which the Mkhize chief, Zihlandlo, seems to have made to submit to Shaka without resistance.[103] The evidence on the fate of the neighbouring Ngcobo chiefdom at the hands of the Zulu is more difficult to interpret. Some sources indicate that the Zulu extended their domination over it by force of arms, with certain sections, including the dominant Nyuswa, being driven out, and others, like the Qadi, submitting and being left in occupation of their territory.[104] Other sources suggest that Shaka was able to establish suzerainty over the Nyuswa by intervening in a dispute over the succession after the death of the chief

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102. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, chs. 3, 5.

103. OT, p. 405; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 115.

104. HZ, pp. 65, 68-9; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, pp. 183, 186; vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, pp. 60, 61.

Mapholoba.[105] In Olden Times Bryant tried to integrate the two sets of traditions: first Shaka intervened in the succession dispute, and subsequently he attacked the Nyuswa, killed their chief and drove them out.[106] Overall, Hamilton's interpretation of the evidence, to the effect that, in contrast to the Mkhize, the Ngcobo sections resisted the Zulu and were either driven out or forced to submit, is as close as one can get to the historical reality.[107]

During this same period, the Zulu were also seeking to extend control over the chiefdoms on their eastern and north-eastern borders. On the White Mfolozi the Sibiya submitted without resistance,[108] while across the river the strong Zungu chiefdom became the target both of Zulu and of Ndwandwe efforts to gain its allegiance. In the event, an attack by the Ndwandwe encouraged most sections of the Zungu to join the alliance dominated by the Zulu.[109] Further to the east, the remnant of the Mthethwa state was disintegrating rapidly after the death of Dingiswayo and the defeat of his army.[110] The Mthethwa chiefly house itself was now headed by a brother of Dingiswayo who was acting as regent for the youthful heir, Somveli.[111] Although there is little evidence that bears on the subject, it can be surmized that the chiefly house's authority was crumbling even within the Mthethwa chiefdom itself, and that, with more Ndwandwe attacks threatening, it had little option but to give its allegiance to Shaka.

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105. Fuze, Black People, p. 67; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 33; vol. 3, evidence of Maziyana, p. 81; Stuart, ed., uBaxoxele, pp. 222-4.

106. OT, pp. 481-2.

107. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 476.

108. Ibid., p. 248.

109. Ibid., pp. 248-52.

110. Fynn, Diary, p. 15.

111. OT, p. 202.

Within a comparatively short space of time after the defeat of the Mthethwa by the Ndwandwe, the Zulu leadership had succeeded in establishing a wide, if not particularly firm, alliance against the Ndwandwe of the chiefdoms between the White Mfolozi and the Thukela. Why the Ndwandwe allowed it time to do so can only be conjectured. Possibly the Ndwandwe army was itself trying to make good the losses which it had suffered in the fighting with the Mthethwa and then with the Zulu; possibly the Ndwandwe state was facing problems on its northern borders; possibly there were dissensions within it. Whatever the reasons, by the time the Ndwandwe forces renewed their raids to the south, the Zulu army was strong enough to confront them. Traditions record that in a fight near the Mhlathuze river a Ndwandwe force was defeated, and that subsequently the Zulu advanced into Ndwandwe territory and destroyed Zwide's capital.[112]

In conventional accounts of these events, most of which reproduce Bryant's rendering, the Ndwandwe chiefdom is supposed to have been broken up by the Zulu attack, with a small remnant under Zwide fleeing to what is now the eastern Transvaal.[113] It is inherently unlikely, however, that at this early stage in its history the Zulu state had anything like the strength that would have been necessary to destroy the well-established Ndwandwe polity. Evidence from one of Bonner's informants suggests that, far from being driven off to the eastern Transvaal, the Ndwandwe at first merely shifted their chiefdom's centre of gravity across the Phongolo into what is now southern Swaziland.[114] Their defeat at the hands of the Zulu was

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112. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleni, p. 17; vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 103; vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, pp. 183-6; vol. 2, evidence of Mangati, p. 209; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, pp. 270-1. See also Fuze, Black People, pp. 47-9. For critical comments on traditions of fighting between the Zulu and Ndwandwe, see Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 13.

113. OT, pp. 206-9.

114. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, p. 29.

in all likelihood simply one among a number of factors which lay behind this move.[115] Other sources indicate that in the period after this defeat the Ndwandwe chiefdom remained a cohesive and powerful entity which continued to play a central role in the politics of the Delagoa Bay hinterland (see below, pp. 338-44).

The victory of the Zulu over the Ndwandwe is all but universally seen in the published literature as having established Shaka's undisputed sway over the region from the Phongolo to the Thukela. Subsequently, so the stereotyped view goes, Zulu armies extended his dominions to the Delagoa Bay region in the north, and to the Mzimkhulu and beyond in the south. The realities were very different. In the first place, Shaka and his faction still faced considerable if by now muted opposition from within the ranks of the Zulu chiefly house. Though there was nothing unusual in a chief's being rivalled for power by his close male relatives, the fact that Shaka was a usurper made his legitimacy as a ruler questionable in the eyes of a number of senior collateral lineage heads. Overt resistance was no doubt stilled by the success of his campaigns against the Qwabe and then the Ndwandwe, and by Shaka's repressive measures, but the divisions within the Zulu ruling group posed a threat to Shaka's position throughout his reign.[116]

In addition, Shaka's hold on his newly forged power base south of the Mfolozi remained tenuous. Though he had extracted the formal submission of the Qwabe chiefdom from the new leadership which he had installed, and though Qwabe manpower had played a probably crucial role in helping him to beat off and then defeat the Ndwandwe, important sections of the chiefdom resisted the continuing efforts of the Zulu leadership to incorporate them more

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115. See also Cobbing's comments in 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 506.

116. For a discussion of these issues see Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, ch. 4.

closely into the emerging Zulu state. The attempt which was made to assassinate Shaka in 1824 may have been the work of Qwabe dissidents, and Qwabe opposition to Zulu domination continued into the reign of his successor, Dingane.[117]

Among the Mthethwa, too, resistance to Zulu overlordship ran deep in some quarters, particularly among the sections of the chiefly house which supported Somveli's candidacy for the chiefship. After his victory over the Ndwandwe, Shaka had acted to enlarge the scope of his authority over the Mthethwa by killing the regent, Mondise, and installing as chief his own nominee and close ally, Mlandela.[118] That he did not put Somveli to death as well suggests that he did not want to alienate important elements among the Mthethwa if he could help it, which in turn lends force to the argument that the Zulu power was far from monolithic. The weakness of its hold on the Mthethwa was demonstrated by the subsequent flight of Somveli and a number of important supporters northwards into Ronga country, an event which, on the basis of a reference in a Portuguese document, Hedges dates to 1821.[119] The limits on Shaka's authority were further shown up, if Bryant's account is to be believed, by the fact that the force which he sent in pursuit of Somveli proceeded to abscond to the Mabhudu chief Makhasane.[120]

North of the Black Mfolozi Shaka's writ did not run anywhere near as far as the conventional view has it. A detailed analysis of the development of the mfecane

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117. For a comprehensive discussion of Qwabe-Zulu relations in Shaka's reign see Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 172-90. The date of 1824 comes from the account of the attempt on Shaka's life given by Fynn, who claims to have been present at the time: see his Diary, pp. 83 ff.

118. OT, pp. 202-3; Fynn, Diary, p. 15.

119. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 205. See also OT, pp. 84, 472-3.

120. OT, pp. 473-4.

stereotype as it applies to this region is badly needed, but even in its absence it is clear that the extent of Zulu power in the north has been greatly exaggerated. After the retreat of the Ndwandwe leadership across the Phongolo, Shaka's immediate concern was to establish an effective presence in the territories which had previously acknowledged the suzerainty of Zwide. Numbers of the chiefs formerly tributary to the Ndwandwe paramount probably remained behind and made tactical submissions to Shaka. But the Zulu state did not have the political or military resources to bring their adherents under the form of direct rule which Shaka was seeking to impose on the chiefdoms of the state's core area about the White Mfolozi. Instead, Zulu control of the northern territories was exercised through a 'viceroy', Maphitha kaSojiyisa, the senior member of a lineage closely related to the Zulu chiefly house. Maphitha established his umuzi near the upper Mona river in the south of the region formerly dominated by Zwide, and, probably from the time of his settlement there, was able to rule with a considerable degree of autonomy.[121]

In the conventional view, Zulu expansion northwards in the late 1810s and early 1820s is portrayed as having been reponsible for putting to flight groups like the Khumalo of Mzilikazi, the Gasa of Soshangane, the Jele of Zwangendaba and the Msane of Nxaba.[122] These groups are almost invariably seen in the literature as 'refugees' from an all-powerful Shaka: little attempt is made to place their

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121. On the nature of Maphitha's authority in Shaka's reign and later see Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 219-24; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 214-16; J. Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom: the Civil War in Zululand, 1879-1884, London, 1979, pp. 37, 249; JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Ndukwana, pp. 278, 314, 318, 321, 357, 358.

122. E.g. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, pp. 3, 57, 64, 130-1; A.K. Smith, 'The Indian Ocean zone', in D. Birmingham & P. Martin, eds., History of Central Africa, vol. 1, London, 1983, pp. 234-6.

migrations in the context of a broader regional politics. Evidence on the limitations of Zulu power in the north are to be found even in Bryant, one of the writers primarily responsible for entrenching the myth of the mighty Shaka. Mzilikazi, he writes, was able to beat off two Zulu attacks before making off to the north-west.[123] Nxaba too was apparently attacked by a Zulu force, but Bryant says nothing about any such attack on either Soshangane or Zwangendaba.[124] His evidence on the flight of the former is contradictory: at one point he indicates that Soshangane and his Gasa adherents fled immediately after the defeat of the Ndwandwe, while at another he implies that they did so only after the lapse of a year or two.[125] Recently Harries has suggested that Soshangane and Zwangendaba may have become tributary to Shaka, and that they hived off from the Zulu kingdom after having been sent northwards by Shaka on a military mission:[126] this notion too is consistent with a view which sees Zulu power in the north in Shaka's reign as having been much weaker than is generally accepted.

In the literature, the movements of the Khumalo, Gasa, Jele and Msane are usually dramatized as long-distance migrations which eventually took these groups far into central and, in some cases, eastern Africa, where in turn their leaders proceeded to establish great kingdoms.[127] In fact their initial movements were in each case over comparatively short distances. The Khumalo moved to the

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123. OT, pp. 422-3.

124. Ibid., pp. 279-80, 448, 459, 460.

125. Ibid., pp. 208, 448.

126. P. Harries, 'History, ethnicity and the Ingwavuma land deal: the Zulu northern frontier in the nineteenth century', Journal of Natal and Zulu History, vol. 6 (1983), p. 4; P. Harries, 'Labour migration from Mozambique to South Africa; with special reference to the Delagoa Bay hinterland, c.1862 to 1897', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1983, p. 156.

127. E.g. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, introduction & chs. 4, 5, 9.

region of the upper Vaal river in what is now the south-eastern Transvaal;[128] the Gasa and Jele moved to the Delagoa Bay region;[129] and the Msane to eastern Swaziland.[130] Their subsequent movements have their own history; they have very little, if anything, to do with Shaka and the Zulu.

The solidly entrenched view is that Zulu expansion northwards in the first half of the 1820s brought the whole region as far as Delagoa Bay and even beyond under Shaka's sway. He was motivated, it is supposed, by the need to eliminate the rival polities which were emerging under the leadership of Soshangane and Zwangendaba, and to establish control of the trade to Delagoa Bay from the south.[131] Recently Harries has queried the notion that Shaka ever embarked on a policy of 'purposeful territorial expansion' in the region. He points out that there are no references in the Portuguese records to any extensive Zulu trading, or to any major Zulu invasion until 1828. In the mid-1820s, he claims, the Zulu were drawn into intervening in the politics of Mabhudu and Tembe in order to prevent the former from establishing a monopoly of the Delagoa Bay

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128. J.R.D. Cobbing, 'The Ndebele under the Khumalos, 1820-1896', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Lancaster, 1976, pp. 15-16.

129. G. Liesegang, 'Nguni migrations between Delagoa Bay and the Zambezi, 1821-1839', African Historical Studies, vol. 3 (1970), pp. 317-23; Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 250-9.

130. OT, p. 460.

131. G. Liesegang, 'Dingane's attack on Lourenco Marques in 1833', JAH, vol. 10 (1969), pp. 570-1; Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, pp. 186-8; Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 248-9, 260; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 227-30; P. Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction; the nature of free and unfree labour in south-east Africa', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), p. 314; Harries, 'History, ethnicity and the Ingwavuma land deal', Journal of Natal and Zulu History, vol. 6 (1983), pp. 4-5.

trade, but did so 'unwillingly' and on a minor scale.[132] Mahungane and Nkomuza told James Stuart that Makhasane of the Mabhudu had paid tribute to 'the Zulu king', probably meaning Shaka,[133] but by itself this does not mean that the Zulu had established political domination of the region. While Shaka may have claimed suzerainty over it, it is unlikely that he was able to wield any effective authority there except spasmodically by means of tribute-collecting expeditions. Bonner's claim that the Ngwane under Sobhuza also became tributary to Shaka needs to be similarly qualified.[134]

An illustration of the weakness of Zulu power in the north is provided by the inability of Shaka's forces to subdue the section of Khumalo under Bheje which lived in the Ngome region. From his stronghold in the Ngome forest Bheje successfully beat off several attacks. It was not until 1827 that the Zulu were able to force him to submit, and then only with the help of a party of British-led musketeers from Port Natal.[135] The effective geographical limits of Zulu power to the north-west were marked by two royal homesteads which Shaka set up to guard this vulnerable frontier from raids by groups like the Swazi and the migrant Ndwandwe and Khumalo. These were ebaQulusini in what is now the Vryheid area, and emPangisweni near the sources of the Black Mfolozi.[136] To the north and north-east, effective Zulu rule probably did not extend beyond the Mkhuze river.

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132. Harries, 'Labour migration', unpublished thesis, pp. 154-6.

133. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahungane and Nkomuza, pp. 143, 152.

134. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 37-9.

135. OT, pp. 420, 596-8; Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 13. See also pp. 347-8 below.

136. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 219, 224-5, 364-6; OT, p. 181; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 91; vol. 4, evidence of Ndukwana, pp. 277-8, 285, 326, 358.

The political forces which operated on the northern frontiers of the early Zulu state will not be more fully understood until an integrated history of the Delagoa Bay hinterland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries has been written. But the brief examination made here of the nature of the Zulu polity's power in its northern borderlands in the reign of Shaka reinforces the points made above about the nature of the processes by which it established domination over the region between the White Mfolozi and the Thukela. In short, the conventional view of Zulu expansion to north and south under Shaka needs in many respects to be abandoned. This argument forms one of the main premises of the discussion in the next chapter, which examines the political changes which took place south of the Thukela in the late 1810s and 1820s.

5. The slave trade as a factor in the politics of the region south of Delagoa Bay

Before the history of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the 1820s can be discussed, consideration must be given to an aspect of the political background which has so far not been mentioned in this chapter - the impact on the conflicts described above of the rise of a trade in slaves at Delagoa Bay. Over the past twenty years, a handful of writers - Smith, Liesegang, Harries - have noted the importance of this trade by the 1820s for the Portuguese,[137] but, with the focusses of their studies elsewhere, they have not been concerned, with the partial exception of Harries, to assess its wider political

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137. Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies,pp. 186-7; Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 278-9, 344-6, 349-52; Liesegang, 'Dingane's attack', JAH, vol. 10 (1969), p. 567; P. Harries, 'Slavery amonst the Gaza Nguni: its changing shape and function and its relationship to other forms of exploitation', in J.B. Peires, ed., Before and after Shaka: Papers in Nguni History, Grahamstown, 1981, pp. 211-14; Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), pp. 312-16 (this is a revised version of the previous essay).

significance. For reasons which themselves need investigation, historians of southern Africa generally have completely overlooked the existence of this trade. Very recently, Julian Cobbing has taken the first step towards re-inserting the subject into historical discourse.[138] He argues that after the end of the Napoleonic wars the growth of the slave trade at Delagoa Bay and at Inhambane, 400 kilometres further up the Mozambique coast, was responsible for a series of 'unprecedented convulsions' among the polities of south-eastern Africa. Basing his arguments on estimates of the dimensions of the slave trade drawn from Harries,[139] who in turn takes his figures from Klein,[140] Cobbing suggests that by the 1820s slave-raiding was widespread in the Delagoa Bay hinterland, where its impact served dramatically to intensify the political conflicts that were taking place in the region at this time.

Cobbing has not yet spelt out his argument in detail, and its implications for debates on the history of the region have as yet hardly begun to crystallize. For this reason, attempts to consider it in the previous sections of this chapter have deliberately been avoided. But even in outline, his notions are clearly of profound import for the study of the history of the region south of Delagoa Bay, including the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region, and need to be addressed directly. A prior necessity, though, is to establish a clearer picture than exists at present of the historical development of the slave trade at Delagoa Bay. If its impact in particular places at particular times is

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138. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 503-7. As Cobbing notes, the importance of the Delagoa Bay slave trade was touched on as far back as 1929 by W.M. Macmillan in his Bantu, Boer and Briton, pp. 19-20. Later historians entirely ignored it.

139. Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), pp. 315-16.

140. Herbert S. Klein, The Middle Passage, Princeton, 1978, pp. 76-7.

to be properly assessed, as precise a chronology as possible of the main features of its history needs to be outlined.

Harries gives some background to the trade of the 1820s and after, but his account ranges indiscriminately over the period from the 18th to the mid-19th century, and does not provide a clear indication of the changing size and significance of the slave trade.[141] It also tends to cast Inhambane and Delagoa Bay together as a single trading zone, rather than treating them as two separate, if linked, regions. The distinction which Smith was earlier at pains to draw between their respective patterns of commerce in the 18th and early 19th centuries is thus largely lost,[142] and the specificities of the situation at Delagoa Bay become blurred. The impression which Harries's acount leaves is that before the 1820s the Delagoa Bay slave trade was well-established and of long-standing, a picture which contrasts sharply with that drawn by Smith, who argues that in this period the slave trade was small-scale, intermittent, and of minor consequence.[143] Harries's account, therefore, does not provide a firm basis from which to judge the importance or otherwise of the trade over time.

Similarly, in Cobbing's assessments, both published and unpublished, of the growth and impact of the slave trade, there is no clear chronology; in consequence, a number of points of tension emerge in his argument. Though he dates the main impact of the trade to the period after 1815, the thrust of his exposition is to project its effects much further back in time into the period when, if Smith is to

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141. Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), pp. 312-18.

142. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 149-52, 190-5, 235-43, 344-8.

143. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 49, 71-2, 110, 154, 206, 344; Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, pp. 176-7.

be believed, there was very little, if anything, by way of a slave trade at Delagoa Bay.[144] In addition, in his treatment of the impact which the slave trade had on the societies of the Delagoa Bay hinterland in the 1810s and 1820s, Cobbing tends to portray it in monocausal terms as the main factor in the upheavals of the period, rather than seeing it as a factor which fed in various ways and to varying degrees into already existing patterns of conflict. To enable the impact of the trade to be placed more accurately in a historical context, this section of the chapter will first give an outline, synthesized from the secondary literature in English, of the history until the 1820s of the slave trade in south-east Africa generally. It will then briefly consider the possible role played by the Delagoa Bay trade in shaping the political scenarios described in the previous sections of the chapter.

Before 1700 perhaps a thousand slaves a year were being exported from the coasts of East Africa for sale in the Islamic states of North Africa and south-west Asia.[145] Further south, European slavers occasionally obtained cargoes from points along the coast as far as Port Natal, but this trade was spasmodic and on a very minor scale.[146] The Portuguese, for their part, took perhaps five hundred slaves a year for sale in Portuguese India, where cheap labour was plentiful.[147] The expansion of the slave trade in south-eastern Africa dates from the 1730s and 1740s,

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144. Cobbing, 'Arguments, hypotheses, assertions etc. on the mfecane', unpubl. ms., 1987, pp. 14, 16; Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 506 & n.

145. M.D.D. Newitt, Portuguese Settlement on the Zambezi: Exploration, Land Tenure and Colonial Rule in East Africa, London, 1973, p. 220; P.E. Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery: a History of Slavery in Africa, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 59-60.

146. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, p. 41; Chase, ed., Natal Papers, part 1, p. 13.

147. E.A. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa, London, 1975, p. 95.

when French settlers on the islands of Mauritius and Reunion began actively developing sugar and coffee plantations. To meet their labour needs they imported slaves from nearby Madagascar, and also from the Portuguese settlement at Mozambique Island. Though trade with foreign ships was officially prohibited, by mid-century the Portuguese were exporting at least a thousand slaves a year, most of them drawn from the coast to the south as far as Inhambane.[148]

After the end of the American War of Independence and the re-establishment of peace between France and Britain in 1783, a rapid increase in the slave trade from Mozambique took place. By the 1790s at least 5000 slaves a year were being exported.[149] Most were taken by the French, who by now dominated the slave trade of south-eastern Africa, to the Mascarene Islands, but some were exported to the French West Indian colony of San Domingo, and a small number was sold to Brazilian slavers.[150]

According to both Isaacman and Alpers, most of the slaves exported from Mozambique at this time came from the northern regions of the Portuguese sphere of influence,

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148. Newitt, Portuguese Settlement, p. 220; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp. 95-6; A. Isaacman, Mozambique: the Africanization of a European Institution: the Zambezi Prazos, 1750-1902, Madison, 1972, p. 86; R. L. Stein, The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: an Old Regime Business, Madison, 1979, pp. 121-3; G. Shepherd, 'The Comorians and the East African slave trade', in J.L. Watson, ed., Asian and African Systems of Slavery, Oxford, 1980, p. 75; B. Benedict, 'Slavery and indenture in Mauritius and Seychelles', in Watson, ed., Asian and African Systems of Slavery, pp. 137-8.

149. This figure is derived from estimates made in Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp. 185-6, 187; P.D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: a Census, Madison, 1969, pp. 229, 242; Newitt, Portuguese Settlement, p. 220.

150. Curtin, Atlantic Slave Trade, p. 229; Isaacman, Mozambique, p. 86; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p. 185; Stein, French Slave Trade, p. 124; R. Anstey, 'The slave trade of the continental powers, 1760-1810', Economic History Review, vol. 30 (1977), p. 260.

with few being obtained from the south.[151] A more precise assessment of the slave trade on the southern coast is to be found in Smith's accounts of trade in this region in the later 18th century. By this time, he states, Inhambane was declining in importance as an ivory-trading centre, and was becoming an important source of slaves.[152] Further to the south-west, at Delagoa Bay, the situation was different. While the ivory trade was expanding rapidly in the 1760s and 1770s (see also pp. 29-30 above), and remained important thereafter, the slave trade at this outlet, as he sees it, was of little consequence.[153]

Following the resumption of war between France and Britain in 1794, the volume of the slave trade in south-east Africa seems temporarily to have diminished.[154] After 1810 it rose sharply, with the biggest demand now coming from Brazil. Partly because of the disruption of commerce between the West Indies, North America and Europe by the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, the market for sugar, coffee and cotton from Brazil was expanding rapidly,[155] and, with it, Brazil's needs for

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151. Isaacman, Mozambique, p. 86; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p. 194.

152. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, p. 151; Smith, 'Delagoa Bay and the trade of south eastern Africa', in Gray & Birmingham, eds., Precolonial African Trade, p. 278; Smith, 'The Indian Ocean zone', in Birmingham & Martin, eds., History of Central Africa, vol. 1, London, 1983, p. 228.

153. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, p. 346; Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, pp. 176-7.

154. See the figures cited in P.E. Lovejoy, 'The volume of the Atlantic slave trade: a synthesis', JAH, vol. 23 (1982), p. 489; H.S. Klein, 'The trade in African slaves to Rio de Janeiro, 1795-1811: estimates of mortality and patterns of voyages', JAH, vol. 10 (1969), p. 540; Anstey, 'Slave trade', Economic History Review, vol. 30 (1977), p. 260; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp. 188, 189. But see also the much higher estimates made by Liesegang and cited in M.D.D. Newitt, 'Drought in Mozambique 1823-1831', Jnl. Southern Afr. Studies, vol. 15 (1988-9), p. 15n.

155. J.C. Miller, 'Slave prices in the Portuguese southern Atlantic, 1600-1830', in P.E. Lovejoy, ed., Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade, Madison, 1986, pp. 44, 51; J.C. Miller, Way of Death: Merchant

larger and larger imports of slave labour. Another factor in the expansion of the Brazilian export economy at this time was the increase in British investment which followed the flight of the Portuguese court under British protection to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 after the French invasion of Portugal.[156] The end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 saw a spurt in demand in Europe and the United States for Brazilian coffee, with a rough correlation discernible between the number of slaves imported into Rio de Janeiro and the export of coffee from that port.[157]

In the 18th century Brazil had been the largest single slave-importing region in the world, taking an estimated 31 per cent of all imports from Africa into the Americas and Caribbean. In the period 1801-10 it was importing at least 20 000 slaves a year, in the ensuing decade the figure rose to 27 000 a year, and, in the 1820s, to 32 000 a year.[158] This sharp increase was matched by a rapid rise in the slave trade of south-east Africa. One of the main reasons for this, was, paradoxically, the implementation of British policies designed to put an end to the Atlantic slave trade. In 1807 Britain had made illegal the transport of slaves in British ships and their importation into British colonies, and in 1810 an Anglo-Portuguese treaty limited the Portuguese slave trade to Portugal's own colonies in Africa.[159] This meant that

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Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830, London, 1988, pp. 492-3.

156. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p. 188; Miller, 'Slave prices', in Lovejoy, ed., Africans in Bondage, p. 53; R.E. Conrad, World of Sorrow: the African Slave Trade to Brazil, Baton Rouge, 1986, p. 57.

157. Conrad, World of Sorrow, pp. 61-2.

158. Curtin, Atlantic Slave Trade, pp. 207, 216, 234. In his review of the literature on the Brazilian slave trade, Conrad suggests that Curtin's figures are underestimates: Conrad, World of Sorrow, pp. 29-33.

159. Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery, pp. 135-6, 283; Conrad, World of Sorrow, pp. 57, 58.

West African sources of slaves, which had previously been of great importance in the trade to Brazil,[160] began to be closed off, and Brazilian importers began to turn increasingly to south-east Africa for alternative sources.[161] This trend was reinforced by another Anglo-Portuguese treaty in 1815, which banned Portuguese subjects from trading for slaves north of the equator, and by a further agreement in 1817 which confined the Portuguese slave trade in eastern Africa to the coast between Cape Delgado and Delagoa Bay.[162]

At the same time the trade from Portuguese East Africa to Mauritius and Reunion was continuing. Britain had seized both islands from France in 1810, but the Act of Abolition of 1807 was not extended to Mauritius until 1813, and smuggling of slaves from Africa to that island continued well into the 1820s.[163] On Reunion, which was restored to France in 1814, French officials did little to prevent the illegal slave trade from Africa. It continued into the 1840s, and, in the guise of the export of indentured labour, into the second half of the century.[164]

The impact which the continuing Indian Ocean trade and the rapidly increasing Brazilian trade had on the level of slave exports from south-east Africa is reflected in the available statistics. By the end of the 1810s exports from Mozambique were running at a minimum of 10 000 slaves

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160. Curtin, Atlantic Slave Trade, p. 207.

161. Miller, 'Slave prices', in Lovejoy, ed., Africans in Bondage, pp. 44, 59.

162. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp. 210-11; Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery, p. 284; Conrad, World of Sorrow, pp. 57-8.

163. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p. 214; M.V. Jackson Haight, European Powers and South-East Africa: a Study of International Relations on the South-East Coast of Africa 1796-1856, London, 1967 ed. (1st ed. 1942), pp. 158-62; Benedict, 'Slavery and indenture', in Watson, ed., Asian and African Systems of Slavery, p. 138; R.W. Beachey, The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa, London, 1976, pp. 27-30.

164. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p. 214; Beachey, Slave Trade, pp. 27-8, 31-5.

a year.[165] In the 1820s this figure rose still higher, to reach possibly 15 000 or more a year by the end of the decade.[166] By this time large numbers of slaves were being exported from the subordinate ports in Portuguese south-east Africa, for in 1811 the Portuguese crown had opened them all to direct trade with Brazil.[167] By the second half of the 1810s Quelimane, some 500 kilometres south-west of Mozambique, had become a thriving slaving port, exporting 3000 slaves or more a year.[168] In the 1820s this figure rose still higher as Quelimane became the largest slaving port in south-eastern Africa.[169]

In the same period the slave trade was also expanding at Inhambane and Delagoa Bay, respectively 1200 and 1600 kilometres closer to Brazil than was Mozambique Island, as Brazilian slavers took to calling at these ports.[170] French slavers from Reunion were also turning to Delagoa

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165. This figure is based on estimates in Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp. 189, 211; Curtin, Atlantic Slave Trade, p. 242; Lovejoy, 'Volume of the Atlantic slave trade', JAH, vol. 23 (1982), p. 489.

166. This figure is based on estimates in Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p. 215; Klein, Middle Passage, p. 77; D. Eltis, 'The export of slaves from Africa, 1821-1843', Jnl. Econ. History, vol. 37 (1977), p. 414; Liesegang as cited in Newitt, 'Drought in Mozambique', Jnl. Southern Afr. Studies, vol. 15 (1988-9), p. 15n.

167. Isaacman, Mozambique, p. 87; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp. 215-16.

168. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p. 216; Lovejoy, 'Volume of the Atlantic slave trade', JAH, vol. 23 (1982), p. 489; L. Vail & L. White, Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: a Study of Quelimane District, London, 1980, p. 18; Liesegang as cited in Newitt, 'Drought in Mozambique', Jnl. Southern Afr. Studies, vol. 15 (1988-9), p. 15n.

169. Vail & White, Capitalism and Colonialism, p. 18, give a figure of 12 000 to 15 000 slaves a year exported from Quelimane in the 1820s. Liesegang, as cited by Newitt, 'Drought in Mozambique', Jnl. Southern Afr. Studies, vol. 15 (1988-9), p. 15n, gives an estimate of a little over 5 000 a year, which is more consistent with the figures cited by other authors for Mozambique generally.

170. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 348-50.

Bay as Britain sought, at first with little success, to curtail the export of slaves from Madagascar.[171] By the early 1820s, according to the reports of Owen and Fynn, the slave trade at this port was well established.[172] The only statistics of any detail so far published on the Delagoa Bay trade come from Klein, who records that in the period of four and a half years from mid-1825 to early 1830 a total of 4 031 slaves was exported from the bay to Rio de Janeiro, that is, an average of 900 a year.[173] Allowing for exports to other Brazilian ports, to Reunion and perhaps Mauritius, and for smuggling, Harries's conclusion that 'well over 1,000' slaves a year were exported from Delagoa Bay in the late 1820s seems well founded.[174] If pre-embarkation mortality among the slaves is taken into account, the numbers extracted from the Delagoa Bay hinterland could well have reached the figure of 2000 to 3000 suggested by Cobbing.[175] Whether this figure can be projected back in time to the late 1810s, as he argues,[176] is a matter for debate, but there can be little disagreement with the thrust of his argument that

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171. Ibid., p. 350; Beachey, Slave Trade, pp. 28-9; M. Bloch, 'Modes of production and slavery in Madagascar: two case studies', in Watson, ed., Asian and African Systems of Slavery, pp. 104-5, 110; G. Campbell, 'Madagascar and the slave trade, 1810-1895', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), pp. 205-10.

172. Captain Owen, 'The bay of Delagoa', in G.M. Theal, ed., Records of South-Eastern Africa, vol. 2, Cape Town, 1964 (reprint of 1st ed., Cape Town, 1898), p. 478; Mr Fynn, 'Delagoa Bay', in the same volume of Theal p. 487; Fynn, Diary, pp. 39-40, 43, 47, 48, 270; Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, p. 76. See also Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 350-1; and Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, p. 177.

173. Klein, Middle Passage, p. 77.

174. Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), p. 316.

175. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 504-5.

176. Ibid. p. 504.

from about 1815 the Delagoa Bay slave trade was increasing in size to the point where it became a major factor in shaping the history of the societies of south-east Africa.[177]

If the main phases in the development of the slave trade in south-east Africa and its extension to Delagoa Bay can be discerned, and its rough dimensions established, lack of published evidence makes assessing its impact a matter of a different order. Even on such important topics as where the slaves exported from Delagoa Bay came from, and how they were obtained, there is very little that can confidently be said at this stage. Contemporary sources indicate that in the early 1820s many of the slaves sold to the Portuguese were captives taken in wars between the local Ronga polities, particularly those of Madolo, Tembe and Mabhudu, and in attacks made on them by intrusive groups like the Gasa and Jele.[178] And, despite the view commonly expressed in the literature that the 'Nguni' 'traditionally' did not sell slaves,[179] there is some evidence to the effect that both the Ndwandwe and the Zulu traded captives to the Portuguese.[180] Beyond this, however, argument as to the sources of slaves sold at Delagoa Bay in the period to the mid-1820s remains conjectural.

Most of the slaves exported by the Portuguese from the bay were probably obtained by purchase from African slavers rather than through raiding by the Portuguese

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177. Ibid., pp. 506-7.

178. Fynn, Diary, pp. 39, 43, 47; Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, p. 256; Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, p. 177; Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), p. 314.

179. For example, Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay', in Thompson, ed., African Societies, p. 186. See the discussion on this point in Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), pp. 309-11.

180. Fynn, Diary, pp. 48, 270.

themselves. Cobbing asserts that 'An army of black musketeers with Portuguese officers existed at Lourenco Marques for the seizure of slaves',[181] but as it stands, this statement fairly certainly exaggerates the ability of the Portuguese-led garrison to engage in independent slaving expeditions. Smith's research has made clear that in the period under discussion the garrison at Lourenco Marques was small and weak, and hardly able to face hostile forces without assistance from allies. Though the Portuguese were on occasion able to exert political leverage over chiefdoms in the region about the bay, it was only with the support of other chiefdoms.[182] Illustrative of their weakness is the fact that in 1824 a Portuguese force, which included the governor of Lourenco Marques, was annihilated by a Madolo army, and soon afterwards the acting governor was put to death by the chief of Tembe.[183] Admittedly the Portuguese records probably hardly begin to reflect the degree of participation by the garrison in slaving activities, but, given the picture which Smith draws, it is difficult to see the garrison as having been able to embark on any but the most minor slave raids without support from African allies. Its function was not so much to seize captives as to hold those purchased from African slavers until the arrival of slave ships.[184]

Whatever the precise role of the Portuguese in slaving activities, there seems no reason to doubt Cobbing's

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181. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpublished paper, p. 10.

182. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 220-7, 242, 252, 254, 261, 262, 270-2. On the weakness of the Portuguese presence in the 1820s see also Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 230-1.

183. Smith, 'The struggle for control', unpubl. thesis, pp. 272-4; Harries, 'Labour migration', unpubl. thesis, pp. 153-4.

184. Fynn, for example, records having seen captives being held in the fort at Lourenco Marques in 1823: see his Diary, p. 39.

argument that by the early 1820s the expansion of the slave trade had made Delagoa Bay the epicentre of waves of violence which reached at least to the Nkomati valley in the north, what is now the eastern Transvaal in the west, and the Mfolozi valley in the south.[185] In assessing the impact of this violence in any particular region, however, the question of precise timing becomes crucial. By and large, the effects of the expansion of the slave trade are unlikely to have been widely felt before about 1815, especially in regions at any distance from the bay. Thus the trade would not have been a factor in the conflicts which took place between the Tembe and the Mabhudu, and between the Ndwandwe and the Dlamini, in the early years of the 19th century, nor in the early stages of Mthethwa expansion under Dingiswayo. But in the 1810s it increasingly became a factor which historians cannot ignore. The persistence of Ndwandwe attacks on the Dlamini at this time may well have been, as Cobbing suggests,[186] in part a response to the exigencies of the slave trade. Whether the Ndwandwe were coming under pressure from slaving groups from the region of Delagoa Bay, or whether they were themselves beginning to raid slaves, are matters for further investigation. The move which they apparently made northwards across the Phongolo towards Delagoa Bay after their defeat by the Zulu suggests that they were seeking to become more closely involved in the slave trade.

The attempts made by the Ndwandwe to tighten their authority over the tributary Gasa, Jele and Msane may also have been stimulated by the rise of the slave trade, especially, if as Hedges has argued, these chiefdoms were in a position to exercise some control over the trade

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185. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 10; Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 506-7.

186. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 16; Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 506.

between the Mthethwa and Mabhudu. The expansion of a commerce in ivory and cattle early in Dingiswayo's reign predated the expansion of the slave trade, but it is quite possible that by the later 1810s the Mthethwa were also sending northwards captives taken in their wars of expansion in the interior. The Ndwandwe intervention may have represented an attempt to take control of an increasingly lucrative form of commerce, or else it may have been a strategic move made to try to prevent the further strengthening of the Mthethwa-Mabhudu axis.

Either way, the role of the slave trade in intensifying political conflict may help explain the intensity of Ndwandwe conflict with the Mthethwa, and the violence of the raids which the Ndwandwe subsequently made into the region south of the White Mfolozi. Cobbing's argument that the collapse and dispersal of the Ndwandwe at a later period is attributable mainly to the effects of the violence associated with the slave trade is open to debate,[187] but it is highly likely that the trade was an important factor in this process. It was probably also significant in stimulating the migrations of the Ngwane and the Khumalo of Mzilikazi, both of which groups, Cobbing suggests, were displaced by the Ndwandwe.[188] As for the Gasa and Jele, far from having been 'driven' northwards by the Zulu, they may deliberately have moved into the Delagoa Bay region as slave raiders and traders.[189]

In discussion of the impact of the slave trade on the Delagoa Bay-Thukela region, a general point raised by Cobbing becomes germane: to what extent were captives supplied to Delagoa Bay a by-product of ongoing conflicts,

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187. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 10.

188. Ibid., p. 11; Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 506, 507.

189. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 11; Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 506.

and to what extent did the demand for slaves actually serve to stimulate new conflicts?[190] A related point that arises out of Harries's work on slavery and servitude among the Gasa also needs to be considered:[191] under what circumstances were captives retained within the societies of their captors, and under what circumstances were they traded as commodities for export? These questions cannot be answered here, but they indicate some of the issues that need to be faced if the history of the Delagoa Bay slave trade and its impact is to be adequately assessed.

Until intensive research is done into the history of the trade, the points made here must remain largely conjectural. They serve, however, to suggest that by the late 1810s its impact was being directly felt in the territories south of the Phongolo. In the 1820s it may have become, indirectly at least, a factor in the politics of the region south of the Thukela. This theme will be taken up at the appropriate points in the remaining chapters.

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190. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 10.

191. Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol. 22 (1981), esp. pp. 312-26.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS SOUTH OF THE THUKELA IN THE LATE 1810s AND EARLY 1820s

1. Continuities with the past

A central feature of the devastation stereotype whose development was analyzed in chapter 2 is that the political changes which were taking place north of the Thukela in the time of Dingiswayo and Shaka burst upon the region south of the river with effects which were both sudden and dramatic. Bryant writes of 'the flood-gates being opened upon Natal', and of waves of destruction 'flooding' into it.[1] Omer-Cooper describes the period of upheaval in Natal as having been begun by the 'sudden eruption' into it of the Thembu.[2] Similar notions live on in the works of more recent writers.[3]

While there is no doubt that the level of political conflict south of the Thukela increased markedly in the late 1810s and 1820s, over much of this area the process was less abrupt than the stereotype holds. The examination made in chapters 1 and 4 above of the forces which were making for political change in this region indicates that

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1. OT, pp. 252, 376.

2. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, p. 156.

3. For example, J.S. Bergh & A.P. Bergh, Tribes and Kingdoms, Cape Town, 1984, p. 20; P. Maylam, History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s, Cape Town, 1986, p. 61; Edgecombe, 'The mfecane or difaqane', in Cameron & Spies, eds., Illustrated History of S.A., pp. 120-1; the present author's 'Before Mgungundlovu: the upper Mngeni-upper Mkhomazi region in the early nineteenth century', in J. Laband & R. Haswell, eds., Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988: a New Portrait of an African City, Pietermaritzburg, 1988, p. 20. This latter essay was written at the beginning of 1987 before the author had begun detailed research into the roots of the devastation stereotype.

in the coastlands and in the valleys of the lower Thukela and the Mzinyathi, tensions had been rising since the later 18th century. This was particularly so in the coastal regions, where conflict had been intensified by the successive intrusions in the later 18th century and early years of the 19th of the Thuli, the Cele and the Makhanya. In the lower Thukela valley, the effects of the expansion of the Qwabe, Ngcobo, Mkhize and Chunu chiefdoms on the north bank of the river were spilling over onto the south bank by the early years of the 19th century. Further inland, the expansion of the Hlubi chiefdom under Bhungane in the late 18th century, and the internal struggles which followed his death, are likely to have sent political ripples across wide areas on either side of the Mzinyathi.

The upheavals which form the subject of this chapter need to be set against this historical background if their nature is to be properly understood. For half a century before the 1810s, the societies of the region south of the Thukela had had to cope with political pressures emanating from the northward. In the coastlands and on the upper Mzinyathi, numbers of people had been incorporated into new, enlarged polities established by invaders and conquerors from across the Thukela and Mzinyathi. In the 1810s first the expansion of the Mthethwa and then the Mthethwa-Ndwandwe-Zulu conflicts, exacerbated by pressures emanating from the slaving societies round Delagoa Bay, had impinged more and more direcly on some, at least, of the polities of the region. The new series of incursions which began in the late 1810s, while far more disruptive, and far more widely felt, than anything which had gone before, was not unprecedented. Its impact was felt not in a politically static landscape, as depicted by Bryant,[4] but in a region which for several decades had been experiencing an increasing tempo of political change. That the

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4. OT, ch. 8. The chapter is entitled 'The people of olden Zululand', but its comments apply equally well to the inhabitants of Natal.

available evidence allows the processes of change to be discerned only in limited parts of the region should not lead to underestimation of their wider impact.

2. The incursion of the Ngwane

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the increasing political pressures which were being experienced by the 1810s among the chiefdoms on the north bank of the Thukela river led certain of them to launch attacks on their neighbours across the river to the south. Instances which were discussed were the Qwabe attack on the Makhanya, and the Nyuswa attack on the Hlongwa. Similar occurrences may have taken place in these years further up-river as a consequence of the expansion of the Mkhize and Chunu chiefdoms, and in the Mzinyathi region as a consequence of the internal conflicts which were taking place in the Hlubi chiefdom. Events of this kind no doubt caused localized disruptions of social, political and economic life, but they were of minor import compared with the incursion of the Ngwane across the upper Mzinyathi which took place in the later 1810s.[5]

The flight of the Ngwane from their territory in the Vryheid region appears in the literature as the prototype of numerous similar migrations which, according to mfecane theory, took place soon afterwards all over southern Africa. The Ngwane are generally described as having been 'driven out' of their lands, if not directly by the Zulu then as a result of Zulu expansion. They turned into a 'horde' of fugitives which, under the leadership of the bloodthirsty Matiwane, cut a swathe through the chiefdoms of inland Natal and the highveld, pillaging, massacring and destroying.[6] Of the groups which feature in accounts

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5. See the discussion on pp. 110-15 above.

