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'ZOOLACRATISM' AND 'CANNIBILISM'
A DISCUSSION OF HISTORICAL DISPOSITION TOWARDS THE 'SHAKAN' MODEL
OF SOCIAL ORDER AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

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AFRICANA

"Zoolacraticism" and "Cannibalism"

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> The Government of the Zoolas. - It would almost puzzle a DeLolme, or any of the ancient writers on governments, to define that of the Zoolas; and I may assert, without the least apprehension of its being controverted, that it is indisputably the most incomprehensible government with which any known nation on the face of the earth is conversant. In one part of this work I have, from not being able to find anything approximating to it, among the ancient or modern states, designated it a Zoolacratical government--an appellation to which, from its inexplicability, I thought it entitled. Its outline, however, may be said to be perfectly simple--namely, despotic.
>
> (Nathanial Isaacs, *Travels and Adventure in Eastern Africa*, first published 1836, third edition, 1970, p.295)

Introduction

In the run-up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 the South African and foreign press, and indeed, the South African public airing their opinions on talk shows and in the letters' pages of the newspapers, debated hotly the prospects for "real" democracy in the country. The same question occupied the political scientists. In a paper on democracy and development in post-apartheid South Africa, presented earlier this year to the Institute for Advanced Social Research, Tom Lodge posed the question of how strong democratic inclinations are amongst most South Africans.[1]

In attempting to answer this kind of question, the press, the public and the professors alike tend to follow a strategy of racial bifurcation, considering the extent of the democratic heritage of white South Africans; and then going on

to consider the claims of black South Africans to liberal and democratic traditions. The main elements cited in discussions about the democratic inclinations of whites include the claim by some that under apartheid, democracy was wholly absent. This assertion is countered by others who argue that within the franchise limitations of apartheid, democratic principles prevailed. Still others refer to the proud tradition of Boer republicanism, while Afrikaner patriarchy, the exclusion of white women voters until 1930, a strong statist tradition and a dominant one-party system are some of the qualifications of that republicanism that are noted. Lodge has argued those liberal values upheld in white South Africa were not without meaning for black South Africans, notably in the existence of an independent judiciary (although obliged to apply racist legislation), a privately owned press and the like.

Lodge looks at recent history of political organizations like the African National Congress (ANC) to assess further black South Africans' claim to liberal and democratic traditions. In his discussion he considers factors such as the existence of manipulative inner caucuses, the discipline and autocracy that follows from operating from exile and from participating in guerilla warfare. He concludes that "[t]he ANC exiles returned home with a well-developed set of authoritarian and bureaucratic reflexes". At home, Lodge argues they encountered a different political culture, that of unions and civic organizations with a higher degree of representation, democracy and accountability. Even here however, Lodge notes, politics was often partisan, and intolerant.

Discussion of the democratic inclinations of black South Africans frequently has recourse to stereotypes about the precolonial past. In one way or another, the "barbarism" of precolonial Africa is offered by commentators outside Africa as an explanation for what is identified as a continent-wide anti-democratic tendency. Many black South Africans appeal to a precolonial idyll--the communalism of the past and the consultative practices of precolonial chiefs. In 1993 ANC

legal affairs expert Zola Skewyiya argued that "traditional" institutions such as chiefship needed to be "cleans[ed]...of all the undemocratic attributes that were imparted to it both by colonialism and apartheid."[2]

In the conflict which erupted last year at the World Trade Centre between chiefs and women over the potential conflict in the constitutional Bill of Rights between the equality clause (entrenching every person's right to equality irrespective of gender) and the customary law clause (entrenching customary law in terms of which chiefs argued for the permanent minority of women), chiefs stressed the assumption of responsibility for the protection and guardianship of women by men, and defended the clause as crucial in preventing the erosion of the foundations of African culture.[3] It is clear that chiefs' arguments against democracy serve directly their interests, allowing them to retain power and influence where they might otherwise lose it. At the same time, many of the very people whose interests are not directly served by such arguments, indeed, whose situations are compromised by them, support at least the principles behind these arguments. From whence does this support come? What deep laid political "habits" and dispositions does it draw on?[4] If such habits are identifiable, are they long-standing or "original" precolonial ideas, as both Sweyiya and the chiefs suggest? Are they remnants of such ideas: refurbished "invented traditions" of the kind discussed by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in their influential study, *The Invention of Tradition*, used in the construction of new political ideologies?

Current (progressive) political wisdom rejects the notion that such ideas are pristine survivals from precolonial times, and tends to dismiss them as invented traditions which serve directly the interests of chiefs and men. The question persists: why then do people who do not benefit from these inventions accept traditions which must obviously be seen as constructions and manipulations? Why do they believe them to contain some kind of truth? What determines the material

selected for use in an invented tradition, and how did that process of adaptation actually take place? What materials were available, why were they available for adaptation, and what were the limitations on their use?

