

**KING DINGANE: A TREACHEROUS TYRANT
OR AN AFRICAN NATIONALIST?**

by

ACQUIRANCE VUSUMUZI SHONGWE

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A thesis submitted to the

Department of History, Faculty of Arts,

University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa

In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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SSTD, B.PAED (ARTS), B.A. HONS. (UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND),
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Supervisor: Professor A.E. Cubbin
Co-Supervisor: Professor L.F. Mathenjwa

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the reasons why King Dingane of the Zulu nation has been portrayed predominantly as a treacherous tyrant in South Africa's Eurocentric historical databases and poses the question whether he should, instead, not be regarded as the forerunner of African nationalism. It also examines the roots of European imperialism in South Africa, as recorded in governmental, geographical, trade and missionary records, and points out that, as with the first colonial invasion by Islam that resulted in the Tarikh chronicles, European imperialism was also inherently based on foreign and nationalistic biases. The study concludes that these preconceived notions have adulterated and overwhelmed the purer African voice that is uniquely represented by the oral tradition. Because the subdued African voice is regarded as more reliable than the written Eurocentric records, this study attempts to augment the Africa-centered work of Africanist historians who have, for several decades, revisited the oral history of Africa in order to recover, rehabilitate and represent a point of view and perspective intrinsic and special to Africa.

The history of King Dingane of the Zulus encapsulates the problem of African historiography best because most of the sources from which accounts of his reign are reconstructed are European, and for this reason, propagate a Eurocentric bias. For example, while Eurocentric White historians are able to present, in print, three eyewitness accounts of the death of Piet Retief, the African point of view based on oral history is largely disregarded. This study seeks to redress this imbalance by championing the African point of view, which is considered to be not only sensible but also plausible and justifiable.

Likewise, much attention has been given to the many studies that demonise King Dingane for the single act of viciously killing the purportedly innocent and innocuous Voortrekkers, while the broad contours of context against which his actions should be judged are disregarded. The purpose of this thesis is to

debunk the myth of King Dingane's unfairness and criminality. It can therefore be interpreted as an effort at decriminalizing King Dingane's actions – a dimension that earlier as well as contemporary scholars of African history have hitherto ignored. It is hoped that in time similar studies on other issues will broaden this perspective and help to create the balance so sorely missing in Zulu history.

A theoretical framework for historical representation is provided in chapter one of the study, while chapter two examines the mindset of the White explorers that arrived in Africa, and their imperial agenda that sought to control, drastically change and re-order everything. Chapter three attempts to portray the greatness of King Dingane in dealing with matters of governance as well as other issues that were to have a profound impact on the way in which he came to be portrayed in history books. Chapter four discusses the relationship between King Dingane and the British Settlers at Port Natal, while chapter five deals with the relationships between King Dingane and the Voortrekkers, who sought the very freedom from the British in the Cape Colony that they were prepared to destroy among Africans in the Zulu Kingdom. The final chapter deals with public history and perceptions about King Dingane in the 21st century. The two museums that commemorate Impi yase Ncome/the Battle of 'Blood River' on 16 December are contrasted with each other and their potential for nation building is examined in a critical light.

The central thesis of this study is that the historiography of the early years of the 19th century inevitably, and perhaps even deliberately, represented King Dingane as a tyrant with neither nationalistic proclivities nor stately qualities. The popularity of this historiographic perspective is arguably symptomatic of a hegemonic disciplinary praxis that seeks to privilege the principles of selection, preference and bias in the use of the vast archive of sources available to the historian, from the written to the oral source. To all intents and purposes, this principle, which interpolates the discourse of history as well as

the producers and consumers of historical scholarship, has led to a limited, over-determined and totalizing view of King Dingane. It is this biased discourse that articulates with the dominant ideology that not only informed scholarship, but also reflected the ideology of the institutions responsible for shaping historiography.