6. The literary image of Matiwane's Ngwane as a horde of murderous savages can be traced at least as far back as the mid-1830s: see Godlonton's Introductory Remarks, pp. 52-3, 204.

informed by mfecane theory, the Ngwane are one whose history urgently needs de-mythologizing. This section of the chapter re-examines the first phase of their migration, the phase which saw them move from the Vryheid region west and south-west through northern Natal to the valley of the upper Thukela.

In chapter 4 (pp. 178-9) it was argued that the flight of the Ngwane followed from an attack made on them by the Ndwandwe at a time when violence north of the Black Mfolozi river was mounting to unprecedented levels. The Ndwandwe, who were then the central political actors in this region, were facing a major challenge from the expansion of the Mthethwa on their southern borders. At the same time they were in conflict with the Dlamini to the north, and were also beginning to feel the impact of the expansion of the Delagoa Bay slave trade. Why the Ngwane were 'driven out' by the Ndwandwe, when the Khumalo of Donda and the Ntshali of Mlotha, who were attacked at much the same time, were apparently not, is a question which needs investigation. The notion of African groups' having violently 'driven' one another over the landscape during the wars of the early 19th century recommended itself strongly to the colonial writers who were responsible for developing the basic stereotypes of mfecane theory. Like other forced migrations of the period, that of the Ngwane has too often been unproblematically portrayed as having followed automatically from a successful attack made by a superior power. Why they were not incorporated as tributaries into the Ndwandwe polity, whether the option of submission to their attackers was feasible, whether it was tried, and if it failed, why, are questions which writers on the subject have almost entirely neglected.

Facing the kind of crisis which they did by the late 1810s, it is likely that the Ndwandwe leaders were by this time more concerned with eliminating real or potential threats posed by the presence of independent chiefdoms on their borders than with bringing more tributaries under

their authority. It is also possible that they were becoming more interested in seizing captives for the expanding slave trade than in increasing the labour-power at their disposal, and hence less concerned with preserving the structures of newly conquered societies than with breaking them up. Under these conditions, as the Ngwane leaders would certainly have realized, the social cost of submission to the Ndwandwe would have been very high. Another factor in their calculations was their own likely treatment if they fell into the hands of the Ndwandwe. Even if Zwide had proved willing to accept the submission of the Ngwane generally, the killing of the Khumalo and Ntshali chiefs revealed in no uncertain terms the fate that awaited Matiwane and his immediate adherents. Making their submission to Zwide was for them not a feasible option.

Some sections of the Ngwane may possibly have broken away and tendered their allegiance to the Ndwandwe chief, but, judging by the success with which Matiwane was able to engage in subsequent conflicts, most Ngwane accompanied him into flight. The Ndwandwe attack was probably ferocious enough to leave the various Ngwane sub-chiefs little real choice. Why the Ndwandwe did not proceed to follow the Ngwane up as persistently and aggressively as they had some time earlier pursued Sobhuza's Dlamini is another issue which needs discussion. The short answer is probably that in the prevailing conditions of crisis the Ndwandwe leaders were reluctant to commit their forces too far from their own territory.

The decision of most Ngwane leaders to take to flight needs to be seen, then, against the background of the political turmoil which for some years had been mounting in the region north of the Black Mfolozi. Though the Ndwandwe attack was obviously the precipitating factor, it was not an isolated occurrence but the culminating event in a process which had for some years seen violence spreading gradually closer to the Ngwane borders. While the Ngwane took to flight most immediately to escape the attacking

Ndwandwe, a factor in their decision was the desire to put a greater distance between themselves and what was becoming a region of unprecedentedly fierce conflict.

Though forced into flight, probably with the loss of most of their cattle, the Ngwane seem to have retained their political cohesion. The Ndwandwe had succeeded in defeating and displacing the Ngwane chiefdom, but had failed to destroy it. From this perspective, the 'driving out' of the Ngwane was as much a successful escape as it was an expulsion. Even under the extremely stressful conditions of flight, the Ngwane proved able to hold together. To describe them, as much of the literature does, simply as a 'horde' is tendentious and misleading; they are more usefully described in this phase of their history as constituting a chiefdom on the move.

Nevertheless to see the Ngwane at this point as having been essentially a marauding group is accurate enough, for the loss of their cattle to the Ndwandwe left them with no option but to embark on a course of raiding as a matter of urgency. The most pressing question which faced their leaders after they and their adherents had made good their escape was where to locate and seize enough cattle to meet their immediate needs. The closest and most obvious target was the neighbouring Hlubi chiefdom to the west. The Ngwane leaders knew that if the various sections of Hlubi were given time to combine they would be more than a match for their own battered fighting forces. The best hope of defeating the Hlubi was to make a surprise attack aimed at destroying the ruling house under Mthimkhulu. That this is what happened is attested in the statements both of Ngwane and of Hlubi informants.[7] In a swift descent on

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7. Ngwane informants are Timango in Stow 'Intrusion of the stronger races', unpubl. ms., pp. 196, 206; and in Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 288; Moloja, 'Story of the "Fetcani horde"', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268; and Msebenzi kaMacingwane, History of Matiwane and the Amangwane Tribe, ed. N.J. van Warmelo, Pretoria, 1938, pp. 22, 30, 32, 126. Hlubi informants are Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement of Mathlomahulu', Cape Monthly Magazine, vol. 3 (1880), p. 163; and Mabhonsa in JSA, vol. 2, pp. 13-14, 16. See also Shepstone's unattributed notes

Mthimkhulu's capital, the Ngwane swept aside local resistance, killed the Hlubi chief, and seized numbers of cattle.

Conventional accounts have it that the Ngwane then in turn drove the Hlubi people out of their territory and across the Drakensberg. The main source used for this by recent writers is Bryant's statement in Olden Times that, after falling on Mthimkhulu and his family in the night and massacring them all, Matiwane 'then drove the Hlubi tribe sauve qui peut over the mountains out of the land'.[8] The notion that the Hlubi were 'driven out' is also found in some of the primary accounts recorded in the later 19th century.[9] While it is probable that in the original interviews the informants themselves used words or phrases which in their own languages conveyed this sense, it fed into, and reinforced, a colonial literary usage which, as described above, was already well established.

The stereotyped notion that the Hlubi were simply 'driven out' by the Ngwane obscures the more complex reality of their reactions to the Ngwane attack and to the destruction of the ruling house. According to Mabhonsa, who, as a Hlubi, had no reason to minimize the strength of the group which had overcome Mthimkhulu, the Ngwane chiefdom was small in comparison with that of the Hlubi.[10] It is unlikely that Matiwane's fugitive party had anything like the resources of manpower which would have been needed to 'drive out' all the Hlubi, and to 'sweep' or 'scour' their large territory for cattle.[11] At another point in

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on Hlubi history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 141.

8. OT, p. 150.

9. Timango in Stow 'Intrusion of the stronger races', unpubl. ms., pp. 196, 206; Mhlanga, 'Story of native wars', Cape Monthly Magazine, vol. 14 (1877), p. 248; Moloja, 'Story of the "Fetcani horde"', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268.

10. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, p. 16.

11. The word 'sweep' is used by Scully in 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 289, and 'scour' by Bryant in OT, p. 139.

Olden Times, Bryant himself gives a rather differently nuanced account from the one cited in the previous paragraph. The Hlubi took to flight, he indicates, not simply in response to the Ngwane attack, but in part as the result of decisions taken by their leaders.[12] This is in harmony with Mabhonsa's statement to the effect that 'As soon as Mtimkulu was murdered the tribe dispersed, each prince carrying off his own section'.[13] In his view the destruction of the Hlubi chiefdom was not so much a case of the people's having been 'driven out' as of their having 'scattered'.[14] As Shepstone also puts it, the Hlubi chiefdom 'fell to pieces',[15] a phrasing which is distinctly different from that of the stereotype.

These views are in accordance with what is known of the structure and history of the Hlubi chiefdom in the early 19th century. Though it was a large and comparatively powerful polity, it was only loosely integrated. If anything, its central authority was becoming weaker during Mthimkhulu's reign as the sections under his senior male relatives sought to assert their autonomy. With its political lynch-pin destroyed by the Ngwane attack, the chiefdom rapidly disintegrated into its constituent parts. While the Ngwane were largely responsible for sending these parts flying in different directions, allowance must also be made for the consequences of the decisions made by the various Hlubi leaders. These decisions were in marked contrast to those taken by the Ngwane sub-chiefs in response to the Ndwandwe attack, for where the Ngwane had largely held together in adversity, the Hlubi sections dispersed in different directions.

Most accounts of their subsequent history focus mainly on the flight of a large section under Mpangazitha over the

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12. OT, p. 138.
13. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, p. 14.
14. Ibid., p. 13.
15. In Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 141.

Drakensberg onto the highveld.[16] This focus stems mainly from the interest displayed from the colonial period to the present in the series of bloody battles which Mpangazitha is supposed to have fought in and about the Caledon valley before being defeated and killed. It distracts attention from the fact that after the Ngwane attack and the destruction of the chiefdom's central political authority, the various sections of Hlubi followed a number of different courses of action. The surviving members of the ruling house made off northwards towards the upper Phongolo region, possibly to seek refuge with the Ngwe, the people of Mthimkhulu's chief wife, or with the Shabalala, the people of his mother.[17] Other groups headed north-westward towards the upper Vaal.[18] Whiteside claims that a number of Hlubi migrated southwards over the Mkhomazi and eventually to the territory of the Gcaleka Xhosa.[19] This notion is not supported in any of the primary accounts, and is probably a product of the author's concern to establish a historical connection between the Hlubi of the Mzinyathi region and the 'fingoes' of the eastern Cape.[20]

Some of these groups of Hlubi took to migration mainly as a means of saving or even enhancing their political autonomy. Others did so in order to seek refuge in regions of political stability. Large numbers, including three of Mthimkhulu's sons, made their way, possibly over a period of time, to the south-east to give their allegiance to

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16. See for example D.F. Ellenberger & J.C. Macgregor, History of the Basuto, Ancient and Modern, London, 1912, pp. 119-20, 124; Bryant, OT, pp. 150-3; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, p. 86 ff; Wright & Manson, Hlubi Chiefdom, pp. 17-18.

17. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, pp. 17, 19; Wright & Manson, Hlubi Chiefdom, pp. 6, 16.

18. OT, p. 150; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, p. 19.

19. Ayliff & Whiteside, History of the Abambo, p. 9.

20. See the argument in A.C. Webster, 'Ayliff, Whiteside, and the Fingo "emancipation" of 1835: a reappraisal', B.A. Hons. essay, Rhodes University, 1988, pp. 1-7.

Shaka,[21] whose emergent Zulu chiefdom must have appeared as a haven of stability in comparison with the polities of the area north of the Black Mfolozi. Others apparently got as far as the Thuli chiefdom, the dominant power in the coastlands of the Mngeni-Mkhomazi region.[22] But not all the Hlubi took to flight. A few small groups seem to have remained in the upper Mzinyathi region.[23] Others, pace the stereotype of Matiwane as mass murderer, tendered their allegiance to the Ngwane chief.[24]

On the basis of information recorded by Stuart from Mabhonsa kaSidlayi, the Ngwane attack on the Hlubi can roughly be dated to the end of the 1810s. According to Mabhonsa, Langalibalele kaMthimkhulu, who was chief of the Hlubi from the later 1830s until his deposition by the Natal colonial authorities in 1873, had been a young child able to run about at the time when the Hlubi had been attacked and put to flight by the Ngwane. Mabhonsa appears to have learnt this from Langalibalele himself, as also the fact that the Hlubi chief had been a member of his father's umSonganyathi ibutho, which was the age-equivalent of the Zulu iHlaba ibutho.[25] Both Stuart and Bryant independently give the iHlaba as having been formed in about 1837 of youths who had been born in the late 1810s.[26] It is known that sons of chiefs were often older than other youths when they were placed in an ibutho; by this token, Langalibalele

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21. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, pp. 13-14; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296.

22. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 281.

23. Wright & and Manson, Hlubi Chiefdom, p. 22.

24. Moloja, 'Story of the "Fetcani horde"', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 269, who indicates that Matiwane was joined by the amaHawula section of Hlubi; Walter Khela, statement in Msebenzi, History of Matiwane, p. 266. A confused statement by Mabhonsa in JSA, vol. 2, p. 14, also indicates that numbers of Hlubi gave allegiance to Matiwane.

25. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, pp. 17, 19.

26. See Stuart's estimate in JSA, vol. 1, p. 19; and OT, p. 645.

could have been born in the mid-1810s. This would square with the estimate made in 1844 by the Wesleyan missionary James Allison that Langalibalele was about 30 years old;[27] and with that made in 1852 by Robert Garden, a British military officer, that he was about 36 or 37.[28] By this measure the Ngwane attack on the Hlubi would not have taken place before the late 1810s.

The wider effects of the Ngwane attack and the break-up of the Hlubi chiefdom had hardly begun to be felt before the Ngwane went pushing their way across the Mzinyathi and the Biggarsberg into the valley of the upper Thukela. One source claims that after the flight of the Hlubi the Ngwane proceeded to occupy their country,[29] but if they did so it is unlikely to have been for long, for the region was too close for comfort to Ndwandwe territory. In his recently published critique of mfecane theory, Cobbing has the Ngwane moving directly from the Vryheid region to the Wilge river in the north-east Orange Free State after the Ndwandwe had attacked them, and says nothing about the possible intermediate stages of their migration.[30] It is contended here that a move of this kind is unlikely to have taken place. Not only does it ignore a number of traditions, recorded both from Ngwane and non-Ngwane informants, to the effect that the Ngwane initially made their way to the upper Thukela,[31] but it also does not take

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27. F.J. Perkins, 'A history of Christian missions in Swaziland to 1910', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1974, p. 76.

28. Garden Papers (Natal Archives), p. 523.

29. Timango in Stow 'Intrusion of the stronger races', unpubl. ms., p. 206; and in Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 289.

30. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 507.

31. Nombiba, in Shepstone's notes on Nyamvu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 137 (the informant is identified in Bird, p. 139); Ntulo, in Shepstone's notes on Zizi history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 138); Moloja, 'Story of the "Fetcani horde"', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268; Khawulela's statement in Commission on Native Laws and Customs, vol. 1, p.

into account a point which Cobbing himself is at pains to stress in another context. Griqua, Kora and other mounted gunmen from the lower Vaal, middle Orange and north-eastern Cape regions were raiding widely across the plains of the highveld by the early 1820s, and probably before.[32] It seems unlikely that, having just escaped from one arena of conflict, the Ngwane leaders would willingly have taken their followers into another if they could have done otherwise.

The desire to avoid the comparatively harsh environment of the highveld may also have been a factor in the Ngwane decision. In the event they followed the line of least resistance between the societies of the highveld to the west and the expanding chiefdoms - the Zulu, Chunu, Mkhize, and possibly the Thembu - of the Thukela-White Mfolozi region to the east. The only obstacles to their advance were a number of small Bhele and Zizi chiefdoms: these they were easily able to overcome in detail before coming to a halt against the foothills of the Drakensberg in the good grasslands of the upper Thukela region, some 200 kilometres from their former territory near Vryheid.

The stereotyped view is that the passage of the Ngwane through the territories of the Bhele and Zizi was marked by little more than bloodshed and destruction. Of the fate of the Bhele, Bryant wrote in Izindaba Zabantu, 'Those of them who...chanced to be athwart Matiwane's path were mercilessly burnt or butchered, infants and females, aged and sick alike, in true Matiwanean style, till not a body was any longer seen nor a foot-fall heard in erstwhile emaBheleni-land'.[33] His account in Olden Times was couched

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166; Msebenzi, History of Matiwane, p. 20. See also JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 28; and Mabhonsa's chronologically confused statement in JSA, vol. 2, p. 26.

32. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 496-9. See also J. Richner, 'The withering away of the "lifaqane": or a change of paradigm', unpubl. B.A. Hons. essay, Rhodes University, 1988, pp. 5-12.

33. HZ, p. 35.

in similar vein.[34] As for the Zizi, Matiwane's followers, 'now transformed into a roving horde of human demons, swept suddenly down upon them. Against such a mad and unexpected onslaught the emaZizini were unable to cope; and leaving land and stock to their fate, they saved their own heads by making a precipitate retreat towards the Cape...'.[35]

There is little doubt that many sections of Bhele, including that headed by the senior chief, Qunta,[36] took to flight southwards upon the advent of the Ngwane, for displaced Bhele groups were a major presence in the Mzimkhulu-Mzimvubu region in the 1820s (see below, pp. 302, 307). Others made their way to khonza Shaka,[37] and others probably ended up in other chiefdoms that lay within reach. Numbers of people who could not or would not make their escape were no doubt killed as the Ngwane set about seizing cattle and beating down resistance. But Bryant's picture is again grossly distorted. By his own account, numbers of Bhele remained behind under their own chiefs, and even if, as he claims, they had been reduced to poverty and some to cannibalism,[38] it is likely that many of them sooner or later gravitated towards Matiwane's newly established polity as it began to reconsolidate. That numbers of Zizi did this is attested by Khawulela, who states that after the defeat of the Zizi they had submitted to the authority of the Ngwane chief.[39] Somewhat later, according to the evidence of Shepstone's informant, Nombiba, sections of Nyamvu, Njilo, Dlanyoka and Ndlovu from the middle Mngeni region, which had been disturbed by the passage of the Chunu, Thembu and other groups, also

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34. OT, p. 139.

35. HZ, pp. 33-4. See also OT, p. 357.

36. OT, p. 348.

37. HZ, p. 34. See also Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 260-2.

38. OT, p. 347.

39. Khawulela's statement in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 1, p. 166.

came to give their allegiance to Matiwane.[40] The turmoil caused by the Ngwane in the upper Thukela region should not be underestimated, but what is missing from the stereotype is any appreciation that after an initial period of upheaval Matiwane's reconstituted chiefdom began to emerge as a major new regional focus of power and stability.

The incursion of the Ngwane into the valleys of the upper Mzinyathi and the upper Thukela completely transformed the political scene in those regions, and sent shock waves over a much wider area. The collapse of the Hlubi chiefdom removed what for several decades had been the dominant power in the Mzinyathi valley, and for a while left something of a political vacuum in the region. To the south-west, the numerous small Bhele and Zizi chiefdoms were either brought under Ngwane domination, or broken up and ejected. In their place emerged a single, much larger, more centralized and more militarized polity. According to Msebenzi, Matiwane's main umuzi, esiNyondweni, was situated to the east of what is now Bergville, and the territory under his authority extended to beyond Ladysmith.[41] Msebenzi was himself a member of the Ngwane chiefly house, and his evidence on this point needs to be treated with caution, but his claim gains substance from the statement of Mqayikana kaYenge, who was of the Mpumuza people, that Matiwane's conquests had extended at least as far as Estcourt.[42] It seems safe to say that his influence reached from the region of the Biggarsberg in the north to the upper Mtshezi (Bushman's) river and beyond in the south.

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40. Nombiba, in Shepstone's notes on these histories in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 137-8, 140, 146 (the informant is identified in Bird, p. 139, and in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 126, 127, 145). See also Bryant, OT, pp. 557, 561.

41. Msebenzi, History of Matiwane, p. 20.

42. JSA, vol. 4, p. 28.

In the course of these political changes, established patterns of social and economic life were either destroyed or severely disrupted. The degree of violence involved should not be minimized, but neither should it be exaggerated in the way that the stereotype of Ngwane history invariably does. Where areas became emptied of population it was by displacement rather than by destruction: neither the Ngwane nor any other group had the capacity or the need to massacre large numbers of people. It is likely that fugitive groups moved off more often as migrant bands which retained some political cohesion and purpose than as the disorganized hordes of refugees which figure in the stereotype. While numbers of people permanently abandoned their home territories, numbers of others remained behind, if often for a time in conditions of extreme want. For at least a season, and possibly longer, in much of the area affected by the passage of the Ngwane, agricultural production would have been at a standstill. The area would also have been largely denuded of livestock, either through the migration of the owners or else through Ngwane raiding.

As the newly re-constituted Ngwane chiefdom took root and began to extend its hegemony over the upper Thukela region, a measure of orderly existence began gradually to return. Once the presence of the Ngwane had ceased to be contested, a main concern of Matiwane's would have been to re-establish the conditions needed for homestead-based agricultural and livestock production to resume. Another would have been to build up his following as rapidly as possible by setting up formal tributary relations with the sections of Bhele and Zizi which had remained in their territories, and with other groups which came to give the Ngwane chief their allegiance.

Of Ngwane relations at this time with the neighbouring Dlamini chiefdoms to the east and south-east, and with other regional powers further off, like the Thembu, Mkhize, Chunu and Zulu, nothing is known. But there can be litle

doubt that the emergence of the Ngwane chiefdom as a significant power in the upper Thukela region injected an important new element into the political calculus of every chief from the White Mfolozi to the Mzimkhulu and beyond.

3. Intrusions into the mid-Thukela region

Soon after the flight of the Ngwane from the Vryheid area across the Mzinyathi and into the valley of the upper Thukela, the developing confrontation between the Ndwandwe and the Mthethwa came to a head. In rapid succession followed the death of Dingiswayo, the defeat of the Mthethwa army, the disintegration of the Mthethwa state, and the emergence of a new confrontation on the White Mfolozi between the Ndwandwe and a rising Zulu-dominated defensive alliance. In the course of urgently mobilizing manpower and resources from among neighbouring chiefdoms, the Zulu attacked and subordinated the large Qwabe polity to the south-east, and then proceeded to turn their attentions southward.

In this region the first chiefdom to be menaced by the Zulu was that of the Chunu, which had for some time itself been engaged in a process of territorial expansion, and represented a potentially serious obstacle to the furtherance of Zulu interests in the south. A move on the part of one of the sections of the Chunu to assert its authority over the Cube precipated a pre-emptive attack against it on the part of the Zulu (pp. 182-3 above). Though the attack does not seem to have been carried further against the Chunu ruling house under Macingwane, the reaction of the Chunu leaders, with the fate of the Qwabe and their chief, Phakathwayo, fresh in their minds, was to gather their cattle, and as many of their people as would follow them, and to move off southwards over the Thukela.

The Chunu chiefdom was not, as Bryant implies, 'driven out' by the Zulu.[43] It moved off of its own accord, and

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43. OT, p. 267.

did so not to avoid destruction at the hands of an all-powerful conquest state but to avoid being made tributary to the parvenu leader of a hitherto insignificant chiefdom. It was not the existence of the Chunu chiefdom that was threatened, but rather the future of its politically ambitious leadership. First the expansion of the Mthethwa into the interior had blocked Chunu expansion northwards; now the military and political successes of the upstart Zulu chiefdom threatened Chunu independence. The external problems facing Macingwane were compounded, Hamilton suggests, by the existence of political tensions within his chiefdom which enabled Shaka to play one Chunu faction off against another.[44]

According to Bryant, once the Chunu were across the Thukela, they cut their way 'without parley or compunction' through hostile chiefdoms all the way to the Mzimkhulu river, where they proceeded to re-establish themselves.[45] There are a number of reasons for doubting whether they covered this distance - some two hundred kilometres - in the course of one continuous migration. In the first place, there was no clear reason for them to do so. Their migration was undertaken essentially to preserve their political independence from the threat to it posed by a rising but still far from formidable new power. It did not represent a flight, as that of the Ngwane had done, to escape possible annihilation at the hands of an established state which was resorting to increasingly destructive methods to beat off external challenges and expand its power. A move of half the distance would still have taken the Chunu well outside the Zulu sphere of influence.

In the second place there is no evidence to substantiate the notion that the Chunu moved in one fell swoop from north of the Thukela to the Mzimkhulu. As noted in chapter 3 (p. 122 above), there is a clear distinction in

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44. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 258.
45. OT, pp. 267-70.

Shepstone's histories, which constituted Bryant's main source on the Chunu migration, in the degree of coverage of Chunu movements before and after they arrived in the vicinity of the Mngeni near Pietermaritzburg. Where their later movements are charted in some detail, there is virtually nothing on their migration from the Thukela to the Mngeni. This lacuna could be a product simply of a failure on Shepstone's part either to elicit information on the subject, or else to record it. On the other hand it could also indicate that the Chunu migration was made in two separate stages which were reflected in different ways in the memories of his informants.

In the third place, there is some evidence to suggest that the move which brought the Chunu to the Mzimkhulu took place at much the same time as the southward migration of the Thembu (see below, pp. 244-5). As this latter event almost certainly took place some while after the movement of the Chunu across the Thukela, the Chunu 'migration' makes sense only if it is seen as having taken place in two distinct stages. The suggestion here is that their initial move was made across the Thukela to the upper Mvoti region, and that after a relatively brief stay, they moved off further south to the Mzimkhulu.

Partly because the Chunu had managed to escape with most of their cattle,[46] and partly because there were no polities in their way large enough to offer substantial resistance, the first stage of their move involved considerably less violence than the second. Together with the fact that the presence of the Chunu in the Mvoti region was too short-lived to have much political impact, this meant that their advent into the region left virtually no trace in oral traditions, at least not in those recorded by Shepstone more than forty years later. Like his informants, Shepstone was predisposed to think in terms of long-distance migrations of bands of refugees flying from

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46. Bryant makes the same point: see OT, p. 267.

the barbarities of Shaka, and it is understandable that he shoud have telescoped the two separate stages of the Chunu migration into one. There was no reason why, another half-century later, Bryant, and for that matter Stuart, and their respective informants should have presented it any differently. For the most part, the recorded evidence obscures the disjunction in Shepstone's histories noted above, although there are several snippets of tradition, discussed in the next section of the chapter (pp. 242-5), which lend support to suggestion made here of a two-phase movement.

The departure of the Chunu from the territory between the upper Nsuze and the Mzinyathi left the way clear for the Zulu to extend their domination over the region. In the process of doing so they came up for the first time against the Thembu chiefdom, which was located on the east bank of the lower Mzinyathi upstream of the Qudeni range.[47] Shepstone, followed by Bryant, maintained that the Thembu had been tributary to the Buthelezi to the east until the defeat of the latter by Shaka.[48] There is nothing to substantiate this in the testimony of Stuart's two main informants on Thembu history, Lugubhu kaMangaliso and Lunguza kaMpukane.[49] Admittedly both were closely associated with the Thembu chiefly house,[50] and were hardly likely to have wanted to admit that the Thembu had ever been tributary to the Buthelezi. But, in any event, if a relationship of this nature had ever existed, it was ended by the subjection of the Buthelezi first to the Mthethwa and then to the Zulu. By the time Shaka and his advisers

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47. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 281, 283, 291; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 297, 298.

48. Shepstone's unattributed notes on Thembu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 143; Bryant, OT, pp. 242, 243.

49. Lugubhu's evidence appears in JSA, vol. 1, pp. 281-93, and Lunguza's in JSA, vol. 1, pp. 297-345.

50. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 281, 283; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p. 297.

turned their attention to the Thembu chiefdom, it was itself engaged in a process of expansion under the vigorous leadership of its chief, Ngoza kaMkhubukeli. Among the groups which are recorded as having tendered their allegiance to him are the Sithole and sections of the Mbatha which had been displaced from the White Mfolozi region by the expansion of the Mthethwa and the Zulu.[51] Possibly another was a section of the Mabaso.[52]

That Ngoza actively tried to expand the scope of his authority over tributary chiefs is attested by Lugubhu, who told Stuart that the Thembu chief was 'continually fighting' with the groups which had khonza'd to him.[53] Hamilton sees the Thembu chiefdom at this time as 'characterized by a proliferation of different lineage names indicative of an expanding polity and the development of a closed ruling elite'.[54] This is probably to exaggerate the degree of centralization which its ruling group had been able to achieve. If anything, the power of the Thembu chiefly house at the time of Ngoza's succession is likely to have been weak, for, Lugubhu states, he became chief after a period during which the Thembu had been ruled by a regent,[55] whom Bryant names as his sister, Mnyango.[56] Lugubhu and Lunguza both indicate that the autonomy of the chiefs subordinate to the Thembu paramount extended to the point where they were able to hold their own umkhosi ceremonies.[57] But there is no doubt, as Hamilton

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51. OT, pp. 225-7, 246; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 281, 290.

52. OT, p. 419.

53. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 290.

54. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 252-3. The proliferation of Thembu lineages was not as great as Hamilton suggests, for, of the sixteen lineages which she identifies as apparently having been Thembu in affiliation, only seven were in fact so.

55. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 290.

56. OT, p. 245.

57. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 291; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 297, 315.

implies,[58] that the Thembu chiefdom posed a major obstacle to Zulu expansion to the south and west after the sudden migration of the Chunu had left a political vacuum in the region.

The existing sources make clear what the response of the Thembu was to the withdrawal of the Chunu and the advent of a Zulu presence on their own eastern and southern borders. Like the Chunu leaders, those of the Thembu had no wish to become subordinated to the Zulu. Like the Chunu, the Thembu proceeded to beat a retreat while they were still in a position to do so. Collecting up their cattle, they pushed their way across the Mzinyathi river and into the country of the Khuze.[59] By contrast with the migration of the Chunu, that of the Thembu was strongly enough opposed to have been remembered in tradition. It was only in the face of fierce resistance on the part of the Khuze, in which their chief, Nomagaga, was killed, that the Thembu were able to establish themselves in the triangle of territory between the Thukela and the lower Mzinyathi.[60]

Facing as they were the threat of attacks by the Ndwandwe to the north, the Zulu were no more in a position to follow up the Thembu than they had been to pursue the Chunu. It is possible that a Zulu force helped expedite the Thembu retreat, for Lunguza claims that the Zulu made an attack on the Thembu while the latter were still in their old territory to the east of the Mzinyathi.[61] But for the time being, the withdrawal of the Thembu saved them from further Zulu attentions, and they were left alone to re-consolidate their chiefdom in its new location.

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58. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 253.

59. Shepstone's notes on Thembu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 143-4; OT, p. 246.

60. Shepstone's notes on Thembu history, in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 143; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 286; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 298-9; OT, pp. 246-7.

61. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p. 298.

After the defeat and subjection of the Khuze, Ngoza was quick to begin asserting his authority over such of the neighbouring chiefdoms as he could. According to Bryant, he 'extended his borders' to include the country of the two Nhlangwini chiefdoms on the opposite side of the Thukela, as well as that of the ekuNene Dlamini and esiPhahleni Dlamini, both closely related to the Nhlangwini.[62] No other record of this has been found, which suggests that, if it existed at all, Thembu authority over these groups was established without fighting, and remained lightly felt. Apparently Ngoza also sought to expand his domain to the north-west into country occupied by groups of Bhele which had been weakened by the recent incursion of Matiwane's Ngwane.[63] Thembu expansion in this direction would have been restricted by fear of encroaching into the sphere of influence of the Ngwane, and also that of the Memela, the main surviving Bhele-linked chiefdom. The Memela occupied country along the Ndaka (Sundays) river above Lenge mountain:[64] that they remained a force to be reckoned with by their neighbours is suggested by an anecdote recounted by Mqayikana kaYenge to the effect that the Memela had raided the cattle of the Khuze while the latter were under attack by the Thembu.[65]

The migration of the Chunu across the Thukela, and, soon after, that of the Thembu across the Mzinyathi, opened the way for the establishment of Zulu domination over the remaining independent chiefdoms in the Thukela valley upstream of the Qwabe. Of these, the relatively large Mkhize chiefdom submitted to Shaka without a struggle (p. 184 above). The Cube appear to have done the same, although there is some evidence that Shaka acted to reinforce his domination over them by killing their chief

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62. HZ, p. 44; OT, p. 248.
63. OT, pp. 248-9; Gardiner, Narrative, pp. 185-6.
64. OT, pp. 347, 350.
65. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 22.

and replacing him with a member of the Cube chiefly house who was more amenable to Zulu rule.[66] Further to the west, the Bomvu were also brought under control with little trouble.[67]

Of the numerous semi-autonomous sections of the Ngcobo chiefdom, only the Qadi seem to have been inclined to submit without resistance to the Zulu. Significantly, they were apparently allowed to keep some of their cattle.[68] The evidence on the relations between the Zulu and the Nyuswa, who were the dominant section of the Ngcobo, is contradictory (pp. 184-5 above). The most likely scenario is that Shaka took advantage of continuing rivalries over the succession to the Nyuswa chiefship to demand its submission. The response of the Nyuswa was to take to flight, but near the Thukela they were caught by a Zulu force which put their chief to death and seized their cattle. After this the Nyuswa were placed by Shaka under the authority of the Mkhize chief, Zihlandlo.[69] Of the other Ngcobo sections, the Ngongoma broke into two groups, one of which took refuge with the Qadi, and the other with the related Fuze southwards near the Mvoti river.[70] The Langeni fled up the Thukela to the Bomvu chiefdom,[71] and the Wosiyana to an unspecified locality across the Thukela.[72] Though the Zulu were responsible for breaking up the Ngcobo chiefdom, it was hardly through the process of 'sweeping', 'slaying' and 'obliterating' described by Bryant in Izindaba Zabantu.[73] The Qadi section remained in

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66. OT, p. 415; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 259.

67. HZ, p. 69; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mayinga, p. 251.

68. OT, p. 493; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 183.

69. OT, p. 482.

70. OT, p. 490.

71. Ibid., p. 483. See also JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, pp. 60, 61.

72. OT, p. 497.

73. HZ, pp. 68-9.

its territory, and most of the rest of the Ngcobo made their submission to chiefs who themselves had recently khonza'd to Shaka.

Soon after the Zulu had subordinated the polities on the northern side of the Thukela, they began to seize cattle from the small chiefdoms which occupied the opposite bank of the river. Most, like the Ngcolosi, Khabela, Nxamalala, and Mpumuza, seem to have offered little or no resistance, and to have formally tendered their submission to Shaka.[74] The Phephetha attempted to hold out in their stronghold on Phisweni mountain, but were soon overcome. (That Shaka was personally present on this expedition, as claimed by Shepstone's informant, Mnguni, and by Bryant, is extremely unlikely.) Numbers of them, including their chief, were killed, others took refuge in the surrounding bush, and some were taken off to the Zulu country.[75] Bryant describes this latter category as 'captives' of the Zulu. The term needs to be carefully qualified: in this context it probably refers to individuals who were incorporated into the households of Zulu notables in various menial capacities, the women and girls as concubines and domestic servants, and the men and boys as cattle herds.[76]

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74. Mnguni's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Ngcolosi history, Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 133 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 107); Sibetshe's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Khabela history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 133 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol 89, p. 109; Hlephuhlephu's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Zondi/Mpumuza history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 134 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone papers, vol. 89, p. 111); Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Nxamalala history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 134 (the informant is identified in T. Shspetone Papers, vol. 89, p. 112); OT, pp. 507, 521, 523.

75. Mnguni's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Phephetha history, Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 133-4 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 110); OT, p. 513.

76. For a useful discussion of the status of captives in the Gaza, Swazi and Zulu states later in the 19th century, see Harries, 'Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction', JAH, vol 22 (1981), pp. 318-29.

Bryant sees the Zulu as having subjugated these Thukela chiefdoms, as well as the Mkhize, Cube and Bomvu, in the course of a single 'campaign'.[77] This is intrinsically unlikely, as it implies that they were able to put a considerable force into the field in the south at a time when they were facing strong pressures on their northern borders. More likely is that on several different occasions they despatched small-scale expeditions into the region to demand the submission of chiefs and seize what cattle they could. Bryant himself writes at a number of points of the Thukela chiefdoms having been attacked by small Zulu raiding parties.[78] The willingness of the Phephetha to offer physical resistance to the Zulu, and the ability of the Khabela initially to escape from the force sent to subdue them,[79] also speak of the small size of the attacking forces. Further evidence in support of this argument comes from one of Stuart's informants, who indicates that the Zulu force which was sent against the Zondi was unable to drive them out of their stronghold.[80]

The most telling indicator of the limits which existed on the ability of the Zulu to establish an effective presence in the Thukela valley at this time is that in the event Shaka's authority in the region had to be sustained largely by proxy. While the Zulu were quite able periodically to mount raiding expeditions into it, to maintain its political submission they had to turn to the agency of a client polity. This was the Mkhize chiefdom of Zihlandlo, who, after his voluntary submission to Shaka, was encouraged to continue the process of expanding the territory under his control, although now in Shaka's name rather than his own. After the migration of the Chunu, Zihlandlo's polity was the dominant regional power between

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77. HZ, pp. 48-62, 69; OT, chs. 48, 49.
78. OT, pp. 409, 550.
79. Ibid., p. 511.
80. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 6-7.

the Zulu chiefdom and the Thukela, and his political ambitions appear to have been such that, even in a subaltern capacity, he was prepared to operate in Zulu interests so long as his own authority was enhanced in the process. The role of Zulu 'agent' devolved on him because he proved himself both willing and able to take it on. The alternative was to take to flight as both the Chunu and Thembu had done, but, with the Thembu, and, further off, the Ngwane now dominating the region to the westward, and the Chunu that to the southward, any but a long-distance migration was becoming a less and less feasible course of action.

Numerous groups are mentioned in the existing sources as having been attacked and subordinated by the Mkhize in the reign of Zihlandlo. The main source of the chiefdom's history at this time is the testimony given to Stuart by Mbokodo kaSikhulekile, who was a grandson of a full brother of Zihlandlo, and of high rank within the chiefly house of one of the Mkhize sections recognized by the Natal colonial government.[81] His comments on the extent of Mkhize power in the early 19th century need to be treated with caution, but evidence from other sources supports the notion which emerges from a reading of his testimony that under Zihlandlo the Mkhize chiefdom expanded rapidly as a satellite of the Zulu polity.

It is not always possible to identify from the evidence the location of groups which are named as having been subordinated by the Mkhize, nor to tell precisely when they were overcome. But, broadly speaking, three phases of Mkhize expansion under Zulu hegemony can be discerned. The first, which fell within the period when the Zulu were mobilizing against the Ndwandwe, saw the Mkhize extending their authority over neighbouring groups like the Cube (if

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81. Mbokodo's evidence is to be found in JSA, vol. 3, pp. 1-20. See also the praises which he gives of Zihlandlo in JSC, file 58, notebook 23, pp. 73-9, and of Zihlandlo's brother, Sambela, in the same notebook, pp. 57-63.

they had not already done so: see p. 170 above), the Nyuswa and other remnants of the Ngcobo chiefdom which had been scattered by the Zulu, and the Bomvu.[82] It may also have been during this phase that a section of the Dladla Mbatha, probably displaced by the Zulu in the course of their expansion to the White Mfolozi, came to give their allegiance to Zihlandlo.[83]

In the second phase, Mkhize forces crossed to the southern bank of the Thukela and proceeded to bring under Zihlandlo's authority the chiefdoms which had recently been raided by the Zulu. This occurred either in the period when the Zulu were still confronting the Ndwandwe, or else soon after the Zulu victory over Zwide's forces, with Shaka now seeking to consolidate his hold on the Thukela valley as well as on the region north of the Black Mfolozi. In part, the Mkhize push across the Thukela was also a movement of colonization, for their forces occupied the territory of the Khabela, and there erected an umuzi, named kwaNyakenye, for Zihlandlo.[84] Further up the river they overcame the Phephetha, the Nxamalala, and the Zondi:[85] in

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82. On the Cube see HZ, pp. 49-50; OT, p. 415; on the Nyuswa, OT, p. 482; on the Bomvu, JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 12; Stuart, ed., uBaxoxele, pp. 187-9; OT, pp. 411-12, 519-20.

83. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Ndabazezwe. p. 183; OT, pp. 226-7.

84. Statement of Sibetshe in Shepstone's notes on Khabela history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 133 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 109); OT, pp. 409, 511. On p. 511 of Olden Times Bryant correctly locates the kwaNyakenye umuzi in the Khabela country, which was in the vicinity of kwaNtunjambili (Kranskop) mountain. On pp. 513-14 he incorrectly locates it in the Phephetha country further north near Phisweni mountain. His error was based on a misreading of Isaacs: see Travels and Adventures, pp. 81-3.

85. On the Phephetha see Mpengula Mbanda's statement in H. Callaway, The Religious System of the Amazulu, Cape Town, 1970 (reprint of 1st ed., Springvale, n.d.), p. 204; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 10, 12, 18; OT, pp. 513-14. On the Nxamalala see JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Khwili, p. 275; vol. 2, evidence of Mandlakazi, p. 175; vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 7, 8-10. On the Zondi see JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 6, 12.

these cases the sources say nothing about occupation of territory. Within a short time of their subordination to Shaka, the Mkhize dominated both sides of the Thukela valley from the region of the Mamba river up to the confluences of the Mzinyathi and the Mpofana. To the west they were coming up against Ngoza's expanding Thembu paramountcy, and to the south they were facing the relocated Chunu chiefdom. The third phase of their expansion saw Zihlandlo's authority extended southwards across the Mvoti: this will be discussed in the next section of the chapter.

The evidence on the relationship between Zihlandlo and Shaka makes clear that the Mkhize chief's function in the Zulu scheme of things was to exercise authority over the southern borderlands of the Zulu sphere of influence, and to extract resources from his domain for the benefit of his overlords. Cattle obtained from his tributaries were forwarded to Shaka, who in turn made occasional presentations to Zihlandlo.[86] The region also supplied manpower to the Zulu. According to Nathaniel Isaacs, who met Zihlandlo in 1826 at Shaka's Dukuza umuzi and visited his country on two occasions, Zihlandlo and others of Shaka's tributaries were required to accompany the Zulu chief to war,[87] and Mbokodo indicates that Zihlandlo led a contingent in one of Shaka's fights against the Ndwandwe.[88] The Zulu chief also took over holus bolus from him his Nguqa and Mpiyakhe amabutho, the latter of which was settled in the Zulu country.[89] Isaacs records that Shaka had taken away all Zihlandlo's young warriors 'to complete his own regiments'.[90] At another point he gives what is

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86. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mandlakazi, p. 175; vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 6, 13.

87. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 78.

88. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 12.

89. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 53; vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 237.

90. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 83.

probably a more accurate description of the roles allotted to Zihlandlo's men in the Zulu army: as amagwala, or 'cowards' who had been subdued by the Zulu, they were not permitted to fight but were required to act as baggage-carriers.[91]

Hamilton has argued that the Zulu had established a strong presence in Nyuswa country very early in Shaka's reign, even before the death of Dingiswayo.[92] The evidence, however, is ambiguous, and it seems unlikely, given the weakness of the Zulu state at this time, that Shaka was able to station an ibutho in the region until later in his reign. But it is probable that Zihlandlo's operations in the Thukela valley were carried out under the supervision of Zulu izinduna,[93] and Isaacs speaks of the contempt with which the Mkhize chief's people were regarded by their Zulu conquerors.[94] Nevertheless it is clear that Zihlandlo was able to rule his domain with a considerable degree of autonomy. To keep his loyalty, Shaka elevated him to the status of close political favourite, and allowed him what for a tributary were unusually wide powers, including the right to form his own amabutho, to keep his own isigodlo, and to exercise powers of life and death over his subordinates.[95] Bryant saw clearly that Zihlandlo had acted for Shaka in the role of 'trusty lieutenant', 'local

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91. Ibid., p. 78.

92. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 370-1.