This paper tries to recast the question of how deep South Africans' traditions of democracy are, firstly, by posing a corollary question: what political traditions and concepts of social order do people have? Secondly, the paper challenges the bifurcation of the answer to this question into separate black and white political traditions, precolonial and colonial/apartheid. To do this, the paper begins to investigate some of the history of such traditions, or deep habits. It looks at the way in which a tradition's (or elements of a tradition's) own past shapes its present.

Through a focus on a single case, that of the political heritage of the Shakan system--termed "Zoolacratical government" by the contemporary observer Nathanial Isaacs, who felt no word in English would serve--the paper considers the question of to what extent it is a source of the political habits and expectations that are ingrained in the minds of a significant number of South Africans. The paper will argue that appeals to the Shakan legacy are, above all else, expressions of a desire and need for social order, where social order is understood as the alternative to anarchy and violence. The paper traces historically the appropriation of a specific set of ideas about social order derived from the precolonial Zulu state into Natal colonial discourse and practice, and specifically into the Natal Native Administration. It suggests that certain of these ideas, reshaped and refurbished, were, in turn, incorporated into aspects of apartheid thinking and practice, as well as into the ideologies of resistance to apartheid. The paper suggests that an understanding of the history of the values which underpin these ideas of social order offers an important perspective on contemporary popular conceptions of authority and of rights, as well as contributing to discussion of historical predispositions towards different political

outcomes. The argument presented in this paper suggests that one of the reasons that supporters of Zuluist politics (i.e. a politics which emphasizes the relevance of the Shakan legacy and the discipline and power of its *amabutho* system in contemporary circumstances) prefer its authoritarianism to the freedoms of liberal democratic politics, is because they perceive it to be a necessary and effective bulwark against current conditions of violence and anarchy.

As South Africans in post-apartheid times seek to modify political practices to take cognizance of popular beliefs, historical predispositions and the need to temper the hegemony of western institutions, the pressure to seek models and justifications in the precolonial past is likely to mount. In discussions about political culture appeals to the precolonial past abound, both in as a source of authority or legitimation for proposals made today, or in the form of metaphors used to discuss contemporary conditions.[5] The argument presented here is that any attempt to reach back to find examples from precolonial past must be qualified by a clear understanding of the many and varied processes by which such ideas have been transported into the present. The simplistic idea of a precolonial "democracy" as distorted by colonialism misunderstands both precolonial political relations as well as the extent to which colonial Native Administration modelled itself on precolonial ideas. It makes too radical a separation between the precolonial and colonial.

Where much recent scholarship has shown how colonial authorities imposed their own axioms and aesthetics on the colonized, or expediently reshaped existing institutions in terms of their own criteria, the argument here is that indigenous institutions were, in certain instances, taken up in their full cultural complexity to give shape and form to colonialism. The paper challenges Sweyiya's formulation that the colonial state sought first to destroy the ethos of African society and the institutions epitomizing it, and that when it failed to do so, it "resorted to the strategy of moulding and tailoring these institutions in order to serve

objectives commensurate with its colonial mission".[6]

Shaka as Political Metaphor

Since the early to mid-1980s, the image of Shaka has been extensively deployed as the central icon in Zuluist politics. Inkatha established Shaka Day as the primary celebration in its calendar, and Inkatha and later Inkatha Freedom Party politicians frequently invoke the image of the first Zulu king. Although he was the founding father of the Zulu kingdom, and is celebrated for his role in creating the Zulu nation, the choice of Shaka as central icon is not self-explanatory. Amongst the many Zulu-speakers who have historically been connected to the Zulu kingdom, Shaka is by *no means uniformly remembered in positive terms*, either in the past or today. *The James Stuart Archive* abounds with stories collected around the turn of the century, and many of which date back deep into the nineteenth century, of the brutality and oppression of Shakan rule.[7] Likewise, in the 1980s, Zulu-speakers continue to attest to the harshness of the reign of Shaka.[8] Indeed, the Zulu king's own praises make much of his violence, remembering him as

> Rager, son of Ndaba
> Ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade
> Who raged among the large kraals
> So that until dawn the huts were turned upside down[9]

While politicians like the IFP leader, Gatsha Buthelezi, make much of Shaka's accommodation of the Port Natal traders who were the first Europeans to have a sustained engagement with the Zulu kingdom, they stress constantly the warrior heritage of Zulu speakers as established by Shaka.[10] This heritage as invoked by Buthelezi and by other Zulu-speakers, both supporters and not of the IFP, consists of a number of elements, most notably discipline and social order.

Order and Chaos: "Zoolacraticism" and "Cannibalism".

By the time of Shaka's death in 1828, the Zulu kingdom had come, in the area between Delagoa Bay and the Mzimkhulu River, to represent the forces of social order, albeit a harsh

one. It was depicted by contemporary black commentators as a centre of civilisation and efficient administration and was opposed to the chaos and anarchy of surrounding areas over which Shakan rule was not established, and in which cannibalism was reputed to be rife.