A full analysis of the circumstances surrounding King Dingane at the time, including the history, the culture, the political dynamics and the personalities of the actors, leads one to the inexorable conclusion that this thesis arrives at – namely that the king did what ‘a king had to do.’ It is furthermore concluded that the evidence leads one to believe that King Dingane should be seen as a forerunner of Black Nationalism, instead of being branded as a treacherous, bloodthirsty tyrant.

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis, **King Dingane: A Treacherous Tyrant or An African Nationalist?** is my own both in conception and in execution. All the sources that I have used or quoted from have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed on this 30 day of July 2004
Acquirance Vusumuzi Shongwe

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late mother, Pearl Nomasabatha Shongwe, and to
my late great-grandmother, Sinah Nokufa Nkosi

and

to my late history teacher, Jackie France Nkosi, who implanted in me the love for
history.

QUOTATION

Nothing in my mind is more reprehensible than those habits of mind in the intellectual that induce avoidance, that characteristic turning away from a difficult and principled position which you know to be the right one. You do not wish to seem too political; you are afraid of being controversial; you need the approval of a boss or an authority figure; you want to keep a reputation of being balanced, moderate, objective – to remain within the responsible mainstream.

- Edward Said

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Introduction

The written history of Africa is regrettably limited. What we have is largely due to the two great colonial invasions, first by Islam, resulting in the Tarikh chronicles, and secondly by European imperialism which produced governmental, geographical, trade and missionary records of commendable length and depth. Both the former and the latter have inherent foreign and nationalistic biases, which have adulterated the purer African voice, which is uniquely and largely represented by oral tradition. This African voice, which is smaller in volume, is sadly always to be relied on. Because of this lacunae, the history of Africa has, for several decades, been re-visited by Africanists abroad and by historians in Africa, both White and Black, to recover, rehabilitate and represent a point of view and perspective intrinsic and special to Africa. This study is an attempt to build on this body of work, which adopts an Africa-centred approach to the historical narrative of Africa. Hopefully, the preponderance of Islamic and European influences in African history will, through this developing initiative, be rigorously undertaken to create a more balanced history of Africa. B. Jewsiewicki and V.J. Mudimbe best illuminate this problem of African historiography when they argue that:

For years, African historiography was more sensitive to the politics of Western academia than to the social and political challenges faced by African societies... African history specialists whose work has gained a place in international scholarship for Africa's past have acted more like construction workers than researchers. Or, better yet, they have worked like urban planners, penciling on their drafting tables expressways linking a "glorious past" to a "radiant future." As a result, their quickly laid layer of asphalt covers the myriad ancient paths connecting the past to the present. Or, better still: a "written layer" now covers the oral and performative reconstructions of the past, employing them as, at best, mere building blocks.¹

The history of Dingane², King of the Zulus, encapsulates the problem of African historiography because most of the sources from which accounts of his reign are reconstructed are European and propagate this Eurocentric bias. For example, White

¹ B. Jewsiewicki and V.Y. Mudimbe, 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', p.4.

² Zulu names are often spelt differently by different authors. For example, 'Dingaan' is the Afrikaans form of 'Dingane'. This study adopts the spelling of 'Dingane'.

historians although varied, present the three eyewitness accounts of the death of Piet Retief. Therefore the approach in this study will be to redress this imbalance by presenting an African point of view, which we submit is not only sensible but both plausible and justifiable. In time, it is hoped, similar studies will create the balance so sorely missing in Zulu history.

Many a thesis has been written demonizing King Dingane because of his single act of the vicious slaughter of the purportedly innocent and innocuous Voortrekkers. What is completely lost sight of is the broad contours embracing the context in which, and against which, his actions played themselves out. An analysis of this terrain embodying the history, the culture, the political dynamics and the personalities of the actors, leads one inexorably to one conclusion, namely, that the king did what 'a king had to do'.