93. See the anecdote in JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 8-10. The man named Manjanja whom Bryant gives as the leader of a force of Zulu marauders (OT, pp. 409, 491, 512, 548, 550), may have been one of the izinduna appointed by Shaka to perform supervisory functions in the region. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 2, p. 425, gives him as a 'Zulu officer' in charge of the Khabela chiefdom in the late 1830s. That he was an induna early in Shaka's reign is suggested in Fuze, Black People, p. 73.

94. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 78, 90.

95. Fuze, Black People, pp. 20, 58; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 280; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 15.

deputy', and 'a species of viceroy'.[96] But because he was steeped in the conventional view of Shaka as the all-powerful conqueror, and because of his failure to develop an adequate chronology of the emergence of the Zulu state, he was quite unable to appreciate the significance of the role played in its development by the Mkhize chiefdom.

The immediate impact of the expansion of the Mkhize across the Thukela under Zulu aegis may have been little different from that of the Makhanya section of the Qwabe lower down the river at the beginning of the century, or, for that matter from that of the Thuli and Cele in the later 18th century. In the short term it entailed the same forcible subordination of groups south of the Thukela by conquerors from the north. Some defeated chiefs were put to death, numbers of people were displaced, and many cattle were seized. But the population was not 'massacred' or 'driven out', and as Mkhize rule became a reality, and stability returned, homestead life and production were able to resume. The contrast with the impact of Ndwandwe expansion north of the Black Mfolozi at this time is striking. Where the Ndwandwe seem frequently to have aimed to eject or destroy defeated groups as an act of policy, the relatively weak and inchoate Zulu state was still seeking to incorporate them, however much it was concerned to reduce their status.

But in the longer term the Mkhize expansion represented a new departure, for it entailed incorporation not simply into an enlarged nexus of chiefdoms, such as constituted the Qwabe, Thuli and Cele polities, but into an emerging if still loosely structured state system dominated by an increasingly closed Zulu elite. Tribute extracted from homesteads at the bottom of the political hierarchy more and more went to support not a reasonably accessible and at least partly accountable leadership but a socially and geographically remote aristocracy which to a greater extent

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96. HZ, p. 52; OT, pp. 409, 551.

maintained its dominance by force. The intrusion of the Mkhize into the mid-Thukela valley may have been less violent and disruptive than that of the Ngwane into the upper Thukela region, but it inaugurated the establishment, if in embryonic form, of a political order different in kind from any yet experienced south of the river.

4. Upheavals in the midlands

After the Zulu had defeated Zwide's forces and pushed the Ndwandwe ruling house across the Phongolo, their main concerns were to consolidate their hold on the core area of their polity about the White Mfolozi, and to secure the defence of their newly extended northern frontier region against the numerous dangers which threatened it from without. Far from being able to sweep forward to the Phongolo and Delagoa Bay, as the conventional view holds, they were hard-pressed to maintain their authority over powerful tributary chiefdoms like those of the Qwabe and Mthethwa, and to find the resources needed to defend the region north of the Black Mfolozi against possible raids from groups like the Khumalo, Ndwandwe, Dlamini, Gasa and Jele.

The problems faced by the Zulu leaders on their southern borders were somewhat less pressing, although by means negligible. Their victory over the Ndwandwe had sent political shock waves throughout the region, and to some extent freed them to assert a more forceful presence in the Thukela and Mzinyathi valleys, but substantial nodes of resistance to the extension of Zulu domination existed at certain points on this frontier. To the south-west, the newly relocated Thembu chiefdom of Ngoza, precariously poised between the Ngwane and the Zulu, was seeking to strengthen itself against its powerful neighbours. To the south, where the client Mkhize chiefdom was establishing control over the Thukela valley and beginning to expand towards the Mvoti, a confrontation with the displaced Chunu chiefdom was building up. To the south-east, the Cele and

Thuli chiefdoms posed no active threat to the Zulu state, but their existence as independent polities in close proximity to the still not properly subdued Qwabe chiefdom made the lower Thukela border potentially unstable.

Zulu policy on the southern frontiers as it emerged in the early 1820s had two main aims: to eliminate real or potential threats to the stability of the region, and to set up more client chiefdoms which, like that of the Mkhize, would serve to maintain control over it and act as a first line of defence against external attacks. The sequence of developments cannot be determined with any certainty, but it is likely that one of the first steps taken by the Zulu leadership was to move against the expanding Thembu chiefdom beyond the lower Mzinyathi.

There is some evidence that Shaka and his advisers first tried to secure Ngoza's voluntary submission,[97] but, knowing full well what his fate was likely to be if he fell into Shaka's hands, the Thembu chief refused to make it, and instead set about preparing to meet the attack which was likely soon to follow. The extent to which Zulu resources were stretched at this time is indicated by the fact that when it came, the assault on the Thembu was apparently made by a single ibutho.[98] Far from proving invincible, as the stereotyped view describes them, Shaka's forces on this occasion were soundly defeated in a fight near the present-day village of Pomeroy. They managed, however, to make off with most of the Thembu cattle.[99] Before this, Shaka might still have been prepared to accept the submission of the Thembu, but Ngoza's victory ensured that major retribution would follow. The Thembu did not have the power to withstand a Zulu attack in strength: the

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97. The anecdote recounted by Lugubhu in JSA, vol. 1, pp. 281-2, 284-5, admits of this interpretation.

98. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 298-9.

99. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 282, 285; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 298-9; Shepstone's notes on Thembu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 144; OT, pp. 249-50.

only course open to them was to take to flight. With the Ngwane chiefdom to the west, the Zulu to the east, and a country largely denuded of people and cattle to the north, they had no option but to head southwards. This was the direction which Ngoza took. With him went most of his Thembu adherents, and, of his tributaries, many Khuze and other Dlamini, the Mabaso, some Mbatha, and a section of the Sithole.[100] A section of Nxamalala from the part of the Thukela valley which had already suffered raids from the Zulu and the Mkhize also threw in their lot with him.[101] Most of his Nhlangwini tributaries remained behind, as did the Dladla section of the Mbatha, a section of the Sithole, and some of the Thembu.[102]

After crossing the Thukela, Ngoza and his followers edged off to the south-west, possibly to avoid the Chunu in the upper Mvoti region. From the start their course was a violent one, for to recoup their losses in cattle they had little option but to seize livestock where they could, and to kill chiefs and people who sought to resist. But their passage was not marked by the general massacre of defeated groups which the stereotyped view posits. Not only did they not have the force to engage in such action, but, more pertinently, the exigencies of migration put a premium on the need for Ngoza to expand his fighting capacity as rapidly as possible by increasing the size of his following. Like the leaders of other migrant groups, he sought to break up the polities which he came up against so as to incorporate as many as possible of their component parts under his own leadership.

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100. Gayeni's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Khuze history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 143 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 139); JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 292; OT, pp. 253, 351, 369, 419; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 253.

101. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 17.

102. Shepstone's notes on Thembu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 144; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p. 301; OT, pp. 253, 259, 351, 369; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 253.

Pushing their way relatively easily through the small chiefdoms of the lower Mpofana region,[103] Ngoza and his party turned southwards towards the middle Mngeni valley north of present-day Pietermaritzburg. Here they met active opposition from the cluster of Wushe chiefdoms in the region, particularly from that headed by the paramount, Sondaba kaPhathwa. The upshot was the defeat of the Wushe and the absorption of Sondaba and his adherents into Ngoza's following.[104] There is some evidence to suggest that Ngoza went on to raid the chiefdoms of the upper Msunduze area,[105] although it is possible that the source may be confusing these events with attacks made in the same region by Macingwane's Chunu either a little before or after the advent of the Thembu. According to Lugubhu's evidence, Ngoza then swung westward to the Nhlazane-Mpendle area, before again turning south and making his way through the Bulwer region and across the upper Mzimkhulu river.[106] Here, on the margins of the Mpondo chiefdom's sphere of influence, like the Bhele, Zizi and others before him, he ended his march and set about trying to reconsolidate his chiefdom.

Evidence which allows these events to be tentatively dated to the very early 1820s was recorded by Stuart from

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103. Magwaza's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Xesibe history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 135 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 115); Thethwa's and Nyandeni's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Ncwabe history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 145 (the informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 141); JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 286-7; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p. 299; OT, pp. 253-4.

104. Thethwa's and Nyandeni's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Wushe history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 140, 141 (the informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 128, 129, 132); JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 287; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p. 299; OT, p. 256.

105. Nyandeni's evidence in Shepstone's notes on the histories of the Nkabane and the Nqondo in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 146 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 143, 144); OT, pp. 256-7.

106. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 287.

Lunguza. The latter stated that he had been born at the time of the Thembu exodus to the south, that at the time of Shaka's death he had been a young boy capable of carrying babies pick-a-back, and that he had been present at the battle of the Ncome (Blood) river against the Boers as a member of an ibutho which was too young to be allowed to participate in the actual fighting.[107] The death of Shaka and the battle of the Ncome river are dated to 1828 and 1838 respectively: on the basis of Lunguza's evidence, Stuart calculated that he had been born in 1822 or 1823, an estimate which he subsequently revised to 1821 or 1822.[108]

Why the Thembu should suddenly have changed direction once they reached the mid-Mngeni-Msunduze region is something of a puzzle, for it involved making a sharp diversion from their previous line of march, and following a route which took them through more broken and difficult country than they would otherwise have traversed. The most likely explanation is that they were seeking to avoid a major political obstacle further to the south. A diversion to the east would have taken them into the sphere of infuence of the Thuli chiefdom; the line of least resistance would have lain along the route which they in fact ended up taking. As to the identity of the barrier which they faced, the most likely candidate would have been the Chunu chiefdom, which had possibly preceded the Thembu to the southward.

After the defeat and submission of the Qwabe by the Zulu, the Chunu had moved away across the Thukela to avoid a similar fate. Several pieces of evidence suggest that they did not in fact migrate all the way to the Mzimkhulu, as Bryant asserts,[109] but rather to a locality not far removed from the Thukela valley. First, there is Bryant's statement that after the breakup of the Ngcobo chiefdom,

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107. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 307, 312-13, 337.

108. Ibid., pp. 307, 337.

109. OT, pp. 267-70.

its Langeni section had sought refuge with the Bomvu, and then, a little while later, with the Chunu, who, some time before, 'had gone down south'.[110] It is difficult to conceive that a small group like the Langeni would seriously have contemplated making its way through potentially hostile chiefdoms over a distance of nearly 200 kilometres to the Mzimkhulu. More likely is that 'south' in this instance meant a region much closer to hand, probably, as suggested above, that of the upper Mvoti.

Second is Mbokodo's statement that after participating in a Zulu victory over Ndwandwe forces led by Sikhunyana kaZwide, Zihlandlo of the Mkhize had made an attack on Macingwane's Chunu.[111] Sikhunyana is known to have been defeated by the Zulu in 1826,[112] but as this was long after the destruction of the Chunu chiefdom and the death of Macingwane, it is very likely that the informant is confusing this defeat with Zwide's defeat at the hands of the Zulu in the late 1810s. By the time of this event, the Chunu had already migrated across the Thukela but not, it is here contended, as far as the Mzimkhulu, for it seems highly unlikely that Zihlandlo would have had the capacity to mount a long-distance expedition over such a distance. More likely is that the attack referred to by Mbokodo took place when the Chunu were still in the region of the Mvoti.

Third is another statement of Mbokodo's to the effect that when a section of the Mkhize was making an attack on the Phephetha chiefdom, Zihlandlo's home district had been raided by a force of Chunu.[113] This incident could conceivably have taken place in the period before the expansion of the Zulu, when the Chunu were still on the upper Nsuze. It seems more likely, though, that the attack referred to on the Phephetha was the one already referred

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110. Ibid., pp. 483-4.

111. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 12.

112. Fynn, Diary, pp. 122-9; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 60, 65, 71-2.

113. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 18.

to which took place after the submission of the Mkhize to Shaka (p. 234), when the Mkhize were expanding across the Thukela at his behest. By this time the Chunu had already made their move over the Thukela. It seems unlikely that they would have launched an attack against the Mkhize all the way from the Mzimkhulu region: if, on the other hand, they had been in the Mvoti area, they would have been well placed to make the attack which Mbokodo mentions.

Fourth is Lugubhu's evidence on the nature of relations between the Chunu and the Thembu at the time of the Zulu attack on the latter. The Thembu apparently made a plea to the Chunu for assistance,[114] something which is hardly likely to have happened if the Chunu had been 200 kilometres away at the Mzimkhulu rather than perhaps 70 kilometres away at the Mvoti. Lugubhu goes on to recount that instead of sending help the Chunu ran away, and that the event was remembered in a song sung by the Thembu which went:

> Sasingasho ini ukuth' amaChun' ayizinja?
> Babalekile, zinyane lendlovu.
>
> Did we not say that the Chunu were dogs?
> They ran away, child of the elephant.[115]

Lugubhu was a close associate of the Thembu chiefly house,[116] and his interpretation of events of a century earlier needs to be treated with caution. However, the circumstantial detail of his anecdote reinforces the notion that at the time of the Zulu attack on the Thembu, the Chunu were not far south of the Thukela.

Fifth is Lunguza's statement that the Chunu actually joined the Thembu on their flight to the south.[117] One does not have to take this statement literally to note the

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114. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 282, 285.

115. JSA, vol. 1, pp. 285-6; Stuart, ed., uHlangakula, p. 10. The Zulu orthography has been modernized.

116. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 281.

117. Ibid., evidence of Lunguza, pp. 307-8.

implication that when the migration of the Thembu from the Thukela began, the Chunu must have been in the general vicinity rather than away on the Mzimkhulu. In the Mvoti region the Chunu would for some time have been coming under pressure from the expanding Mkhize chiefdom. In these circumstances, the Zulu attack on the Thembu, even though it ended in failure, was probably all that was needed to set the Chunu in motion once more. Sooner or later, it was clear, they would face a similar onslaught. Short of submitting to Shaka or Zihlandlo, there was no option but to take to flight to the southward. It is impossible to tell from the available evidence whether they began the next stage of their migration before or after the Thembu: all that can be said is that the two movements seem to have taken place at much the same period.

Like the passage of the Thembu, that of the Chunu was marked by a considerable degree of violence. Though they retained their cohesion, the forces which threatened their survival as a group were much greater than they had been at the time of their previous move. Behind them were the Mkhize, backed by the power of the expanding Zulu state. To the east of their line of advance were the Cele and Thuli chiefdoms. Somewhere near at hand were the Thembu, who were in competition for the same resources of cattle and manpower. The first substantial resistance faced by the Chunu as they moved south may have come from the Zelemu under Madikane who lived in the Mngeni valley below the related Wushe. Several sources state that this group was pushed or carried southwards by the impetus of the Chunu.[118] After raiding cattle and possibly absorbing more adherents in the Msunduze valley,[119] Macingwane's party pushed on to the south-west, breaking up a number of small

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118. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 60; vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 85; OT, pp. 268, 374.

119. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, p. 119; vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, pp. 23-4.

chiefdoms as they went.[120] In the country between the Mkhomazi and the Mzimkhulu they came to a halt. Here, some 150 kilometres from the Mvoti, the Chunu leaders seem to have felt that they were safely out of the way of the Zulu. Before them lay the Mpondo sphere of influence, the northern marches of which were becoming the scene of rising conflict as intruding groups from the north like the Bhele and Zizi struggled to establish themselves. Rather than pushing forward, the Chunu leaders preferred to remain north of the Mzimkhulu, where they set about reconstituting their chiefdom.[121]

Much of Macingwane's following by now probably consisted of groups and individuals displaced from the midlands by the flight of the Chunu. More no doubt came to seek protection from the Thembu and other groups in the troubled region across the Mzimkhulu. Still more, like some of the Dlanyoka,[122] came from the coastal regions where, not long after the relocation of the Chunu, Zulu forces were raiding cattle, breaking up existing chiefdoms, and establishing a Zulu presence (see below, p. 265). The Chunu chief may also have received the formal allegiance of Madikane, whose Zelemu following had by now been joined by numbers of Wushe displaced by the Thembu.[123] These groups formed the core of what later came to be the Bhaca chiefdom.[124] By this time Madikane and his following had moved to the region of the Mzimkhulu, where, according to Shepstone's informant, Nombiba, they were 'to some extent under Macingwane'.[125]

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120. Shepstone's unattributed notes on the histories of the Khalalo, Ntambo, Yobeni, Nomabhunga, Cekwana and Shwawu in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 147, 148; OT, pp. 268-70.

121. OT, pp. 269, 270; JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 24.

122. OT, pp. 555, 561.

123. HZ, p. 45.

124. OT, pp. 154, 352, 380, 398.

125. Shepstone's notes on Bhaca history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 136. The informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 119.

Evidence broadly in support of this statement comes from one of Stuart's informants, Mahaya kaNongqabana, who describes the Chunu and Bhaca as having been in league against a common enemy on at least two occasions.[126] With additions of this sort, Macingwane's re-established chiefdom was on the way to becoming a major new power in the Mkhomazi-Mzimkhulu region. Its sphere of influence extended southwards across the Mzimkhulu, northwards towards the Mngeni, and north-east to the marches of the Thuli chiefdom.

The migrations of the Thembu and the Chunu left something of a political vacuum in the region about the mid-Thukela valley. The Zulu moved rapidly to fill it through the agency of two client chiefdoms, one already in existence and the other newly established. Later events indicate that from its recently established foothold south of the Thukela, the Mkhize chiefdom was encouraged to expand south-west towards the upper Mvoti into the area vacated by the Chunu (see below, pp. 251-2). At the same time, the Zulu were setting up a new satellite polity in the lower Mzinyathi region. After the defeat of the Zulu forces by the Thembu, and the flight of Ngoza and his party, the Zulu had sent another ibutho to assert control of the area.[127] Its main task seems to have been to set up the client chief chosen by Shaka to exercise authority for him in the region. This was Jobe kaMaphitha, chief of the section of the Sithole which had remained behind when his overlord, Ngoza, had taken to flight. It is highly likely that, as Hamilton argues, Jobe had conspired with Shaka against Ngoza: his reward was to be given charge of the territory on either side of the lower Mzinyathi previously dominated by the Thembu.[128] Under him he had his own

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126. JSA, vol. 2, pp. 113, 118, 119.

127. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p. 299.

128. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 253-4, 255; Shepstone's notes on Thembu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 144; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, 301; OT, p. 259.

Sithole following, expanded by defections from other Sithole groups, and the Thembu who had remained in the region.[129] In addition, numbers of remaining Mbatha, Khuze and other Dlamini probably gave him their allegiance.

Bryant and, independently, Hamilton suggest that Jobe himself was placed in the territory to the west of the Mzinyathi river, where, in Bryant's words, he was required to act as 'warden of the marches'.[130] Lunguza's first-hand evidence makes clear, however, that the Sithole chief was located by Shaka to the east of the river, and that it was not until Dingane's reign that he was sent in person to occupy the country across the Mzinyathi.[131] Nevertheless, it is likely that in Shaka's reign his authority extended a good distance across the river into the country previously dominated by Ngoza.

Like Zihlandlo of the Mkhize, Jobe was given a good deal of autonomy by Shaka, to the extent of being allowed to put people to death.[132] Lunguza's statement that Shaka held only one call-up of men for his amabutho among Jobe's people suggests that the Sithole chief was permitted to exercise a greater degree of authority in the territory under his control than were chiefs in the core region of the Zulu state.[133] Unlike Zihlandlo, however, who was chief of the Mkhize by inherited right and not by appointment, Jobe had no wide power base among his own people. As Hamilton points out, he was directly dependent for his position on the good graces of Shaka, to whom he had a highly personal loyalty.[134]

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129. Fuze, Black People, p. 21; OT, pp. 259-60.

130. OT, p. 259; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 255-6.

131. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 301, 322, 334, 336.

132. Ibid., p. 331.

133. Ibid., pp. 302, 308.

134. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 255, 256. See also Lunguza's evidence in JSA, vol. 1, p. 332.

The extension of Zulu rule by proxy into the region about the lower Mzinyathi was probably a key factor in stimulating the exodus of what were by now the only chiefdoms of any size remaining in the valley of the middle Thukela and its tributaries: that of the Memela under Mdingi kaLanga, and those of the Nhlangwini under Baleni kaNongcama and Nombewu kaGasa. Under increasing pressure from the Ngwane to the west and the Sithole to the east, they had the option of submitting to one or the other, or else of moving away. In the event they chose the latter course, and made off, apparently together, to the south. In the course of their migration they became the core group of what Shepstone and Bryant termed a 'confederacy' of migrant chiefdoms.

The contradictions in Shepstone's and Bryant's accounts over the issue of whether the flight of this group took place before or after the migrations of the Thembu and Chunu have been discussed in chapter 3 (pp. 108-9, 143 ff). The only other attributable statement bearing on this issue which has been found in the sources is Mqayikana's statement that the 'confederacy', as Stuart also calls it, had been formed 'two, three or more years after the flight of the Chunu and Thembu.[135] This statement may well have been influenced by Stuart's comments to the informant about Shepstone's and Bryant's versions, and in any case by itself would not constitute sufficient evidence to prove the point. But it is very unlikely that the migration of the relatively small Nhlangwini and Memela groups could have taken place before the much larger Thembu and Chunu parties had proceeded southward and in the process broken up many of the polities which lay between the mid-Thukela and the mid-Mzimkhulu.

The notion of the 'confederacy' which appears in the works of Shepstone and Bryant was based on the evidence given to the former by a single informant, Nombiba. He

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135. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 23.

described it as having comprised Bhele (i.e. Memela), Nhlangwini, Dunge, Nyamvini, Fuze, and Gwenyane/Bombo groups (see p. 127 above). The only supporting statement comes from Mqayikana, who stated that the confederacy had consisted of the Memela, the Nhlangwini and a section of his own Mpumuza people.[136] These latter groups were all from the mid-Thukela region, while the others named by Nombiba were from the upper and mid-Mvoti. It is quite possible that, under the increasing pressure which they were experiencing from the Mkhize chiefdom to the north, sections of these and other Mvoti chiefdoms joined themselves to the Nhlangwini-Memela group as it moved south. The combined party is unlikely, though, to have constituted what the three writers - Shepstone, Bryant and Stuart - all termed a confederacy. The term implies an alliance of equals, whereas the various groups which joined with the Nhlangwini and Memela almost certainly did so by formally khonzaing a recognized leader. Of the two Nhlangwini chiefs, Nombewu was genealogically the senior,[137] and it is possible that either he or Mdingi was nominally the leader of what was not simply a temporary alliance but a loose paramountcy in the making.

In the mid-Mngeni region, the route taken by this party converged with those followed by the Thembu and the Chunu. Here the Nhlangwini, Memela and their tributaries are said to have attacked and defeated the Zelemu-Wushe under Madikane,[138] an event which may have been decisive in influencing the latter to make off for the Mzimkhulu region, where, as previously described, they joined with the Chunu. From the mid-Mngeni, the Nhlangwini-Memela

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136. Ibid., pp. 9, 22-3.

137. OT, pp. 367, 368.

138. Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Nyamvini history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 131-2 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol 89, p. 105); JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, pp. 1, 6, 8, 10, 22; Scully, 'Fragments: the Amabaca', The State, vol. 1 (1909), p. 674.

party seems to have followed a route which took them slightly to the east of the line previously taken by the Chunu, through the western fringes of the Thuli sphere of influence. On the way they raided and broke up a number of small chiefdoms.[139] Their migration ended in the Mzimkhulu-Mzimvubu region,[140] where they became one of the by now numerous groups which were struggling to reconstitute themselves as coherent polities and to survive in what was becoming an arena of rapidly mounting conflict.

By this stage the Nhlangwini and Memela seem to have shed many of the smaller groups which had initially joined them in their migration. The Dunge, the Nyamvini and the Gwenyane/Bombo are said to have returned to their territories in the vicinity of the Mvoti,[141] while the Mpumuza were driven out of the Mzimkhulu region by the Mpondo and eventually became fugitives in the forests of the Karkloof area.[142] All these groups thus ended up in a region which was being brought under the sway of Zihlandlo's Mkhize chiefdom. The geographical location of this polity made it the destination of numbers of people who were seeking to escape from the upheavals that were taking place in the areas to the south.

At the same time Zihlandlo was actively expanding southwards from the bushveld of the deeply incised Thukela valley into the high grasslands of the Mvoti region. He received the submission of the Nyamvini of the middle Mvoti valley, and, further upstream, attacked and dispersed the

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139. Shepstone's notes on the histories of the Njilo, Cindaneni, Ntshele and Shangase in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 146, 147, 149. The only informant identified is Nombiba for the Njilo history: see T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 145.

140. Gardiner, Narrative, pp. 276, 312; OT, pp. 380, 382-3.

141. Evidence of Nombiba and Funwayo in Shepstone's notes on the histories of the Nyamvini and Dunge in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 131, 132. (The informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 105, 106.

142. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 23.

Dunge, some of whom khonza'd to him.[143] A number of other groups in the region - the Fuze, the Xesibe, the Gwenyane/Bombo - are said to have been driven away by Zulu raiding parties.[144] In some cases the raiders may actually have been Zulu; in others they may well have been Zihlandlo's forces. Either way, the territories and the remaining inhabitants of the groups concerned would have been brought under the authority of the Mkhize chief. He also received the submission of two groups of Nyavu (or Nyavini: not to be confused with the Nyamvini of the Mvoti region) and a group of related Njilo which had abandoned their territories on the Mngeni.[145] He is said to have raided other groups beyond what is now Pietermaritzburg.[146] By the mid-1820s the Mkhize exercised direct authority over a territory that probably extended south of the Mvoti, and dominated an area that reached to the Mngeni and beyond.

5. The intrusion of the Zulu into the coastal regions

The defeat and subordination of the Qwabe chiefdom by the Zulu suddenly and dramatically brought the conflicts which for some years had been building up about the mid-White Mfolozi to the doorstep of the chiefdoms south of the lower

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143. Evidence of Nombiba and Funwayo in Shepstone's notes on histories of the Nyamvini and Dunge in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 132; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dabula, p. 88.

144. Evidence of Magwaza in Shepstone's notes on the histories of the Xesibe and Fuze, and of Nombiba in his notes on the history of the Gwenyane in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 135, 136 (the informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 115, 116, 117); Fuze, Black People, p. 73; OT, pp. 254, 491-2, 507-8, 552-3.

145. Evidence of Nombiba in Shepstone's notes on the histories of these chiefdoms in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 137-9, 146 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 125, 145); OT, pp. 410, 559.

146. Evidence of Nombiba in Shepstone's notes on history of the Njilo in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 146 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 145); JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo. pp. 13, 14-15; OT, p. 378.

Thukela. Though they had for several decades lived in the shadow of the much larger and more powerful Qwabe polity, these chiefdoms had to some extent been shielded by its presence from the direct impact of the struggles which were developing further to the north. The collapse of Qwabe independence opened the way for the extension of Zulu domination south of the river.

The incorporation of the Qwabe chiefdom into the Zulu state posed a frontier problem for the Zulu leaders of a kind which they did not have to face to the same extent on any of their other borders. As has been argued in the previous chapter, the nature of the military and economic crisis which faced the Zulu leaders after the defeat of the Mthethwa by the Ndwandwe had made the full incorporation of the Qwabe into the group of chiefdoms which constituted the core of the emerging Zulu state a matter of urgent political necessity. The Qwabe chiefdom, though, lay on the south-eastern margins of Zulu-dominated territory. The Zulu leaders thus had to deal with the peculiar problems of trying to integrate into the political and social centre of the state a conquered group which was located on its geographical periphery, and in which resistance to Zulu rule ran deep. Whatever the degree of favouritism shown by Shaka to the party under Nqetho which he had installed as the powerholding group in Qwabe society, many Qwabe resented Zulu domination. For disaffected groups, taking to flight across the Thukela was a feasible option so long as this distant frontier remained uncontrolled by the Zulu power. If the Zulu leaders were to prevent resources of Qwabe manpower and cattle from haemorrhaging away southward, the establishment of a strong Zulu or Zulu-linked presence on the lower Thukela was essential.

Soon after the defeat of the Ndwandwe, Shaka moved to extend his authority over the chiefdoms of the coastal region south of the Thukela. His strategy was the same as the one which he was successfully employing to take control of the mid-Thukela valley: to set up and provide support

for a client chief who was allowed a comparatively large degree of regional authority in return for continued loyalty to the person of the Zulu monarch. The prime target of his attentions was the Cele chiefdom under Dibandlela.

There is no clear evidence as to how long it was after the subordination of the Qwabe before the Zulu moved against the Cele and their neighbouring chiefdoms. That they were unable to do so until after the withdrawal northward of the Ndwandwe is suggested by evidence that Shaka himself accompanied the force which he sent into the Cele country, something which he would never have dared to do while the Zulu faced attack by Zwide's forces. Both Dinya kaZokozwayo and Melaphi kaMagaye stated to Stuart that Shaka had crossed the Thukela in person.[147] That Dinya, at least, was not reproducing a mythologized tradition is indicated by his evidence that one of his informants had been present at a council of local chiefs held by Shaka on this occasion.[148]

Shaka's proceedings in the Cele country are recorded in some detail in four separate published accounts.[149] Hamilton has interpreted the evidence to indicate that the threat of an impending Zulu attack caused a split in the Cele ruling group, with the chief, Dibandlela, advocating submission to the Zulu, and an opposition group, led by one of his sons, Mande, favouring a policy of resistance. As support for Mande increased, Dibandlela responded by 'fetching back' another son, Magaye, from where he had been living among the Qwabe, his mother's people, and nominating him as his successor. What had originally been a dispute

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147. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 115-16; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 78-9.

148. JSA, vol. 1, p. 115.

149. Shepstone's unattributed notes on Cele history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 124-5; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 115-17; vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, pp. 71-2; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 77-9.

over the appropriate response to the Zulu threat thus resolved itself into a struggle over the succession, a struggle which ended only when Shaka intervened on the side of Magaye and put Mande to death.[150]

The interpretation favoured in the present study puts the emphases somewhat differently. Melaphi states that the struggle between Magaye and Mande had begun some years before the advent of the Zulu.[151] On this evidence it would seem to have been a classic 'succession' dispute, even if a particularly prolonged and bitter one, with a faction of subordinate chiefs espousing the claims of a rival to the ruling chief's designated heir in order to try to weaken the powers of the chiefship. Hamilton casts doubt on the validity of the tradition that Magaye had early on been designated as Dibandlela's successor,[152] and points out that stories about 'fetching back' an heir constitute a device often used in oral tradition to lend legitimacy to a particular cause.[153] Admittedly the informants Mageza and Melaphi were both 'interested' parties, in that the former was an adherent of a chief descended from Magaye, and Melaphi was himself a son of Magaye.[154] Both might well have been inclined to depict Magaye as having been the legitimate heir even if this had not been the case. But against these considerations must be set the evidence from three sources that Magaye's mother was a daughter of the Qwabe paramount chief, Khondlo,[155] and thus of very high rank. It is more than likely that, in accordance with common practice, Dibandlela and his

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150. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 469-71.

151. JSA, vol. 3, p. 78.

152. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 470.

153. Hamilton, 'The amaLala in Natal', unpubl. paper, p. 18.

154. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 69; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 74, 93.

155. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 97, 115, 119; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 74; vol. 4, evidence of Mtshebhwe, p. 159.

advisers had publicly chosen her in advance as the wife who would produce the heir. Dinya stated as much in his evidence to Stuart.[156]

Over and above this is Dinya's statement that Magaye's mother was a full sister to Nqetho,[157] who, as described above, had been elevated by Shaka to the chiefship of the Qwabe on the death of Phakathwayo. The closeness of the relationship which ideally was supposed to exist in the societies of south-eastern Africa between a man and his mother's brothers is attested by ethnographers,[158] and it is likely that, growing up as he apparently did among the Qwabe,[159] Magaye would early on have come to the notice of Nqetho as a future chief whom it would be politic to take under his wing. When Nqetho became chief of the Qwabe, Magaye may already have been one of his protégés. If so, it would have been an astute move on Shaka's part to espouse Magaye's claim to the Cele chiefship. The act would have been seen as an indication of his support for Nqetho, while at the same time it brought Magaye under his own patronage. The question of the Cele succession may thus have been decided by pre-arrangement well before Shaka's public intervention in the dispute.

What precisely it was that precipitated the Zulu chief's move south is not recorded, but in the event he took advantage of the virtual civil war conditions which existed in the Cele chiefdom to invade it with the iziYendane ibutho.[160] He met with no resistance, and, the better to present himself as mediator rather than conqueror, he summoned the leaders of the warring parties, together with a number of chiefs from within the Cele

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156. JSA, vol. 1, p. 115.

157. JSA, vol. 1, pp. 97, 105.

158. Krige, Social System, pp. 26, 98.

159. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 115; vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kwaKwefunga, p. 71; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 77.

160. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 79.

sphere of influence, to discuss the succession issue.[161] The outcome was a foregone conclusion: Magaye was recognized as Dibandlela's heir, and, with his father either already dead or else too old to take an active part in affairs,[162] effectively became ruler of the Cele. Most sources indicate that either then or a short while later Mande was put to death by Shaka, although Bryant states that he escaped, and survived into the reign of Dingane.[163]

Like Jobe of the Sithole, Magaye was brought to power by dint of Zulu intervention, but, unlike Jobe and like Zihlandlo of the Mkhize, his authority also rested on the legitimacy of his claim to the chiefship. Again like Zihlandlo, he had a close personal relationship with Shaka, by whom he was addressed as umnawe (younger brother).[164] He seems to have been allowed to exercise certain powers of life and death over the people subject to him,[165] and was permitted to retain control over his own fighting men. The names of six of his amabutho are known,[166] and while it is not entirely clear on what basis they were formed, Melaphi's reference to the 'young iNjanduna regiment' suggests that they were organized at least in part by age.[167]

Magaye was expected to exercise authority on Shaka's behalf over a number of neighbouring chiefdoms which were

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161. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 115-16.

162. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 115; vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 72; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 93.

163. Shepstone's notes on Cele history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 125; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 116; vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga, p. 72; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 79; OT, pp. 539-41.

164. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 117; vol. 2, evidence of Mandlakazi, p. 192; vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 237; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 72, 79, 89; vol. 4, evidence of Mtshebhwe, pp. 158-9.

165. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 117.

166. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza kaKwefunga,p. 73; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 75.

167. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 92.

subdued, presumably by the iziYendane, at much the same time as the Cele. To the north, between the Cele and the Qwabe, were the Makhanya under Duze kaMnengwa. While the chief's fate is uncertain, his people submitted to Shaka, who placed them under the rule of Magaye.[168] Inland of the Cele in the Mvoti valley were the Somi. On the advent of the iziYendane they attempted to escape to the south, but were overtaken, and numbers of them were killed. Some survivors fled to the Mkhize chiefdom; others returned with their chief to submit to Shaka, who is said to have given him cattle with which to re-establish himself.[169] Like the Somi, the neighbouring Nganga also fled south, leaving most of their cattle to their conquerors. Some went off to join the Thembu under Ngoza south of the Mzimkhulu; others returned with their chief and gave their allegiance to Shaka.[170] Following Lewis Grout, Bryant states that numbers of their young men were taken off as 'captives' to be drafted into the Zulu forces.[171]

Further up the Mvoti, the Maphumulo submitted to Shaka's forces, who again took off cattle and young men.[172] The

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168. Shepstone's unattributed notes on Makhanya history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 152; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 116; vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 186; vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 237; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 295-6; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 26, 31, 35.

169. Shepstone's unattributed notes on Somi history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 128; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296; OT, pp. 535-6.

170. Evidence of Mnguni in Shepstone's notes on Nganga history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 130 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 103); Shepstone's unattributed notes on Phemvu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 152; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleka, p. 11; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296.

171. Lewis Grout's evidence on Nganga history in his statement to the Harding Commission, published in Natal Govt. Gazette, no. 215, 18 January 1853; OT, p. 545.

172. Grout's evidence on Maphumulo history, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853.; Shepstone's unattributed notes on Maphumulo history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p 149; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleka, p. 11; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296; OT, p. 530.

Seleku section of the Maphumulo went off to the southward,[173] while some sections of the related Hlongwa and Shinga (or Ndelu) did the same.[174] Other groups said to have broken up by the 'Zulu' in the Mvoti region are the Bane, the Nzobe and the Tshibi.[175] The iziYendane do not seem to have penetrated inland of the Maphumulo territory, for further to the west the country was being brought under the domination of the Mkhize. On the south-western and southern borders of the Cele chiefdom, the iziYendane raided a number of other small groups, most of which had probably been under the suzerainty of Dibandlela. Among them were the Hloko, or Nhloko, the Nkulwini, the Lumba, or Lumbi, the Ndwayana, and a section of the Ndlovini. Some sections of these chiefdoms fled; others were brought under the rule of Magaye.[176]

Ultimately the territory controlled by the Cele chief extended from the Thukela to the vicinity of the Thongati,[177] and from the sea inland for forty or fifty

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173. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 187; OT, p. 531.

174. Grout's evidence on histories of the Hlala, Langa, Luleka, Ndelu, and ekuNene, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; Funwayo's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Hlongwa history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 127, 131 (the informant is identified in Bird, p. 128); OT, pp. 525, 532.

175. Grout's evidence, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853.

176. Grout's evidence on the histories of the Hloko, Nkulwini, and Ndwayana, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Nkulwini history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 140 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 130); Shepstone's unattributed notes on the histories of the Lumbi and Ndlovini in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 129; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 79, 81; OT, p. 554.

177. The southernmost outposts of the Cele chiefdom in 1824 seem to have been on the Thongati: see Fynn, Diary, p. 63; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 32. These outposts were in the charge of a chief whom Isaacs names as 'Osingale'. Bryant, OT, p. 536, identifies him as Singila of the Somi people. Much more likely is that he was the person named Sinqila whom Dinya (JSA, vol. 1, p. 96), Maquza (JSA, vol. 2, p. 233), and Melaphi (JSA, vol. 3, p. 93) identify as either a son or a close relative of the Cele chief Magaye.

kilometres. His capital, eMdlazi, was situated near the Mhlali river.[178] To oversee Zulu interests in the region, Shaka appointed Mbikwana, a senior member of the Langeni chiefly house and a close relative of the Zulu chief on his mother's side. In 1824, when Fynn encountered him, he was living some fifteen kilometres north of the Thongati, and wielded considerable influence in the Cele chiefdom.[179] Unlike Zihlandlo and Jobe, the other two satellite chiefs set up by Shaka on the southern borders of the Zulu state, Magaye had a Zulu ibutho quartered in his territory. This was the iziYendane, which, once its initial raiding operations were over, was established in an ikhanda named eziYendaneni near the Mvoti river under the command of Nonzama.[180]

It is significant that this unit was not one of the 'main line', partially age-based amabutho whose members were drawn from the core chiefdoms of the Zulu state. It was composed of men from the large group of Hlubi and related peoples which had sought protection from the Zulu after the Ngwane incursion.[181] For Shaka to have placed one of the newly formed amabutho from the Zulu heartland into this remote outpost would have short-circuited the urgent efforts which the Zulu leadership was then making to

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178. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza, p. 73; vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 235; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 75.

179. Fynn, Diary, pp. 64, 65, 68, 70, 71, 72. Bryant, OT, p. 569, gives Mbikwana as an Mthethwa, but four of Stuart's informants give him as of the Langeni: see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mayinga, p. 247; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, p. 268; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhando, p. 159; vol. 4, evidence of Ndlovu, pp. 203, 216, 224, 225, 226, 230. Fynn, Diary, p. 65, gives Shaka as the nephew of Mbikwana, which is consistent with the evidence of Stuart's informants.

180. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 103; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296; vol. 2, evidence of Socwatsha, p. 296; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 45.

181. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, pp. 13-14, 20; vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 96; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 277, 296.

foster their cohesion and their loyalty to the Zulu chiefly house.[182] From both a political and a military perspective, it made better sense at this time where possible to turn men from one periphery of the Zulu state against the inhabitants of another.

The functions of the iziYendane seem to have been to raid cattle from the chiefdoms which still survived in the regions to the south and south-west of Cele territory, perhaps to stiffen Magaye's authority as he sought to consolidate his newly won position as paramount chief, and to defend this far-flung corner of the Zulu domain against outsiders. Where, further inland, the Sithole and Mkhize satellite chiefdoms both bordered on regions where political organization had been disrupted or destroyed by the migrations of the Ngwane, Bhele, Thembu, Chunu and other groups, the Cele polity had as its southern neighbour the large Thuli chiefdom.

There is no way of telling whether Shaka had in mind even before the Zulu subordination of the Cele the extension of his suzerainty still further to the south. But once the Cele chiefdom had been brought under his authority the days of Thuli independence were numbered, for it was unlikely that the Zulu leaders would long tolerate the existence of an autonomous and relatively strong polity on the edges of their sphere of influence. By contrast with the Cele case, there is very little evidence on the fate of the Thuli at the hands of the Zulu state. This is partly because the chief house under Ntaba was so thoroughly broken up that much of its history was lost to record, and also because, in the colonial period, the Natal administration seems to have followed a policy of favouring the interests of the subsidiary section under the

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182. Much the best existing analysis of Shaka's reorganization of the amabutho system in the early years of his reign is that in Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 335-50.

descendants of Mabona (Manti).[183] Bryant's account of Thuli history in the early 19th century is notably thin, and Stuart's two main informants on the subject, Mcothoyi kaMnini and Maziyana kaMahlabeni, who were both of Mabona's section, had very little to say on the history of the main house after its dispersal. Either they were ignorant of it, or else reluctant to reveal much about it to Stuart for fear of undermining their own section's standing in the eyes of the Natal colonial government.

Bryant's account in Olden Times suggests that the Thuli chiefdom was broken up in the course of one of a series of invasions of the region south of the Thukela by an army sent from the Zulu heartland.[184] Maziyana's evidence indicates that the reality was rather different. The Thuli and neighbouring chiefdoms were attacked by forces composed of detachments of the iziYendane and of men summoned from the minor chiefdoms which had been placed under Magaye.[185] Although Maziyana claimed that these forces operated without special instructions, in the the case of the Thuli they probably had clear orders to make sure that the chiefdom's senior house was overthrown. The establishment of Zulu domination was facilitated by the tensions that had long existed between the various sections of the senior house. According to Mcothoyi, Ntaba was put to death by a rival faction whose protection he had sought against Shaka's forces. Other members of the ruling house were killed by the latter, and the line of succession broken.[186] The genealogies of the Thuli senior section given by Maziyana are notable for the number of individuals whom he describes as having been killed at this time, and for the number of survivors who did not marry or produce issue.[187]

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183. See the comments of Mbovu on the dispute between Bhoshongweni and Mnini in JSA, vol. 3, pp. 25-7, 40, 41.

184. OT, p. 503.

185. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296.

186. Ibid., p. 300; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 53.

187. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 283-91.