The various institutions of the early Zulu state from which this reputation for efficient administration and security derived are now well-known and do not warrant extended treatment here.[11] Suffice to say the *amabutho* system lay at the heart of a well-established state apparatus, augmented by an efficient bureaucracy, and the strategic placement of Shakan loyalists in regional positions of authority. The state and social structure were hierarchically organized, and political power emanated from above. The government used organs of state power--the bureaucracy, the military and secret services--to repress dissent to its rule and to promote its policies.

The primary elements of "Zoolacraticism", in the view of Stuart's informants were the talented leadership of Shaka himself in which patronage and the maintenance of discipline were carefully balanced. Speaking to James Stuart in 1903, Jantshi kaNongila, for example, held the view that Shaka was a successful conqueror, rather than a ruthless killer. "As a matter of fact", he commented, "Tshaka did not put to death the kings and kinglets he defeated, if, when he proceeded against them, they ran away and did not show fight. He made them *izinduna* [officers]".[12] Nevertheless, Jantshi did note that Shaka frequently caused people to be put to death.[13] He related how Shaka fed people to the vultures, but linked such acts to the maintenance of authority and discipline in the Zulu kingdom. According to Jantshi, Shaka would cut off a man's ears if he did not listen, i.e. obey, and he would pick out anyone wounded in the back in battle and kill him for being a coward, for running away.[14] In Jantshi's account, Shaka's successor, Dingane, was unfavourably compared to Shaka as being venomous, treacherous and tyrannical, and less accomplished.[15] In the account given by Ndhlovu kaTimuni,

Shaka emerges as a leader of great ability, an innovator and a hero in battle.[16] In response to a query from Stuart regarding Shaka's alleged atrocities, Ndhlovu commented, "People were concocting stories about him".[17] Shaka's enemies and rebellious subjects, of course, had harsher opinions,[18] but on balance, the subjects of the first Zulu king viewed the Zulu state as highly regulated.

The Shakan system of government was thus strongly authoritarian, with great emphasis placed on "law and order". Command, obedience and order were deemed to be higher values than freedom, dissent and opposition. Shaka's legitimacy was, and is, understood to be founded, not on his birthright, but on his success and his achievements, which, in turn depended on his army, and its character as highly disciplined and effective, able to guarantee law and order in violent times. Shaka's capacity to offer protection is attested to in his praises:

> He who was a pile of rocks at Nkandla,
> Which was a shelter for the elephants in bad weather,
> Which sheltered Phungashe of the Buthelezi clan,
> Which sheltered Zihlandlo of the Mkhize clan,
> And the elephants ran away from the place.[19]

The analyst of Shaka's praises, M.Z. Malaba, offers the following gloss on these lines: "And shelter, it seems, is found in the person of the ruler--only in subservience is there hope for a measure of security, as opposed to mere survival".[20] These emphases found in the oral texts were transferred into European written accounts of Zulu history in a variety of ways, but most decisively, as we shall see later, when the Natal Native Administration began to draw on Zulu history for a model of domination and control.

That these were indeed violent times is well-attested to.[21] In fact, it is the only point agreed upon by the many contenders in the current debates around the concept of the mfecane.[22] The mfecane stereotype has conventionally attributed this violence and upheaval to disruptions caused by the invasions of Zulu armies. It is seen as the consequence of a series of wars and migrations set in motion by the explosive expansion of the Zulu kingdom, which was credited with

disrupting life over a wide area of south-east Africa. In his recent doctoral thesis focusing on the area between the Thukela and Mzimkhulu rivers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, John Wright has shown how the concept of the mfecane which portrays these upheavals as a product of the violent expansion of the Shakan state is misplaced, for the area south of the Thukela was not devastated by the Zulu, and they were never able to occupy more than a very small part of it. Wright argues that these ideas of Zulu devastation were the product of Cape merchant interests and those of their associates, seeking to encourage British colonization of the area. The idea was subsequently taken up by missionaries who used it as a justification for the need to bring "civilization" to the widespread disorder, and by settlers seeking to justify their land appropriations. As Wright puts it, "The notion that the African societies no longer had any coherent existence was clearly convenient to their purpose".[23]

In my view Wright is quite correct to assert that the mfecane stereotype inappropriately attributes the upheavals to the Zulu, and he marshals considerable evidence to support his argument. However, in claiming that it was in interests of the merchants, missionaries and settlers to support the idea of the Zulu devastations, he downplays the extent of the upheavals and dislocation which did indeed prevail, and which provided the real meat of their claims to be the bringers of "civilisation". In the minds of contemporary African inhabitants of the region, Natal was an area of massive upheaval and social dislocation, and was contrasted to the Zulu state.[24] They saw Shaka's kingdom as the source of the only available security and as a centre of "civilisation" and order. Once the missionaries' and settlers' own centres of "civilisation" and social order were established, it is not surprising that Shaka and the Zulu kingdom on the colonial periphery were, in turn, constructed as the savage, "cannibal" other.