Not only the senior house but the chiefdom as a whole lost most of its cattle, either during the first iziYendane attack or during subsequent raids.[188]

That Nonzama's forces did not have things all their own way is indicated in the first-hand account given by one of Lewis Grout's informants, Jodile, himself a Thuli. According to this source, some of the Thuli were able to regroup near the Mkhomazi, drive off a 'Zulu' raiding party, and recapture their cattle.[189] This evidence is consistent with that of Shepstone and of Maziyana to the effect that, though their central political authority had been destroyed, numbers of people remained in the Thuli territory.[190] Many of them probably gravitated within a short time to Mabona's section of Thuli, which occupied the Bluff and the territory to the south of the bay at Port Natal. Though it too had lost most of its cattle, it seems to have remained in occupation of its territory, and to have retained its leadership structures. 'My father Mahlabeni never ran away from these parts,' Maziyana told Stuart. 'He always remained with Mabona, Mnini and Mathubane.'[191]

Mabona himself had died some time before the advent of Shaka's forces,[192] leaving his young heir, Mnini, under the guardianship of a close relative, Dlemula.[193] The latter

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188. Grout's evidence on Thuli history, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; Shepstone's notes on Thuli history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 130 (possibly based on the evidence of Funwayo, to whom reference is made in this source); JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 293, 302.

189. Grout's evidence on Thuli history, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853. The anecdote given by Bryant in Olden Times, p. 503, is taken from this source.

190. Shepstone's notes on Thuli history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 130; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 275.

191. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296.

192. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 293, 296.

193. Ibid., p. 285; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 60; also Robert Garden's notes on Thuli history in the Garden Papers (Natal Archives), p. 62.

was regent at the time of the iziYendane attack, but he thereafter came to be superseded by a relative, Mathubane kaJombela, who had early on khonza'd Shaka and found favour with him.[194] (Bryant gives the name Mathubane as an alias for Fica, a member of the Thuli senior house, but the genealogical information given by Maziyana, Mbovu and Mcothoyi makes clear that Mathubane and Fica were two different persons.[195]) Shaka recognized Mathubane's position by presenting him with cattle.[196] The Zulu chief also seems to have allowed him to keep a number of armed men under his command.[197] By 1825, when Nathaniel Isaacs visited him, Mathubane was effectively chief of this section of the Thuli.[198] Like other local chiefs in this peripheral region of the Zulu state, he was subordinate to Shaka's client, Magaye of the Cele.[199]

At much the same time as the Thuli senior house was broken up, Shaka's forces also raided the chiefdoms tributary to it or within its sphere of influence. Following Grout and Shepstone, Bryant regards these forces as having been composed of 'Zulus', who devastated the lower Mngeni valley in the course of a single campaign.[200] Again it is much more likely that they consisted of men of the iziYendane and of local recruits, and that they conducted a series of raids rather than a single campaign against the polities which still survived on the coast and

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194. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 297; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 65; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 85.

195. OT, pp. 503-6; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 284, 288; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 25; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, pp. 60, 61.

196. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 270, 296.

197. Ibid., p. 293.

198. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 26. See also JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana. pp. 266, 297; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 25.

199. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 266.

200. OT, pp. 555-7.

in its hinterland. On the north side of the lower Mngeni, they attacked the Khanyawo and a section of Zelemu.[201] Further inland, they raided as far as the area about the confluence of the Mngeni and the Msunduze, in the process breaking up chiefdoms like the Nkulwini, Dlanyoka, Njilo, Nyavu, Dlanyawo and Ndlovini.[202] Numbers of 'captives' as well as cattle were taken off from most of these groups. Only the Nyavu, who lived in the broken country near the confluence of the Mngeni and Msunduze were able to hold on to their territory and retain their political cohesion. After a time, to escape attacks from bandits, they moved off to join Matiwane's adherents on the upper Thukela.[203]

To the south, Nonzama's raiding parties reached as far as the lower Mkhomazi, where, as noted above, one of them was beaten back by a force of Thuli. It is unlikely that at this stage they penetrated much further, for to the west the large Chunu chiefdom of Macingwane was busy consolidating in its new territory between the middle Mkhomazi and the Mzimkhulu. To the south were lesser but well-organized groups like the Nhlangwini, Memela and Bhaca, each of which would have been well able to resist attacks by the relatively small forces which were all that the iziYendane commander could have sent against them. South of the Thukela, Shaka's suzerainty was felt in the

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201. Grout's evidence on the histories of the Khanyawo, Zelemu and Hlungele, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; evidence of Funwayo in Shepstone's notes on Khanyawo history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 129-30 (the informant is identified on p. 129); Shepstone's unattributed notes on Zelemu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 130; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 276.

202. Grout's evidence on the histories of the Hlanga, Langa, Ndlovini and Nyavu, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on the histories of the Dlanyawo, Dlanyoka, Ndlovini, Njilo and Nyavu in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 137, 139-40, 141, 146 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 125, 126, 134, 144, 145, 146).

203. Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Nyavu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 137; OT, p. 557.

territories subject to Magaye; beyond these his writ was carried only spasmodically.

6. An overview

In the late 1810s and early 1820s the political map of the Thukela-Mzinyathi region changed with dramatic suddenness, not once but twice, as the struggles for domination among the states to the northward played themselves out. The first phase of change was largely a product of the intensifying conflicts between the Ndwandwe and the Mthethwa, and then the Ndwandwe and the Zulu. An early casualty of these conflicts was Matiwane's Ngwane chiefdom in the area round the sources of the White Mfolozi. On being attacked by the Ndwandwe, its leaders chose to try to retain the chiefdom's independence by abandoning their territory and cattle and taking to flight. To acquire more cattle, which were essential for social, political and economic survival, they atacked the neighbouring Hlubi chiefdom, killed its chief, and broke up its ruling house. Loosely structured and deeply divided as it was, the Hlubi chiefdom fell apart, with its constituent sections going their several ways, some moving off to the west and north, some going to khonza Shaka of the Zulu chiefdom, some subordinating themselves to Matiwane, and some remaining in the Hlubi territory.

From the upper Mzinyathi the Ngwane proceeded south-westward through the territories of several Bhele and Zizi chiefdoms, raiding cattle and sweeping aside resistance as they went. In the valley of the upper Thukela they came to a halt and set about trying to reconstitute their chiefdom. Numbers of Bhele and Zizi moved off southwards with their leaders; others came to give their allegiance to Matiwane. Within a short space of time the Ngwane chiefdom, though still hardly more than a loose amalgamation of disparate groups, was the dominant power in the basin of the upper Thukela.

Not long after these events, a series of major disturbances began to be felt among the chiefdoms of the

mid-Thukela valley. The proximate cause was the further expansion of the Zulu chiefdom, which had already achieved the status of a regional power under Mthethwa hegemony. After the defeat of the Mthethwa by the Ndwandwe, the Zulu, facing imminent destruction at the hands of Zwide's forces, hurriedly sought to force into existence a defensive alliance of the chiefdoms south of the White Mfolozi. In the process they extended the area which they dominated, directly or indirectly, southwards to the Thukela valley. In the south-east they subordinated the Qwabe. In the south they sought to subordinate the large Chunu chiefdom, but failed when the Chunu moved away over the Thukela and re-established themselves in the region of the Mvoti. After breaking up the Nyuswa paramountcy and subduing the neighbouring chiefdoms of the Thukela valley, the Zulu set up the Mkhize chiefdom as their controlling agency in the region. In the south-west, an incipient confrontation between the Zulu and the Thembu chiefdom, which was also seeking to expand at this time, caused the latter to withdraw from the east to the west bank of the lower Mzinyathi. After overcoming the Khuze, into whose territories they had intruded, the Thembu then sought to bring other local chiefdoms under their domination.

In the space of a few years the nature of the political order in the regions to the south and west of the Thukela-Mzinyathi valley had been transformed. In the north the previously dominant Hlubi power had been destroyed, and in the north-west the intrusive Ngwane chiefdom was establishing its supremacy round the upper Thukela. East of the Ngwane, the intrusive Thembu chiefdom was engaged in a similar process. In the upper Mvoti-mid-Thukela area, a third intrusive chiefdom, that of the Chunu, was competing for hegemony with the expanding Mkhize polity, which was backed by the emerging Zulu power. On the lower Thukela, the Cele chiefdom was now confronted by a Qwabe chiefdom which had lost its independence and was being incorporated into the Zulu state. Between them, the three intrusive

powers of the interior - the Ngwane, Thembu and Chunu chiefdoms - and the two established ones in the coastlands - the Cele and Thuli - now dominated the political scene between the Thukela and Mzimkhulu. Only in the central and southern areas did small-scale chiefdoms continue to maintain an independent existence.

The new order had hardly begun to consolidate when much of it was overturned in a second phase of rapid change. Again the main forces involved emanated from north of the Thukela. After their defeat of the Ndwandwe, the leaders of the enlarged Zulu state had two immediate concerns. One was to consolidate their precarious hold on the core region - i.e. the area about the White Mfolozi, together with the awkwardly appended Qwabe chiefdom to the south-east - of the territories which they now dominated. The other was to establish a ring of protective dependencies round the core, partly to defend it against external enemies, and partly to prevent secession by disaffected elements. On their more vulnerable northern and western borders they sought to achieve this end by establishing military settlements headed by members of the Zulu chiefly house or, in the case of the Mandlakazi, the head of a closely related lineage.

The resources of the Zulu state were stretched too thin for this strategy to be possible in the south, where in any case problems of defence were less urgent. Here the policy which evolved was to break up chiefdoms which were perceived as a threat to the stability of the Zulu borderlands and to sub-contract responsibility for policing and defence to partially autonomous client chiefdoms. These latter were encouraged to expand their territories at the expense of the smaller chiefdoms on their borders, and to seize cattle and manpower for the Zulu state. The first such chiefdom to be set up, probably even before the defeat of the Ndwandwe, was that of the Mkhize under Zihlandlo. Its encroachment southwards was probably a major factor in the decision of the Chunu to move off and re-establish their chiefdom between the Mkhomazi and the Mzimkhulu.

Further up the Thukela, Zulu menaces caused the Thembu under Ngoza to embark on a migration which eventually took them over the Mzimkhulu. As ruler over much of the territory and many of the people that the Thembu had dominated, Shaka established Jobe of the Sithole. At much the same time, he extended Zulu suzerainty over the Cele and other chiefdoms south of the lower Thukela, and set up Magaye as a satellite chief to keep guard, with the help of a Zulu ibutho, over the sensitive south-eastern border of the Zulu state. The ruling house of the rival Thuli paramountcy was broken up, and, under a new chief who owed his position to Shaka, the Thuli were brought within the ambit of Magaye's authority.

The major powers between the Thukela and the Mzimkhulu were now the three Zulu satellite chiefdoms - the Sithole, the Mkhize and the Cele - together with the Ngwane in the north-west and the relocated Chunu in the south. Between them they dominated the whole of the region. The independent small chiefdoms of the midlands and the coast had either taken to flight southwards, or had khonza'd to one or other of the emerging powers, or had been broken up and dispersed.

In the stereotyped version of the region's history in the 1810s and early 1820s, the prime cause of change is seen as the 'invasions' of the Zulu. In fact the only territories invaded by the Zulu were the Thembu country west of the lower Mzinyathi, the south bank of the mid- and lower Thukela, and the northern coastlands. The Zulu state was also ultimately responsible for the expansion of the client Mkhize chiefdom into the northern midlands. But it had nothing at all to do with the incursion of the Ngwane into the north-western part of the region, and was only indirectly responsible for the migrations of the Thembu and Chunu from the Zulu borderlands. Still less was it responsible for the migrations of groups like the Memela, Nhlangwini and Bhaca. All these events had their own dynamics, in which pressures exerted by the Zulu were only one factor, if often a very important one.

The stereotyped view disregards the fact that much of the region had a history of heightened political conflict which went back several decades before the rise of the Zulu state. It fails to appreciate that in these years the newly emerged Zulu state was still largely inchoate, and facing severe internal and external threats to its existence, and that it did not have the capacity to mount large-scale invasions beyond its borders. And it completely overlooks local trajectories of change and the political agendas of local leaders.

Another major source of distortion in the stereotype is its overwhelming exaggeration of the violence and destruction which took place in this period. Certainly the degree of violence should not be minimized, but there is nothing in the evidence to indicate that large numbers of people were indiscriminately massacred - this notion was injected into the literature by settler ideologues.[204] The violence which accompanied the changes described above was a product largely not of 'massacres' but of fights over cattle, which were an absolutely essential resource for leaders who were trying to maintain or increase the size and cohesion of their followings, and of attempts on the part of expanding chiefdoms to destroy the leadership structures of subjected groups.

Both kinds of conflict need to be seen in clearer perspective than the stereotype allows for. The fights which took place when communities resisted the seizure of their cattle were no doubt widespread and fierce, but they would have involved relatively few numbers of men at any one time, and would have been relatively short-lived. While numbers of people were killed in them, it is doubtful if

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204. The persistence of this kind of thinking, outside as well as inside South Africa, is reflected by Ballard's recent repetition of the charge that 'between .5 and 1 million people perished in the wake of the Zulu conquest' - this in a reputable American academic journal. See Ballard, 'Drought and economic distress', Jnl. of Interdisciplinary History, vol. 17 (1986-7), p. 374.

they produced very large casualties. And if established political leaders and their close adherents were often deliberately put to death by their conquerors, this was not an invariable practice. Evidence has long existed which runs counter even to the stereotype of Shaka as murderous tyrant. As far back as the 1830s, Andrew Smith recorded the information, probably derived from Henry Fynn, that Shaka 'was always very considerate towards strangers and the people of conquered nations'.[205] In his evidence to the Harding Commission of 1852-3, Grout cited a letter written by a missionary colleague, Newton Adams, in the early 1840s, to the effect that had Shaka had treated subordinates in a conciliatory manner.[206] In 1864 Shepstone noted that Shaka had allowed some of the chiefs of the Thukela valley to live and rule as his tributaries.[207] In 1903 Jantshi put the point clearly when he told Stuart, 'Tshaka did not put to death the kings or kinglets he defeated if, when he proceeded against them, they ran away and did not show fight'.[208]

Numbers of people, particularly in areas where social and economic disruption were severe, also perished from starvation and debilitation.[209] But the strongly entrenched view that whole populations were 'wiped out' by marauding 'hordes ' can be rejected: it fails to take into account that it was in the direct interest of political leaders to incorporate subjected peoples into their own followings rather than annihilate them. Even if they had had the physical capacity to kill off large numbers of

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205. Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, p. 80.

206. NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853.

207. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 2, p. 425.

208. JSA, vol. 1, p. 187.

209. See the group histories in Grout's evidence to the Harding Commission, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; and the sources on 'cannibals' in notes 218-21 below. Mqayikana kaYenge also comments on the want of food which some groups experienced in these times: JSA, vol. 4, p. 9.

people, which the great majority did not, it would have been politically senseless for leaders to have done so in place of allowing or, if necessary, forcing, them to khonza.

Violence, then, was effected by conquering groups not so much to destroy populations as to seize the resources and destroy the political organization of defeated groups. In the process, a number of small chiefdoms, particularly in the south, where the paths of a number of the larger migrant groups converged, were so thoroughly broken up that they ceased to exist as political entities.[210] Many, probably most, of their members, though, survived to give their allegiance, either as individuals or in groups, to other chiefs. Outside the south, most chiefdoms seem to have been able to retain a degree of cohesion, even if many lost some of their component sections through secession. Generally speaking, for smaller groups there were three main strategies of survival: to migrate as an independent unit; to remain in situ and wait for dangers to subside; and to khonza a new leader who could offer effective protection. Numbers of groups may have followed all three courses at different stages. Comparatively few had the resources needed for successfully pursuing the first and second courses, and over time most ended up taking the third.

The history of the period was characterized not so much by the destruction of peoples as by two other kinds of process, which were linked to each other: the displacement and migration of populations, and the fragmentation of political units and their re-aggregation into new, enlarged entities. The numerous small polities which had existed only a few years before were replaced by a handful of much

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210. See the statements to this effect in some of the group histories outlined by Grout in his evidence to the Harding Commission, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853, and by Shepstone in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 124-53; also Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 2, p. 420.

larger chiefdoms, the cores of which were formed either by intruding groups - the Ngwane, Sithole, Mkhize, Chunu - or by local groups which, under varying circumstances, managed to maintain their cohesion - the Memela, Nhlangwini, Zelemu-Wushe (or Bhaca), and Cele.

Political re-aggregation was accompanied by demographic concentration. The conventional view holds that if the inhabitants of the Natal were not mostly massacred in the violence of the period, they were driven out, either onto the highveld or southwards across the Mzimkhulu. The available evidence indicates clearly that this was not so. Numbers of groups did migrate out of the region (including some which made off to the Zulu chiefdom,[211] pace the notion of the Zulu as destroyers), and there may have been a temporary drop in the overall population as a result. But most of the previous inhabitants remained within the region, and a fall-off of population would to some extent have been offset by the advent of intruding groups like the Ngwane and the Mkhize. As significant as migrations inward or outward across what are in any case rather arbitrarily determined boundaries were the internal movements which took place.

As numbers of people shifted into the territories dominated by the larger and more stable chiefdoms to find security, so these regions became relatively more populated, while other areas became relatively denuded of inhabitants. As far back as 1864 this phenomenon was noted by Shepstone, who wrote of the increase in population which had taken place during Shaka's reign in the lower Thukela valley as a direct result of the influx of 'refugees' from other areas.[212] Other regions in which concentrations of

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211. The cases of the Hlubi and Bhele have already been mentioned. See also the evidence of Nombiba and Funwayo in Shepstone's notes on Dunge history, Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 132 (the informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 106); JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana on Thuli history, p. 298.

212. Shepstone, 'Historic sketch', Commission on Laws and Customs, pp. 419, 425.

population formed were very likely the territories dominated by the Ngwane in the north-west, the Cele south of the lower Thukela, and the Chunu and other large chiefdoms about the Mzimkhulu. The intervening regions - the area between the Mzinyathi and Ndaka rivers, the central midlands, the southern coastlands - probably experienced a drop in population. It was one of these areas, the southern coastlands, which was later reported by Fynn to have been almost devoid of inhabitants when he traversed it in 1824,[213] a claim which was seized upon by numerous later writers and generalized to apply to the whole of Natal. Few, if any, took into account the cautionary note sounded in 1866 by William Holden, one of the earliest settler historians, to the effect that he was 'by no means disposed to think that the number of these aborigines was so small as has often been represented'. As Holden was aware, numbers of small groups clung on in the more broken or forested parts.[214] They lived largely by gathering and hunting, and probably kept cultivation and keeping of livestock to a minimum to avoid attracting the attention of larger groups. Others took advantage of the breakdown of previously established authority structures to turn to banditry.[215]

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213. Fynn's evidence to the Harding Comission, NGG, no. 220, 22 Feb. 1853. The relevant passage was reprinted in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 103. It should be compared with two other statements made by Fynn on this subject, one also to the Harding Commission (NGG, no. 221, 1 March 1853; reprinted in Bird, p. 123), and the other in one of his manuscripts, first published in Bird, p. 69 (reprinted in Fynn's Diary, p. 22). See also the extracts supposedly from Francis Farewell's journal of 1825 published in P.R. Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, Cape Town, 1955, pp. 64-5.

214. Holden, Past and Future, p. 137.

215. See the group histories in Grout's evidence to the Harding Commission, NGG, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Nyavu history, Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 137 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 105); JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 277, 298; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 80-1; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhando, p. 162. For two personalized accounts of life in these marginal regions see Nombiba's description of the experiences of Nomsimekwana in

The members of most of the communities described as 'cannibals' in the settler-influenced literature were probably bandits. The literary stereotype about the widespread existence of cannibalism in Natal in 'Shaka's time' was very much a product of settler ideology and its exaggeration of a handful of recorded eye-witness accounts and traditions.[216] This evidence cannot simply be dismissed, for it is likely that in areas where agriculture and livestock production had collapsed, some people took to cannibalism to stay alive. But in regard to traditions of cannibalism, the comments made by Delius in his study of the history of the Pedi chiefdom of the eastern Transvaal are highly pertinent. Such traditions, he suggests, functioned to show 'the dire consequences of the destruction of properly constituted authority'. They were thus liable to exaggeration in African society as well as by white commentators, and need to be treated with caution. Close investigation of his sources, Delius argues, shows that cannibal groups were 'principally distinguished by the fact that they secured their subsistence almost exclusively through raiding, and were thus seen as living on their fellows'.[217] The scraps of evidence which exist suggest that south of the Thukela-Mzinyathi valley such groups emerged in precisely those regions which had been most

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Shepstone's notes on Nyavu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 138-9; JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, pp. 1, 8-9.

216. The making of this stereotype needs detailed research in its own right. Early writers like Gardiner (Narrative, pp. 185-6) and Isaacs (Travels and Adventures, p. 78) mention the practice of cannibalism in the Natal region in passing, but it was not until the later 19th century that writers like Shepstone ('Early history of the Zulu-Kafir race', in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 159-60) began to portray it as a major consequence of 'Shaka's wars'. In the early 20th century Bryant took delight in further embellishing the stories of Shepstone's informants about cannibals: see OT, pp. 58, 248, 348, 377, 410, 504, 552, 558-9.

217. Delius, The Land Belongs to Us, p. 24.

heavily raided by larger chiefdoms and had been partially denuded of population. Several traditions indicate that in the north the country between the Mzinyathi and the Ndaka rivers was one such region.[218] Others were the territory near the upper Mvoti formerly inhabited by the Dunge,[219] the broken country of the mid-Mngeni valley,[220] and the coastlands from the Mngeni southward.[221]

The stereotyped view that in the 1810s and early 1820s the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region was deliberately devastated by the Zulu totally fails to capture the complexity of the period's history. While it was certainly a time of rapid and often violent political transformation, the notions that the processes at work involved nothing but 'devastation', that the Zulu state was the only significant agency of change, and that the Zulu had the power to intervene more or less at will in the region's affairs, are products of ideological interpolation rather than of historical analysis. Though by the early 1820s the emerging Zulu state was certainly the most powerful political actor south and west of the Thukela-Mzinyathi

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218. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dunjwa, p. 126; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, pp. 301, 302, 336; vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, pp. 14, 15, 24, 31; vol. 2, evidence of Mangathi, p. 202; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhando, p. 161. See also Gardiner, Narrative, pp. 185-6.

219. Evidence of Nombiba and Funwayo in Shepstone's notes on Dunge history, Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 132 (the informants are identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 106); JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dabula, p. 90.

220. Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on the histories of the Nyavu, Dlanyoka and Ndlovu, Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 138-9, 140, 146 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, pp. 125, 126, 145); JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 26, 27.

221. Funwayo's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Khanyawo history, Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 129-30 (the informant is identified on p. 129 of the text); JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, p. 113; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 277; vol. 3, evidence of Dinya, p. 81; Fynn, Diary, p. 22 (see also Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 69); Fynn's evidence to the Harding Commission, NGG, no. 221, 1 March 1853 (see also Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 123).

line, it was not until the mid-1820s that it succeeded in establishing domination over what is now the Natal region. Even then the physical presence of the Zulu for the most part remained confined to the northern coastlands. The establishment of, and the limits to, Zulu domination will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ZULU DOMINATION SOUTH OF THE THUKELA

1. The expansion of the Zulu presence

In the previous chapter it was argued that in the late 1810s and 1820s, to safeguard and police its southern flank, the emerging Zulu state established the Sithole, Mkhize and Cele chiefdoms as client polities. The belt of territory which it thus brought under its suzerainty reached west and south across the lower Mzinyathi and the middle and lower Thukela. Soon afterwards, the Zulu leadership began to extend its domination still further in these directions, and to transform the nature of the role played by the peripheral coastland region across the Thukela in the political economy of the state. The Zulu attacked and drove out the Ngwane chiefdom on the upper Thukela, and destroyed the Chunu chiefdom on the middle Mzimkhulu. By 1824 they were raiding across the Mzimkhulu, and establishing a number of cattle posts in the coastlands between the Thukela and the bay of Port Natal.

In conventional accounts of the expansion of the Zulu state there is virtually nothing which recognizes, let alone elucidates, this sequence of developments. In all but a handful of works the extension of Zulu domination south of the Thukela is seen as following unproblematically from military conquest, and as representing the culmination of the process of Zulu territorial expansion which had begun after the defeat of the Ndwandwe.

The earliest writings on the 'Zulu invasions' of Natal attributed them to little more than the bloodlust of the

tyrant Shaka, or to his greed for cattle.[1] Later and more historically oriented accounts explained them in terms of Shaka's political ambitions, and of his need to destroy any possibility of resistance to his rule in regions within reach of his armies.[2] By the early 20th century this idea had developed into the notion that Shaka had sought deliberately to destroy political organization across the Thukela in order to create a buffer zone or cordon sanitaire to the south and west of the Zulu state.[3] In the 1960s and 1970s this notion was picked up by Africanist writers, and spread rapidly to become something of an orthodoxy among academic historians of southern Africa.[4] As Slater has noted, it provided historians who were developing the notion of Zulu 'nation-building' with a rational explanation of what settler ideologues had often portrayed as irrational destruction.[5] Why the Zulu did not create a similar buffer zone on their far more vulnerable northern borders was left unexplained. Alongside this idea there developed a number of other explanations of the Zulu conquest of Natal: that Shaka had intervened in the region to put an end to the 'chaos'

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1. For example Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 148, 152; Champion, Journal, p. 15.

2. Holden, Past and Future, p. 25; Shepstone, 'The early history of the Zulu-Kafir race', in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 158; op. cit., extract from Fynn's papers, p. 66.

3. Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 290; Ayliff & Whiteside, History of the Abambo, p. 10.

4. E.V. Walter, Terror and Resistance: a Study of Political Violence, London, 1969, pp. 138-9; Thompson, 'Co-operation and conflict: the Zulu kingdom and Natal', in Wilson & Thompson, eds., Oxford History, vol. 1, p. 346; B. Sansom, 'Traditional rulers and their realms', in W.D. Hammond-Tooke, ed., The Bantu-speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, London, 1974, p. 279; Sh.M. (Shula Marks), article on southern African history in Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974 ed., vol. 17, p. 281; Edgecombe, 'The Mfecane or Difaqane', in Cameron & Spies, eds., Illustrated History of S.A., p. 121.

5. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, pp. 327-8.

there;[6] or to seize its cattle in order to sustain the amabutho system;[7] or to establish it as 'an area of settlement for a growing Zulu population'.[8]

Some of these explanations are simplistic, or simply speculative; others contain the germs of useful analysis. None of them, however, breaks away from the triumphalist and stereotyped notion that Zulu power in the region across the Thukela was more or less absolute. None of them is concerned with delineating the changes in the political context within which Zulu interventions south of the Thukela took place. A step towards a more historically rooted explanation was taken by Slater, who argued that in the 1820s and 1830s the relationship between the Zulu state and its periphery south of the Thukela passed through two broad phases. The first was a period of predation which yielded cattle, labour-power and grain for the state at a time when it was a suffering from a shortage of these resources because of the struggles which it was waging on its northern borders. Over time, as had frequently happened in the development of other imperial systems, this kind of relationship had given way to more ordered forms of exploitation, with the Zulu state establishing a 'protectorate' over the zone to the south whose resources it was extracting.[9] Unlike its predecessors, this argument had the great merit of recognizing that the nature of Zulu interests in the region south of the Thukela changed over time, but, largely because the author was in the end unable to break firmly with the devastation stereotype, he was not concerned to provide an explanation for the transition which he discerned.

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6. Ritter, Shaka Zulu, pp. 108, 228; Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, p. 37.

7. J. Omer-Cooper, 'The Nguni outburst', in J. Flint, ed., Cambridge History of Africa, vol. 5, Cambridge, 1976, pp. 332-3; Ballard, House of Shaka, p. 20.

8. Ballard, House of Shaka, p. 20.

9. Slater, 'Transitions,' unpubl. thesis, pp. 328-30.

Hamilton is the first writer to have recognized that significant changes took place in the nature of Zulu interests south of the Thukela in the 1820s, and at the same time to have pointed towards an explanation of those changes. She distinguishes three phases of Zulu expansion in the coastal regions. In the first, the Zulu leaders intervened in the Cele civil war, and placed Magaye in the chiefship. In the second, they set about establishing a number of cattle posts in the Cele domain, and subjugated the Thuli. In the third, they moved their capital from Bulawayo to Dukuza near the Mvoti river, and established more cattle posts as far south as the Mzimkhulu.[10] Hamilton does not make clear the reasons for the initial Zulu intervention in the Cele country: she seems to imply that it was made in order to seize cattle.[11] But she adduces a persuasive explanation for the second and third phases. These, she argues, were responses primarily to the development of a political crisis in the Zulu state, with mounting opposition to Shaka's rule in its core territories leading him to seek greater security for herds of royal cattle and for his own person in the Zulu-dominated territories south of the Thukela.[12] With certain elaborations, this line of argument forms one of the bases of the analysis that follows.

There was nothing in the establishment of the Sithole, Mkhize and Cele chiefdoms as satellites of the Zulu state which necessarily entailed further Zulu expansion towards the west and south. But within a year or two, political developments within the heartland and on its northern borders made the southern peripheries of the state of increasing strategic importance to Shaka and his party of supporters. The first demonstration of this came with Shaka's shift of his administrative capital, Gibixhegu

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10. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 358-60, 469-74.

11. Ibid., pp. 358, 359-60, 473.

12. Ibid, pp. 361-2.

(later renamed Bulawayo), together with the bulk of his amabutho, from the old Zulu chiefdom's territory near the middle White Mfolozi south-eastwards into the Qwabe territory south of the Mhlathuze river.[13] The particular reasons for this move are not clear, but, as Hamilton has argued, a major factor was very probably the persistence of strong resistance within the state, particularly among the Qwabe, to Zulu rule.[14] The transfer of the Zulu capital and many amabutho was thus in part a move to suppress dissidence within the powerful and politically important Qwabe chiefdom.

This development needs to be seen against the background of events on the Zulu northern frontiers, which in the early 1820s were under constant threat of attack from the turbulent regions further to the north. Hedges and Hamilton have seen the major menace as having been the Ndwandwe polity.[15] More recently, Cobbing has argued that the political pressures which were coming to bear on the Zulu northern frontiers at this time were primarily a product of the rapid contemporaneous expansion of the Delagoa Bay slave trade.[16] Cobbing states his thesis too baldly: the expansion of slaving in the Delagoa Bay hinterland does not by itself explain, as he implies, the southward shift of the Zulu state's political centre of gravity. There can be litle doubt, however, that by the early 1820s it was a major factor in creating political instability in the regions which abutted on the Zulu borderlands. Cobbing's position and that of Hedges and Hamilton are not mutually exclusively: both serve to emphasize the importance of the 'northern factor' in Zulu

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13. Ibid., pp. 350-7.

14. Ibid., pp. 184-6, 355, 361-2.

15. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 201-2, 214-15; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 221-2.

16. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 506-7; 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 13.

politics at this time. Much more research into the history of the early state is needed before an understanding can be reached of how this factor combined with the growth of internal resistance to Shaka's rule to exacerbate political tensions within the Zulu state. What is germane here is that one of the consequences was Shaka's decision to move his capital to the Qwabe country. This development in turn served to focus the attentions of the Zulu rulers more closely on the territories across the Thukela.

Not long after the subordination of the Cele, Thuli and neighbouring chiefdoms, the Zulu leaders began to develop an active interest in extending their territorial domination further southward. In part this may have been a product of their apprehensions about the stability of the state's southern borderlands at a time when they were facing increasing problems both in the core region and on the northern frontiers. The outposts of the Ngwane and Chunu chiefdoms, which were in the process of re-establishing themselves on the upper Thukela and the mid-Mzimkhulu respectively, were only eighty kilometres or so from those of the Zulu polity. Though both were far less powerful than the latter, and were probably concerned much more with internal consolidation than with external expansion, in the eyes of the Zulu leadership they seem to have represented a major threat.

But Shaka and his advisers were concerned with more than simply eliminating possible sources of instability on the southern frontiers of the Zulu state. Their interests also lay in extending their domination over regions from which cattle could be extracted. Hamilton has demonstrated that a rapid expansion of the number and size of Zulu amabutho was taking place at this time, and in part the concerns of the Zulu leaders were to find new sources of the cattle which were essential for provisioning them and for distributing as largesse.[17] Adding urgency to

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17. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 350-7, 474-5.

their search were possibly the effects of a prolonged drought on the size of the Zulu herds. In the early 1820s the eastern Cape and adjoining territories, together with much of the interior north of the Orange, experienced severe drought;[18] it may have affected the areas east of the Drakensberg as well. Given the existence of a number of large and powerful chiefdoms to the north of the Zulu state, it was logical for its rulers to look to the more vulnerable territories to the south and south-west as potential raiding grounds.

To secure unimpeded access to these regions, it was necessary for the Zulu first of all to eliminate the two powers which stood in the way, the Ngwane and Chunu chiefdoms. At some stage in the early 1820s both were attacked by Zulu forces. Bryant indicates that the Ngwane were assailed first,[19] but there is nothing in his source, Shepstone's notes on the history of the Dlanyoka chiefdom, to bear this out.[20] Nor is there any evidence to indicate whether the two chiefdoms were attacked in the course of a single expedition or on two separate occasions, or what interval of time separated the Zulu onslaughts. What is clear is that the Ngwane chiefdom was broken up, and Matiwane and many of his adherents driven over the Drakensberg onto the highveld.[21] As for the Chunu, they

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18. G.E. Cory, The Rise of South Africa, vol. 2, London, 1926, pp. 160-1; J. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 499.

19. OT, p. 561.

20. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 139-40.

21. Timango in Stow, 'The intrusion of the stronger races', unpubl. ms., pp. 197, 207, and in Scully, 'Fragments...IV', The State, vol. 2 (1909), pp. 290-1; Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement of Mathlomahulu', Cape Monthly Magazine, vol. 3 (1880), p. 163; Moloja, 'Story of the "Fetcani horde"', Cape Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1882), p. 268; Khawulela's evidence in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 1, p. 166; Msebenzi, History of Matiwane, pp. 20, 22; Feni Qongqo's statement in Msebenzi, History of Matiwane, p. 261; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mabhonsa, p. 17.

fled before their Zulu attackers across the Mzimkhulu to Nsikeni mountain, where numbers of them were caught and killed, and the chiefdom's cattle seized. The chief, Macingwane, is said to have escaped, but to have disappeared soon afterwards.[22] Numbers of his adherents eventually made their way back across the Thukela and submitted to Shaka.[23]

On both these occasions, it seems, the aim of the Zulu was not simply to break up political structures and to seize cattle, but also to prevent any possibility of the revival of these chiefdoms. The Ngwane and Chunu were not minor polities that could simply be absorbed as tributaries of the Zulu state, but powerful chiefdoms which rivalled it for domination of the region south and west of the Thukela-Mzinyathi line. Zulu policy towards them closely parallelled that pursued a few years earlier by the Ndwandwe state when faced by threats from rival polities. Seen in these terms, the Zulu attack on the Ngwane was not entirely successful. Although the Zulu were probably able to capture most of the Ngwane cattle, they were not able to prevent the chief and his people from making their escape. Within a short space of time the Ngwane chiefdom was emerging as an important actor in the politics of the southern highveld.[24] By contrast, the expedition against the Chunu was a complete success. Their polity was completely shattered, and its leadership structures destroyed.

The attacks made by Shaka's forces on the Ngwane and the Chunu, particularly the latter, represent the closest that the Zulu came to acting in the way in which the

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22. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 85; vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, p. 114; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296; vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, pp. 24, 26; Fuze, Black People, p. 23.

23. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Magidigidi, p. 85; vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 26.

24. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 507-8.

devastation stereotype supposes them to have acted for most of Shaka's reign. Certainly numbers of people were killed in the attack on the Chunu, and it is probable that the territories occupied by the two chiefdoms remained for a while largely empty of population. But, contrary to the claims of the stereotype, these attacks were exceptional events in the process by which the Zulu extended ascendancy over the region south of the Thukela and west of the Mzinyathi. After the destruction of the two chiefdoms, the Zulu dominated the territories from the Mzinyathi to the Drakensberg, and from the Thukela to the Mzimkhulu. As far as the evidence goes, they did not mount a series of 'invasions' of this region, nor for some time did they seek to establish any effective occupation of it outside the belt of territory which they already controlled. For reasons which will be discussed in the next section of the chapter, their concerns were not so much to colonize these territories as to extract cattle from them, and to tighten their hold on the satellite chiefdoms on their southern and south-western borders.

On their south-western periphery, the Zulu may possibly have established a number of cattle posts at this time in the Sithole domains. According to Mayinga, Shaka built a post called umNkangala in the Msinga region between the lower Mzinyathi and the Thukela.[25] He gives no indication of when this event took place, but it is unlikely to have been before the overthrow of the Ngwane polity further up the Thukela. It is possible that this post, and perhaps others in the vicinity, were stocked with cattle taken from the Ngwane. Further to the south, Shaka may also have been encouraging Zihlandlo of the Mkhize chiefdom to extend his rule in the region between the upper Mvoti and the Mngeni (see pp. 251-2 above). But it is clear that the main focus of Zulu interest lay in the coastlands. The region ruled by the client Cele chief, Magaye, lay

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25. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mayinga, p. 249.

conveniently across the Thukela from Shaka's new capital, and was well situated as a base from which raids could be launched on cattle-holding groups further to the south.

In the vicinity of the lower Mzimkhulu, numbers of small groups, some of them recently ejected by the iziYendane and their local auxiliaries from the coastlands further north, still clung on to a tenuous independence.[26] After the destruction of the Chunu chiefdom, there was little to stop Shaka's forces from extending their raids into this region.[27] Magaye was encouraged by Shaka to do the same, in return, it seems, for a share of the cattle which he seized.[28] It was fairly certainly the accumulation of cattle taken from the Chunu and from the smaller groups along the coast which enabled Shaka to establish a number of cattle posts in the Cele country at this time. The major one was built near the Mdloti river, and placed in the charge of Magaye's iNjanduna ibutho, which was thus appropriated by Shaka to his own service.[29] There may well have been other posts erected at the same time, although their names have not survived in the recorded traditions.

Within a short space of time there can have been few cattle left for the Zulu to seize in the coastal regions north of the Mzimkhulu. If raiding in this direction was to be continued, expeditions would have to be sent still

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26. For the names of groups which occupied the coast and its hinterland in this region, many of which are said to have been 'destroyed' by the 'Zulu', see Shepstone's histories in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 148, 149, 151; Grout's list of chiefdoms in his evidence to the Harding Commission, Natal Government Gazette, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853; Perrin's list of chiefdoms in Garden Papers, pp. 826-81; Bryant, OT, pp. 561-2.

27. See JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 296.

28. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 92.

29. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 53; vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 236; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 268, 296, 297; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 92; vol. 4, evidence of Mtshebwe, pp. 159, 160. See also Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 360, 472.

further south. The region across the river was at this stage dominated by the comparatively large and powerful chiefdoms of the Mpondo, the Bhaca, the Memela-Bhele and the Nhlangwini (see below, pp. 306 ff), and by themselves the iziYendane and Magaye's forces were nowhere near strong enough to take them on. There was no alternative but for the Zulu state to take a more direct hand in the business of accumulation. A force of amabutho was therefore mobilized by Shaka, and sent off to raid the territories south of the Mzimkhulu.

Conventionally this expedition is dated to 1824 on the basis of evidence left by Henry Fynn. According to his published Diary, he encountered the Zulu force on its return journey soon after his arrival at Port Natal in the middle of that year.[30] His description of its size seems heavily exaggerated, for it is difficult to credit that Shaka could have sent southward an army of the magnitude described by Fynn when the Zulu state was facing constant threats on its northern borders. Justifiably wary of settler propaganda of the period, Cobbing has expressed doubts that the expedition took place at all.[31] There is good reason to mistrust Fynn's writings as a reliable source of evidence in many respects, but that a Zulu raid south of the Mzimkhulu took place at about this period seems reasonably well authenticated by the evidence from a number of different sources.[32] The notion that it did

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30. Fynn, Diary, pp. 61-4.

31. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 12.

32. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 282-3, 287; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 272-3; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 43; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 55; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhehlengana, p. 217; Shepstone's notes on Ndelu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 127; C.R. Maclean, 'Loss of the brig Mary at Natal, with early recollections of that settlement', Nautical Magazine, Jan. 1854, p. 28. (Charles Rawden Maclean was the real name of the person usually referred to as John Ross in the literature. See B. Roberts, The Zulu Kings, London, 1974, p. 118; S. Gray, 'South African fiction and a case history revised: an account of research into retellings of the John Ross story of early Natal', unpubl. paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988, esp.

take place accords with the argument, which Cobbing himself accepts, that the Zulu state's centre of gravity was shifting southwards in the course of the 1820s.

Precisely which groups were the intended targets of the Zulu raid is not clear. Maziyana claimed that its purpose was to attack Madikane of the Bhaca, an idea which is also expressed in notes on Bhaca history which were published by Scully in 1913.[33] Scully's account, though, contradicts in several respects articles which he had written on the subject a few years earlier,[34] and cannot be regarded as reliable. Moroever, both his and Maziyana's informants may have been confusing the Zulu campaign of 1824 with either of two others which were launched specifically against the Bhaca by Dingane in 1830 and 1833 respectively.[35] This argument is reinforced by the nature of the contradictions which emerge between the various sources as to the route taken by the Zulu force. Lugubhu claims that it went along the coast, while three other informants state that it took an inland route.[36] The statements of these latter may again be reflecting a confusion with the expedition of 1833, which, settler records indicate, passed through the upcountry regions.[37]

The main aim of the Zulu force was probably to seize whatever cattle it could from the groups which lived in

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pp. 13-14.)

33. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 272; W.C. Scully, Further Reminiscences of a South African Pioneer, London, 1913, pp. 262-4.

34. Scully, 'Fragments. The Amabaca', The State, vol. 1 (1909), pp. 676-8; and W. Scully, 'Fragments of native history. The Amabaca. II', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 90.

35. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 185, 187, 193; Stuart's historical epilogue in Fynn, Diary, pp. 221-2; OT, pp. 398-9.

36. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, p. 282; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 272,; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 43; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 55.

37. Stuart's historical epilogue in Fynn's Diary, pp. 221-2.

the vicinity of the Mzimvubu river. In this it seems to have been only partially successful. According to two informants, the force ran out of provisions and had to resort to eating amabhece melons to survive; subsequently the expedition was referred to as that of the amabhece.[38] In the Mpondo country, a section of Zulu was cut off and severely mauled by Faku's forces before reinforcements came to its rescue.[39] Lugubhu's opinion was that the Zulu attack on the Mpondo 'was not pushed in any way', and Maziyana stated that Shaka's force failed to seize many cattle.[40]

Those cattle which the expedition succeeded in capturing were, it seems, placed at two new posts which Shaka established in the Thuli country near the bay of Natal. The more important one was built by his inDabenkulu ibutho, which was sent specially for the purpose and then returned to the country north of the Thukela. This kwaNdabenkulu post, at which only oxen were kept, was run, at Shaka's behest, by Thuli married men, who were required to leave their families behind. Linked with it was another post, named kwaKhayisa, which was built by Mathubane, the Thuli regent, at what was later known as the Bluff at the bay of Natal. Here the work of herding was done by Thuli youths.[41] As with the Cele, Shaka was requiring more and more by way of labour service from the Thuli under his authority. To retain the loyalty of Mathubane, and to buttress his position as de facto chief of the Thuli, Shaka presented him with a number of the cattle seized on the amabhece campaign.[42]

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38. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 272, 273; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhehlengana, p. 217.

39. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 273.

40. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 282-3; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 272.

41. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 293, 294; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 66.

42. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 270.

The records left by some of the British hunter-traders who visited or settled at Port Natal in the period 1823-25 help flesh out the picture of conditions in the coastlands at this time as derived from oral tradition. Evidence from Fynn and Isaacs indicates that Magaye's domain extended as far south as about the Thongati river, and was relatively well populated both near the coast and further inland.[43] Established in it were several of Shaka's 'barracks', and numbers of cattle posts manned by young men of his amabutho.[44] Some of the earliest descriptions written by King and Farewell of the region round Port Natal as they found it in 1823-24 have been adverted to in chapter 2 above (p. 62). Their comments on the abundance of grain and fish and the easy availability of cattle are echoed in Maclean's memoirs, written long afterwards.[45] They contrast sharply with the propagandistic statements which Fynn made at a later stage about the destitution which the Thuli had been in by 1824 as a result of the raids of the Zulu.[46]

There is a similar contradiction in Fynn's various statements on the state of the region to the south of Port Natal as he had found it in the mid-1820s. In one source he states that on his early journeys to the south he had found 'neither kraals, huts, Kafirs, nor corn' in the coastal region as far as the Mpondo country near the Mzimvubu. Apart from a few 'stragglers', the whole area

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43. Fynn, Diary, pp. 63-4, 70; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 32, 63.

44. Fynn, Diary, p. 70; Maclean, 'Loss of the brig Mary', Nautical Magazine, Nov. 1853, p. 570.

45. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, King to Bathurst, 10 July 1824, p. 41; op. cit., Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, p. 38; Maclean, 'Loss of the brig Mary', Nautical Magazine, Feb. 1853, p. 76, and April 1853, p. 200.

46. Fynn's evidence to Harding Commission, Natal Govt. Gazette, no. 221, 1 March 1853 (the relevant portion of his evidence is reproduced in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 124); Fynn, Diary, p. 60n.

was empty of population.[47] In another, he indicates that in 1824 there were 'six thousand unhappy beings' living along the coast between Port Natal and the Mthatha river.[48] In his published Diary, the evidence is that, even if they were in considerable poverty, in 1824-25 there were numerous small groups living along the coast.[49] The overall picture which emerges from a critical treatment of the evidence from his and other traders' accounts is that in the domains of Magaye and Mathubane, social, political and economic organization in the mid-1820s were well established. In the coastlands south of Port Natal, the population was thinner and more scattered, and existence more precarious.

That Shaka's hold on these peripheral regions of his kingdom in this period was not as absolute as is usually thought is suggested by Maziyana's testimony that numbers of cattle seized on 'official' raids by the iziYendane were appropriated by their izinduna. It was not until the aftermath of the campaign against the Chunu, or perhaps of that against the Mpondo, that Shaka had a force available to take steps against them. Numbers of iziYendane, including the chief induna, Nonzama, were put to death, while many others fled to seek refuge among the Xhosa and Sotho. Nonzama's cattle were given to Mathubane.[50] It is not clear if this was the end of the iziYendane's presence in the coastlands. If it was, many of them may have remained settled there, for Fynn later listed the Hlubi as one of the 'tribes' which he had encountered between the

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47. Fynn's evidence to Harding Commission, Natal Govt. Gazette, no. 220, 22 Feb. 1853. The relevant portion of his evidence is reprinted in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 103. See also the extract from Fynn's papers published in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 74.

48. Extract from Fynn's papers published in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 69; also in Fynn, Diary, p. 22.

49. Fynn, Diary, pp. 91, 92, 95, 96-7, 98, 99, 100, 107-8.

50. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 296, 297.

Thukela and the Thongati rivers on his arrival in 1824.[51]

Another indication that Shaka's herds south of the Thukela were not immune to theft comes from traditions about the reivings of Gcugcwa of the Wosiyana section of the Ngcobo. He and others are said to have made off with cattle from the Zulu herds in the coastlands, and to have driven them to a hideout far up the Thukela valley before being tracked down by Shaka's forces and put to death.[52] But if Shaka dealt severely with robbers of his cattle, his policies towards 'bandits' in the peripheral regions south of the Thukela were more flexible than the two cases previously mentioned might suggest. Melaphi recounts that he gave an amnesty to people, probably of the Makhanya chiefdom, who, after a Zulu attack, had taken to the bushes and begun to steal cattle from the Cele.[53] Another similar case concerned a former office-bearer in one of Shaka's amabutho named Lukhilimba, whom the Zulu chief had sent into exile. After establishing himself as the leader of a group of Hlongwa and others near the lower Mzimkhulu, he had acquired a reputation as a cattle-raider. Shaka's way of eliminating this source of disturbance on his southern borders was to pardon Lukhilimba, present him with cattle, and resettle him in Magaye's territory.[54]

This is not to say that Zulu rule did not lie heavily, probably increasingly so, on the inhabitants of the region south of the Thukela. Men and youths were required to serve as herders at the Zulu cattle posts, and, unlike the members of the state's amabutho, had little prospect of

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51. Fynn's evidence to Harding Commission, Natal Government Gazette, no. 220, 22 Feb. 1853.

52. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 201; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 81; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, pp. 245-6.

53. JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 80-1.

54. Funwayo's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Hlongwa history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 127-8 (the informant is identified in the text); JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 112, 126; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 269-70, 273, 275.

winning honours or reward in the service of the Zulu (see pp. 317-18 below). Most homesteads in the Cele and Thuli chiefdoms probably held few, if any, cattle at this period, and personal experiences of rule at the hands of the new overlords were often harsh. Maziyana tells how Shaka ordered Mathubane to put two Thuli herdboys to death, and threatened him with the same fate, for an apparently minor transgression.[55] According to Fynn, Zulu warriors in transit through the Cele country were accustomed to pillaging the homesteads and fields of Magaye's people as they passed by.[56]

By the mid-1820s the Zulu state had extended the bounds of the area which it dominated a hundred and fifty kilometres or more west and south to the Drakensberg and the Mzimkhulu. Domination had not, though, led to an expansion of territory actually occupied by the Zulu themselves or by their satellite chiefdoms, except perhaps by the Mkhize in the upper Mvoti-middle Mngeni region. In the northern coastlands the Zulu had established a stronger and more visible presence. From this territorial base they were busy extracting cattle from a region which now extended beyond the Mzimkhulu, using, as before, armed parties from Magaye's domains, but also, when necessary, their own amabutho. These cattle were grazed at posts located in the Cele and Thuli countries and manned by adherents of Magaye and Mathubane, who carried ultimate responsibility for them.

2. Conflicts in the Mzimkhulu region

By driving away the Ngwane chiefdom from the upper Thukela and destroying the Chunu chiefdom on the middle Mzimkhulu, the Zulu had removed the main obstacles to their further expansion to the west and south. But there is no indication that they sought to establish any effective

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55. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 293-4.
56. Fynn, Diary, pp. 64, 64n, 70n.

occupation of the territories thus vacated. Their failure to do so was due primarily to the reluctance of the Zulu leaders to colonize a geographically distant region at a time when their hold on state power was still largely unconsolidated, and when they were faced with violent conflicts all round the sphere of influence which they had created. On its northern borders, the Zulu state faced major threats to its security, and possibly to its very existence, from some of the polities which were contending for domination in a region which extended far beyond Delagoa Bay. Zones of instability also existed on the highveld to the west, and beyond the Mzimkhulu to the south. In the early and mid-1820s, the policy followed by Zulu leaders on their state's western and southern borders was to avoid further territorial expansion, while maintaining security by supporting client chiefdoms in the Thukela-Mzinyathi valley, and by acting to eliminate major polities within reach of Zulu armies. This latter aspect involved not so much 'depopulating' the adjacent regions, as writers who have invoked the notion of a cordon sanitaire have implied, as of destroying organized communities of a size which the Zulu leaders regarded as politically dangerous.

There is no doubt that in the 1820s the highveld was the scene of considerable violence and of social and political upheaval. The established explanation of this phenomenon is that it was caused primarily by the irruptions of groups ejected from the territories to the east by the explosive expansion of the Zulu state. According to this view, the main agents for disorder north of the Vaal were Mzilikazi's Khumalo, and, south of that river, Matiwane's Ngwane. Originally set out in the late 19th century by Theal, and revamped in the 1960s by writers like Omer-Cooper and Lye, this view has become a deeply entrenched orthodoxy.[57] Recently, though, its

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57. Theal, History of S.A. since 1795, vol. 1, chs. 14, 15; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, chs. 6, 9; Lye, 'The Difaqane', JAH, vol. 8 (1967), pp. 107-31.

fundamentals have been challenged by Cobbing. In his view, the violence on the highveld in the 1820s was a product not of Zulu expansion but of the intersection of two other sets of forces. In the north-east, the expansion of the Delagoa Bay slave trade after 1815 sent shock waves deep into the interior of southern Africa. In the south, the British settlement of 1820 in the eastern Cape greatly intensified the long-standing demand for more labour in the colony. This is turn stimulated a rapid increase in slave-raiding in the territories beyond the colony's northern frontiers by bands of mounted gunmen from the middle Orange-lower Vaal region. These groups - Griqua, Kora, Xhosa and whites - had long been raiding to the north-east for slaves for the Cape market and for cattle: after 1820 they penetrated further and further across the highveld in search of these items.[58]

Cobbing's hypothesis exists at present only in outline, and a great deal more research is needed to establish it on a firm footing. But, in identifying bands of raiders equipped with horses and firearms as prime agents of violence on the southern highveld in the 1820s, he has opened the way for a radical re-interpretation of the early 19th-century history not only of this region but of the neighbouring territories as well. Support for Cobbing's notions has come from Richner's survey of the published sources bearing on the history of the highveld in the 1820s and early 1830s.[59] On the basis of his and Cobbing's arguments, it is safe to say that from at least the early 1820s the activities of mounted and armed raiders on the highveld would have been a cause of concern to political rulers over much of the region south of the Limpopo. That the Zulu had first-hand experience of them

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58. Cobbing, 'The myth of the mfecane', unpubl. paper, pp. 26-9; 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 492-500; 'Jettisoning the mfecane' unpubl. paper, pp. 7-8.

59. Richner, 'The withering away of the "lifaqane"', unpubl. essay, chs. 2-4.

is evidenced by Isaacs, who, in March 1827, recorded the return of a party of Shaka's men from a raid which the Zulu king had launched to the west. Near a large river, which was probably the Vaal, they had encountered 'yellow people on horses, who compelled them to return'.[60] Fear of these groups was very probably a major factor in keeping Shaka and his advisers from establishing cattle posts in the territory from which the Zulu had driven the Ngwane.

Similar considerations prevented them from extending their occupation of the coastlands much beyond the lower Mngeni region. Though the threat, real or potential, posed by the existence of the Chunu had been eliminated, beyond the Mzimkhulu was a number of comparatively large and unstable groups, newly displaced from the territories further north, which survived largely by raiding one another and the established chiefdoms further to the south. The history of the region in which they operated, which extended from the Mzimkhulu to the Mbashe and beyond, is still largely a blank. Theal regarded the area about the Mzimvubu as having been 'a continued scene of pillaging and butchering' in the 1820s, but felt that an investigation of its history would be 'a waste of time'.[61] Bryant's attitude was similar. Though he paid some attention to the histories of the individual groups which had migrated southwards across the Mzimkhulu in the late 1810s and early 1820s, he was not concerned to set out the region's history systematically. For him it was a 'general cock-pit',[62] into which refugees from the 'depopulated' zone to the north conveniently disappeared from view. 'Impossible were it for us to convey to the reader's mind', he wrote, 'any vivid visualization of the social and political pandemonium in which both clans and

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60. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 100.
61. Theal, History of S.A. since 1795, vol. 2, p. 354.
62. Bryant, OT, p. 487.

individuals now found themselves in this small strip of land betwixt the Mzimkulu and Mzimvubu'. As so often in his work, in place of a historical overview he substituted a generalized and lurid picture of 'tribal tumult' and the collapse of political and social order.[63]

Soga included fragments of Mpondo, Mpondomise, Bomvana and Thembu history in his compilation, but his interpretations of them are idiosyncratic and contradictory, and need to be treated with caution.[64] More recently, Hammond-Tooke, Beinart and Wagenaar have briefly synthesized some of the sources on the early 19th-century history of the Bhaca, Mpondo and Thembu respectively,[65] but there is a good deal of primary material still to be worked through before a comprehensive account of the history of the region as a whole can be given. In the absence of such a study, it is difficult to grasp the full nature of the forces which, in the early 1820s, served to inhibit Zulu expansion south of Port Natal. In the rest of this section, an attempt will be made to outline the nature of the conflicts which were taking shape at this time in the region about the Mzimkhulu and to the south.

Much of the existing literature, especially that written from a Zulu-centric perspective, tends to see the

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63. Bryant, OT, pp. 381-2.

64. J.H. Soga, The South-Eastern Bantu, Johannesburg, 1930, esp. chs. 19, 20, 24.

65. W.J Beinart, 'Production, labour migrancy and the chieftaincy: aspects of the political economy of Pondoland, ca.1860-1930', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1979, pp. 10-36; W. Beinart, The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860 to 1930, Johannesburg, 1982, pp. 9-14; E.J.C. Wagenaar, 'A forgotten frontier zone - settlements and reactions in the Stormberg area between 1820-60', in Archives Year Book for South African History, 1982, vol. 2, Pretoria, 1984, ch. 1; E.J.C. Wagenaar, 'A history of the Thembu and their relationship with the Cape, 1850-1900', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Rhodes University, 1988, pp. 1-10; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, The Tribes of Mount Frere District, Department of Native Affairs Ethnological Publications no. 33, Pretoria, 1956, pp. 32-44; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, Bhaca Society, Cape Town, 1962, pp. 2-7.

region south of the Mzimkhulu in the 1820s as little more than a conduit for refugee groups fleeing from the Zulu towards the Thembu and Xhosa chiefdoms further south. According to the conventional view, most of these groups ended up as clients of the Thembu and Xhosa, or as so-called Fingoes in the eastern Cape colony. The notion that the Fingoes, or Mfengu as they have been dubbed in recent Africanist literature, emanated from regions far to the north or north-east of the colony goes back to the early and mid-1820s, when groups of displaced and socially marginalized people first began appearing in any numbers on the Cape eastern frontier.[66] Some commentators maintained that these groups were refugees from what is now Natal,[67] but this idea probably did not spread widely among Europeans at the Cape until after 1835. In that year, under circumstances which still need critical investigation, large numbers of Fingoes were encouraged by the Cape authorities to settle in the colony's frontier districts, where, it was hoped, they would serve as a reservoir of labour for the region's European settlers.[68] To give this operation the appearance of altruism, the colonial authorities, together with settler ideologues like Godlonton, sought to caste the Fingoes as victims, first, of devastations caused in Natal by Shaka, or alternatively Matiwane of the Ngwane, and, second, of Xhosa exploitation.[69]

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66. For early documentary references to 'Fingoes' see Andrew Smith Papers, vol. 3 ('Kaffir Notes'), pp. 129-30; G.E. Cory, The Rise of South Africa, vol. 3, London, 1919, p. 162n; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, pp. 164-5; Webster, 'Ayliff', unpubl. essay, pp. 5-6.

67. See Webster, 'Ayliff', unpubl. essay, p. 6.

68. The most detailed academic account of these events is given in R. Moyer, 'A history of the Mfengu of the eastern Cape 1815-1865', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1976, ch. 2. Moyer takes his sources too much at face value, and his account leaves room for a radically different interpretation.

69. See Godlonton, Narrative, reprint of official notice of 3 May 1835, esp. p. 248.

Their arguments were based in the first instance on statements apparently made by a number of Fingo leaders, who indicated, among other things, that their people had been driven from the Natal region some ten or twenty years before.[70] This information meshed neatly with, and served to reinforce, the notion which was then becoming established in colonial discourse that Shaka had been a destroyer of tribes far and wide (see chapter 2 above). From that time on, the idea became dominant in the literature that the Fingoes were originally refugees who had migrated southward to escape destruction at the hands of the Zulu, or of the Ngwane, who were themselves fleeing from the Zulu.[71] It survives today virtually unchallenged in the work of academic historians.[72]

Once again Cobbing has been the first historian seriously to call this orthodoxy into question. The Fingoes as a category of dispossessed people were, he argues, the products not so much of upheavals in Natal as of a long series of British cattle raids and land seizures across the eastern frontier of the Cape. Stories that they had fled from the Zulu and become virtual slaves of the Gcaleka were to a large extent evolved by the colonial authorities to cover their seizure of large numbers of

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70. See for example Captain Alexander's notes on the Fingoes, Jnl. of the Royal Geographic Society, vol. 5 (1835), pp. 318-19. According to Moyer, 'History of the Mfengu', unpubl. thesis, p. 34, these notes were taken almost verbatim from a letter written by the missionary John Ayliff and published in the Grahamstown Journal (of which Godlonton was editor) of 17 August 1835.

71. See for example Gardiner, Narrative (1836), p. 313; Holden, Past and Future (1866), p. 133; Shepstone, 'Early history of the Zulu-Kafir race' in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1 (1888), p. 158; C.P. Brownlee, Reminiscences of Kafir Life and History, ed. C Saunders, Pietermaritzburg, 1977 (reprint of 1916 ed., 1st publ. Lovedale, 1896), p. 79.

72. See for example Moyer, 'History of the Mfengu', unpubl. thesis (1976), ch. 1; J.B. Peires, The House of Phalo: a History of the Xhosa People in the Days of Their Independence, Johannesburg, 1981, pp. 41, 87-8, 105.

Fingo captives in the war of 1834-35.[73]

In important respects, Cobbing's hypothesis is supported by Webster's recent study of the historical mythology surrounding the 'emancipation' of the Fingoes in 1835,[74] and in arguing that the category of Fingoes, or amamfengu, as they were called in Xhosa society, were in large part the product of colonial violence he has put his finger on a major unexamined aspect of Cape frontier history. But he goes too far in portraying accounts of Fingo migrations from Natal as more or less entirely the invention of colonial officials. This is very much a simplistic and 'top-down' view of the processes by which representations of the past are produced. It takes no account of the probability that in creating an officially sanctioned history of the Fingoes these officials were selectively drawing on stories and traditions which were current among the various Fingo groups. Nor does it take account of the probability that some of these stories and traditions may have reflected a historical reality, albeit one which was distorted by the concern of Fingo spokesmen to present to the colonial authorities information about their past which was consonant with their own particular political agendas. Critical examination of recorded Fingo traditions would fairly certainly yield a version of the past in which stories about the migrations of certain groups from Natal turned out to have a factual base. Nevertheless Cobbing's arguments serve to point up the necessity for thorough research into the history of the region south of the Mzimkhulu through which many of the migrant groups which became Fingoes are supposed to have passed.

From a Natal-centric perspective, there is little doubt that numbers of groups displaced by the upheavals of the late 1810s and early 1820s migrated across the Mzimkhulu.

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73. Cobbing, 'The myth of the mfecane', unpubl. paper, pp. 21-3; 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, p. 13.

74. Webster, 'Ayliff', unpubl. essay, passim.

But, contrary to the stereotype contained in the literature on Fingo history, most of these groups apparently aimed to re-establish themselves between that river and the Mzimvubu rather than move on further south. What seems to have been the first major group to migrate across the Mzimkhulu in this period, one consisting largely of Bhele from the territories south of the Biggarsberg, is a good case in point. Following Shepstone, Bryant implies at one point in Olden Times that the Bhele migrated directly to the Cape frontier.[75] His substantive account of their history, on the other hand, has them settling just south of the Mzimkhulu, where their chief, Qunta, died and was given an elaborate burial.[76] Similar treatment is accorded by Bryant to the Zizi and the Tolo. Again following Shepstone, Bryant at one point unproblematically has both of these groups as having made their way directly from the foothills of the Drakensberg across the Mzimkhulu to the Cape frontier.[77] At other points he indicates that they in fact remained in the Mzimkhulu-Mzimvubu region.[78]

If it is accepted that these and other migrant groups settled, or attempted to settle, in this region, an explanation is needed as to why they should have come to a halt in this particular area. The main reason is probably that, after a relatively unopposed passage through territories occupied by very small polities, they found themselves entering the sphere of influence of the much larger and more powerful Mpondo paramountcy. This was located on either side of the lower Mzimvubu, and since 1820 or before had been ruled by Faku, son of

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75. Bryant, OT, . p. 357; Shesptone's notes on Bhele history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 142.

76. Bryant, OT, p. 348.

77. Ibid., p. 357; Bryant, HZ, p. 34; Shepstone's notes on Zizi and Tolo history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 142, 147.

78. Bryant, OT, pp. 358, 382.

Ngqungqushe.[79] To the south-west across the Mthatha were various groups of Thembu, most of which acknowledged the paramountcy of the Hala section under Ngubencuka, or Vusani. Though the polity under his authority seems to have been more loosely constituted than that of Faku,[80] it would still have represented a major obstacle for the migrant groups which were making their way south across the Mzimkhulu before and after 1820.

For these groups, the choices were to make their submission to established and relatively powerful rulers like Faku and Ngubencuka, to fight them for dominance, or to attempt to re-establish themselves on the edges of the Mpondo sphere of influence. In the first instance most of the larger migrant groups seem to have chosen the latter course. To the extent that they attempted to resuscitate an economy based on agriculture and cattle-keeping, environmental factors would have tended to channel them into a comparatively narrow band of territory in the lower- lying regions, for the high inland plateau of what is now East Griqualand, with its long frost season and sourveld grazing, was unfavourable for year-round settlement. Conflicts among these groups over cattle would thus have been intensified by competition for relatively scarce resources of good agricultural and grazing land.

Soon after the advent of the Bhele, the comparatively powerful groups of Macingwane's Chunu and Ngoza's Thembu arrived on the scene at much the same time. That the Chunu were probably in advance of the Thembu is suggested by the fact that they proceeded to appropriate for themselves the region to the north of the middle Mzimkhulu, well away from the Mpondo sphere of influence.

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79. Beinart, 'Production', unpubl. thesis, pp. 10-11; Soga, South-Eastern Bantu, pp. 303-5; Peires, House of Phalo, p. 86.

80. Peires, House of Phalo, pp. 84-6; Wagenaar, 'History of the Thembu', unpubl. thesis, pp. 1-4.

The Thembu, following after, had little option but to continue further southward, into a position where they were faced by the Mpondo on one side and Macingwane's Chunu on the other. Somewhere in the vicinity were also the recently arrived Bhele. Not long afterwards, the Nhlangwini of Nombewu, together with the Memela of Mdingi, also pushed their way across the lower Mzimkhulu. A little way inland, the Bhaca under Madikane apparently moved into the developing Chunu sphere of influence, and made their submission to Macingwane.

Besides these larger groupings, and the fragments of other polities which adhered to them, numbers of smaller parties also made their way southward across the Mzimkhulu. The Zizi and Tolo have already been mentioned; others named in the records are the Nxasane (or Cekwana) and the Shwawu, who retreated from the Mzimkhulu on the arrival of the Chunu,[81] and the Hlongwa and Shinga (Ndelu), who moved off from the middle Mvoti to avoid Zulu domination.[82] Drawing on the evidence of Magwaza, Shepstone gives the Xesibe as having migrated from the middle Thukela region towards the Mpondo country.[83] There were no doubt numerous other small parties, whose separate identities subsequently became submerged, which made their

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81. Shepstone's unattributed notes on the histories of the Cekwana and Shwawu in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 148; Bryant, OT, pp. 269-70.

82. Funwayo's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Hlongwa history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 127-8, 131 (the informant is identified in the text); Bryant, OT, pp. 525, 532.

83. Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 135 (Magwaza is identified as the informant in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 115). See also Bryant, OT, p. 254. Soga, South-Eastern Bantu, pp. 349-51, draws on Bryant in trying to mesh three separate sets of Xesibe traditions, one linking them to the Dlamini of the middle Thukela region, another to the Mpondo, and a third to the Qwathi. See also Jojo's evidence on Xesibe history in Brownlee, ed., Transkeian Native Territories, esp. p. 105; M. Ndima, 'A history of the Qwathi people from earliest times to 1910', unpubl. M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1988, pp. 1-6.

way southward and khonza'd either to the Mpondo or to one or other of the larger intrusive groups.

The sudden influx of dislocated groups into the Mzimkhulu valley and the area to the south inaugurated a long period of political instability and violence in the region. What little is known of its history in the 1820s is largely about fights and raids. Of the previously established chiefdoms, that of the imiThwana, which was located on the coast a little way north of the Mzimkhulu, is said to have been broken up in an assault by several of the intrusive groups.[84] The Xolo, who lived on the lower Mzimkhulu, were raided by the Nhlangwini,[85] and the Mbotho, who lived at the Bisi river, were attacked by the Chunu and Bhaca.[86] The first major conflict of the period was probably that between the Mpondo and Ngoza's Thembu. The difficulties of assessing Shepstone's and Bryant's accounts of the circumstances in which the confrontation between them took place have been touched on above (see pp. 120-1). In the event, the Mpondo defeated the Thembu in battle, killed Ngoza, and broke up his chiefdom. While numbers of his people probably khonza'd to local chiefs, many of them eventually made their way back northward and submitted to Shaka.[87] Not long afterwards the Zulu made the first of a series of interventions in the politics of the region. As already described, they attacked and destroyed the Chunu chiefdom. The chief, Macingwane, disappeared, and numbers of his people returned to make their submission to Shaka.

It is significant that, contrary to what mfecane theory would lead one to expect, the remnants of the Thembu and

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84. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 112-13, 126.

85. Bryant, OT, p. 562.

86. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 113, 119.

87. Ibid.; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Lugubhu, pp. 282, 287; vol. 1, evidence of Lunguza, p. 299; vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 119-20; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 32; Fynn, Diary, p. 321.

Chunu retraced their footsteps to the north and gave their allegiance to Shaka rather than continuing further to the south. Several other groups also returned northwards from the Mzimkhulu region at this time. The Hlongwa, together with the associated Shinga (Ndelu) eventually settled near Port Natal.[88] A section of Mpumuza from the middle Thukela valley, which had accompanied the Memela and Nhlangwini southward, returned to seek refuge in the forests of the Karkloof region north of the upper Mngeni.[89] A party of Nxamalala, which had left the middle Thukela valley to join the migration of the Thembu under Ngoza, made its way back to its former territory after the latter's defeat and death.[90] All these groups, it seems, preferred to join Shaka or to try to maintain an independent existence under difficult conditions rather than to remain in the zone of intensified conflict which was emerging in the south.

The destruction of the Thembu and Chunu powers marked the end of one phase of conflict in the Mzimkhulu-Mzimvubu region, and the beginning of another. In this, the main protagonists were the Bhaca under Madikane, the group of Memela and others under Mdingi, and the Nhlangwini under Nombewu. In the wings to the south were the Mpondo and the Thembu of Ngubencuka. From the north, raiding parties from the Zulu domains made occasional forays into the coastlands south of Port Natal and, eventually, as described in the previous section of the chapter, over the Mzimkhulu.

Most active among these groups seem to have been the Bhaca. Their leader, Madikane, was another of those

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88. Shepstone's unattributed notes on Ndelu history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 127; Funwayo's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Hlongwa history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 127-8 (the informant is identified in the text); Brayant, OT, pp. 526, 532.

89. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, pp. 1, 8-9.

90. Ibid., p. 17.

figures who, in mfecane literature, are cast in the same mould as Shaka. As Scully puts it, 'Among the many notable leaders who emerged from the debacle occasioned by Tshaka, Madikane was one of the most remarkable'.[91] Bryant describes him as a 'fighting-chief' who performed 'fierce deeds of daring'.[92] The evidence on his following's history in the 1820s is very thin and patchy, and difficult to interpret, but it seems that after the defeat of the Chunu, to whom they had briefly been allied, the Bhaca moved away to the south-west and eventually settled in the valley of the middle Mzimvubu.[93] According to Bryant, in the process they attacked and defeated the Nhlangwini of Nombewu and the party led by Mdingi. The latter's original Memela following had been augmented by numbers of Bhele who had joined him after the death of their chief, Qunta.[94]

After a time the Bhaca shifted still further to the south-west across the Mthatha and Mbashe rivers into country occupied by Ngubencuka's Thembu. According to Scully, this move was a direct consequence of an attack made on them by Shaka's forces during the Zulu expedition across the Mzimkhulu in 1824.[95] The Bhaca advance into Thembu territory brought forth an alliance of Thembu, Gcaleka and Mpondomise to oppose them. In the Gqutyini area, north-west of present-day Engcobo, they attacked the

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91. Scully, 'Fragments. The Amabaca. II', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 93.

92. Bryant, OT, pp. 374, 375.

93. Andrew Smith Papers (S.A. Museum), vol. 4 'Africa vol. I', p. 152; Scully, 'Fragments. The Amabaca', The State, vol. 1 (1909), p. 675; Scully, Further Reminiscences, pp. 261-2; Bryant, OT, p. 384.

94. Bryant, OT, pp. 382-4.

95. Scully, Further Reminiscences, pp. 262-5. In an earlier account, Scully had dated this attack to 1828: 'Fragments, The Amabaca', The State, vol. 1 (1909), pp. 676-8; 'Fragments. The Amabaca. II', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 90. See also the discussion on p. 289 above.

Bhaca, defeated them, and seized their cattle and numbers of women and children.[96] On the basis of an unattributed story which indicated that the fight took place on the day of an eclipse of the sun, Theal, followed by Scully and Bryant, dated it to 20 December 1824.[97] That an eclipse visible in the region took place on that day is confirmed by modern scientific calculations;[98] whether this particular battle can be associated with it needs to be established by further research.

The sources disagree as to whether or not Madikane was killed in this fight, but, whatever the chief's fate, it is clear that after their defeat the main body of Bhaca gravitated back to the valley of the Mzimvubu. From there, under the leadership either of Madikane or of his son and effective succesor, Ncaphayi, they raided widely over the territories to the east and south.[99] For their part, groups like Mdingi's Memela-Bhele and Nombewu's

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96. Nombiba's evidence in Shepstone's notes on Bhaca history in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 136 (the informant is identified in T. Shepstone Papers, vol. 89, p. 119); evidence of Vete kaMziziba, as recorded by F.P. Gladwin, in Commission on Laws and Customs, vol. 2, p. 404 (also in Brownlee, ed., Transkeian Native Territories, p. 113); Ndima, 'History of the Qwathi', unpubl. thesis, pp. 36-9; Andrew Smith Papers (S.A. Museum), vol. 4, 'Africa vol. I', p. 152.

97. Theal, History of S.A. since 1795, vol. 1, p. 390; Scully, Further Reminiscences, p. 265 (where he revises his earlier dating of 20 December 1828: see Scully, 'Fragments. The Amabaca. II', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 92); Bryant, OT, p. 384. See also Mahaya's statement in JSA, vol. 2, p. 118, that on the day of the fight 'darkness came over the land'.

98. R. Gray, 'Annular eclipse maps', JAH, vol. 9 (1968), p. 156.

99. Nombiba's evidence as cited in note 96 above; Mehlomakhulu, 'Statement of Mathlomahulu', Cape Monthly Magazine, vol 3 (1880), p. 163; Scully, 'Fragments. The Amabaca. II', The State, vol. 2 (1909), pp. 94-5; W.C. Scully, 'Fragments of native history. The Amabaca. III', The State, vol. 2 (1909), p. 194-5; Bryant, OT, pp. 154, 385-7; Soga, South-Eastern Bantu, pp. 308-9, 372; Fynn, Diary, pp. 320-1.

Nhlangwini may also have been living largely by predation on their more settled neighbours at this time.

The disruptions caused in the territories south of the Mzimkhulu in the early and mid-1820s by the intrusion of groups from the north were compounded by the effects of the conflicts and confrontations which were taking place at this time on the Cape eastern frontier and also on the southern highveld. It is an extraordinary feature of the relatively large corpus of work on the history of the eastern Cape region that there is still no study which comprehensively assesses the impact of British policies and the British presence on the African societies beyond the colonial boundary. Several recent works have touched on the traumatic impact on the westernmost Xhosa chiefdoms of the expulsion of large numbers of people from the Zuurveld west of the Fish river in 1811-12, and from the so-called Ceded Territory between the Fish and Keiskamma in 1819. They have also hinted at the destabilizing effects of large-scale, officially sanctioned cattle raids conducted by British forces across the colonial boundary in the 1810s and 1820s.[100] But none of these works goes much beyond Macmillan's study of sixty years ago in attempting to confront the question of how these events affected the politics of the broader region northwards and eastwards from the Fish river.[101] Nor is there any work which does much to recognize, let alone to analyze, the overall impact on this region of raids and threats of raids from the other side of the Orange river.[102] In the absence of such studies, the most that

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100. Peires, House of Phalo, pp. 65-8, 79-84; J. Milton, The Edges of War: a History of the Frontier Wars (1702-1878), Cape Town, 1983, pp. 60-75, 79-80, 86-94; B. Maclennan, A Proper Degree of Terror: John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier, Johannesburg, 1986, chs. 14-25 passim.

101. Macmillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, pp. 31-4, and chs. 5 & 6.

102. Exceptions are Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 500-1; Richner, 'The withering away of the "lifaqane"', unpubl. essay, pp. 22-3.

can be said here is that the interactions between established chiefdoms like those of the Mpondo, Mpondomise, Thembu and others and intrusive groups from north of the Mzimkhulu were shaped, in ways which badly need research, by pressures which they were all coming under from the south and from the north-west.

This, in rough outline, was the situation which faced the Zulu leaders on the southern borders of their sphere of influence in the mid-1820s. Though they had the military capacity to mount large-scale raids into the region, they did not have the power to intervene effectively in its politics, let alone establish the domination which the literature on the mfecane supposes them to have maintained over it. While no doubt keeping a wary eye on the struggles for supremacy which were taking place beyond the Mzimkhulu, they were constrained to leave the coastlands south of Port Natal uncolonized.

3. The shaping of new political identities

Most writers have seen the domination which the Zulu exercised over subordinate chiefdoms, including those south of the Thukela, as having been maintained almost entirely by force.[103] Until very recently, they paid virtually no attention to the role played by ideological factors in sustaining Zulu power. The first author to accord any major significance to the subject was Hedges, who recognized the centrality of the ideology of kinship in the processes by which the Zulu incorporated newly subordinated groups into the polity which they ruled.[104] He failed, however, to appreciate the significance of the

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103. This section of the chapter draws heavily in places on Hamilton & Wright, 'The making of the Lala', unpubl. paper, pp. 6 ff, and on the revised version which is due for publication in 1990 in the South African Historical Journal.

104. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 22-4, 63-4, 77-83, 98-9, 207-9.

point, previously made by Slater, that these groups were incorporated differentially, with several 'broadly concentric zones of Zulu power' having developed, each of which was 'characterized by different kinds of relationship to the apex'.[105] Slater, for his part, completely neglected the role of ideology, and so failed to perceive that the three zones which he distinguished - the 'heartland', the 'provinces', and the 'protectorates' - did not simply stand in different relationships to the centre of power, but were occupied by groups which, in one way or another, came to acquire new socio-political identities.

The pioneering work in the identification of the new political categories which began to be formed in the early years of the Zulu kingdom, and in the elucidation of the particular historical circumstances in which they came to be created, has been done by Hamilton in her seminal thesis on the role of ideology in the formation of the Zulu state. The crucial distinction which she makes is between the peoples of the Zulu kingdom's heartland, who collectively came to be known as amantungwa, and the more heavily oppressed and exploited peoples of the kingdom's peripheries, who came to be designated by a variety of derogatory terms. Of these peoples, she focusses her attention on those who lived south of the Thukela river and who came to be called amalala.

The amantungwa chiefdoms were, without exception, those which were incorporated into the emerging Zulu state in the very earliest phase of its expansion.[106] At this time, as has been argued above (pp. 179 ff), Shaka's still unstable regime was facing a serious threat from the raids of the Ndwandwe, and was seeking urgently to mobilize a military and political alliance against them. To give cohesion to the alliance, the chiefdoms which were drawn

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105. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, p. 298.

106. This paragraph is based on Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, ch. 5.

or forced into it were closely assimilated into the body politic of what was in effect an emergent state. Most of the peoples who were thus relatively suddenly brought together under the domination of the Zulu were genealogically quite unrelated: identifiable descent links could therefore not serve as a basis for social cohesion. The Zulu leadership was therefore constrained deliberately to fabricate a new collective identity for these peoples which was based on a generalized, non-specific notion of kinship. They propagated the idea that these groups were linked to one another and to the Zulu by virtue of sharing a common origin, the nature of which was purposely left unspecified. That this idea was cast in the familiar idiom of descent made it comprehensible to the groups concerned, even if they remained unable to demonstrate direct genealogical links with one another. This enabled leaders of subordinated groups who, for their own particular reasons, wanted to establish closer political ties with the Zulu more easily to make the idea acceptable to their adherents, and to engage in the process of reformulating the traditions of origin of their own groups so as to make them harmonize with those of the Zulu. The result was the gradual emergence of a common identity as amantungwa among the heterogeneous chiefdoms of the Zulu heartland. (The origins of the term itself are not entirely clear: a possible explanation has been advanced by Hamilton.[107])

The chiefdoms of the southern peripheries were incorporated into the Zulu kingdom on a different basis from those of the heartland. As a result, their members came to acquire identities which distinguished them from the amantungwa. Hamilton and the present writer have previously argued that the peoples of these southern chiefdoms were all incorporated into the Zulu kingdom on essentially similar lines, and that from the start all

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107. Ibid., pp. 289-90.

were designated by their new overlords as amalala.[108] The evidence adduced in the present study makes clear, however, that there were major differences in the ways in which certain of these chiefdoms - the Mkhize on the one hand, and the chiefdoms of the coastlands on the other - were incorporated. As a result, it is argued here, they would have acquired different political identities. Only later, after the end of Shaka's reign, did the distinction begin to be lost and the amalala identity become more general south of the Thukela.

The incorporation of the relatively powerful Mkhize chiefdom under Zihlandlo into the Zulu polity took place at a time when the latter was still relatively weak, and unable to establish the degree of control over its southern peripheries which it had done over its heartland. Authority over the chiefdoms of the Thukela valley was perforce entrusted by Shaka to Zihlandlo, who, by submitting without resistance to the Zulu, had established himself as a favoured subordinate. With Shaka's backing, the Mkhize chief was able rapidly to expand his domination over a wide area on either side of the Thukela. In the process, it is suggested here, he was able to win recognition from the Zulu leadership of the primacy of the Mkhize claim to be regarded as 'abaMbo'.

The precise historical connotations of the designation 'abaMbo' (the 'Mbo' people), or 'abaseMbo' (the people from 'Mbo'), are no longer known, but there is evidence that it had long had a strong resonance over much of what is now Natal-Zululand. The survivors of the Sao Thomé, which foundered off the coast of Zululand in 1589,[109]

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108. Hamilton & Wright, 'The making of the Lala', unpubl paper, pp. 12, 14, 17; Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl thesis, pp. 474-7.

109. For bibliographic information on Portuguese accounts of its sinking and of the experiences of its survivors, see Axelson, Portuguese in South-East Africa 1488-1600, p. 222; and Boxer, ed., Tragic History, pp. 37-42. English translations of one of these accounts are to be found in Boxer, pp. 53-104; and Theal, ed., Records of South-Eastern Africa, vol. 2, pp. 188-224. On the location of the region where the survivors reached land

reported that to the southward, in the region which they called 'Natal', was the kingdom of 'Vambe' or 'Bambe'.[110] Commentators have agreed that this was a reference to the 'abaMbo', though there is no unanimity among them as to the nature of the group so designated.[111] Survivors from the Stavenisse, which was wrecked somewhere near the Mzimkhulu in 1686, reported that the people of the region were called 'Semboes' (abaseMbo) or 'Emboas' (from the locative form, eMbo).[112] In the 1820s, Andrew Smith recorded that the Xhosa designated certain peoples who lived to the north of them as 'Mbos'.[113] A similar meaning was noted by Henry Fynn some time later.[114] Certain groups of migrants from the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region which tendered their allegiance to Xhosa chiefs in the 1820s and 1830s at some stage thereafter came to

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see Axelson, p. 219; Willcox, Shipwreck and Survival, pp. 18-19; Bell-Cross, 'Portuguese shipwrecks', in Axelson, ed., Dias and His Successors, p. 56.

110. Boxer, ed., Tragic History, p. 70.

111. Theal, History of S.A. before 1795, vol. 1, pp. 359, 390, sees the Abambo as a recently arrived horde of immigrants from the north-west. H.A. Junod, 'The condition of the natives of south-east Africa in the sixteenth century', S.A. Jnl. of Science, vol. 10 (1914), p. 150n, disputes Theal's identification, as does Boxer, Tragic History, p. 70n. Bryant, Olden Times, pp. 9, 232, 288-9, 312-15, gives the Mbo as one of his streams of 'Nguni' immigrants. On the basis of this single reference, Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, pp. 87-8, 146, 160, 192, 193, 239, 267, postulates that a 'Vambe' paramountcy dominated much of the Natal region for several centuries. No other evidence for its existence can be found.

112. Moodie, ed., The Record, part I, documents on the wreck of the Stavenisse, pp. 426, 431. See also Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 41 (where 'Temboes' should presumably read 'Semboes', as in Moodie) & 47.

113. Andrew Smith Papers, vol. 3, 'Kaffir Notes', p. 23. P.R. Kirby indicates that these notes were made by Smith in 1824-5: see the introduction to his edition of A. Smith, The Diary of Dr. Andrew Smith, vol. 1, Cape Town, 1939, p. 11.

114. H.F. Fynn Papers (Natal Archives), note in File 29.

designate themselves collectively as abaMbo.[115] Several of the informants interviewed by James Stuart in the early 20th century stated that 'abaMbo' was the name used by the Mpondo for the peoples of Natal.[116] Bryant recorded that the Xhosa also used the term in this way.[117]

The evidence supports Hedges's conclusion that the term 'Vambe', as recorded by the Sao Thomé party at the end of the 16th century, referred to peoples of the Natal region in a general sense rather than to a specific political unit.[118] Hamilton has argued that the designation 'abaMbo' was specifically one shared by those peoples who spoke tekela dialects of what is now called Zulu, and who had traditions of having originated in the coastal lowlands to the north-east.[119] Whatever its precise connotations, they seem to have been prestigious enough for the Mkhize who came under Shaka's rule to seek to reserve the term exclusively for themselves as one of their izithakazelo, or forms of polite address.[120] Though firm evidence on the subject is lacking, their main concern was very probably to provide themselves with an identity which was clearly distinct from the denigratory

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115. Hence the title of Ayliff & Whiteside's History of the Abambo (1912), which, in the interests of missionary enterprise among these peoples, sought to reinforce their identity as abaMbo.

116. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 126, 129; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 274; vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 19.

117. Bryant, 'Sketch', in his Dictionary, p. 24*; Bryant, HZ, pp. 16-17.

118. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 105.

119. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 269-70. The term still survives strongly in Swaziland among those groups which preserve a tradition that their ancestors migrated across the Lubombo mountains from the coastal areas to the east (personal communication from Carolyn Hamilton, 24 April 1986).

120. On the ways in which izithakazelo were subject to manipulation in the processes by which traditions of origin were reshaped, see Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, pp. 273-7.

amalala identity which the Zulu were seeking to impose on other subordinated peoples of their kingdom's southern peripheries. As a means of strengthening Mkhize support for his regime, Shaka seems to have been prepared to allow them to have their way. It was only in the 1830s, after Shaka's successor, Dingane, had killed Zihlandlo and broken up the Mkhize paramountcy,[121] that the Mkhize too began to be regarded by the Zulu, if not by themselves, as amalala.