Despotic Shakan rule was, it seems, the price for social order and security that many local inhabitants were prepared

to concede particularly in the face the anarchy which was depicted as existing beyond the borders of the Zulu kingdom. This anarchy was vividly represented as "cannibalism" and was said to a phenomenon that was contemporaneous with the rise of the Zulu kingdom.[25] Shaka, in sharp contrast to his representation in the mfecane stereotype, enjoyed a reputation for acting against the "cannibals".[26] Shaka's appointee, Jobe of the Sithole established the "Izituli-zikaMandala" and "Izintaba" outposts charged with the special task of guarding against the "cannibals",[27] while the most notorious of all the cannibals, Mahlapahlapha kaMnjoli, chief of the Ntuli section of Bhele who lived on the Ndaka (Sundays) River, was finally routed by Dingane.[28]

Accounts of cannibalism have, in recent years, been treated with growing scepticism, as scholars have become increasingly aware of how the preconceptions of early European travellers in Africa fed into and shaped their descriptions of the societies which they encountered. But cannibalism was a feature as much of nineteenth-century African consciousness. The indigenous idea of *buzimuzimu* is often translated as cannibalism but is glossed by African commentators as the opposite of civilized.[29] In suggesting that the idea of "cannibalism" has roots in African thought I question the perspective current that cannibalism was "an invention" of the West as the quintessential symbol of savagery.[30] I am not however suggesting that anthrophagy was common in early nineteenth-century Natal. I am arguing that the idea of *buzimuzimu* was current, and that it was counterposed to the idea of social order.

"Cannibalism" was understood to prevail on the peripheries of the Zulu kingdom, particularly in the areas to the south and the west of the Zulu kingdom.[31] Amongst those designated as "cannibals" were sections of the amaDunge[32] and the amaBele.[33] "Cannibalism" was the major trope for the representation of social disruption, a state of cattlelessness and extreme famine.[34] "Cannibals" did not live in settlements, but in the bush or in caves.[35] They were bandits who would

kill people and eat them and the produce of their gardens.[36] For fear of these marauders, "no-one used to travel alone", proclaimed Stuart's informant, Jantshi.[37] Not all those who were dislocated were deemed to be cannibals; some were seen as their victims, as refugees who were also prey to wild animals.[38] People designated as cannibals were also consciously used as "hitmen". When the Hlubi chief Langalibalele was captured by "cannibals" it was reported that they had been put up to it by a rival claimant to the Hlubi succession. In this case the victim escaped and went on to rule the Hlubi. Stragglers from amongst the "cannibals", and other "orphans" then joined chief Langalibalele.[39] Likewise, those who fled from Shaka like the Chunu chief Macingwane, "died from a wandering existence (from destitution)", reputedly eaten by cannibals.[40] To be with Shaka was to secure within culture, within an ordered, albeit "Zoolacratical", system. To be outside his ambit was to be in nature, uncontrolled and "cannibal".

We should note however that Shaka, viewed from the perspective of another contemporary centre of social order, Moshoeshoe's Thaba Bosiu, became the cannibal "other". In BaSotho texts Shaka was in turn depicted as the devourer. As David Coplan has argued "Certainly, for Basotho, Shaka is a symbolic foil for their own Bakoena aristocracy's efforts at state formation; a darkness against which to appreciate Moshoeshoe's light".[41]

In 1873, the installation of the new Zulu king, Cetshwayo kaMpande, was presided over by Theophilus Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs in the neighbouring British colony of Natal. While it is remarkable in itself that a colonial administrator officiated in the coronation of the monarch of an independent state, of even greater interest is the fact that both Shepstone, and the Zulu councillors who invited him to participate in the ceremony, understood that he did so "as Chaka". Elsewhere, I have described the circumstances of the coronation and have explained at length the logic behind both parties in casting the Natal Secretary for Native Affairs in

the role of Shaka. My central argument was that Shepstone drew on existing African conceptions of sovereignty articulated in the image of Shaka to establish a model for colonial domination and native administration, and found in that model a legitimation for colonialism. Shepstone recognized that to appropriate the image of Shaka was to assume for British imperialism a despotic form of government, but one which was justified as a bulwark against disorder and social chaos, a conception not at odds with British views of their civilizing mission. This concern with order and disorder underlay the extensive researches by Shepstone into the reign of Shaka.

Shepstone and the researching of the Shakan past

When Shepstone became the Secretary for Native Affairs, "Shaka" was, in Britain, the name of one among many relatively little-known African chiefs. It was only with the Anglo-Zulu war in 1879 that the Zulu achieved a special recognition in the eyes of the British public. What was known about the first Zulu king in the mid-nineteenth century was ambiguous: the image of Shaka that prevailed in settler and missionary literature was of the Zulu king as a cruel tyrant amongst his own people, but as the one Zulu monarch who had been good to early white visitors to his kingdom. In general, Shaka was at once favourably compared to his successor Dingane, who had been responsible for the death of the Boers at the battle of Ncome River (known to the settlers as the battle of Blood River), and caricatured as a monstrous despot.[42]

In September 1863, at the behest of the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, John Scott, Shepstone embarked on a project to collect information on the historical grounds for African land claims in Natal. In an excellent discussion of Shepstone's research and his methods, John Wright concludes that, while Shepstone consulted earlier written sources, "...Shepstone's histories were the product mostly of the testimony given him by his own informants."[43] Wright establishes that Shepstone conducted historical interviews

with about fourteen informants, and used the data gleaned as the bases for two documents which he drafted in 1863-4.[44]

Shepstone's first document was a history of the Natal "tribes", the other an account of the rise of the Zulu power. The first comprises short histories of ninety-three groups resident in Natal before the reign of Shaka. Shepstone's investigations gave him a picture somewhat different from the settler stereotype which ascribed the wholesale devastation of Natal to Shaka. As Wright, who is concerned to trace the origins of the mfecane stereotype, puts it,

> 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 of at least four non-Zulu groups of 'refugees' from north of the Thukela, and one from the Natal midlands.[45]

Thus, in Shepstone's document the extermination which occurred was ascribed as much to the actions of "other tribes"[46] as to the Zulu. Natal was shown to have been devastated, and to have become, in contrast to the Zulu kingdom, a uncultivated wilderness where cannibalism was rife[47] and "universal anarchy" reigned.[48] The set of oppositions with which Shepstone built up his narrative were not those of "the West"/"civilization" and "the Other"/"barbarism", but of the Zulu kingdom/order and the rest, specifically Natal/chaos. These particular oppositions, as we have already noted, can be sourced directly to African oral texts of the nineteenth century.

The second document, "Historic Sketch of the Tribes Anciently Inhabiting the Colony of Natal, as at present Bounded, and Zululand," was based on the evidence presented in the first document and gave an account of the rise of the Zulu power that focused on Shaka. Shaka's rule was described as autocratic and "uncompromising",[49] but, on the whole, the narrative was concerned with Shaka's military successes and the expansion of the Zulu kingdom. While it is true that

these two documents were the main sources of the "devastation hypothesis", it is worth noting that they were generally free of the sensationalism that marked the accounts of earlier writers like Nathanial Isaacs and Robert Godlonton.[50] Instances of despotism were not represented as wanton savagery, but as linked to processes of rule:

> The large tribes who had been the first to disturb the Aboriginal inhabitants of Natal, in their endeavours to pass through the country now known by that name, to escape from Chaka, having been overtaken and dispersed by Chaka's armies in their new residences, and their Chiefs mostly killed, now found further flight useless, and the great body of their population returned and became subjects to the Zulu King, who distributed them among his head men and chief officers, and incorporated the young men into his army as soldiers...[51]

Thus, for Shepstone, the mfecane did not, as Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff have argued for colonizers generally, "confirm the savagery of Africa",[52] so much as offer a discourse for the discussion of questions of the nature of effective domination in an African setting. The "Historic Sketch" was overwhelmingly a narrative about the establishment of Zulu sovereignty and the extension of Zulu control of new territories and peoples.

While peoples were "overtaken and dispersed" and chiefs "mostly killed", Shepstone's accounts are remarkable for the extent to which they were <u>not</u> faithful to the stereotype of Shaka present in much contemporary missionary and settler literature. The two accounts certainly were Shepstone's constructions, but the unusual concern which they manifest with questions of sovereignty do not have a precedent in previous settler histories. As a "native administrator" Shepstone had more reason to be concerned with questions of sovereignty than most of his fellow white Natalians. But, as contemporary African narratives concerning Shaka from other sources make clear, he was not simply seeing in the accounts collected a possible reading that could be twisted to suit his own purposes. African accounts of Shaka were <u>themselves</u> fundamentally concerned with matters of sovereignty and the nature of power and domination.[53]

The "Historic Sketch" opened, not with a chronicle of historical events, but a distinctly anthropological discussion of the nature of African sovereignty and government before Shaka. The account went on to focus on the political and military changes brought about first by Dingiswayo, and later, Shaka, culminating in a short review of the reign of Dingane. Throughout, the central theme was a concern with how power was wielded and order maintained in the Shakan kingdom. This was the framework for all allusions to Shakan aggressiveness and autocracy.

With the production of Shepstone's two documents in 1863-4, the first glimmerings of a whole new way of discussing Shaka began to enter colonial productions of Zulu history. Although Shepstone's two documents were not published until 1888 and 1890, they were influential in shaping colonial thinking at the time of their preparation, and they foreshadowed a more expansive exploration and enactment of the connections between Shaka and the notion of sovereignty which Shepstone was to engage in the coronation of Cetshwayo.