The argument above is admittedly partly speculative, but it is based on the notion that there would logically have been a clear distinction of identities between the relatively powerful Mkhize, who were in a position to resist being thrust to the bottom of the social and political scale in the Zulu-dominated order, and the relatively weak chiefdoms of the coastlands, which were not. By conceptualizing the categories of abaMbo and amalala as historically created identities, rather than as the names of primordial sub-divisions of people termed the 'Nguni', as Bryant does,[122] it points towards an

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121. On the destruction of the Mkhize polity, see Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 204, 251-2; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mandlakazi, pp. 191-2; vol. 2, evidence of Mangati, p. 205; vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 7, 17-18; Fuze, Black People, pp. 73-4; Bryant, OT, pp. 412-14.

122. Bryant's uncertainties about the meanings of these terms are reflected in the variations which took place over time in his system of classifying the peoples of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region. In his 'Sketch' of 1905, he designated the peoples of Natal generally as 'Lala', among whom the 'Mbo' were an important clan (Dictionary, p. 24*). He retained this usage in his Izindaba Zabantu articles of 1910-13 (see HZ, p. 16). By 1919 he was referring to these peoples as Tonga-Ngunis or Lala ('The origin of the Zulus', Native Teachers' Journal, vol. 1, no. 1 (1919), p. 14). In Olden Times (1929), he classified them as Tekela-Nguni, whom he sub-divided into the Mbo and Tonga-Nguni, with the Lala now as sub-group of the latter (OT, p. 7). In The Zulu People, published in 1949, he distinguished between the Mbo, who had occupied up-country Natal, and the Lala, who had settled the rest of the region (Zulu People, p. 10).

explanation of a subject which puzzled both Bryant and Stuart: why, by the early 20th century, it was the Mkhize alone of the peoples of Natal who were designated by the once widespread name of abaMbo.[123] The contradictions inherent in Bryant's usage of the terms 'Mbo' and 'Lala' will only be fully understood when the meanings of these terms as they developed from the 1830s onward have been investigated: what the present work seeks to do is to specify the meanings which they acquired when the Zulu were establishing domination of the territories south of the Thukela in the 1820s.

The creation of an identity as amalala for the Cele, Thuli and neighbouring chiefdoms is better attested than is the acquisition of the isithakazelo 'abaMbo' by the Mkhize. Like the latter process, the former was also a product of particular historical circumstances. Where the Mkhize had submitted to Shaka in the early stages of Zulu expansion, when his regime was still relatively weak, the chiefdoms of the coastlands south of the Thukela were subordinated after the Zulu had defeated the Ndwandwe, and made themselves the dominant power between the Thukela and the Black Mfolozi. With Shaka's authority over the chiefdoms of the Zulu kingdom's heartland now somewhat more firmly established, the Zulu leadership was able to assert tighter political and ideological controls over the chiefdoms of the south-eastern coastlands than it had been able to do over the Mkhize. The more effectively to maintain its domination and to exploit the region's resources of cattle and labour-power, it sought to impose on the local peoples the notion that they were amalala.

The evidence strongly suggests that in the early 19th century the term amalala meant something like 'menial',

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123. Bryant, 'Sketch', in his Dictionary, p. 24*; Bryant, OT, p. 403; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo on the name 'Embo',p. 19, presumably in answer to a specific question from Stuart.

and carried a heavy stigma of social inferiority.[124] It served to demarcate those peoples on the southern peripheries of the Zulu kingdom whom the Zulu leadership wished to exclude from the category of amantungwa, and so to prevent them from making the claims on their new overlords to which, in terms of kinship ideology, membership of this category would have entitled them. Though the leaders of the amantungwa peoples were required to yield tribute and service in various forms to the Zulu king, they could in return expect to benefit from his periodic redistribution of accumulated 'surplus', and also to be allowed to participate in the Zulu state's decision-making processes. To render the peoples of the southern peripheries open to a greater level of exploitation, it was essential for the Zulu leadership to prevent them from aspiring to join the category of amantungwa peoples. They sought to do this by ascribing to them the identity of amalala, which in effect reduced them to the status of despised outsiders.

The amalala peoples were distinguished from the amantungwa by differences in dialect, custom and supposed origin. Their new identity did not develop solely through imposition 'from above': it was almost certainly helped to take root though its acceptance by leaders such as Magaye of the Cele and Mathubane of the Thuli, who owed their positions directly to Zulu intervention. To some extent, it seems, the dominant Cele group was able to avoid the full effects of Zulu oppression and exploitation by deflecting them onto the other peoples of the coastlands whom the Zulu had subordinated and placed under Magaye's authority. These chiefdoms came to be designated as inyakeni, a term which carried connotations of ignorance and slovenliness. The effects of this categorization

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124. The passages which follow draw on Hamilton & Wright, 'The making of the Lala', unpubl. paper, pp. 10-17; and on the revised version due for publication in 1990 in the South African Historical Journal.

would have been to stratify the chiefdoms of the coastlands still further, and make them yet more vulnerable to exploitation by the Cele on behalf, ultimately, of the Zulu power.

The establishment by the Zulu of physical domination over the chiefdoms south of the Thukela was thus accompanied by an ideological restructuring which saw the emergence of new political identities among the peoples of the region. In the Thukela valley, the Mkhize were able to assert an exclusive claim to the isithakazelo 'abaMbo', which reflected the position of local dominance that they were able to achieve by dint of being Shaka's 'favourites'. In the coastlands, by contrast, the Cele, Thuli and other peoples came to be designated by the insulting appellations of amalala and inyakeni, which reflected the positions which they occupied at the bottom of the Zulu-dominated social and political order.

Zulu hegemony over the territories south of the Thukela was still in the process of being consolidated when, from the mid-1820s, a completely new set of factors began to affect the dynamics of power and conflict in the region. These factors stemmed from the settlement at Port Natal from 1824 onward of parties of British traders and hunters from the Cape colony. The background to the advent of these groups, together with their impact on the politics of the region in the second half of the 1820s, will form the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE ADVENT OF BRITISH HUNTER-TRADERS AND THE UNDERMINING OF ZULU POWER SOUTH OF THE THUKELA

1. The coming of British hunter-traders to Port Natal

The history of the trading posts which were established at Port Natal from 1824 onward by Cape-based entrepreneurs has long formed part of the mythology by which English-speaking whites in Natal justify their presence in the region and the political domination which they exercise over its black inhabitants. Very soon after the establishment of Natal as a colony of European settlement in the late 1840s and early 1850s, the arrival of British traders at Port Natal a generation earlier was coming to be portrayed as the event which marked the advent of civilization in the area.[1] The first histories of the colony were, however, ambiguous in their treatment of this prefatory period of its history. While their writers were pleased to highlight the role played by the traders as protectors of 'refugees' from Shaka, they were embarrassed by the irrefutable evidence that, far from from having been instrumental in spreading 'civilized' values, numbers of these 'adventurers' had in fact ended up 'going native'. Their response was to downplay this period of Natal's history, and to focus on the processes by which Natal had become a British colony, and on its 'progress' since.[2]

It was not until the late 19th century, when Natal's white settlers were in the process of acquiring self-

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1. Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal (1853), p. 6.

2. Holden, History of the Colony of Natal (1855), pp. 41-8; R.J. Mann, ed., The Colony of Natal, London, n.d. (1859), pp. 14-15; H. Brookes & R.J. Mann, Natal: a History and Description of the Colony, London, 1876, pp. 206-9.

government, and, with it, a greater self-consciousness about their collective historical pedigree, that their historians began incorporating the now sufficiently distant period of precolonial settlement more fully into their accounts. By this time the British traders of 1824 and after were beginning to be seen less as 'adventurers' than as 'pioneers' and 'settlers', the forerunners of the founding fathers of the 1840s and 1850s.[3] Similar treatment was accorded to them in Theal's influential histories, although, in keeping with his southern Africa-wide focus, and with his anti-imperial sentiments, he saw the early Natal traders as having opened the way for the coming of the Voortrekkers rather than for the establishment of British rule.[4]

The 1920s saw the centenary of the arrival of the first British traders at Port Natal. By this time Natal's English-speaking community had come to feel firmly enough rooted for its settler-descended families to be able to indulge in a certain nostalgia for the 'old days'. This was evinced in the publication in 1930 of Mackeurtan's The Cradle Days of Natal, a long and romanticized narrative of Europeans' activities in the region from the time of Vasco da Gama's voyages in the 1490s to the establishment of British colonial rule in the 1840s.[5] Its treatment of the early Port Natal traders, which was much the most substantial yet produced, cast them both as pioneers and as adventurers. It is noteworthy that the book was first published by Longmans, Green and Co., the firm which, the

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3. Russell, Natal (1891 ed.), pp. 127-33; P.A. Barnett & G.W. Sweeney, Natal: the State and the Citizen, London, 1904, p. 24; Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, Twentieth Century Impressions of Natal (place of publication not stated), 1906, p. 17; A.H. Tatlow, ed., Natal Province: Descriptive Guide and Official Handbook, Durban, 1911, p. 4.

4. G.M. Theal, History of South Africa since 1795, vol. 2, London, 1908, pp. 296-302.

5. G. Mackeurtan, The Cradle Days of Natal, Durban, 1972 reprint (1st publ. London, 1930), esp. chs. 6 & 7.

year before, had published Bryant's Olden Times. What Bryant did to provide a detailed reference work on the precolonial history of the region's African people, Mackeurtan did for its English-speaking whites. Like Olden Times, Cradle Days remained the standard work of reference on its subject into the 1970s.

In the 1950s and 1960s a new crop of popular and academic works on the history of Natal and Zululand in the 19th century made its appearance. In so far as they dealt with the Port Natal settlement of the 1820s and 1830s, few of them moved much, if at all, beyond Mackeurtan.[6] A partial exception was Watt's fictionalized biography of Francis Farewell, but this too remained firmly within the orthodoxies of the settler approach to Natal history.[7] Though Bulpin pioneered an important innovation by setting the establishment of the settlement in the context of a regional 'Natal' history,[8] his successors preferred to continue to place it within the history of Shaka's Zulu kingdom.[9]

The currents of Africanist history that were flowing strongly in the 1960s and early 1970s left little impression on treatment of the history of the Port Natal settlement.[10] It was left to Roberts's The Zulu Kings, a popular work on the reigns of Shaka and Dingane published

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6. For example, A.F. Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal, Cambridge, 1950, ch. 1; Bulpin, Shaka's Country, chs. 3, 4; and To the Shores of Natal, Cape Town, n.d. (1953), chs. 4, 5; Brooks & Webb, A History of Natal, ch. 3; Morris, The Washing of the Spears, pp. 71-116; Thompson, 'Co-operation and conflict: the Zulu kingdom and Natal', in Wilson & Thompson, eds., Oxford History of S.A., vol. 1, ch. 8.

7. E.P. Watt, Febana, London, 1962.

8. Bulpin, To the Shores of Natal, pp. 20-7.

9. See the references to Brookes & Webb, Morris and Thompson in note 6 above.

10. Partial exceptions were Thompson's account cited in note 6 above, and F. Okoye, 'Tshaka and the British traders 1824-1828', Transafrican Journal of History, vol. 2 (1972), pp. 10-32.

in 1974, to take the first major step beyond Mackeurtan's account.[11] Roberts used archival sources to make some penetrating reinterpretations of the relations which had existed betwen the traders and Shaka, and among the traders themselves. His book was - as it remains - the longest and best account of the settlement's history yet published. Its conventional conceptualization of the internal dynamics of the Zulu kingdom prevented it, though, from making a comprehensive breakthrough in its treatment of the subject.

The first work to do this was Slater's doctoral thesis, completed in 1976. It placed the history of the Port Natal settlement firmly in the history of the political economy of the south-east African coastlands from pre-European times to the 1840s.[12] Some of the deficiencies of Slater's overly evolutionist analytical framework, which have been discussed in chapter 1 (pp. 12-13), are apparent in the fifty or so pages which he devotes to the history of the settlement in the 1820s, but his account nevertheless forms the most incisive study of the subject yet made. In spite of the obtrusion of his notion of the 'absolutist' Zulu state, Slater provides numerous stimulating insights into the nature of the forces which produced the settlement, and of the relations between the state and the British traders. It is an indictment of later writers on the subject that his work has not received the attention it deserves.

Another useful if all too brief discussion of the relations between the Zulu kingdom and the traders was conducted by Hedges in his doctoral thesis on state-formation in the Delagoa bay-Thukela region in the 18th and early 19th centuries.[13] Since its completion in 1978 there has been very little fresh analysis of the subject. A number of repetitive articles by Ballard break no new

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11. Roberts, The Zulu Kings, chs. 1-10.

12. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, pp. 326-40, 351-83.

13. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 231-40.

ground,[14] and, disappointingly, the detailed narrative which Cubbin provides in his doctoral thesis on the Port Natal settlement is almost entirely barren of interpretative insights.[15]

Since the later 1980s, following the lead set in a number of public speeches by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Chief Minister of KwaZulu,[16] a new genre of writings on the Port Natal settlement of 1824 has begun to emerge. It is aimed primarily at 'rehabilitating' Shaka in the public mind through the device of denigrating those contemporary writers, like Fynn and Isaacs, who are seen as having been primarily responsible for feeding to the outside world the image of the Zulu king as a bloodthirsty monster. In this literature the traders are no longer seen as the enterprizing pioneers of civilization; they are regarded as greedy, scheming opportunists who deliberately spread lies about Shaka and the Zulu state for their own material ends.[17] While this depiction is certainly closer to the historical reality than is the romanticized notion of the

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14. C. Ballard, 'The role of trade and hunter-traders in the political economy of Natal and Zululand, 1824-1880', African Economic History, no. 10 (1981), pp. 3-5; 'Natal 1824-44: the frontier interregnum', Jnl. of Natal and Zulu History, vol. 5 (1982), pp. 49-56; 'Drought and economic distress', Jnl. of Interdisciplinary History, vol. 17 (1986-7), pp. 375-7.

15. A.E. Cubbin, 'Origins of the British settlement at Port Natal May 1824-July 1842', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1983, chs. 1, 2.

16. See particularly the text of Buthelezi's speech in commemoration of King Shaka Day given at Claremont township, Pinetown, 28 Sept. 1986.

17. The major work in this genre is L. du Buisson, The White Man Cometh, Johanesburg, 1987. It is significant that Buthelezi was the guest of honour at the book's launching party in July 1987. See also Ballard, The House of Shaka, p. 13. The manuscript of this work was shown to Buthelezi prior to publication (see report in Natal Mercury, 2 Dec. 1988), and both Buthelezi and King Goodwill Zwelithini of the Zulu were guests of honour at its launching. For the incorporation of this viewpoint into a general history, see Reader's Digest, Illustrated History of South Africa, Cape Town, 1988, pp. 86-7.

traders as 'pioneers', it has so far not been accompanied by any attempt at a comprehensive reinterpretation of the Port Natal settlement's history. The accounts produced by its progenitors remain heavily dependant on the very sources whose authority they query. In the end these writers have done very little more than simply invert the old stereotype, with Shaka now as the hero of the piece, and the traders as the villains.

A potentially far more fruitful reinterpretation of the conventional sources on the history of the settlement emerges from Cobbing's developing critique of mfecane-theory. His sub-continent-wide perspective has enabled him to develop insights into settler ideology which he has used to extract new meanings from the texts of these works. It also enables him to to place the history of the Zulu kingdom and its peripheries in a broader context than has been established by previous writers. Cobbing's analysis is weakened in some respects by its failure so far to grapple with the dynamics of internal conflicts within the Zulu state. Nevertheless, even in embryonic form it has provided some provocative new views on the nature of the relations which were coming into being from the mid-1820s onwards between the Zulu, the Port Natal traders, and settlers, officials, merchants and missionaries in the Cape.[18]

Following the lead set by Slater, the account that follows sees the advent of British traders at Port Natal in the mid-1820s as the product of deep-seated forces which were rooted in the first instance in the expansion of west European-based commercial capital over the previous two centuries or more.[19] More particularly, their arrival must be seen against the background, first, of the establishment of British naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean by 1810, and

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18. See particularly Cobbing's 'Jettisoning the mfecane', unpubl. paper, pp. 12-14; and 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 509-13.

19. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, p. 351.

second, of the growth of interest among merchants and investors in the Cape colony after 1815 in the economic potential of the sub-continent to the north.

The gradual development of Britain's naval power in the Indian Ocean was the product of thirty years of intensified rivalry with France for command of the main maritime trade routes between Europe and the Orient. From the time of the American War of Independence, the two powers had been increasingly sensitive to the need for strategic bases in the region which extended from the Cape of Good Hope to the eastern coasts of Africa and the islands of the Indian Ocean. In 1781 the French occupied the Cape to forestall a British move to do so. In 1795, after the outbreak of the French revolutionary wars, the British in turn seized the Cape from the Dutch to prevent a French occupation. The colony was restored to the Batavian Republic in 1803, but, after the resumption of war in Europe, was again taken by the British in 1806. It was finally transferred to Britain by treaty in 1815.[20]

After the dramatic French attempt in 1798 to break into the Indian Ocean via Egypt and the Red Sea, eastern Africa and its seas were also turned into a zone of confrontation between France and Britain. Though the British defeat of the French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar in 1805 effectively put an end to French designs to supplant British power in the east, so long as the French retained their important naval base on Mauritius, they were perceived as a serious threat to British interests in India.[21] The French invasion of Portugal in 1807 again raised the possibility that the French would be able to seize control of Portuguese territories in India and south-eastern Africa, and use them as bases for challenging

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20. G.S. Graham, Great Britain in the Indian Ocean: A Study of Maritime Enterprise 1810-1850, Oxford, 1967, pp. 24-8, 36-7.

21. Ibid., pp. 26-8; Jackson Haight, European Powers and South-East Africa, pp. 119-32.

British domination in the Indian sub-continent. For a time the British government considered carrying out a pre-emptive occupation of those territories. In the event, the flight of the Portuguese court to Brazil, and its adherence to an alliance with Britain, made this move unnecessary, but these developments served to fix official British attentions firmly on south-eastern Africa for the first time.[22]

The capture of Mauritius by the British in 1810, followed by their reduction of French posts on the east coast of Madagascar the following year, effectively ended the naval war between France and Britain in the Indian Ocean.[23] By this time, the economic potential of eastern Africa was becoming a subject of interest to the British East India Company, and in 1810 a commercial treaty between Britain and Portugal nominally opened all Portuguese ports in the region to trade with British sujects.[24] After the Napoleonic wars had come to an end in 1815, and British governments were beginning to look with new vigour for markets for the manufactured goods produced by industrialization,[25] official interest in south-east Africa was maintained. A concrete expression of this was the decision made by the British government in 1821 to send an official naval expedition to survey the coast of eastern Africa and investigate its economic potential. The consequence was the despatch the following year of Captain William Owen's well-known expedition.[26]

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22. Jackson Haight, European Powers and South-East Africa, pp. 149-54.

23. Ibid., pp. 158-63; Graham, Great Britain in the Indian Ocean, pp. 46-54.

24. Jackson Haight, European Powers and South-East Africa, pp. 155-8, 163-6.

25. Ibid., pp. 169-70; P.J. Cain & A.G. Hopkins, 'The political economy of British expansion overseas, 1750-1914', Economic History Review, vol. 33 (1980), pp. 471-4.

26. Jackson Haight, European Powers in South-East Africa, pp. 174-6; E.H. Burroughs, Captain Owen of the Africa Survey, Rotterdam, 1979, pp. 78-82.

Owen's survey co-incided with, and gave additional stimulus to, the launching of speculative commercial ventures from Cape Town along the coast of south-east Africa. Though the Cape had been a supplier of provisions to Mauritius and Reunion since the 1770s, until the end of the Napoleonic wars it remained more an entrepot than a base for the development of an export economy.[27] After 1815, however, Cape merchants were increasingly active in seeking to tap the resources of the region to the north of the colony, especially in ivory and cattle products.[28] By the early 1820s, after the establishment of several thousand commercially oriented British settlers in the eastern Cape, some merchants were looking to establish trading links with the Xhosa across the eastern frontier.[29] Others were investing in seafaring enterprises that aimed to break into the established commerce of Delagoa Bay, and to set up trade with the Zulu kingdom.[30]

The key role in the effort to make commercial contact with the Zulu was played by a Cape Town-based entrepreneur named Francis Farewell. In 1823 he led an unsuccessful attempt to reach Shaka's capital via St. Lucia estuary.[31]

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27. R. Ross, 'The Cape of Good Hope and the world economy, 1652-1835', in R. Elphick & H. Giliomee, eds., The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840, Cape Town, 1989, p. 266; W.M. Freund, 'The Cape under the transitional governments, 1795-1814', in Elphick & Giliomee, eds., Shaping of S.A. Society, pp. 333, 351-2; Graham, Great Britain in the Indian Ocean, p. 24.

28. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl., thesis, p. 370.

29. Le Cordeur, Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism, p. 40; J. Peires, 'The British and the Cape 1814-1834', in Elphick & Giliomee, eds., Shaping of S.A. Society, pp. 472, 475, 480, 485.

30. Mackeurtan, Cradle Days, pp. 94, 97-101; Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 8-15; Fynn, Diary, pp. 36-45.

31. Fynn, Diary, pp. 52, 54; Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 8-15; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, notarial deed signed by James King and others, 4 Dec. 1823, pp. 19-21; notarial deed signed by William Garrett and others, 19 Dec. 1823, pp. 21-3; notarial deed signed by F.G. Farewell and others, 29 Dec. 1823, pp. 24-5; letter from King to Bathurst, 10 July 1824, pp. 40-42.

The following year he led another party which succeeded in making a landing at Port Natal bay, establishing overland contact with Shaka, and obtaining his permission to base itself at the bay.[32] Farewell's overt intentions, as conveyed to the Governor of the Cape before his departure, were to engage in a large-scale and prolonged trading venture aimed at obtaining the 'produce' of the region, by which he presumably meant primarily ivory.[33] Adverting to voyages which Farewell had previously made to Rio de Janeiro and Mauritius, Cobbing has suggested that he also had an eye on the possibility of trading slaves out of Port Natal.[34] Given the proximity of the Delagoa Bay slave market, and the ineffectualness of British anti-slaving patrols off south-east Africa at this time,[35] an enterprise of this sort would have been quite feasible.

Soon after his arrival at Port Natal, it became apparent that Farewell's longer-term plans were to set up a permanent establishment there, if possible with exclusive rights of occupation and trade reserved for the party under his leadership. One of his first acts was to obtain from Shaka his written mark on a document which purported to grant Farewell a large tract of territory about Port Natal, including the harbour itself.[36] Quite certainly

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32. Fynn, Diary, pp. 55-80; Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 15-32, 57-65; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, notarial deed signed by James Gosling and F.G. Farewell, 15 April 1824, pp. 27-8; notarial deed signed by F.G. Farewell and others, 17 April 1824, pp. 28-9; Farewell to Somerset, 1 May 1824, pp. 35-6; Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, pp. 37-8.

33. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Farewell to Somerset, 1 May 1824, p. 35.

34. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 510n; and 'Jettisoning the mfecane (with perestroika)', unpubl. paper, p. 13. On Farewell's trading background see Fynn, Diary, p. 51.

35. Jackson Haight, European Powers and South-East Africa, pp. 218-30; Graham, Great Britain in the Indian Ocean, pp. 111-16.

36. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, and annexure, pp. 37-40; Fynn, Diary, pp. 86-8.

Farewell would have known that the Zulu king was allowing him nothing more than rights of occupation. His immediate concern was to obtain written proof not so much of title to land as of his priority of occupation which he could if necessary wave in the face of potential rivals. His longer-term aim was no doubt to establish a claim to the land which the British authorities would find difficult to disregard if at some stage in the future they established authority over the Port Natal region. In an attempt to gain official recognition of his claim, he forwarded a copy of the deed of cession to the Cape Governor, with a request for him to sanction it, and also to vest Farewell with formal authority over the party which he had brought with him to Port Natal.[37]

Farewell's aims of establishing a large enterprise with exclusive trading rights recognized by both the Zulu state and the Cape government were soon dashed. Most of the members of his party decided to abandon the venture and return to the Cape; the sloop which he had chartered to maintain communication with the Cape was lost at sea; the British authorities failed to recognize his land claims; and towards the end of 1825 Shaka permitted a rival group of traders to set up at Port Natal.[38] This party was under the leadership of James King, who had been associated with Farewell in his attempt to open up trade with the Zulu kingdom at St Lucia in 1823, and had since been organizing a separate venture to Port Natal. His plans, too, quickly came to grief when, on arrival at the bay, his ship was wrecked. Because neither group was in a position to conduct any vigorous trade, relations between them at first were reasonably cordial, though both were continually manoeuvering for favours from the Zulu king.[39]

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37. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, pp. 37-8.

38. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 70-88; Fynn, Diary, pp. 91, 93, 118-21.

39. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 75-80; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, King to Bathurst, 10 July 1824, pp. 40-42; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 1-30.

For his part, as the accounts left by the traders make clear, Shaka welcomed their advent and showed them abundant hospitality.[40] The arrival of the first party in mid-1824 would not have come as a complete surprise to him, for he had already received information about Farewell's trading ventures from one of the latter's interpreters who had been left on shore during his unsuccessful attempt to effect a landing at St Lucia the previous year.[41] Shaka's attitude to the traders was grounded in part in the hope that they would provide a source of manufactured goods to rival that at Delagoa Bay.[42] In addition, as subsequent events made clear, it was grounded in his assessment of their potential value to him in political terms. Their access to firearms technology made them a force which it was important to have on his side in his struggles against his enemies inside and outside the kingdom.[43] Their links with the Cape gave them a position as intermediaries through whom he might establish diplomatic contact with the British authorities there.

Through the reports of the envoys who, it can be assumed, regularly passed back and forth between the Zulu chief and his counterparts among the Xhosa polities to the south, Shaka would have had a good idea of the relative power of British arms, and knowledge of the defeats which they had administered to the Xhosa, and of their territorial conquests. A good while before the arrival of Farewell and King, he would have known that the British constituted a power with which it would be politic to have

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40. Fynn, Diary, pp. 22, 71-80; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, p. 37; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, Kings's account of his visit to Shaka, pp. 27-9.

41. Fynn, Diary, pp. 73n, 75-6; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 276-8.

42. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 231; Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, p. 331.

43. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 234-5; Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, p. 337.

friendly rather than unfriendly relations, all the more so as the main direction of Zulu expansion by the early 1820s was to the south. The importance of this consideration in Shaka's political calculations was indicated by the desire which he expressed at one of his earliest meetings with Farewell in 1824 to send an embassy to the Cape 'for the purpose of being better acquainted with the English nation'.[44]

The Zulu king's immediate response to the advent of first Farewell's and then King's parties was actively to assist them to establish themselves at Port Natal by making their leaders generous presentations of cattle.[45] At the same time he was concerned to make clear that the traders fell under his overall authority, and that they would be allowed to operate from Port Natal only so long as they remained obedient to it. In particular they were required to recognize the monopoly which he exercised over the trading of ivory.[46] To give effect to his authority at the bay he established izinduna nearby to keep the traders under surveillance.[47] Though Farewell may have tried to pretend to the Cape government that Shaka's 'grant' of territory round the bay gave him exclusive authority over it, in his dealings with Shaka he was careful to comport himself as a subordinate. The presentations of goods which he made to the king were formal tokens of his submission.

From the start, though, there was a clear disjunction between the views of Shaka and of the traders as to the purposes for which the individual settlements at Port

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44. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, p. 37. See also the discussion in Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 238, 239.

45. Fynn, Diary, pp. 65, 66, 80; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Farewell to Somerset 6 Sept. 1824, p. 37; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, King's account of his visit to Shaka, p. 29.

46. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 231-2.

47. Fynn, Diary, p. 67; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 14, 19, 40, 60, 129.

Natal were intended to operate. Where the Zulu king envisaged them essentially as forwarding agencies that should function under his sanction ultimately for his own benefit,[48] the traders aimed to establish autonomous profit-making concerns under their own direction. From early on, Farewell sought to circumvent the restrictions placed on his operations by Shaka. Though he did not dare to flout Shaka's authority in the regions under the king's direct control, he was soon making plans to tap the ivory resources of the territories south of the Mzimkhulu which lay beyond the reach of effective Zulu rule. At the end of 1824 he sent Henry Fynn, one of the leading members of his party, to make reconnaissances in that direction.[49] In 1825, after establishing contact with the Mpondo chief, Faku, Fynn spent a protracted period setting up a trading station in his territory and gathering ivory from the region round about. Farewell's plan was to smuggle it out by sending his trading ship to touch on the neighbouring coast, but when the vessel was lost he had no option but to turn to Shaka for assistance in transporting it to Natal. According to Fynn, Shaka complied with the request,[50] but another contemporary account indicates that at about this time the Zulu king confiscated a large amount of ivory from Fynn for having traded without permission.[51] Fynn himself recorded that Shaka's reaction to his explorations in the

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48. See the discussion in Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, pp. 331, 376.

49. Fynn, Diary, pp. 91-116. In his account of these operations, as in most of his published Diary, Fynn presents himself as acting mainly as an autonomous agent. It should be noted that he had come to Port Natal as one of Farewell's employees, and remained a member of Farewell's party until late 1826 or 1827, when he broke away to set up an independent hunting and trading operation. See below, p. 349.

50. Fynn, Diary, p. 118.

51. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 6 Jan. 1826, pp. 79-80.

south had been hostile.[52] If it is difficult to know what to make of this particular episode, it is clear that, relying on Shaka's good will towards them, and playing on his respect for their supposed connections with the British in the Cape, the traders were from the beginning attempting to contest certain areas of his authority.

This notion is at variance with the conventional view that Shaka exercised more or less complete power over the traders, as he did over his subjects generally. It is broadly true, as Slater argues, that before 1838 the traders 'had only been able to establish and maintain their position on the express permission of the Zulu state', and that they 'continued to accept, however reluctantly, their status as subjects of the Zulu protectorate zone'.[53] But Slater's conception, which he shares with almost all other writers on the subject, that the Zulu state was 'absolutist' allows very little room in his analysis for the argument that the traders may in certain ways have sought to resist the terms of domination which Shaka was concerned to impose on them, and to broaden the scope of the immunities allowed to them. The 'mode of survival', to use Slater's term, into which they were admitted by the state was certainly founded on adherence to Zulu laws, as he argues,[54] but he does not allow for the possibility that the traders might in some respects have sought to circumvent those laws. Nor does he consider that in respect of the king's 'favourites', the laws might have been applied with a certain flexibility.

That the traders fell into the category of favourites, and received special dispensations from Shaka, is indicated by the accounts which they left. Fynn stated explicitly that Shaka regarded Europeans 'as his real friends, and made them partakers of his meals - this being considered by

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52. Fynn, Diary, pp. 93, 110.
53. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, pp. 331-2.
54. Ibid., pp. 338, 376.

him to be a high honour'.[55] According to the same source, Shaka proclaimed to his people how proud he was to be visited by the subjects of King George.[56] White people, Isaacs wrote, had particular privileges in the land, and were considered as the king's 'domestics and favourites'.[57] Both writers certainly had a material interest in exaggerating the importance of the status which the traders had in Shaka's eyes. But there seems little doubt that, given their position as bearers of coveted manufactures, as potential military auxiliaries, and as potential intermediaries with the authorities in the Cape, the Zulu king would from the start have been inclined to treat the traders with special favour. Even though their presence at Port Natal was for some while a largely ineffectual one, Shaka seems to have thought it politic to continue to maintain good relations with them.

For their part, the traders found it wise to keep their resistance to Shaka's authority within limits. They did so not simply out of fear of his power, but because for some time after their arrival they were heavily dependent on him for some of their most important material needs. In the early years of the settlement, observers reported wide fluctuations in the ability of the traders' parties to produce enough food to feed themselves. In times of shortage, they had to turn to Magaye, the Cele chief, for grain, and to Shaka for slaughter cattle.[58]

Though the Zulu king had made Farewell and King substantial presentations of cattle on their arrival, and

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55. Fynn, Diary, p. 27; see also p. 22.

56. Ibid., p. 80.

57. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 31, 112.

58. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Hawes to Morrison, 16 May 1825, p. 50; op. cit., report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 4 June 1825, p. 51; op. cit., report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 28 April 1826, p. 85; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 41, 67, 68, 70.

periodically thereafter,[59] most of these were probably used not so much for food as for loaning out to members of the followings which they actively sought to set up under their patronage. The accumulation of groups of African adherents by the traders has been portrayed almost universally in the literature as the product mainly of altruism on their part. The traders' spokesmen were quick to give out that their chief concern in bringing people from round about to settle at Port Natal was to rescue them from the distress into which Shaka's wars had cast them.[60] This rationalization was from an early date absorbed into Natal settler historiography;[61] it still survives in some academic work.[62] But, as Slater was the first to indicate, a more important factor was the need of the leading traders to augment the work-force which they had at their disposal.[63] At the end of 1825, the white and 'coloured' employees in the service of Farewell and King numbered no more than twelve or fifteen in all.[64] They were far too few in number to provide the ongoing labour in the spheres of hunting, porterage, herding, agriculture and construction work which was needed if their employers were to establish their enterprises on a stable and long-term footing. The traders were sometimes able to obtain temporary labourers from among Mathubane's Thuli in return for payment,[65] but did not remotely have the resources to pay a large wage-

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59. Fynn, Diary, pp. 22, 65, 66, 80; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 29, 36, 57.

60. Fynn, Diary, pp. 22, 130; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 18.

61. Mann, ed., Colony of Natal (1859), p. 15; Brooks & Mann, Natal: a History and Description (1876), p. 207; Russell, Natal: the Land and Its Story (1891), pp. 129-30.

62. Ballard, 'Drought and economic distress', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, vol. 17 (1986-7), p. 376.

63. Slater, 'Transitions', unpubl. thesis, p. 334.

64. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 72, 89.

65. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 67, 68; Maclean, 'Loss of the brig Mary', Nautical Magazine, July 1853, p. 350.

labour force. Through the auspices of Shaka, King was able to obtain a certain amount of forced labour from the Thuli to assist his party to build a small ship.[66] But this was only because the Zulu king had a particular interest in the project, in that it promised to provide a means for him to send an embassy to the Cape. By themselves the traders did not have the physical force needed to extract labour from neighbouring indigenous communities with any degree of regularity.

Their only alternative was to tap the labour-power of those families which they could induce to settle at Port Natal under their authority. Two major forms of inducement were available to them. As Shaka's known 'friends', they were in a position to hold out the prospect of a more secure life to people who for some years had been living in conditions of pronounced insecurity. And, so long as they had cattle available, they could also provide the means for families which had lost their livestock in the upheavals of the previous few years to begin rebuilding their herds. From an early date, the traders' blandishments proved successful, so that by early 1826, according to two separate reports, three to four hundred Africans had settled at the bay in the service of the traders.[67] But even if the leading traders were able to exercise a firm patriarchal authority over their adherents,[68] the continued

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66. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 16, 66; Maclean, 'Loss of the brig Mary', Nautical Magazine, June 1853, p. 300; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 267; vol. 3, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 66.

67. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 28 April 1826, p. 85; King, 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement', in Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol. 2, p. 244. See also Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 16 June 1826, p. 91; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 14, 18; Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, extract from Farewell's journal, p. 62.

68. Maclean, 'Loss of the brig Mary', Nautical Magazine, April 1853, p. 197.

existence and expansion of this source of labour was directly contingent on Shaka's giving permission for individual families to establish themselves at Port Natal, and on his continuing to make the traders presentations of cattle. The power which he wielded over the traders was, then, that of patron as well as of overlord. Accordingly, their resistance to his authority was tempered by their dependence on him for material support.

2. The involvement of the hunter-traders in the politics of the Zulu state

In the first two years or so of the Port Natal settlement's existence, the traders featured very little in the public affairs of the Zulu kingdom. Even if their leaders were regarded as important figures by Shaka and his advisers, their presence did not, as far as the evidence goes, feature largely in the formulation of state policies. This situation began to change, however, in the second half of 1826. Although there is very little direct evidence to show it, it seems that by this time internal and external pressures were combining in a way that made Shaka's hold on power more and more difficult to maintain. A key factor in the development of this situation was the re-emergence in the mid-1820s of the Ndwandwe chiefdom as a major threat to the existence of the Zulu state. In the middle of 1826 Shaka made the decision to turn to the traders for assistance in mounting a major offensive against it.

Since Bryant's time, writers on Zulu history have implicitly or explicitly portrayed the campaign of 1826 against the Ndwandwe as a defensive reaction on the part of the Zulu state to the threat of a Ndwandwe invasion from the north-west.[69] According to Bryant, the invasion was led by Zwide's son and successor, Sikhunyana, from the eastern Transvaal region, where the Ndwandwe chiefdom had

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69. Bryant, OT, pp. 588-94; Morris, Washing of the Spears, p. 89; Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 100-103; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 201-2.

for some years been reconsolidating.[70] In February 1826, Bryant wrote, 'the whole Ndwandwe host, warriors women and wealth, was...swarming into the northern districts, coming, as they said, to retake possession of their country. Indeed, so determined were the invaders and so bold, that before the 25th of the month their army had approached to within one day's march of Shaka's very capital'.[71]

Bryant's view of the Ndwandwe as having in this instance been the aggressors derived from an uncritical reading of accounts left by Fynn, King, and Isaacs.[72] He did not consider that these writers might have been uncritically reflecting Shaka's view of events, or that they themselves might have had a vested interest in portraying the Ndwandwe as invaders. A closer look at the evidence in the sources used by Bryant reveals a picture very different from the one he paints. According to Isaacs, towards the end of March 1826 an invading Ndwandwe force was said to be camped within one day's march of Shaka's residence.[73] Two weeks later the Zulu king was still expecting to do battle with them.[74] Isaacs wrote no more on the subject until the middle of June, when an envoy from Shaka arrived at Port Natal to summon the traders to join the expedition which he was planning to send against the Ndwandwe.[75] A few days later the traders received the news that Shaka had postponed the expedition until the next full moon.[76] It

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70. OT, pp. 209-12, 588.

71. Ibid.

72. Bryant had access to Fynn's acount as published in 1888 in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, pp. 86-90. (Essentially the same account appears in Stuart & Malcolm's edition of Fynn's Diary (1950), pp. 122-8.) See also King, 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement at Port Natal', in Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol. 2 (1827), p. 249; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures (1836), pp. 45, 55.

73. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 45.

74. Ibid, p. 55.

75. Ibid. p. 60.

76. Ibid.

was not until August or September that the campaign was finally launched.[77]

It is hardly likely that, in the face of an imminent Ndwandwe invasion, Shaka would have delayed making a counter-attack for four or five months. What Isaacs's evidence indicates is that, while the Ndwandwe might have been raiding into Zulu territory early in 1826, there was no general 'invasion'. This argument is supported by evidence from the account written by Henry Fynn, who was one of the traders who accompanied the Zulu army which eventually went out against the Ndwandwe. A careful reading of this source indicates that when the Zulu forces encountered those of the Ndwandwe north of the upper Phongolo river, the latter were in retreat, and were accompanied by their womenfolk, children and cattle.[78] North of what is now Vryheid, the Zulu army had found considerable quantities of grain at 'kraals deserted by the hostile nation'.[79] It does not seem to have struck Bryant or later writers as odd that the members of an 'invading' force should have burdened themselves with their families, and exposed their cattle to enemy raids by bringing them on campaign. To these writers, the Ndwandwe were simply one more of the numerous migratory 'hordes' which had figured so often in the period's history. Because the key piece of evidence, to the effect that the Ndwandwe had built homesteads and cultivated grain, did not fit the picture of the Ndwandwe as invaders, it was disregarded altogether.

When pieced together, the evidence from Fynn and Isaacs points to a scenario quite different from that depicted by Bryant. The Zulu went out to attack not a 'host' making a threatening advance southward from the eastern Transvaal region, but a chiefdom which had for some time been located about the upper Phongolo, with homestead life and

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77. Ibid., p. 66.
78. Fynn, Diary, pp. 126-7.
79. Ibid., p. 125.

agriculture well established. This argument is supported by evidence cited by Bonner to the effect that after several shifts of location in the eastern and south-eastern Transvaal, the Ndwandwe under Sikhunyana had settled near the Phongolo.[80] It is also in accord with the evidence recorded by Fynn that towards the end of 1824 the Ndwandwe had lived close enough for the Zulu to raid them and carry off a number of their cattle.[81]

Since Hedges first made the point, it has been clear that even after their withdrawal northwards from the region about the Mkhuze, the Ndwandwe had remained a threat to the stability and even the existence of the Zulu state.[82] The salience of this threat by the mid-1820s is reflected in Fynn's evidence that Shaka blamed the Ndwandwe for the attempt made to assassinate him in 1824.[83] James King recorded in 1826 that at the end of the previous year he had found Shaka anxious about the prospect of war with the Ndwandwe, who were said to be close at hand.[84] In the early 20th century, Sikhunyana was still remembered by two of Stuart's informants who were associated with the Zulu royal house as having intended to 'return' to the former Ndwandwe territories.[85] If, as now seems likely, the Ndwandwe were establishing themselves on the north-western borders of the Zulu chiefdom in the mid-1820s, the Zulu attack on them in 1826 can be seen in clearer perspective. It was Shaka's response not to an actual Ndwandwe invasion but to the threat of one, and also to the probability that

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80. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires, pp. 237-8, note 15.

81. Fynn, Diary, pp. 88-90, 91; Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, extract from Fynn's notes, p. 68.

82. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 201-2.

83. Fynn, Diary, p. 85.

84. King, 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement', in Thompson, Travels and Adventures vol. 2, pp. 246, 249.

85. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 186; vol. 4, evidence of Ndukwana, p. 276.

Sikhunyana was giving support to his internal enemies. His attack on the Ndwandwe was a pre-emptive move to try to eliminate a growing source of insecurity for the Zulu state.

In explaining why Shaka decided to go onto the offensive when he did, the influence of two important factors needs to be taken into account. The first was the emergence of a succession dispute in the ranks of the Ndwandwe ruling house. The second was the availability to Shaka of the Port Natal traders with their firearms. According to Fynn's evidence, the Ndwandwe chief Zwide had died in late 1824 or the first half of 1825.[86] Not long after the succession of Sikhunyana, the latter's main rival for the chiefship, a brother named Somaphunga, had made off to the Zulu chiefdom with a number of followers and submitted to Shaka.[87] There is no evidence of what degree of support Somaphunga had in the Ndwandwe chiefdom, but it is likely that his defection, which took place at some point before May 1826,[88] at a time when Sikhunyana was still seeking to consolidate his hold on power, would have weakened the Ndwandwe ruling house. For Shaka, it provided the opportunity to strike at the enemy before he had recovered his strength.

It is arguable that in these circumstances Shaka would have seized his chance and attacked the Ndwandwe anyway. But a factor which helped him reach the decision to do so was very probably the presence in his domains of the traders, who by now had several times demonstrated to him the efficacy of firearms.[89] For their part, the traders were very probably more than willing to comply with Shaka's summons to assist him. Participation in the intended

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86. Fynn, Diary, p. 118.