The new politics and world view pioneered in the campaign against slavery placed colonial administrations under pressure to find systems of administration free of direct coercion but also capable of executing the colonial project. The institution of wage labour was one option, and a number of studies have examined this choice and its impact on colonized societies. Shepstone resolved the dilemma posed in a different way--through recourse to an African model of domination. Essentially Shepstone found in Shaka a model of ruling the African population of Natal that allowed him to circumvent the liberal principles of government increasingly entrenched in Britain but prohibitively expensive to implement in the cash-strapped Natal colony. In a way that was fundamentally at odds with prevailing notions of individual rights, but justifiable as an indigenous system, and one which was locally understood as the force of civilization that held chaos at bay, Shepstone sought to make all members of a chiefdom responsible for actions of individuals, including the chief,

and *vice versa*.[54] Shepstone understood punishment of the innocent along with the guilty to be a feature of cheap administration. Likewise, the system of forced labour, or *isibhalo*, which was introduced into Natal, was problematic in times of anti-slavery. Shepstone was able to justify all of these aspects of his administration as features of Shakan times and as appropriate to the government of ex-subjects of Shaka.

The terms in which Shepstone described Shaka's administrative problems, mirrored almost exactly Shepstone's own position,

> The policy of Chaka saw his peculiar position as despotic ruler of a people composed almost wholly of conquered tribes, compelled him to mass them as much as possible around him, to intermingle them as much as possible, and so rule them as to destroy their old associations and hence he would not permit the occupation of the entire country he conquered.[55]

My reading of Shepstone's treatment of Shaka is very different from that of Daphna Golan, who talks about Shepstone "de-emphasizing Shaka", and fighting "to break the dominance of Shaka's heirs, the royal family in Zululand".[56] Shepstone did, at a much later point, work with the colonial authorities in trying to rein in Zulu royal power, but, in principle, he held an opposite position to theirs, namely, that a strong central power modeled on the Shakan regime was essential to the control of the Zulu kingdom, and the African population of Natal. This underlay an almost obsessive interest on Shepstone's part in the reign of Shaka.[57]

When Shepstone was offered the opportunity "as Chaka" to install Cetshwayo, he understood it in terms very different from that of playing the part of a "savage monster". Rather, he perceived that the invitation offered him the possibility of intervening directly in matters of Zulu sovereignty. It was, Shepstone recognized, an opportunity loaded with possibilities. To recognize the possibilities and to explore them required a grasp of the cultural logic of the African population of Natal and the Zulu kingdom, and the role therein of Shaka. This, it seems, Shepstone had, by 1873, achieved in

substantial measure.

Following the Anglo-Zulu War, Shepstone's ideas came under increasing pressure as settler interests began to dominate Natal politics. A struggle developed within the Native Administration between proponents of Shepstone's ideas--men like James Stuart--and officials who sought to implement a more expedient form of indirect rule designed primarily to service settler land and labour needs.[58] In his 1911 publication on the 1906 Bambatha rebellion Stuart criticized latter-day developments within "native policy" as attempts to impose "Western Civilization" on Africans, and he depicted the Bambatha affair as standing for a deep-seated rejection of precisely that. Stuart made wide ranging proposals for the form to be assumed by the new Union Native Administration, proposals that were strictly in the mould of Shepstone's ideas. To be effective, he argued, "native policy" had to involve

> a restriction of liberty as well as of individualism. People by self choice, would tend more and more to submit themselves to a form of social and political life to which they were accustomed and which, so to speak, runs in their veins. They would therefore, elect to be under a form of control, provided this were exercised by themselves, in the same way that we find Ethiopians desirous of controlling themselves apart from all European interference.[59]

The seeds of a policy of segregation planted in this approach are evident. But Stuart would have objected strongly to segregation because of the policy's failure to maintain the essences of the Shakan system, most notably its discipline and its ability to guarantee social order and security. In terms of the new Union constitution, the head of the government was also the Supreme Chief of all the African inhabitants of South Africa. In Stuart's eyes this was a perversion of the Shepstone system and destined to fail. This Supreme Chief was distant, unknown and inaccessible, and, in turn, did not have the necessary knowledge of the African communities under hime to rule in the Shepstone--or Shakan--manner.

Conclusion

The conception of a strong central authority as a bulwark against chaos was thus an idea which characterized the reign of Shaka, and one which was not obliterated but rather reinforced by colonial practices in the nineteenth century. In a distorted form this idea was incorporated into the policies of segregation and apartheid. In the twentieth century, much Zuluist politics has sought to challenge these distortions through a claim to the "real" version, this time as a bulwark against the chaos and social upheaval wrought under apartheid. The invocation of these ideas in the politics of the 1980s and 1990s as a powerful counter to the ANC's programme for democracy is thus not a reclamation of precolonial ideas, nor is it an expedient invented tradition, but rather an appeal to concepts with their own long history.