87. Bryant, OT, pp. 212-13; Fuze, Black People, p. 50; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maphuthwana, p. 230.

88. Fynn, Diary, p. 122.

89. Ibid., pp. 120-1; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 28, 52-3.

campaign held out the prospect of reward in cattle, of trading concessions, and of captives who could be put to work at Port Natal or possibly shipped out as slaves. It is quite likely, as Fynn, Isaacs and Farewell claim, that Shaka made a number of threats to ensure the traders' co-operation,[90] but even if they had little choice in the matter they were not reluctant participants. The assertions made by their spokesmen that they acted under duress need to be taken with a heavy pinch of salt. Like the efforts of these writers to portray the Ndwandwe as the aggressors, they were intended as a later cover-up for the role played by the traders in the attack.

In the event Shaka's army was joined by a force consisting of Farewell, some of his employees, including Fynn, and a number of his African retainers who had been trained in the use of firearms.[91] James King was at that time away on a visit to the Cape in an attempt to refurbish his trading venture;[92] whether any members of his party went on the expedition is not known. The Zulu army came up with the Ndwandwe north of the upper Phongolo at the izinDololwane hills, to which the latter had retreated en masse. In the ensuing battle the Ndwandwe were routed. Numbers of their women and children were killed, their cattle were captured, and in follow-up operations their homesteads and fields were destroyed.[93] As in the attacks some years before on the Ngwane and Chunu, Shaka seems to

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90. Fynn, Diary, , pp. 122-3; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 60, 64, 65-6; Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, extract from Farewell's journal, pp. 65-6.

91. Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, extract from Farewell's journal, p. 66; Fynn, Diary, p. 124.

92. King had left Port Natal for the Cape in April 1826. See Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 28 April 1826, pp. 84-5.

93. Fynn, Diary, pp. 125-8; Maclean, 'Loss of the brig Mary', Nautical Magazine, April 1853, p. 201; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 186; vol. 2, evidence of Magojela, p. 104; vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, p. 12; vol. 4, evidence of Ndukwana, pp. 276, 279.

have been determined to shatter the Ndwandwe polity so completely as to prevent its re-emerging as any kind of threat to his rule.

Farewell ends his account of the expedition at a point before the Zulu encountered the Ndwandwe.[94] Fynn's description of the actual battle and its aftermath is very reticent, and gives little indication of what role the Port Natal party played in the fighting.[95] But it is likely that at the very least, as Hedges argues, the presence of white men with firearms on Shaka's side was of great psychological importance in determining the outcome of the fight.[96] Whatever the precise nature of their involvement, it is clear that the campaign marked a turning-point in their relations with Shaka. After the return of the army in October, Isaacs wrote, he had found Shaka 'in better spirits than I had ever seen him before' in consequence of the destruction of the most powerful enemy he had encountered.[97] The king duly rewarded the traders with cattle. Though none of their published acounts mention the subject, Stuart's informant Maziyana, who was closely associated with the Thuli chiefly house, indicates that Fynn, for one, had obtained a good share of the spoils.[98]

Shaka also seems to have relaxed some of his regulations on the extraction of ivory at this time. In December 1826, Isaacs travelled openly to Zihlandlo's Mkhize chiefdom to look for elephant ivory. By that time the traders were also being allowed to hunt for hippotamus ivory north of the Thukela.[99] But much the most important indication of the shift in relations between Shaka and the traders which took place after the defeat of the Ndwandwe was Shaka's

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94. Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, extract from Farewell's journal, p. 67.

95. Fynn, Diary, pp. 125-8.

96. Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, p. 236.

97. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 71.

98. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 269.

99. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 79-86.

move to colonize more actively the coastland region south of the Thukela whose chiefs whose had submitted to him in the early 1820s. The first sign of his new policy was the establishment of a major new ikhanda, named kwaDukuza, in Cele territory near the mouth of the Mvoti, some seventy kilometres from Port Natal. By the end of November 1826 Shaka had taken up residence there.[100] The general view is that from this time on, kwaDukuza was Shaka's capital: Isaacs indicates, though, that the king's intention was to remain at kwaBulawayo and pay occasional visits to kwaDukuza, some eighty kilometres to the south.[101] It was not until the end of 1827 that Shaka made kwaDukuza his administrative centre.[102]

The building of this ikhanda marked the start of a major enlargement of the Zulu presence in the region. In December 1826 Isaacs found that a number of new imizi had been built in the lower Mvoti region by people attached to kwaDukuza. The Cele inhabitants of the area had been pushed further inland.[103] One of these imizi was named kwaShiyabantu; Bryant describes it as a cattle post.[104] As part of the process of occupying what had until this time been a peripheral zone of the Zulu state, Shaka seems also to have been asserting more direct controls over its chiefs. According to Maquza, one of Stuart's informants, Shaka required Magaye, the Cele chief, to build a hut at kwaDukuza to use when he came to khonza.[105] The implication is that the Cele chief was now required to spend prolonged spells under the eye of his overlord. A similar requirement may have been imposed on Zihlandlo of the Mkhize, who also had a hut at kwaDukuza when Isaacs

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100. Ibid., p. 77.
101. Ibid.
102. Fynn, Diary, p. 137.
103. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 84.
104. Ibid., p. 89; OT, p. 644.
105. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 237.

encountered him there in December 1826.[106] It may have been at about this time too that Shaka appointed Sotobe kaMpangalala of the Sibiya people, who was later described by one of the British traders as 'a man of great influence with Shaka', as the induna entrusted with the task of maintaining supervision of Zihlandlo and his chiefdom.[107]

Shaka's motives for setting up kwaDukuza and other imizi south of the Thukela are not clear, but it seems likely that he was activated by two strong considerations. One was to continue implementing the line of policy which he had been pursuing since before 1824. This was to build up a power base in a region of his kingdom where the dominant chief, Magaye, was largely dependant on Shaka's support for his position, and hence likely to espouse Shaka's cause rather than that of his enemies. The second consideration, which dovetailed with the first, was to strengthen his links with the traders at Port Natal, and, through them, to establish relations with the British at the Cape. By an accident of geography, the one usable harbour on the coastline between Algoa Bay and Delagoa Bay happened to lie within the region where, before the arrival of the traders, Shaka had already been expanding his hold. The advent of the traders at Port Natal would have provided him with a further incentive to continue with this policy, as would their demonstrated willingness to lend him military support.

The shift in Shaka's relations with the traders was further reinforced by their involvement in another of Shaka's campaigns early in 1827. This was aimed at enforcing the submission of Bheje, a Khumalo chief who, in his stronghold in the rugged Ngome region on the northern borders of the Zulu state, had for years held out successfully against Shaka's attempts to subdue him. After his defeat of the Ndwandwe in September or October 1826,

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106. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 78.

107. Cape Archives, G.H. 19/3, deposition of John Cane, Cape Town, 10 Nov. 1828.

Shaka had sent off part of his army to subjugate Bheje and another Khumalo chief. The latter had been forced to submit, but Bheje had been able to beat off the Zulu attack.[108]

Early in 1827 Shaka issued a command for a party of musketeers to be sent from Port Natal to assist the re-inforcements which he had sent against Bheje. In their accounts, Fynn and Isaacs are again at some pains to emphasize the degree of duress which Shaka applied to force the traders to obey his summons.[109] Roberts's judgement, that Isaacs's protestations are unconvincing, and that the traders co-operated with Shaka because they stood to gain much by doing so, is eminently sound.[110] In the event, ten or eleven men from Port Natal, including five Africans who could use firearms, went out on the expedition.[111] The majority of the party belonged to James King's settlement. King had returned from Cape Town with a newly chartered vessel in October 1826, and, with his enterprise now on a firmer footing, had at once sought to establish a sphere of operations separate from that of Farewell's party. The result had been a fierce quarrel between the two leaders and a severing of relations.[112] By participating in the expedition against Bheje, it can be surmised, King was pursuing an opportunity to acquire cattle and favours from Shaka as his rival had done by co-operating against the Ndwandwe.

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108. Fynn, Diary, pp. 128-9; Bryant, OT, pp. 596-7, 602-3.

109. Fynn, Diary, pp. 129-30; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 86-88, 97-100.

110. Roberts, Zulu Kings, p. 112.

111. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 89.

112. Ibid., pp. 69, 71, 75-6; Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 99, 103-9; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, deed of charter signed by J.R. Thomson, James King and others, 22 July 1826, pp. 91-3. For opposing accounts of relations between Farewell and King see Cape Archives GH 19/3, letter from Farewell to Dundas, 10 Sept. 1828; and Chabaud to Cole, 14 Nov. 1828, enclosing copy of deposition made by John Hutton and Nathaniel Isaacs, 24 May 1828.

If the role of gunmen from Port Natal in the defeat of the Ndwandwe is uncertain, there is little doubt that it was decisive in the defeat of Bheje's Khumalo. Isaacs's account of the assault on Bheje's stronghold, in which he took part, gives a graphic illustration of the psychological effects produced on both the Khumalo and the Zulu by the Port Natal party's use of firearms.[113] Bheje was required to give up his livestock, a good share of which was presented by Shaka to King and the members of his party, including Isaacs.[114] According to the latter's account, the Port Natal party also seized a number of young women from the Khumalo.[115] It is possible that many more captives were taken off by the traders, as well as by the Zulu.

After the subjugation of Bheje, the shift in Shaka's attitude towards the traders which had begun with the defeat of the Ndwandwe became more pronounced. This was most clearly discernible in his further relaxation of controls on the production and trading of ivory. By now Fynn was able to proceed with impunity to hunt elephants in the Mzimkhulu region with a party of African retainers equipped with firearms.[116] Isaacs was permitted to purchase ivory independently in the Mlalazi river region north of the Thukela.[117] In addition, Shaka for the first time actively turned his amabutho to the business of producing ivory.[118]

Also in this period, according to Fynn, Shaka was for the first time allowing the traders to receive refugees

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113. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 90-5. See also Fynn, Diary, p. 130. For assessments of the impact of the use of firearms in this engagement, see Roberts, Zulu Kings, p. 118; Hedges, 'Trade and politics', unpubl. thesis, pp. 236-7.

114. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 95, 100.

115. Ibid., p. 95.

116. Fynn, Diary, p. 130.

117. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 101.

118. Fynn, Diary, p. 131.

from the Zulu kingdom itself.[119] Isaacs indicates that by August 1827 his patron, King, had established a new umuzi, called kwaSindabantu (literally, the place where the people are saved), peopled by refugees from Shaka.[120] The Zulu king's change of attitude encouraged the traders, particularly Fynn, to step up their recruitment of adherents from the territories to the south of Port Natal. At the time of the quarrel between King and Farewell, Fynn had seized the opportunity of severing his links with the latter, and, with the cattle which he had received from Shaka after the Ndwandwe campaign, had set up his own separate establishment near the Mlazi river south of the bay.[121] In the course of his hunting and trading expeditions to the Mzimkhulu region from 1827 onwards he set about gathering more followers, and, by his own account, soon had more than 2 000 people living under his authority in the imizi which he proceeded to establish in that area.[122] One of Fynn's main aims in setting up a territorial base near the Mzimkhulu was very probably to develop a route by which he could export his ivory overland to the eastern Cape. He would have been encouraged to do so by the penetration of whites from the eastern Cape further and further northwards towards his area of operations. Traders had reached to the Mzimvubu by at least 1825,[123] and in 1826-7 the Wesleyan Missionary

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119. Fynn's evidence to Harding Commission, Natal Govt. Gazette, no. 220, 22 Feb. 1853. The relevant portion of Fynn's evidence was reprinted in Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 104.

120. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 111.

121. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 108-9; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 269, 297.

122. Fynn, Diary, pp. 130-1. Both Okoye, 'Tshaka and the British traders', Transafrican Journal of History, vol. 2 (1972), p. 21, and Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), p. 510, read Fynn as stating that he already had over 2 000 adherents by 1827. Fynn's account makes clear that the process of accumulating large numbers of adherents began at about that time.

123. Fynn, Diary, p. 116.

Society had established the first mission station north of the Kei river at Butterworth among the Gcaleka.[124]

Little evidence exists as to the identity of the groups which gave their allegiance to the traders. Among Farewell's adherents were elements of Thuli from the Port Natal region, Khanyawo from the lower Mngeni, and Maphumulo from the middle Mvoti.[125] Others who were early on brought to Farewell's settlement by Fynn from the Mzimkhulu region were of the Xolo and Shaba peoples.[126] One of these Shaba, Khofiyana kaMbengane, became induna of Farewell's umuzi, esiNyameni, which was located on the north side of the bay.[127] The Shangase from the middle Thukela and the Ndlovini from the Mdloti who are said by Bryant to have joined the traders are also likely to have become adherents of Farewell.[128]

King's establishment on the south-eastern side of the bay was known as esiHlengeni.[129] He died in September 1828, so his occupation of it was brief. All that is known of his following is that his induna was one Siphongo (Nasapongo in Isaacs's account), who originally hailed from the Zulu country.[130] Fynn's adherents at his imizi on the Mzimkhulu were probably drawn mostly from the Xolo, Shaba and others of the numerous small groups which survived in

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124. W.D. Hammond-Tooke, introduction to his edition of W. Shaw, The Journal of William Shaw, Cape Town, 1972, pp. 10-11.

125. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 268.

126. Ibid., pp. 266, 275; Kirby, ed., Andrew Smith and Natal, p. 82.

127. Ibid., pp. 269, 275. Bryant. OT, pp. 496, 554, 688, gives Khofiyana as belonging to the Mbambo section of the Cele. Three of Stuart's informants give him as belonging to the Shaba (Shabeni, Tshabeni): see JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 99; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 275; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 30.

128. OT, pp. 496, 554.

129. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 267.

130. Ibid., p. 297; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Maziyana, p. 85; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 71, 78, 133.

the region. His induna at his eNsimbini umuzi near the Mlazi was Juqula kaNqawe of the Phemvu people; one of his leading men was Mjozingana kaMbholi, a Cele man of rank.[131]

It would have been difficult for the leading traders - Farewell, King and Fynn - to have set up stable or substantial imizi without wives to give them status as socially mature men in the eyes of their adherents. Farewell's domestic establishment was presided over by the wife whom he had married in Cape Town, and who arrived at Port Natal in October 1826.[132] Fynn, as is well known, took several African wives during his career at Port Natal.[133] These he probably married after 1826-1827, when he had acquired the cattle needed for ilobolo and was setting up as an independent operator. Some of Farewell's and King's white and coloured employees who had the resources to make ilobolo payments may also soon have married African wives and set up imizi. This is suggested by Isaacs's evidence to the effect that by the middle of 1826 two of the coloured men in Farewell's party had 'kraals', people and cattle.[134] These men, together with their establishments, apparently remained under the overall authority of their employers, for Isaacs records that Farewell exercised powers of flogging those of his coloured retainers who had broken the peace, and of confiscating their people and cattle.[135]

In effect, the three separate settlements at Port Natal were from about 1827 turning into the nuclei of so many African chiefdoms, with their leaders increasingly exercising the powers of chiefs under African customary law

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131. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 99, 110; vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 269, 297.

132. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 69.

133. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 111; Bryant, OT, pp. 373, 561; S. Bramdeow, 'Henry Francis Fynn and the Fynn community in Natal 1824-1988', unpubl. M.A. thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1988, p. 1988, pp. 100, 168.

134. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 59.

135. Ibid., pp. 59, 89.

as well as of employers under Cape colonial law. By this time the respective leaders were seeking to expand their followings not simply to obtain labour-power for productive purposes but also to increase the number of armed men under their authority in case it became necessary to resolve rivalries over trade by force. It is likely, too, that they were aiming to make their combined force one that would have to be reckoned with by the Zulu leadership. It was no doubt with these purposes in mind, as well as the hunting of elephants, that they trained numbers of their African adherents in the use of firearms,[136] and laid in stocks of arms and ammunition. Without indicating his sources, Theal claims that at one point the traders were able to exchange ivory for muskets and ammunition when a trading vessel put in at the bay.[137] The context of his statement suggests that this was the Buckbay Packet, which according to Isaacs, visited Port Natal in February 1828.[138] Isaacs of course makes no mention of a trade in firearms as having taken place.

The extent of the conflict between Farewell and King was such that by the beginning of 1827, with Farewell apparently in effective possession of the Port Natal harbour, King was making serious efforts to find another port from which to operate. In January 1827 he 'annexed' the mouth of the Mlalazi river, and later in the year proceeded to make a survey of it.[139] In about May of that year he sent a member of his party, a boy named Charles Maclean (the 'John Ross' of Natal settler mythology), to walk to Delagoa Bay with an escort provided by Shaka. Maclean's purpose was ostensibly to 'fetch medicines', but

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136. On the training and arming of African musketeers see Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 60, 89; Fynn, Diary, p. 130.

137. G.M. Theal, History of S.A. since 1795, vol. 2, London, 1908, p. 301.

138. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 117.

139. Ibid., pp. 86, 105; Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 110-11.

a close reading of Isaacs suggests that the real purpose of his mission was to explore the feasibility of King's using the overland route to the bay to send out his ivory.[140]

Nothing is known of the relations that existed at this time between the trading settlements and the neighbouring Thuli and Cele chiefdoms. Nor is there any firm evidence on the impact which the rivalries among the traders had on Shaka's policies towards them. Isaacs states only that the traders' collision of interests from the end of 1826 onward 'tended much to perplex' the king.[141] What this probably meant was that Shaka found it difficult to pursue a consistent policy towards the traders when authority among them was divided and the different parties were making competing claims on him. The emergence of divisions among them would also have made it more difficult for him to find agents whom he could trust to carry out the project which had remained in his mind since the arrival of Farewell's party in 1824. This was to send an embassy to make contact with the British authorities in the Cape.[142] From the middle of 1827 onward this project was looming larger and larger in his mind. The reasons for this, and the way in which it shaped the nature of relations between the Zulu king and the Port Natal traders will be considered in the next section of the chapter.

3. The crisis of Shaka's authority

The main factor which impelled Shaka actively to seek to make contact with the British from about mid-1827 onward was most probably the precariousness of his rule in the face of internal and external opposition. Though he had succeeded in destroying the main outside threat, in the form of the Ndwandwe chiefdom, in 1826, there is nothing to

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140. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 101-103.

141. Ibid., p. 77.

142. See Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Farewell to Somerset, 6 Sept. 1824, p. 37; op. cit., report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 6 Jan. 1826, p. 80.

indicate that resistance within the Zulu kingdom was diminishing. If anything, to judge by subsequent events, it was increasing. In addition, the expansion of the traders' settlements at Port Natal, and more particularly the growth of Fynn's budding chiefdom at the Mzimkhulu, were probably coming to be causes of concern to Shaka.

That there was a high degree of political tension in the kingdom at this time is indicated by the outburst of mass hysteria and the widespread killings which followed the death of the king's mother, Nandi, in August 1827. The full significance of this episode still needs to be properly researched, but the evidence from Fynn's well-known eyewitness account, undoubtedly exaggerated though it is, suggests that it had important political dimensions.[143] In part it may have been a consequence of Shaka's deliberate attempts to rouse popular feeling against his enemies so he could rid himself of opposition elements. That resistance to his rule was strong in some quarters is indicated by the survival into the early 20th century of numerous traditions to the effect that Nandi had been killed by Shaka's own hand.[144] One does not have to believe these traditions, which are not supported by Fynn's account,[145] to appreciate that they were manifestations of the deep-seated opposition to Shaka's rule which had existed in his lifetime. Though the story that Shaka had killed his mother probably did not gain wide public currency until after his assassination in 1828, it was probably being whispered about by his opponents soon after her death.

'I am like a wolf on a flat, that is at a loss for a place to hide its head in,' Shaka told Isaacs a few weeks

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143. Fynn, Diary, pp. 132-5, 139. See also Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 108-111.

144. The traditions to this effect as recorded by Stuart are too numerous to cite individually. See the indexes in the successive volumes of the James Stuart Archive under 'Nandi: death'.

145. Fynn, Diary, pp. 132-3.

after Nandi's death.[146] Towards the end of the year he left Bulawayo, and, taking large numbers of people and cattle with him, crossed the Thukela to go and live at kwaDukuza.[147] It was probably at this time that he established a number of new amakhanda in the adjacent coastlands. According to Bryant, he stationed the uBhekenya ibutho near kwaDukuza, the uGibabanye south of the Mvoti, and the umGumanqa (or uKhangela) at Port Natal.[148]

Several possible reasons for Shaka's move can be identified. In the first place, as Hamilton has suggested, he may have been in fear of his life.[149] KwaBulawayo was situated in the country of the Qwabe, many of whom were deeply hostile to Zulu rule. According to tradition, Shaka himself stated that he was moving to escape from the country of the izimpaka, or wildcats which were supposed to be used as familiars by workers of evil powers.[150] By the same token, he may have wanted to be closer to the Port Natal traders for reasons of security. In the second place, he may have been aiming to assert a greater degree of control over the traders, who occupied part of the region which was coming to be of increasing strategic importance to him. In the third place, he may have been aiming more actively to put in train the organization of his long-touted embassy to the Cape.

In July 1827 Shaka had secretly raised the issue of sending a mission to the Cape with King, Isaacs, and

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146. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 113.

147. Fynn, Diary, p. 137.

148. Bryant, OT, p. 644. On the uGibabanye see Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 140; on the uKhangela see JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Makewu, p. 161; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Meseni, p. 100; and Fuze, Black People, p. 65.

149. Hamilton, 'Ideology', unpubl. thesis, p. 186.

150. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Ndukwana, p. 194; vol. 2, evidence of Makewu, p. 161; vol. 2, evidence of Maquza, p. 235.

Fynn.[151] His plans were temporarily disrupted by the upheavals that followed the death of his mother, but in September, after the end of the official mourning period, he again took the matter up.[152] That it was King's employees who were building the boat on which Shaka's plans depended was probably the main reason why the Zulu king turned to him rather than to Farewell for assistance and advice. The role played by King's party in the defeat of Bheje earlier in the year was no doubt a reinforcing factor.

The construction of the boat had its own politics. Soon after his arrival at Port Natal in October 1825, King had put several members of his party to work on building a small schooner.[153] Most writers have accepted at face value Isaacs's statement that King's aim in building the boat was to enable his party to escape from Port Natal after the wreck of the ship which he had chartered to bring it there.[154] But as Roberts has argued, the evidence points to a different conclusion. During his exploration of Port Natal in 1823, King had noted that good timber for ship-building was available near the harbour. According to a letter written by Farewell, which Roberts cites, King had made plans to build a boat at Port Natal even before setting out on his trading venture there. The fact that he brought with him a trained shipwright and the requisite tools confirms this. In addition, though the members of his party had several opportunities to leave Port Natal before the boat was finished, they did not take them.[155] King's initial purpose was probably to use the materials and labour available at Port Natal to construct

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151. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 106.

152. Ibid., p. 113.

153. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 16; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 6 Jan. 1826, p. 79.

154. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 16.

155. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 80-1.

his own vessel in order to avoid the expense of having to charter a ship and the difficulties of finding financial backers. But as he became aware of the importance which Shaka attached to the idea of sending an embassy to the Cape, so, it seems, King began to realize that possession of the means of conveying Shaka's envoys would put him in a powerful position to extract favours from the Zulu king. Completion of the vessel therefore became dependent on Shaka's willingness to grant him concessions.

It is difficult otherwise to explain why construction of the vessel was not finished till March 1828, two and a half years after it was begun.[156] In January 1826 King had been reported as expecting it to be completed within four months.[157] In April 1826 the ship was more than half finished.[158] Work on it was no doubt delayed by King's absence in the Cape from April to October 1826, and by several work stoppages on the part of its builders.[159] But the likelihood is that, after his return, King deliberately delayed progress on it until he had worked his way firmly into Shaka's favour. It seems too much of a co-incidence that at the end of 1827 Isaacs was reporting 'rapid progress' on the building of the ship,[160] and that in February 1828 Shaka made his mark on a document which in effect recognized King as paramount among the Port Natal traders. It purported to grant him possession of Port Natal and the surrounding territories, and exclusive trading rights throughout Shaka's dominions. In addition, it appointed him 'chief' of kwaDukuza, and placed

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156. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 117.

157. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 6 Jan. 1826, p. 79.

158. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 28 April 1826, p. 85; King, 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement', in Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol. p. 245.

159. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 101, 116.

160. Ibid., p. 115.

him in charge of the embassy which the Zulu chief was about to send to the Cape.[161]

It was not an accident that Isaacs, who signed the document as a witness, omitted all mention of it from his memoirs. The 'grant' of land supposedly obtained by King was much the same as that previously made by Shaka to Farewell, to whom, according to Isaacs, the Zulu king was by now exhibiting 'a cool indifference'.[162] Having obtained his concession, fraudently or otherwise, King's main aim was now to get to the Cape and lay his claims before the colonial government, with corroboration of their validity from Shaka's envoys. As will be discussed below, his intentions were also undoubtedly to agitate for the establishment of some kind of British authority at Port Natal to give his claims effect. In March 1828 his boat was launched, and at the end of April the members of Shaka's embassy embarked. As his envoys the Zulu king had chosen two of his senior izinduna, Sotobe kaMpangalala and Mbozamboza.[163] The party sailed on 30 April and arrived at Port Elizabeth on 4 May.[164]

Thus did Shaka's embassy fall into the clutches of the man who, on his previous visit to the Cape in 1826, had been at pains to publicize the notion that Shaka was a 'despotic and cruel monster' who had laid waste most of the region about his kingdom.[165] It is difficult to establish precisely what Shaka's intentions were in sending the mission. According to the report which King made to the Cape government after his arrival at Port Elizabeth, Sotobe

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161. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, notarial deed signed by J.A Chaboud, 29 July 1828, pp. 247-8. See also Chase, ed., Natal Papers, part 1, p. 23; Bird, ed., Annals, vol. 1, p. 94.

162. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 117.

163. Ibid., pp. 117-18.

164. Ibid., p. 118; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Francis to Bell, 9 May 1828, p. 154.

165. King, 'Some account of Mr Farewell's settlement', in Thompson, Travels and Adventures, vol. 2, pp. 248-9.

was to convey to the authorities the message that Shaka was well disposed towards the British, and to find out what their attitude was to his intentions of making an attack on the chiefdoms near the Cape eastern frontier. Mbozamboza was to return from Port Elizabeth as soon as possible with a report on how the embassy had been received at the Cape.[166] No more explicit a statement of the mission's purpose is to be found in any of the voluminous correspondence, as recently published,[167] which its arrival at the Cape engendered. Sotobe later indicated that an additional aim may have been to open up trading relations with the Cape.[168] Overall, it seems, the objects of the mission were to establishment official contact between the Zulu king and the British authorities in the Cape, to explore the possibilities of trade links, and if possible to elicit a response from the colonial government which would clear the way for further Zulu expansion to the south. That the Zulu were contemplating an attack on the chiefdoms near the Cape frontier was, though, almost certainly an insinuation of King's rather than a reflection of Shaka's real objectives.

In the event Shaka's embassy remained in Port Elizabeth for three months, while government officials there and in Cape Town sought to establish the bona fides of its members, and to find out from them precisely what the purpose of their mission was. Following the partisan account of Isaacs, who had accompanied King to Port Elizabeth, many writers have seen the official reception of the embassy as a case of bungling on the part of a pettifogging and obstructive bureaucracy.[169] But this is

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166. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, King to Van der Riet, 10 May 1828, pp. 156-7.

167. See the extemely useful and apparently comprehensive set of documents published in Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, pp. 154-280 passim.

168. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Cloete to Bell, 25 July 1818, p. 238.

169. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 119-24; Bryant, OT, pp. 617-20; Mackeurtan, Cradle Days, p. 142; Morris, Washing of the Spears, pp. 102-3; Brookes & Webb, History

to overlook the fact that on a number of previous occasions the Cape authorities had demonstrated their support for the ventures at Port Natal, which they expressly regarded as having been established under the sanction of the colonial government.[170] Twice the government had sent a naval vessel to investigate the state of affairs at the port,[171] and it had supported King's enterprise to the extent of providing him with two cannon, arms and ammunition from official stores.[172]

As is clear from the official correspondence on the subject, the Cape authorities took Shaka's mission seriously.[173] From the start, though, they were highly suspicious of King's credentials and motives. Attempts to exclude him from negotiations with Shaka's two envoys were frustrated by their refusal to commit themselves without King's advice. Discussions between the various parties were greatly complicated by the spread of strong rumours from mid-June onwards that a Zulu army was advancing southwards towards the colonial frontier.[174] By the end of June both envoys were anxious to return home, and in spite of King's increasingly desperate attempts to find a role for himself as a negotiator, the Cape government decided to send a naval vessel to return the embassy to Port Natal. It left Algoa Bay on 9 August and arrived at its

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of Natal, p. 22.

170. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Brink to Farewell, 5 May 1824, p. 36; op. cit., Plasket to Cuyler, 26 Nov. 1824, p. 44.

171. Ibid., Hawes to Moorsom, 16 May 1825, pp. 49-50; op. cit., report in Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 28 April 1826, pp. 84-5.

172. Ibid., Plasket to Military Secretary, 11 Aug. 1825, p. 68.

173. See also the useful analysis in Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 124-9, 137-9.

174. See the correspondence in Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, pp. 154-202 passim.

destination a few days later.[175]

From both Shaka's and Kings's perspectives, the mission to the Cape had been a failure. The latter's grandiose schemes to win official recognition as a figure of importance at Port Natal had collapsed. He returned a sick and broken man, and died a few weeks later.[176] For his part, Shaka gained nothing but a statement from the Cape government that while it was anxious to be on good terms with him, any movement southward by the Zulu which threatened to disturb the colony's eastern frontier would be opposed by force. This, at least, was the official message given to his ambassadors.[177] Whether they actually conveyed it to the king is not known; in any case, Isaacs did so soon after the party's return from the Cape.[178] To some extent the failure of the embassy can be attributed to Shaka's having placed it in the charge of King, who was unable to convince the Cape authorities that he was anything more than a self-interested impostor. But to a major extent it must be attributed to the inopportune raid which Shaka had launched southward soon after the embassy's departure.

The circumstances which led to the mounting of this expedition have never been properly examined, and it remains a problematic episode in the history of Shaka's reign. It will not be fully understood until a thorough study of the history of the early Zulu state has been made. Nevertheless, the analysis developed so far in this chapter provides the basis for a partial reassessment of previous arguments to be put forward.

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175. See the documentation in Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, pp. 207-80 passim.

176. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 140, 141-2.

177. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Cloete to Bell, 7 Aug. 1828, p. 255; op. cit., Bourke to Huskisson, 26 Aug. 1828, p. 269.

178. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 132; Cape Archives GH 19/3, Isaacs to Cole, 19 Dec. 1828.

The first writer to have discerned a link between Shaka's embassy to the Cape and his raid to the south seems to have been Mackeurtan.[179] He made little of it, though, nor did Morris in his more detailed account.[180] It was not until Roberts produced his reassessment of the Port Natal settlement's history that the importance of the connection was recognized.[181] Roberts argues that the more or less simultaneous despatch of the embassy and of the expedition to the south was in large part a product of James King's manipulations. The latter was concerned not simply to obtain exclusive trading rights from Shaka, but also to get official British protection of his venture. The first step towards achieving this latter aim was to bring the Zulu 'threat' to the Cape firmly to the notice of the colonial authorities. King therefore, according to Roberts, 'staged' the departure of the embassy to take place at the same time as the despatch of Shaka's army southward in the hope that he would be able to play a key role in subsequent negotiations between the British and the Zulu.[182] Shaka, in Roberts's view, was ready to launch a campaign against the frontier chiefs in order to enable him 'to contact the whites in the Cape Colony'.[183]

Like the other traders, King no doubt had a direct interest in fomenting upheavals in the regions to the south in order to try to draw the British northwards to Port Natal. And there is abundant evidence in the documentation on the mission which he conducted to the Cape that from the start he was seeking a role for himself as an intermediary on the Cape frontier between the British and a supposedly advancing Zulu army.[184] But because of his focus on the

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179. Mackeurtan, Cradle Days (1930), p. 142.

180. Morris, Washing of the Spears (1966), pp. 99-103.

181. Roberts, Zulu Kings, chs. 8, 9.

182. Ibid, pp. 137-8.

183. Ibid., p. 153.

184. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, King to Van der Riet, 10 May 1828, p. 157; op. cit., King to Van der Riet, 24 May 1828, p. 163; op. cit., King to Van der Riet, 13 July 1828, pp. 219-20.

dynamics of the Port Natal settlement rather than on those of the Zulu state, Roberts takes too instrumentalist a view of Shaka's expedition to the south. If King was in a position to take the Zulu embassy to the Cape more or less when he chose, he did not remotely have the power to 'stage' the sending of the expedition. And it seems highly unlikely that Shaka would have been politically so naive as to aim to 'make contact' with the British in the Cape by sending an army to attack the frontier chiefdoms: Roberts is here taking the traders' projection of Shaka's motives too much at face value.

A radically different interpretation of these events has been put forward by Cobbing. He argues that it is unlikely that there was any Zulu attack to the south at all. In mid-1828 Shaka's army was sent northwards to raid along the Olifants river in the eastern Transvaal; for it to have been campaigning southwards just previously was, in his view, a physical impossibility. The notion that Shaka made a raid to the south was a fabrication of the Port Natal traders, particularly Fynn, who was seeking to cover up a raid which he himself had made on the Mpondo with his own private army from the Mzimkhulu. Fynn's raid was an indication of the degree to which Shaka's southern security system was by this stage disintegrating under the impact of the traders' activities. More and more Shaka was finding himself wedged between two fronts of white pressure, one emanating from Port Natal, the other from Delagoa Bay. The probable purpose of his mission was to make a protest about white destabilization of his state.[185]

Like Roberts's argument, Cobbing's is heavily trader-centric, and takes little account of the internal dynamics of Zulu politics at this time. The notion that there was no Zulu raid southward is strongly contradicted by the evidence from Stuart's informants. In the four volumes of

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185. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi,' JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 510-11.

the James Stuart Archive so far published, sixteen informants of widely differing backgrounds make mention in one form or another of this campaign.[186] Several of them speak of their fathers as having participated in it,[187] and this corpus of information cannot summarily be disregarded. Cobbing's comments on the activities of the traders, like those of Roberts, serve to underline the importance of the role which they were playing in Zulu politics by 1827-28, and to reveal the ways in which their operations were adding to the pressures which Shaka was facing. But both authors tend to portray Shaka too much as the victim of manipulation by the traders. The Zulu king had his own political agendas, and the ability of the traders to take advantage of him at certain times depended on the conjunctures of a much wider range of circumstances than either Roberts or Cobbing allows for.

According to the statements of Isaacs and Fynn, Shaka had been planning a raid to the southward since at least September 1827, when the official mourning for his mother came to an end.[188] There seems no reason to doubt their evidence in this case, for it is probable that a number of factors were combining to make a move of this kind something of a political necessity for Shaka. An external campaign would help divert the attentions of his subjects from affairs of state, and if successful in terms of the number of cattle seized, would enable him, for a time at

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186. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleka, p. 6; Cane, p. 77; Dinya, pp. 95, 106; Jantshi, p. 187.
JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 61; Mahaya, p. 110; Makewu, p. 163; Mayinga, p. 249; Maziyana, p. 274.
JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 44; Mcothoyi, p. 55; Melaphi, p. 83; Mkhando, p. 145; Maziyana, p. 146; Mkhehlengana, p. 217.
JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 27; Mtshaphi, p. 82.

187. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 95; vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 61; vol. 3, evidence of Mkhehlengana, p. 217; vol. 4, evidence of Mtshaphi, p. 82.

188. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 113; Fynn, Diary, p. 139.

least, to damp down internal opposition. A show of strength in the Port Natal-Mzimkhulu region would serve to reassert his domination over the traders. To prepare the ground he sent out spies, among them Mathubane of the Thuli, and Mbozamboza, the induna who soon afterwards went to the Cape as one of Shaka's ambassadors. By his own account, as later reported by a Cape official, the latter reached as far as the chiefdoms near the Cape frontier.[189]

It was probably the spread of reports of the intended expedition which spurred King to complete the construction of his boat, and to begin pressuring Shaka into making him the concessions he sought in return for conducting his proposed embassy to the Cape. At the same time, he and other traders may well have encouraged Shaka to proceed with organization of his expedition by representing to him the favourable response that he would evoke from the British if he were to attack their 'enemies' on the Cape frontier. Certainly this was the conclusion later reached by the Acting Governor of the Cape, Richard Bourke. In a report to his superiors in London, he expressed his opinion that Shaka had been induced by the traders to believe that the colonial government would favour an invasion of the frontier region, and that the Zulu king's 'designs' had been fomented by the traders in their own interests.[190] It is unlikely that Shaka was entirely taken in by the asseverations of the traders, but they probably added to his determination to make diplomatic contact with the British and sound out their attitudes on frontier affairs. In the early months of 1828 he went ahead with arrangements for sending off his embassy and with preparations for his expedition to the south.

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189. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 113; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 273; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Cloete to Van der Riet, 27 June 1828, p. 186.

190. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Bourke to Huskisson, 26 Aug. 1828,

Sometime in May, shortly after the departure of the embassy, a Zulu army marched southwards, accompanied by Shaka himself. On the way it was joined by strong contingents from the Port Natal settlements and also from Fynn's establishments on the Mzimkhulu.[191] Though Fynn predictably indicates that his people were forced to join the expedition, it is likely that, as on previous campaigns, the traders participated with alacrity. The combined forces proceeded to invade the Mpondo country and seize large numbers of cattle.[192] By mid-June a section of the Zulu army seems to have reached as far as the Bomvana country, south of the Mthatha river, before turning back.[193] According to Fynn, he and Farewell remained at his residence near the Mzimkhulu with Shaka, and took no part in the raid.[194] Evidence collected soon afterwards by Cape frontier officials indicates otherwise. The Mpondo chief, Faku, reported that 'a party of armed Englishmen', including Fynn, had participated in the attack on him.[195] Isaacs, who obtained his information from Fynn, indicates that a number of Farewell's employees had also taken part.[196]

Seen as a cattle raid, and as a show of force, the expedition to the south was a success. Numbers of the

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191. Fynn, Diary, p. 143; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 126.

192. Fynn, Diary, pp. 144-51; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 126-7; also the references as for note 186 above.

193. Fynn, Diary, p. 145; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 126; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana. p. 274; Kay, Travels and Researches, p. 293; Shaw, Journal, pp. 128-32; Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Brownlee to Campbell, 2 July 1828, p. 197; op. cit., Shaw to Somerset, 8 July 1828, pp. 204-5.

194. Fynn, Diary, pp. 143-9; Cape Archives GH 19/3, Fynn to Somerset, 9 Sept. 1828. See also Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 126.

195. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Dundas's report, 15 Aug. 1828, pp. 273-4; op. cit., Bourke to Huskisson, 26 Aug. 1828, p. 269.

196. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 126.

cattle seized were sent to Shaka's existing posts near kwaDukuza and in the Cele and Thuli territories. Others were placed at posts which the Zulu chief now set up along the coast south of Port Natal as far as the Mzimkhulu. These latter were in the charge of the chiefs of the Ndelu, Langa and other small groups.[197] At first sight it seems surprising that Shaka should have placed these cattle in a region which was vulnerable to raiding from south of the Mzimkhulu. But with Fynn and his gunmen now well established on the lower reaches of that river, and, after Shaka's personal appearance at the head of his army, at least temporarily subservient to his authority, the Zulu king seems to have felt that he had less to fear from his opponents in that direction than from those north of the Thukela.

But if Shaka had hoped to head off internal opposition by means of a successful raid, then the expedition had been a failure. If anything, it seems to have provided the opportunity for a number of his high-ranking enemies to plot his death. Both Dinya and Mcothoyi state that some of Shaka's brothers were looking for an opportunity to kill him in the course of the expedition, and, according to Mahaya, an attempt was actually made to stab him during a dance.[198] Cobbing has suggested that Fynn and other traders were party to the conspiracy.[199] Until recently this claim might have appeared startling; against the background of the scenario sketched out above, it appears justifiable. For the traders as a body, the elimination of Shaka would have been a means of opening the way to a

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197. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mayinga, p. 249; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 83; Fynn, Diary, pp. 151, 158; Grout's statement on Hlongwa history in his evidence to the Harding Commission, Natal Govt. Gazette, no. 215, 18 Jan. 1853. See also Bryant, OT, p. 644.

198. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 95; vol. 2, evidence of Mahaya, pp. 110-11; vol. 2, evidence of Mcothoyi, p. 55.

199. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol 29 (1988), p. 511.

further relaxation of the trading regulations under which they had to operate.[200] For Fynn, it would have meant the removal of a major obstacle to the expansion of his political power in the Mzimkhulu region. For Farewell, it would have meant an end to the influence at court of James King, his main rival for control of the Port Natal trade. The statements made by Fynn and Isaacs that the killing of Shaka had long been contemplated by the king's brothers may indicate that they themselves had known of the conspiracy for some time.[201]

It is likely that Shaka had wind of the plot to kill him, otherwise it is difficult to explain his next move. Even before his army had returned from the expedition against the Mpondo, he issued orders for it to proceed at once far to the north to raid the chiefdoms of the region beyond Delagoa Bay.[202] With it, according to Maziyana, went two companies of men drawn from the followings of the Port Natal traders.[203] The launching of a new campaign so soon after the conclusion of a previous one was unprecedented, and caused much dissension in the army, to the point where Shaka was said by some to have gone mad.[204] It is best explained as a desperate attempt on the part of Shaka to put the conspirators at a distance pending the return of his embassy from the Cape with the long-hoped-for agreement of friendship with the British. With senior members of the Zulu chiefly house now actively planning his

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200. On Shaka's opposition to open commerce, see Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 177.

201. Fynn, Diary, p. 156; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 143.

202. Fynn, Diary, p. 153; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 127, Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 145-6. See also the numerous references to this campaign in the James Stuart Archive, where it is indexed under 'Shaka: campaigns' and 'Soshangane'.

203. JSA, vol. 2, p. 297.

204. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Baleka, p. 6; vol. 1, evidence of Jantshi, p. 187; vol. 2, evidence of Madikane, p. 61; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 83.

death, and with the allegiance of the Fynn and Farewell parties at best dubious, Shaka's only hope of finding powerful allies lay in the outcome of his mission to the Cape.

Shaka's raid beyond the Mzimkhulu and his occupation of the coastlands south of Port Natal must in part have been carried out in the expectation that his embassy to the Cape would succeed in providing the British with an acceptable explanation of his overall policy in the region. He was not in a position to know that after three frontier scares in as many years the Cape government was highly jittery about 'invasions' from the north into the territories on the colony's eastern and north-eastern frontier. In 1825, 1826, and 1827 alarms had flared up in certain quarters on the frontier after the spread of reports that hordes of marauders, usually unidentified except as 'fetcanie', were advancing southwards and threatening to send floods of Xhosa and Thembu refugees pouring into the colony.[205] These scares still need proper study: it is likely that to some extent they were fomented by settlers and officials who wanted a more interventionist British policy on the frontier. The significant point here is that they served to make the Cape government more sensitive than ever to developments beyond the frontier which seemed to threaten the stability of the colony.

Thus when reports reached the frontier in the middle of June 1828 that a Zulu army was advancing southward, the Cape government's response was to prepare if necessary to beat it back by force.[206] By early July news had arrived that the Zulu forces were retiring northwards, but by the end of the month rumours were circulating that they were again advancing.[207] It was against this background of rumours and alarms that, early in August, Shaka's

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205. See the documents in Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, pp. 56-63, 95-106, 114-51.

206. Ibid., pp. 171, 173-89.

207. Ibid., pp. 196-7, 250-1.

ambassadors were embarked on their return voyage to Port Natal with the official intimation that Shaka's expansion to the south would not be welcome to the British if it menaced the stability of the colonial frontier.

The return of the embassy with the news that it had failed to achieve its main objectives was a heavy blow to Shaka.[208] Perceiving that he had been duped by King, he turned as a last resort to Farewell's party, and ordered one of its members, John Cane, to proceed at once overland to the Cape with another party of envoys and re-open negotiations with the British authorities.[209] That the Zulu king had to fall back on the traders for assistance underscores the degree to which events had made the pursuit of his diplomatic initiatives dependent on their co-operation. Any attempt to send an unaccompanied Zulu embassy overland to the Cape at this time would very probably have ended in its destruction at the hands of the chiefdoms to the south. The members of the mission were to convey Shaka's desire to maintain friendly relations with the British, to maintain peace with the chiefdoms on the Cape frontier, and to open communication overland with the colony. In addition, they were to request the colonial government to send an emissary to Shaka to make known its policies, and to ask for a missionary to come and live in his country. If the British government wanted to establish a settlement at Port Natal, Shaka would allocate to it the territory from near the port southward to the Mpondo country.[210]

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208. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 128-35.

209. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 151-2; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 133; Fynn, Diary, p. 155.

210. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 152-3, 154; and the following documents from Cape Archives GH 19/3: Somerset to Bell, 10 Oct. 1828; Campbell to Bell, 10 Oct. 1828; deposition of John Cane, Cape Town, 10 Nov. 1828; deposition of John Cane, Cape Town, 13 Nov. 1828; also Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa, British Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons no. 252, 1835 (repr. in Irish University Press series of British Parliamentary papers, Colonies, Africa, vol. 20, Shannon, 1970), Cole to Murray, 31 Jan. 1829, p. 558.

But Shaka's new initiatives did not save him from his enemies. The failure of his efforts to obtain the support of the British in the Cape would very soon have reached the ears of the conspirators, and encouraged them to take decisive action. Judging by the fact that Dingane subsequently promoted him to high office, it is likely that Sotobe, the chief emissary on Shaka's abortive first mission to the Cape, belonged to the anti-Shaka party.[211] His reports may well have played a key role in deciding the conspirators to make their move. The absence of most of the army was probably another important factor. In late September Shaka was stabbed to death at kwaDukuza by a party led by two of his brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana.[212]

4. The challenge from the south

The assassination of Shaka is an event which has been heavily dramatized in the literature, but has never yet been properly placed in historical context. From the perspective taken in this study, it can be seen as a striking manifestation of the extent to which the affairs of the Zulu kingdom had by the late 1820s become interlocked with those of the world of European capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism. The main arena where the development of this relationship was played out was the coastland area between the Thukela and the Mzimkhulu. From being a marginal region of the Zulu state, it had within half a dozen years become a zone of conflict between two fundamentally different and opposed sets of interests. On the one hand, Shaka and his supporters were seeking to establish it as the new political centre of gravity of the Zulu state. On the other, the foreign traders whom he had

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211. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 173, 252; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mageza, p. 71.

212. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 143.

encouraged to settle at Port Natal were aiming, whatever the rivalries among them, to establish the port and the region round it as an autonomous base for the unrestricted commercial penetration of the hinterland. To further their respective aims, both sets of interests sought to enlist the support of factions in the opposing camp, as well as of the British authorities in the Cape.

On his advent to power, the first impulses of Dingane, Shaka's successor, were to diminish the Zulu presence in the coastlands south of the Thukela. He abandoned the cattle posts which Shaka had recently established south of the Cele domain.[213] He moved the Zulu capital from the Mvoti back to the mid-White Mfolozi area.[214] He turned the Zulu state's attentions back to Delagoa Bay.[215] But no more than Shaka could he afford to relax his hold on the southern peripheries of his kingdom, or to weaken ties with the traders at Port Natal. Though no analysis of the politics of the Zulu state at this time has yet been produced, it is likely that Dingane's position as a usurper of the kingship remained shaky for a good while. Like Shaka, he needed the support of the traders, or, at the very least, to prevent it from going to possible rivals. After an initial period of uncertainty, he seems to have been able to establish working relations with the various parties of traders, and, by early 1830 at least, was actively courting commerce with them.[216] Later that year he sent John Cane once again tramping overland to the Cape frontier to convey a message of friendship to the Cape government.[217]

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213. Fynn, Diary, p. 158; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 144.

214. Roberts, Zulu Kings, p. 186.

215. Fynn, Diary, p. 175; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 224.

216. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 160, 177, 178; Fynn, Diary, p. 175; Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 174, 185-6, 192.

217. Roberts, Zulu Kings, p. 199.

At the same time Dingane was taking steps to assert his own authority over the territories south of the Thukela. The necessity of this was graphically underscored when, early in 1829, a large section of Qwabe revolted against his rule. Led by their chief, Nqetho, they made off southwards from the area between the Thukela and the Mhlathuze with herds which included numbers of royal cattle. After beating off a Zulu attempt to recapture the cattle, they proceeded to establish themselves between the Mzimkhulu and the Mzimvubu.[218] Soon afterwards, Dingane turned on Magaye, the Cele chief, and put him to death for allegedly conniving at the escape of the Qwabe. Whether the charges against him were true or not is not clear, but his position as one of Shaka's 'favourites' had made him a marked man from the time of Dingane's accession to power. In his place Dingane elevated Mkhonto, one of Magaye's sons.[219]

Early in 1830 the new king launched an attack on another of Shaka's satellite chiefdoms, that of the Mkhize, who dominated the area between the middle Thukela and the upper Mvoti.[220] On this occasion, the chief, Zihlandlo, seems to have escaped, but it is likely that thereafter his power as a local ruler was much diminished. A year or two later he was assassinated at the instigation of Dingane, whereupon most of hs adherents took to flight across the Thukela.[221] At about the same time, Dingane found an excuse for putting to death Mathubane of the Thuli, another local chief who

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218. Fynn, Diary, pp. 165-7, 175; JSA, vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, pp. 36-8; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 82-3; vol. 3, evidence of Mmemi, p. 269.

219. JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, pp. 105-6; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, pp. 74, 82, 88; vol. 4, evidence of Mtshebhwe, p. 160

220. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 204.

221. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Mandlakazi, pp. 191-2; vol. 2, evidence of Mangati, p. 205; vol. 3, evidence of Mbokodo, pp. 7, 17-18; Fuze, Black People, pp. 73-4, 83; Bryant, OT, pp. 413-14.

owed his position largely to Shaka's support.[222] What happened to the Thuli chiefship is not clear. By the early 1830s, then, Dingane had removed the key figures in the structures of authority set up south of the Thukela by Shaka, and either replaced them with his own client chiefs or allowed their functions to lapse. To support his authority in the coastlands he seems to have relied strongly on the presence there of the iNjanduna and uHlomendlini amabutho, the latter of which he had formed soon after his accession to power.[223]

In the first years of his reign Dingane was concerned not only to establish his authority over the southern peripheries of the kingdom, but also, like Shaka, to make a show of strength in the Zulu sphere of influence beyond its borders when he felt that circumstances demanded it. The flight of the Qwabe in 1829, and their embroilment in the conflicts of the Mzimkhulu-Mzimvubu region, provided the occasion for such an intervention. By this time the main lines of confrontation in these territories had been drawn between Faku of the Mpondo and Ncaphayi of the Bhaca. Ncaphayi, it seems, had recently routed an alliance of the Memela-Bhele and the Nhlangwini, sending the former fleeing southward towards the territories of the Thembu and Gcaleka, and the latter northward back across the Mzimkhulu.[224] The advent of the Qwabe was followed by a new outbreak of violence. After beating off an attack by some groups tributary to Faku, in October 1829 the Qwabe wiped out most of the members of a party of traders, headed

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222. JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, pp. 272, 293, 294, 301. According to Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 211-12, Mathubane was still living in November 1830.

223. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 214, 227, 260; JSA, vol. 2, evidence of Maziyana, p. 295; vol. 3, evidence of Melaphi, p. 88; Bryant, OT, pp. 546, 667-8.

224. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, p. 9; Bryant, OT, pp. 386-7. Under the rule of Fodo, Nombewu's successor, the Nhlangwini were trading ivory to Port Natal from the Mkhomazi-Mzimkhulu area by 1830: see Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 191, 195.

by Francis Farewell, which was proceeding from the Cape to Port Natal.[225] Soon afterwards they raided the Bomvana across the Mthatha.[226] At the end of 1829 the Qwabe were attacked in strength by the Mpondo, and completely broken up. Most of their cattle fell into the hands of the Bhaca.[227]

This event brought a reaction on the part of the Zulu. In the middle of 1830 Dingane sent an expedition against the Bhaca to try to recover the cattle which the Qwabe had taken off at the time of their revolt.[228] Though the expedition failed in its purpose, it was an earnest of the Zulu state's concern to assert its position as the dominant power in the region which extended from its borders towards the Mzimkhulu. In keeping with this policy, Dingane also established tributary relations at about this time over the Nhlangwini, who, after their defeat by the Bhaca and the death of Shaka, had settled in the valley of the middle Mkhomazi.[229]

Though he had shifted the political centre of his kingdom back to the old Zulu heartland, Dingane was thus demonstrating from early on in his reign that he was determined to maintain Zulu domination in the territories south of the Thukela. But already the forces bearing down

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225. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 183-5; Fynn, Diary, pp. 167-71; Kay, Travels and Researches, pp. 325-9; A.G. Bain, Journals of Andrew Geddes Bain, ed. M.H. Lister, Cape Town, 1949, pp. 122-4.

226. Kay, Travels and Researches, pp. 329-32; Missionary Notices (Wesleyan Missionary Society), vol. 6, extract of letter from W. Shepstone, 21 Oct. 1829, pp. 242, 244; op. cit., letter from W. Shaw, 3 Nov. 1829, p. 244.

227. Fynn, Diary, pp. 171-3; Kay, Travels and Researches, pp. 333-4; Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Methodist Missionary Society Papers, incoming correspondence, South Africa, box 5, W. Shepstone to Secretaries, 3 March 1830, enclosing extracts from his journal; JSA, vol. 1, evidence of Dinya, p. 105; vol. 3, evidence of Mbovu, p. 38.

228. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, pp. 188, 193-4.

229. JSA, vol. 4, evidence of Mqayikana kaYenge, pp. 7, 8, 19.

on this region from the Cape and beyond were rapidly growing stronger. The most dramatic manifestation of this development was the Cape government's despatching of a large military force in July 1828 to head off Shaka's supposedly imminent 'invasion' of the chiefdoms across the frontier. On finding that the Zulu had withdrawn after raiding the Mpondo, the force turned, for reasons that have never adequately been explained, against the Ngwane of Matiwane, who by this time had settled near the upper Mthatha. Aided by a large army of Thembu, Gcaleka and Mpondo, who were drawn by the prospect of rich loot, the British force attacked the Ngwane at the end of August. In a massive display of firepower, large numbers of Matiwane's people were killed and his following broken up. Most of the Ngwane cattle were seized, and many people taken off as captives.[230]

In the absence of any detailed research on the subject, the wider impact of this attack can at present only be guessed at, but it seems certain that the shock waves from it would have been felt all over southern Africa. As Cobbing observes, the forces which attacked the Ngwane comprised one of the largest armies yet seen in the continent.[231] The march of the colonial troops had taken them some 300 kilometres into African-controlled territory, and more than halfway from the eastern Cape boundary to the Mzimkhulu. In effect the Cape authorities were giving violent notice that they regarded the whole region to the

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230. An outline of the official version of these events can be pieced together from the following documents in Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1: Bourke to Huskisson, 29 June 1828, pp. 187-8; Bourke to Huskisson, 1 Aug. 1828, p. 251; Somerset to Bourke, 23 Aug. 1828, pp. 265-6; Somerset to Bourke, 26 Aug. 1828, pp. 266-8; Bourke to Huskisson, 26 Aug. 1828, pp. 268-9; plus Somerset to Bourke, 29 Aug. 1828, published in Van Warmelo's edition of Msebenzi, History of Matiwane, pp. 252-7. For a hard-hitting critique of the official intepretation see Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988), pp. 500-503.

231. Cobbing, 'The mfecane as alibi', JAH, vol. 29 (1988). p. 502.

borders of Zulu-dominated territory as now falling within their sphere of influence. More than two years later, the missionary William Boyce reported from the Mpondo country that the colonial expedition had 'left upon the minds of the natives a salutary impression of the power of the English'.[232] Similar sentiments were probably being expressed by Europeans across the sub-continent.

At the same time the Cape government began moving towards a policy of more active diplomatic intervention in the affairs of chiefdoms several removes from the colonial frontier. Its response to Shaka's first embassy was a sign of this, as were the activities of its officials in bringing together the alliance which shattered the Ngwane chiefdom. The arrival of Shaka's second mission on the eastern frontier in October 1828 provided the government with the opportunity to carry this policy further. After interviewing John Cane and the other envoys in Cape Town, the new Governor, Sir Lowry Cole, detailed a military officer to carry back to Shaka the message that the British desired friendship with him, and also to repeat the injunction that they would resist with force Zulu incursions which threatened the stability of the colonial border regions. Cole's emissary had reached the eastern frontier before the arrival of news of Shaka's death caused his mission to be abandoned.[233]

With the Cape government clearly pursuing a more interventionist policy beyond the colonial boundary, the scene was set for other colonial and colonial-linked interests to become more active in the territories bordering on the Zulu sphere of influence. Among the first to do so were groups of European and coloured freebooters

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232. Cited in Steedman, Wanderings and Adventures, vol. 2, p. 269.

233. Roberts, Zulu Kings, pp. 152-4, 175; Cory, Rise of S.A., vol. 2, pp. 365-6; Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa, House of Commons no. 252, 1835, two letters from Bell to Aitchison, 24 Nov. 1828, pp. 562-4.

from the Cape who for years had been operating in the Xhosa and Thembu territories. By the late 1820s, at least, some of them were becoming actively involved in the conflicts which were then racking the Mzimvubu-Mzimkhulu region,[234] where similar groups under Fynn and possibly other Port Natal traders were already established. The impact exerted by all these parties on the politics of the region is a subject that badly needs researching.

The freebooters were soon followed by missionaries, on occasion in co-operation with them.[235] In 1823 the Wesleyan Missionary Society had tried to establish a mission at Delagoa Bay,[236] and in the same year it had begun operations in Xhosa territory with the express purpose of extending a chain of mission stations towards the north-east.[237] In 1824, the launching of Farewell's venture to Port Natal encouraged the Society to consider setting up a mission there,[238] but lack of funds constrained it to concentrate on its work in the eastern Cape. At the time of the destruction of the Ngwane, the furthest Wesleyan station was at Butterworth among Hintsa's Gcaleka. In the aftermath of that event it established a mission among the Bomvana in 1829, another among Ngubencuka's Thembu in 1830, and a third among the Mpondo in the same year.[239] In 1829, after Shaka had made his request to the Cape authorities for a missionary to be sent to him, the Society was again planning an investigation of

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234. B. Holt, 'Nicolaas Lochenberg: freebooter, elephant-hunter and fugitive from justice', Africana Notes and News, vol. 11 (1953-55), pp. 3-9; Watt, Febana, pp. 301-2; Fynn, Diary, p. 321. See also Bryant, OT, p. 385.

235. Holt, as cited in the previous note, p. 6.

236. Shaw, Memorials of South Africa, pp. 270-3.

237. Hammond-Tooke's introduction to his edition of William Shaw's Journal, pp. 7-11.

238. Leverton, ed., Records of Natal, vol. 1, Archbell & Whitworth to Somerset, 27 April 1824, pp. 34-5; op. cit., memorial of Whitworth & Broadbent, 4 March 1825, p. 47.

239. Hammond-Tooke's introduction to his edition of Shaw's Journal, pp. 11-12.

the mission field in the Zulu domains when a shortage of funds for a second time caused its plans to be postponed.[240]

Soon after the missionaries came the merchants. By 1829 a wagon route had been opened from the eastern Cape via several mission stations to Port Natal,[241] and by 1830 traders from the Cape were beginning to use it with increasing frequency.[242] In 1829, the Commercial Exchange in Cape Town endorsed a new set of plans being touted by Farewell for a settlement at Port Natal; support for it was also expressed in Britain.[243] At the same time, from within the group of Cape merchants and their associates with an interest in Port Natal, came the first formal call to the British government for the annexation of the territory of 'Natal'.[244] Though the request was turned down on the grounds of expense,[245] the imperial government was by this time edging towards formal involvement in the affairs of the region. This was evinced by its suggestion, made at the end of 1829, that the Cape authorities should consider extending the colony's criminal law over British subjects at the port.[246] Though the proposal was not immediately acted upon, it was a sign of official recognition that interest in the region as a field of

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240. W. Shaw, The Story of My Mission in South-Eastern Africa, London, 1860, pp. 562-3.

241. Fynn, Diary, p. 175; Kay, Travels and Researches, pp. 344-5; Steedman, Wanderings and Adventures, vol. 1, pp. 282-3.

242. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, p. 188; Roberts, Zulu Kings, p. 197.

243. R.F.M. Immelman, Men of Good Hope: the Romantic Story of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, 1804-1954, Cape Town, 1955, pp. 128-9; Watt, Febana, pp. 288-9; Bannister, Humane Policy, p. 239, & appendices 1, 6 & 7.

244. Chase, ed., Natal Papers, part 1, Bannister's letter to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 May 1829, pp. 23-9.

245. Ibid., undated extract from letter from Secretary of State for the Colonies, pp. 29-30.

246. Walker, History of S.A. (1928 ed.), p. 185.

commercial enterprise was by this stage spreading beyond the handful of speculators who had backed the ventures of Farewell and King. This development would have been further stimulated by the Cape government's abandonment in 1830 of long-standing restrictions on trade across the colony's eastern borders.[247]

Thus was the field becoming set for a struggle between the Zulu state and Cape-based interests, backed ultimately by imperial Britain, for control of the territories about Port Natal. The forces which, for more than half a century, had operated to link the region south of the Thukela ever more firmly to the polities north of the river were now starting to be countered by forces which sought to pull it into the political and economic orbit of the Cape. A new era in its history was beginning.

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247. Peires, 'The British at the Cape 1814-1834', in Elphick & Giliomee, eds., Shaping of S.A. Society 1652-1840, p. 485.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the evidence from recorded oral traditions, from archaeological research, and from published travel accounts indicates that in the mid-18th century the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region was occupied by several dozen or several score small chiefdoms. The largest among them probably numbered no more than a few thousand people, and extended over no more than a couple of thousand square kilometres. Their economies were based on the production of cereal crops and the husbandry of cattle by homesteads under the patriarchal authority of male elders. Within the chiefdom, overall authority was vested in a hereditary chief. The chief's 'house' seems to have exercised a certain amount of political and social dominance over the other groups which recognized his rule, but the scope of his authority was restricted by the fluidity of the chiefdom's political structures. Over time, the size and composition of chiefdoms tended to fluctuate as groups hived off and others came to give their allegiance. In some areas, neighbouring chiefdoms whose rulers claimed to be genealogically related constituted loose clusters headed by paramount chiefs, but the authority exercised by these figures seems to have been mostly formal in character. There is no evidence for the existence at this period of highly centralized and stratified polities.

Patterns of political change in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region cannot be traced before the later 18th century, when the effects of transformations that were taking place in the territories to the north of the Thukela began to make themselves felt. From about the third quarter of the century, certain chiefdoms in an area which extended from

south of the White Mfolozi to beyond Delagoa Bay were beginning to expand in size and power, and to come increasingly into conflict with one another and with their smaller neighbours. The initial dynamic, at least, for these developments seems to have been provided by the rapid expansion after about 1760 of an international trade in ivory at Delagoa Bay.

Particularly significant in its import for political developments south of the Thukela was the expansion of the Mthethwa chiefdom in the area between the lower Mfolozi and the Mhlathuze. In what seems to have been a defensive reaction to the increase in Mthethwa power, the ruling groups in a number of chiefdoms along the lower Thukela sought to strengthen their polities by enlarging the territories which they dominated. The most successful in this aim ultimately seem to have been the rulers of the Qwabe chiefdom in the area between the Mhlathuze and the Thukela. Other chiefdoms which began to engage in a process of expansion in the later 18th century were those of the Nyuswa, the Mkhize and perhaps the Chunu. Further inland, on the upper Mzinyathi, the Hlubi chiefdom was responding in much the same way to the threat posed by the growth of the powerful Ndwandwe chiefdom to the east.

The expansion of the Qwabe chiefdom seems to have been the main factor in dislodging the Thuli from the upper Matikhulu area, and, in about the 1770s or 1780s, sending them migrating southwards across the Thukela. After forcing their way through a number of small coastland chiefdoms, the Thuli re-established themselves in what is now the Pinetown-Durban area. From there they proceeded to extend their domination over the inhabitants of a territory which reached perhaps fifty kilometres inland, and the same distance southwards to the Mkhomazi. Several offshoot chiefdoms set themselves up still further south between the Mkhomazi and the Mzimkhulu. Some time later, the continued expansion of the Qwabe was instrumental in pushing the Cele too across the lower Thukela. Their

ruling house settled on the lower Mvoti, and subsequently supplanted the Thuli as rulers of the chiefdoms of the coastlands as far south as the Thongati-Mdloti area.

The Thuli and Cele paramountcies were much larger than any of the historically known chiefdoms which had previously existed in the coastlands. Though there is no evidence surviving on the subject, the spheres in which they exercised political influence probably extended well beyond the Mzimkhulu to the south, and deep into what are now the Natal midlands to the west. But in both polities the central authority remained weak. In neither case were the rulers able to establish centralized institutions of government which gave them the degree of control over their adherents that was exercised by the Ndwandwe and Mthethwa leaders. Both the Thuli and Cele polities remained loose aggregations of chiefdoms rather than budding states.

In the first two decades of the 19th century, pressures from the northward on the polities south of the Thukela increased markedly as the conflicts between the emerging states of the Thukela-Delagoa Bay region became more intense. In the coastlands, the Qwabe were beginning to expand across the Thukela. Further up the river, the Nyuswa may also have been doing so. North of the Biggarsberg, rival sections of the Hlubi ruling house were competing for domination. The effects of these developments on the chiefdoms further to the south is not known; like the intrusions of the Thuli and Cele into the coastlands in an earlier period, they were probably felt over wide areas of what is now Natal.

In the late 1810s and early 1820s, the struggles among the chiefdoms north of the Thukela, exacerbated by the impact of a rapidly increasing trade in slaves at Delagoa Bay, stimulated a further series of migrations into the territories to the south and west. In the ensuing upheavals, the political map of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region was completely transformed. These upheavals are

conventionally seen as an aspect of the 'mfecane', a series of wars and migrations, allegedly set in motion by the explosive expansion of the Zulu state, which is supposed to have disrupted social and political life over a wide area of south-eastern Africa. Analysis of the literature on the subject reveals, in keeping with Cobbing's recent critiques of mfecane theory as a whole, that the notion of the mfecane as applied to the region south of the Thukela is an empty and profoundly misleading formula. Its essential elements - that the region was deliberately devastated by Zulu armies under Shaka - can be shown empirically to be based on misrepresentations which were originally developed for particular material ends by merchant interests in Natal and the Cape in the late 1820s and 1830s. The resultant historical stereotype was subsequently entrenched in the literature on southern African history by settler ideologues in Natal and the Cape. In the 20th century, academic historians of all shades of opinion uncritically absorbed it into their own work.

The modern notion of the mfecane as it is supposed to have taken place south of the Thukela is based very largely on the historical writings of Father Alfred Bryant, whose Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, published in 1929, is still widely regarded as the undisputed authority on 'Zulu' history before the death of Shaka. Bryant's work is thought to rest on the researches into oral traditions which he claimed to have conducted over a period of more than forty years. A close analysis of his writings on the upheavals which took place in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the 1810s and 1820s reveals that his ideas on the subject were in fact derived almost entirely from previously published sources. Much the most important of these were two documents - a set of brief notes on Natal tribal histories, and a sketch of Natal's history before the establishment of European rule - which had been researched and drawn up by Theophilus Shepstone

in the 1860s and published in the 1880s. In his treatment of the upheavals, Bryant incorporated Shepstone's narrative framework and his empirical data without acknowledgement. It is not too much to say that most of his account of the subject was plagiarized from these two documents.

Shepstone's original notes of his interviews with perhaps a dozen African informants do not appear to have survived; the tribal histories which he published are his own renderings of the information which he received, and are couched very much in terms of the stereotype of 'Zulu devastations'. This does not of itself invalidate them as sources of evidence, but it does mean that they form an insubstantial and eminently unsound base on which to erect a comprehensive account of political developments in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the 1810s and 1820s. Concepts developed in the last fifteen years or so by writers on the precolonial history of south-eastern Africa, together with the body of evidence available in the traditions recorded by James Stuart, provide the means for producing an interpretation entirely different from that put forward by Bryant.

The upheavals which took place in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region before and after 1820 were a product not of the aggressions of the Zulu, as the stereotype holds, but ultimately of an intensification in the political struggles which were taking place among the emergent states in the territory from the Thukela to beyond Delagoa Bay. The expansion of the Zulu state under Shaka was a product of the same set of forces. That the level of conflict was increasing at this particular time was in large measure an outcome of the rapid expansion of the slave trade at Delagoa Bay during the 1810s. In terms of its impact on the politics of the region south of the Thukela, the most significant development was the emergence of a confrontation between the Ndwandwe and the Mthethwa chiefdoms, both of which were forcefully

expanding in the course of the early 19th century. In the late 1810s, as the struggle between them came to a head, some of the smaller chiefdoms caught up in it began to take to flight. One of the first to do so was the Ngwane chiefdom under Matiwane, which lay on the western borders of the Ndwandwe polity. After an attack by the Ndwandwe, who may have been in search of captives for the Delagoa Bay slave market, as well as of cattle, Matiwane and many of his adherents made off to the westward. Falling upon the ruling section of the Hlubi, they killed the paramount chief, Mthimkhulu, and seized his cattle. Upon this, the Hlubi polity, which was little more than a loose clustering of semi-autonomous chiefdoms, broke up into its constituent parts. Some remained in the Hlubi territory, some moved off to the west and north in bids to maintain their autonomy, some made their way to give their allegiance to neighbouring chiefs, and some submitted to Matiwane.

To put a safe distance between themselves and the Ndwandwe, the Ngwane continued their migration south-westward across the Mzinyathi and the Biggarsberg into the valley of the upper Thukela. After establishing themselves near Bergville, they began to bring the neighbouring Bhele and Zizi chiefdoms under their sway. Some of the latter sought to preserve their political independence by moving away southward: others, unable to offer resistance to the Ngwane, had no option but to khonza to Matiwane. Within a short time the Ngwane headed a paramountcy which dominated the upper Thukela basin.

At much the same time as these events were taking place, the Zulu chiefdom under Shaka was extending its domination over the polities between the mid-White Mfolozi and the Thukela. Shaka had been set up by Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa as guardian of the western marches of his domains: after the defeat of the Mthethwa and the death of Dingiswayo at the hands of the Ndwandwe, the Zulu chief began to use his new-found power to enlarge the

territories under his rule. Through a combination of military aggression and political manoeuvering, he brought the relatively powerful Qwabe chiefdom under his authority, and then turned his attention to the other chiefdoms of the lower Thukela valley. The Chunu under Macingwane were able to avoid the fate of the Qwabe by migrating across the Thukela, probably to the upper Mvoti region. The Mkhize under Zihlandlo submitted to Shaka without a struggle. The Nyuswa tried to resist, but were defeated by a Zulu force sent against them. To the west of the former Chunu territory, the Thembu under Ngoza sought to maintain their independence by migrating westward across the lower Mzinyathi.

Zulu expansion towards the lower Thukela was primarily a defensive move undertaken to eliminate potential threats from the south, and to acquire the resources of cattle and manpower which were urgently needed to strengthen the new and relatively weak Zulu state against Ndwandwe raids from the north. After the Ndwandwe polity had shifted northwards across the Phongolo, the Zulu leadership's prime strategic concern was to secure the northern borders of the state by establishing and maintaining a strong military presence in the Black Mfolozi-Mkhuze region. Contrary to the stereotyped view, it is clear that at this stage the Zulu polity did not have the capacity to pursue a policy of active expansion to the southward. Here the main aims of its rulers were to establish a stable and secure border in the valleys of the lower Thukela and lower Mzinyathi. To this end they sought to break up or drive away chiefdoms which they regarded as posing a threat to the stability of the region, and to set up client polities which would serve to maintain control over it.

The sequence of developments that took place in this area in the late 1810s and early 1820s is impossible to establish with any certainty, but the overall consequences of Zulu intervention are clear enough. To the south-west

they sought to establish their authority over the Thembu, who, to avoid domination either by the Zulu on one side or by the Ngwane on the other, made off southwards through the Natal midlands and ultimately across the Mzimkhulu. To maintain control over the area on either side of the lower Mzinyathi, Shaka set up Jobe of the Sithole as ruler of a partly autonomous client polity. South of the Zulu heartland, Shaka set up Zihlandlo, ruler of the long-established Mkhize chiefdom, in a similar capacity. With Shaka's backing, Zihlandlo expanded the area under his authority southwards across the Thukela towards the Mvoti, where the Chunu chiefdom had recently re-established itself. In the face of Mkhize expansion, and alarmed by the Zulu attack which finally triggered off the migration of the nearby Thembu, the Chunu once again moved off. After pushing their way through the small polities of the Natal midlands, they halted in the mid-Mkhomazi-mid-Mzimkhulu area, and once again sought to consolidate. Not long afterwards, pressures exerted by the Sithole and Mkhize to the east and the Ngwane to the west sent a large group of Memela, Nhlangwini and others from the northern midlands migrating southward.

South of the lower Thukela Shaka set up a third client polity to watch over Zulu interests. Its core was formed by the Cele chiefdom, which had dominated the lower Mvoti region for several decades, and had submitted to Shaka's overlordship without resistance. Under the rule of Magaye, who had been placed in the chiefship by Shaka, the Cele were required to exercise dominion over the numerous smaller chiefdoms in the coastlands which had been forced to acknowledge Shaka's supremacy. To buttress Magaye's authority, and to enable him the more effectively to raid cattle from the territories further south on Shaka's behalf, the Zulu chief stationed a force of armed men known as the iziYendane in his chiefdom. Within a short while this force had broken up the Thuli paramountcy in the lower Mngeni-lower Mkhomazi area. As ruler of the

remnant Thuli chiefdom, Shaka elevated Mathubane, who belonged to one of its junior sections. Like other local chiefs, he came under the overall authority of Magaye.

By the early 1820s the emerging Zulu state had established indirect domination over a belt of territory on its south-western and southern borders which extended from the Msinga region south-eastward between the Thukela and Mvoti rivers to the coast, and thence south to the lower Mngeni-Mlazi area. To the west, the Ngwane chiefdom dominated the basin of the upper Thukela. To the south, the Chunu were seeking to establish their power between the middle Mkhomazi and the Mzimkhulu. In the midlands, social and political organization had been heavily disrupted by the successive migrations of the Chunu, the Thembu and the Memela-Nhlangwini group. Most of the polities of this region had either made off independently to the south, or had gone to give their allegiance to one or other of the larger chiefdoms which now dominated the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region, or had been broken up. A few managed to hold out in the more isolated and broken areas. Numbers of fragmentary groups which had lost their cattle sought to survive on the fringes of more organized polities by turning to banditry.

Though the Zulu state was by now the most powerful political actor south and west of the Thukela and Mzinyathi, it was by no means dominant in the region. To the west and south, the Ngwane and Chunu chiefdoms respectively exerted influence across considerable territories. There was nothing inherent in Zulu policy which necessarily entailed further expansion in these directions. But within a short space of time, political developments within the Zulu polity and on its northern borders set in train a process which saw Zulu domination extended westward to the Drakensberg and southward to the region of the Mzimkhulu.

The precise nature of these developments will not be known until the history of the early Zulu state has been

studied in detail, but primarily they had to do with the growth of internal opposition to Shaka's rule at a time when his kingdom was facing increasing pressures from the north. As a usurper, Shaka had from the beginning of his reign faced strong, if muted, opposition from within the Zulu ruling house. In addition, as the Zulu state expanded, its rulers faced continuing resistance from sections of powerful subordinate chiefdoms such as those of the Qwabe and the Mthethwa. Exacerbating the resultant internal tensions was, very probably, the threat of incursions on the part of the raiding and slaving polities which had established themselves in the hinterland of Delagoa Bay.

One of the responses of the Zulu leaders to the internal and external problems of security which they faced was to shift their capital, kwaBulawayo, together with many of Shaka's amabutho, from the mid-White Mfolozi area south-east to the Qwabe territory between the Mhlathuze and the lower Thukela. The move was made to suppress dissidence among the Qwabe, and perhaps also to put a greater distance between the state's nerve-centre and the unstable northern borderlands. With this shift closer towards the lower Thukela, the territories south of that river became established as a zone of new strategic importance for the Zulu leaders. For the leadership as a whole, expansion to the southward presented a means of bringing new resources of cattle under its control. For Shaka and his party of supporters in particular, it also presented the opportunity of establishing a separate power-base which could be brought more directly under their control than was possible in the regions north of the Thukela where their authority was being contested.

To secure unimpeded access to the territories beyond the Thukela, it was necessary for the Zulu first of all to eliminate the rival Ngwane and Chunu chiefdoms. At some point in the early 1820s both were attacked by Zulu forces. Though they lost many of their cattle, the Ngwane

succeeded in escaping across the Drakensberg and re-establishing their chiefdom in the Caledon valley. The Chunu chiefdom, however, was broken up. The cattle seized from it were placed at new cattle posts erected by Shaka in the country of the Cele chief, Magaye, and guarded by the latter's amabutho. Other posts may have been established in the Sithole domain on the lower Mzinyathi for the cattle taken from the Ngwane.

These campaigns extended Zulu power westward to the Drakensberg and southward to the vicinity of the Mzimkhulu. They were not, however, followed by effective occupation. While the Zulu state had the ability to mount occasional forays into these territories, it did not have the capacity to set up the permanent military presence which colonization would have entailed. The area west of the Mzinyathi was vulnerable to raids by the Griqua and other mounted gunmen who, by the early 1820s, were raiding further and further from the west and south across the southern highveld. Similarly, the territories about the Mzimkhulu were exposed to raids from the groups which, at this time, were struggling for domination in the region to the south. Chief among these after the destruction of the Chunu chiefdom were the intrusive Thembu of Ngoza, the Bhaca, the Memela, and the Nhlangwini, together with the established Mpondo chiefdom.

In the face of these dangers the Zulu leaders held back from occupying more territory south of the Thukela. Their policy was instead to consolidate their hold on the coastland region which they already controlled by proxy through Magaye, and to send armed parties to raid cattle further and further south beyond the Mkhomazi. In 1824 a force of Zulu amabutho from north of the Thukela penetrated to the vicinity of the Mzimvubu and seized cattle from the Mpondo. These were placed at posts set up in Mathubane's territory near Port Natal, and watched over by men of his Thuli chiefdom. At no stage, as far as the evidence goes, did Zulu armies make the murderous sweeps

through Natal which conventionally they are supposed to have done.

Zulu domination over the territories south of the Thukela was still being consolidated when, in the mid-1820s, a completely new set of political factors began to come into play in the region. These stemmed from the advent at Port Natal from 1824 onward of parties of British traders and hunters from the Cape colony. Their coming was a product of the growing interest which, after the end of the Napoleonic wars, merchants and officials in the Cape and in Britain were showing in south-eastern Africa as a field of commercial enterprise. With the backing of Cape Town merchants, and the assent of the colonial authorities, a small party under Francis Farewell established itself at Port Natal in 1824. Another under James King followed in 1825.

The aims of the traders were ostensibly to open up a trade in ivory with the Zulu kingdom. Covertly, their leaders also manoeuvered to acquire cessions of land about Port Natal from Shaka, and to obtain recognition of their claims from the Cape authorities. They may also have had an eye on the possibility of shipping slaves, illegal though the trade was, to the Delagoa Bay market. For his part, Shaka welcomed the British traders as suppliers of manufactures who could rival the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay, as potential allies against his enemies inside and outside the kingdom, and as intermediaries through whom he could establish contact with the British authorities at the Cape. His initial policy towards the traders was to assist them to establish themselves at Port Natal, but at the same time to try to maintain overall control of their interactions, commercial and otherwise, with his subjects. Though the traders had no option but to recognize Shaka's authority, they were soon seeking to evade the restrictions which he placed on their trading operations.

For the first two years after their arrival, the traders seem to have played little part in the public

affairs of the Zulu kingdom. From mid-1826 onward, however, they were drawn further and further into its politics. Their initial involvement came about in response to Shaka's demand for military assistance against outside enemies. In about September 1826 a party of Farewell's men accompanied Shaka's army in an attack on the Ndwandwe chiefdom, which had recently re-established itself near the upper Phongolo. With the aid of the traders' firepower, the Zulu routed the Ndwandwe and destroyed their chiefdom. Numbers of cattle, and possibly captives as well, went to Farewell and his party as reward. A few months later, James King's party assisted a Zulu force to subdue Bheje of the Khumalo who for years had held out against Shaka in the northern borderlands. This party, too, was well rewarded in cattle and captives.

By late 1826 Shaka seems to have relaxed some of his restrictions on the hunting and trading of ivory as a concession to the traders. A further testimony of the importance which by now he was attaching to their support was his enlargement of the Zulu presence in the coastlands south of the Thukela. By the end of the year he had established a major new ikhanda, kwaDukuza, near the lower Mvoti, only seventy kilometres from Port Natal, and had himself taken up residence there. At the same time, he set up numbers of other imizi and cattle posts in the region.

By about this time, too, Shaka was allowing the leading traders to set up what were in effect new chiefdoms at Port Natal and in the coastlands further to the south. From soon after their arrival he had permitted the traders to receive as adherents people from the surrounding areas who came to give their allegiance. To begin with, the traders had sought to expand their followings in order to obtain the labour which they needed to establish their enterprises on a viable footing. By 1827, as bitter rivalries developed between them, their leaders were seeking to build up their followings into private armies.

At the same time, the heads of the two main parties, Farewell and King, were jockeying for influence with Shaka. By the latter half of 1827 he was favouring King, largely, it seems, because the latter was promising to convey an embassy from Shaka to the Cape authorities in a schooner which his party was building. Shaka had had in mind since the arrival of the first party of traders the notion of sending a mission to the Cape. By the middle of 1827 he was entertaining the idea seriously, probably because of the continuing growth of opposition to his rule within the kingdom. As he seems to have seen it, the establishment of good relations with the Cape authorities would strengthen his hand against his opponents.

By the beginning of 1828 King had manoeuvred Shaka into signing a document which purported to grant him possession of Port Natal, and exclusive trading rights throughout the Zulu kingdom. Soon afterwards he completed the construction of his boat and embarked Shaka's embassy. At the beginning of May 1828 the party arrived in Port Elizabeth. Shaka's specific aims in sending a mission to the Cape government seem to have been to obtain British sanction for the expansion of the Zulu sphere of influence further to the southward into what was for the colonial authorities a politically sensitive region, and also to explore the possibilities of setting up trade links with the Cape. In the event, the mission failed, partly because, in seeking to turn it to his own advantage, James King roused the Cape government's suspicions of the whole venture, and partly because, while his embassy was still in Port Elizabeth, Shaka inopportunely launched a major raid southward into the Mpondo country.

The circumstances which led to the mounting of this expedition remain obscure. Shaka seems to have been planning it since at least late 1827. His purposes were possibly to try to damp down internal opposition to his rule by seizing cattle which he could redistribute to his politically important subordinates, and possibly also to

reassert his declining authority over the Port Natal traders. He was probably encouraged to proceed with his plans by the traders, who seem to have intimated to him that the British in the Cape would respond favourably to an attack on their 'enemies' beyond the colonial frontier by the Zulu. The traders knew very well that the British response to such a move on the part of the Zulu was likely to be hostile: what they were hoping for was a confrontation between Zulu and British which would lead the latter to intervene in the affairs of the Port Natal region, and open the way to an expansion of its commerce.

What effect the traders' intimations had on Shaka is impossible to establish. In May 1828 the Zulu king accompanied a large Zulu force southwards to the Mzimkhulu, from where he launched it against the Mpondo. With the assistance of parties of armed men provided by the traders, the Zulu seized numbers of cattle from the territories as far south as the Mthatha. Some of these were taken back to Shaka's existing cattle posts in the coastlands north of Port Natal; others were placed at several new posts which the Zulu king proceeded to set up on the coast south of the port as far as the Mzimkhulu.

Seen as a cattle raid and as a show of force in the southern borderlands of the Zulu kingdom, the expedition was a success. But as an act of policy it could hardly have been worse timed. In August 1828 Shaka's ambassadors returned with the message that the Cape government would actively resist Zulu expansion to the southward if it threatened the stability of the colony's eastern frontiers. In effect his attempt to establish friendly relations with the British had failed. This setback provided the opportunity for Shaka's enemies in the Zulu royal house to take steps to get rid of him. A conspiracy to kill him, in which some of the Port Natal traders may have been involved, had been building up for some time. The absence of most of the Zulu army, which, for reasons that are not entirely clear, Shaka had sent off on an

expedition to the northward, made it easier for the conspirators to act. In September 1828 he was assassinated by some of his brothers.

After Shaka's death, his successor Dingane at first sought to reduce the Zulu presence south of the Thukela. He soon found, though, that he could not afford to relax his hold on the southern peripheries of the Zulu kingdom, or to weaken the monarchy's commercial and political links with the Port Natal traders. No more than Shaka was he able to avoid involvement with the outside forces which had brought the traders to Port Natal in 1824, and which, by the late 1820s, were bearing down ever more strongly on the Zulu domain south of the Thukela. In July and August 1828, just after Shaka's southern expedition had begun its withdrawal from the Mthatha river, the Cape authorities made their own display of force in the area by sending a powerful expedition to destroy the intrusive Ngwane chiefdom on the upper reaches of that river. In effect they were opposing attempts by the Zulu to extend their domination further southwards, and asserting their own primacy in the region that extended towards the Mzimkhulu. Encouraged by the growing readiness of the Cape government to intervene with force in the southern reaches of the Zulu sphere of influence, other Cape-based interests pressed forward towards the Port Natal region. In 1829-30 the Wesleyan Missionary Society established three new stations beyond the Kei river, including one in the Mpondo country, and considered plans to open another at Port Natal. In the same period, a wagon route was opened from the eastern Cape to the port, and the beginnings of an overland commerce between the two regions was established. In Cape Town, merchant interests were beginning to press for British intervention to be extended to Port Natal and its hinterland. The scene was being set for a new round of struggles for control of the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region.

LIST OF SOURCES

This list is set out under the following headings:

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3. Miscellaneous official publications
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6. Unpublished theses and working papers

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