The paper suggests that the potency of the symbol of Shaka in South Africa today is neither the consequence of how great Shaka really was, nor is it the result simply of clever manipulations in the present by Zulu nationalists. It is the product of the historical association within it of indigenous conceptions of sovereignty and practices of colonial domination. When journalist Barry Renfrew sought to capture the ideas of discipline associated with Shaka in his description of a Zulu rally: "The discipline is extraordinary. I heard three thousand of them *breathing* together. It sounds like the purring of a giant cat",[60] he was invoking an image with its roots in indigenous ideas, reinterpreted by the Natal Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone as the basis for native administration, reinforced by the Zulu victory at Isandlwana in 1879, rehearsed in the many arguments of James Stuart and explored in current Zuluist politics as well as in texts such as the television series *Shaka Zulu*, and the holiday resort, *Shakaland*. In the historically developed discourses on Shaka, however, the corollary of the image of discipline is violence and domination. Both notions have been invoked in abundant measure in the 1980s and 1990s.

Precolonial "traditions" have typically been called upon

by those whose political agenda is to find justifications for their opposition to democracy. To characterize these "traditions" as colonial inventions has been the favoured response to such tactics. To engage seriously the question of the possibility of the existence of deep habits and dispositions is thus both unfashionable and risky. But not to do so is to avoid tackling the tricky question of why it is people whose own direct interests are not served by the invocation of precolonial "traditions" respond positively to them. This paper, necessarily incomplete--for this is far larger and more nuanced a subject than any single paper can accommodate--has tried to begin to chart an approach to the question.

NOTES

1.T. Lodge, "South Africa: Democracy and Development in a Post-Apartheid Society", paper presented to IASR, Wits, 1994.

2.Z.S.T. Skweyiya, "Chieftaincy, the Ethnic Question and the Democratisation Process in South Africa", Community Law Centre Occasional Paper Series, UWC, 1993, p.1.

3.Negotiation News, 15 December, 1993. I am grateful to Elsabe Wessels for this reference.

4.The use here of the terms "habits" and "dispositions" invokes Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "habitus" and "disposition". Bourdieu recognizes that there is order and pattern in the system of dispositions and schemes that people operate with in their day to day practices, and he refers to this as "habitus". I have elected to use the term "habits", for I do not dealing with embodied dispositions which is the other aspect of "habitus" as used by Bourdieu. In particular I mean it to recall Bourdieu's idea that in a situation of crisis, people look as though they are making rational choices, where in fact habitus determines the repertoire open to them, at a level that may well be less than conscious. (Outline of a Theory of Practice, Cambridge, 1977,p.214; The Logic of Practice, Cambridge, 1990, pp.66-79.)

5.This was recognized at the 1994 History Workshop's History Teachers' Conference which solicited for its proceedings a paper on "Precolonial Democracy."

6.Skweyiya, "Chieftaincy", p.2.

7.In the late 1980s a number of writers argued that the negative image of Shaka which characterizes much of the written literature on the first Zulu king was the product of the myth-making activities of white writers, anxious for their own purposes to invent the Zulu king as a monster. (See for example, J. Cobbing, "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo", Journal of African History, 29, 1988, pp.487-519; D. Golan, "Construction and Reconstruction in Zulu History", unpub. Ph.D thesis, Hebrew University, 1988; J.B. Wright, "The Dynamics of Power and Authority in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: A Critical Reconstruction", unpub. Ph.D thesis, Wits, 1990. I have elsewhere argued at length that this perspective misses the crucial point that Shaka was also villainized by nineteenth-century African commentators.(C.Hamilton, "'The Character and Objects of Chaka': A Reconsideration of the Making of Shaka as Mfecane Motor", Journal of African History, 33, 1992, pp.37-63. Also see my discussion of the dating and reliability of the African texts concerned in C.A. Hamilton, "Authoring Shaka: Models, Metaphors and Historiography", unpub. Ph.D thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, 1993, chap.4.)

8.See for example, letter to the editor from N. Gumede, Inkula, 3, 1990; The Natal Mercury, 11 April, 1991.

9.Quoted in M.Z. Malaba, "Shaka as Literary Theme", unpub. Ph.D thesis, York University, 1986, p.42.

10.See Buthelezi quoted in N. Nassing, "The Chief", New York Review of Books, 12 February, 1987.
11.See, for example, J. Wright and C. Hamilton, "Traditions and Transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries", in A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds.), Natal and Zululand. From Earliest Times to 1910. A New History, Pietermaritzburg, 1989, pp.49-82; C.A. Hamilton, "Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom", unpub. MA thesis, Wits, 1986.
12.C. de B. Webb and J. B. Wright (eds.) James Stuart Archive (JSA), vol. 1, p.187, Jantshi.
13.JSA, vol.1, 195, Jantshi.
14.JSA, vol.1, pp.195, 201-2, Jantshi.
15.JSA, vol.1, pp.196, 197, Jantshi.
16.JSA, vol.4, pp.198, 204, 205, 228, 229, Ndhlovu.
17.JSA, vol.4, p.219, Ndhlovu.
18.For a discussion of views of Shaka's opponents see Hamilton, "Authoring Shaka", pp.189-93.
19.Cited in Malaba, "Shaka as Literary Theme", p.53.
20.Malaba, "Shaka as Literary Theme", p.55.
21.Malaba notes that Shaka's praises express feelings of insecurity prevalent in Shakan times. (Malaba, "Shaka as Literary Theme", p.55.)
22.C. Hamilton (ed.) The Mfecane Aftermath, WUP and UNP,forthcoming.
23.J.B. Wright, "The Dynamics of Power and Conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: A Critical Reconstruction", unpub. Ph.d thesis, Wits, 1990, p.71.
24.Dislocation in Natal is widely attested to in the Stuart texts, see, for example the testimony of Mqaikana, JSA, vol. 4, especially pp.1,5 and9; also see vol, 3, pp.80-81, Melapi.
25.JSA, vol. 1, p.201, Jantshi.
26.JSA, vol.3, p.161, Mkando.
27.JSA, vol. 1, p.336, Lunguza.
28.JSA, vol.2, p.15, Mabonsa. For details on Mahlaphahlapha see JSA, vol.1, p.299, Lunguza; A.T. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, London, 1929, pp.58, 347; and A.T. Bryant, History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes, Cape Town, 1964, p.37.
29.See, for example, J.S.M. Matsebula, A History of Swaziland, Cape Town, 1988, p.160.
30.J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution,Chicago, 1991, p.123.
31."Cannibals. There used to be a saying as the sun was setting, "Oh! It is going to be devoured by cannibals', for the impression was that cannibals lived to the west." JSA, vol.1, p.34, Baleni. See JSA, vol.3, p.26-27, Mbovu; JSA, vol.3, p.81, Melapi. For a claim that cannibals were to be found amongst the upcountry Ntuli see JSA, vol.1, p.126, Dunjwa. Also see JSA, vol. 1, p.301, Lunguza.For "cannibal" attacks reported on Hlubi and Tshabalala, and by the Radebe see JSA, vol.2, pp.14-14, Mabonsa.
32.JSA,vol.1, p.60, Bazley; JSA, vol.1, p.90, Dabula.
33.JSA, vol. 1, p.302, Lunguza; JSA, vol.2, p.24, Mabonsa; JSA, vol.2, p.202, Mangati.
34.JSA, vol.1, p.90, Dabula; JSA, vol. 1, p.201, Jantshi.
35.JSA,vol.1, p.54, Bazley.
36.JSA, vol.2, p.277, Maziyana.
37.JSA, vol. 1, p.201, Jantshi.
38.JSA,vol.1, p.56, Bazley,
39.JSA, vol.2, p.31, Mabonsa.
40.JSA, vol.2, pp.85,87, Magidigidi; Bryant, Olden Times, p.271.
41.D. Coplan, In the Time of Cannibals: The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants, Chicago University Press, forthcoming, ms. p.1. I am grateful to David Coplan for providing me with a copy of his manuscript.
42.For a detailed discussion of the image of Shaka see my "Authoring Shaka".
43.Wright, "The Dynamics of Power", p.106.
44.Enclosures in Despatch no.34, Scott to Newcastle, 26 February, 1864, published in Correspondence Relating to Granting to Natives in Natal of Documentary Tribal Titles to Land, Sessional Papers nos. 22 and 23 of the Natal Legislative Council, 1890, and as far as can be ascertained, first published in the report of a Cape government commission in 1883.
45.Wright, "Dynamics of Power and Conflict", p.107.
46."Enclosures," item 29, p.610.
47.See, for example, "Enclosures," items 5, p.604, 29, p.609, 57, p.615.

48."Enclosures," item 43, p.613. Also see NAD, Sh.P., A96, vol.90, "General Historical," p.11.
49."Enclosures," p.622.
50.R.Godlonton, A Narrative of the Irruption of the Kaffir Hordes, Grahamstown, 1836.
51."Enclosures," p.626.
52.Comaroff and Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution, p.169.
53.For a detailed discussion of this content in oral texts about Shaka see Hamilton, "Authoring Shaka", chap.4.
54.It should be borne in mind that Shepstone was raised in the Eastern Cape and entered the colonial service at a very early age. He spoke fluent Xhosa as a boy and was, from early on, familiar with the norms and practices of African society. These personal factors are part explanation for this recourse to an African model of government.
55.Natal Archives Depot, Shepstone Papers (Sh.P.), vol.76, p.15. Also see vol. 82, "Historical Notes," p.24, and "Powers of Chiefs," p.136.
56.Golan, "Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History," p.32.
57.See also Sh.P. vol. 79, pp.17-18.
58.For a detailed discussion of these developments see Hamilton, "Authoring Shaka", chapters 6, 7 and 8.
59.J. Stuart, A History of the Zulu Rebellion, 1906, and of Dinuzulu's Arrest, Trial and Expatriation, London, 1913, p.536.
60.Quoted in "Percy's World", The Star Tonight, 13 July, 1992. Also see Peregrine Worsthorne, "Could fascism solve S. Africa's race problem", in Sunday Telegraph, 14 December, 1986. I am grateful to David Lazar for the latter reference.