The purpose of this thesis is to debunk the myth that what King Dingane did was unfair and criminal. The thesis can be interpreted as the decriminalization of King Dingane's actions. It is this context, which this thesis pursues and unfolds to give a dimension hitherto ignored completely by earlier and contemporary scholars of African history.

This thesis is presented in six chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by providing a theoretical framework in historical representation. Chapter two examines the mindset of the White explorers that arrived in Africa, and their imperial agenda that sought to control, drastically change and re-order everything. Chapter three attempts to portray the greatness of King Dingane in dealing with matters of governance as well as other issues that were to have a profound impact on the way in which he came to be portrayed in history books. Chapter four discusses the relationship between King Dingane and the British Settlers at Port Natal, while chapter five deals with the relationships between King Dingane and the Voortrekkers, who sought the very freedom from the British in the Cape Colony that they were prepared to destroy among Africans in the Zulu Kingdom. The final chapter deals with public history and perceptions about King Dingane in the 21st century. The two museums that commemorate Impi yase Ncome/the Battle of 'Blood River' on 16 December are contrasted with each other and their potential for nation building is examined in a critical light.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION: A PRAGMATIC TOOL OF READING AND INTERPRETATION

History is a field of force; a series of ways of organizing the past by and for interested parties which always comes from somewhere and for some purpose and which, in their direction, would like to carry you with them...It is a field that variously includes and excludes, which centers and marginalizes views of the past in ways and in degrees that refract the powers of those forwarding them... History is never itself, is never said or read (articulated, expressed, discoursed) innocently, but that it is always for someone.¹

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The central thesis of this study is that the historiography of the early years of the 19th century inevitably and perhaps, even deliberately, represented King Dingane as a tyrant with neither nationalistic proclivities nor stately qualities. The popularity of this historiographic perspective is, I would argue, symptomatic of a hegemonic disciplinary praxis that privileges the principles of **selection**, **preference** and **bias** in the use of the vast archive of sources available to the historian, from the written to the oral source. To all intents and purposes, this principle, which interpellates the discourse of history, as well as the producers and consumers of historical scholarship, has led to this limited, over determined and totalizing view of King Dingane. It is this biased discourse that articulates to the dominant ideology that not only informed scholarship, but also the reflected ideology of the institutions responsible for shaping South African historiography.

Now, more than ever in our post 1994 era, it falls to the contemporary historian both to deconstruct and debunk not only the intrinsic falsity of historians who

¹ K. Jenkins: Rethinking History , p.71.

have shaped the historical corpus of South East African studies, but also their biased positional and political interest. Michel Foucault's ideas on the relationship between knowledge and power are particularly pertinent with regard to South African historiography where collusion between historical knowledge and the institutions for its dissemination has perpetuated a particular perspective on some issues while silencing or marginalizing others. For the French scholar, discourses are never objective constructions, but rather techniques of control. Foucault informs us, for example, that an institution such as a mental clinic, generates discourses, and this knowledge bestows power. Insanity is controlled by 'experts' and represented by the 'other' as mental disorder, with never a chance to speak for itself. It is caged in the concepts and categories of 'science'.²

This chapter therefore addresses itself to the question of historical representation in texts where individuals are not only represented as human subjects but also as political subjects. I am arguing that historical representation as mediated by writing is characteristically purposive and tendentious. This means that the writer's literary response to the world does not derive from an isolated or independent consciousness but that the writer writes from within, or expressly against, a framework laid down by genre and against the wider backdrop of current practice in literature.

Notably, in the area of historiography, historians now recognize that the writing of history is encoded in language and thus deploys the usual conventions of narrative to give order and coherence to what would otherwise be a chaotic flow of events. Post-modern historians like Hayden White have broken with disciplinary conventions and applied elements of literary theory to historiographical texts. In such works as *Meta-History*, White argues that all historical representations even though they seem to be reports of objective facts are subject to the normal rules of narrative representation.³ White's basically argues that history makes use of narrative devices and systems of rhetoric to construct a verbal image of 'reality'.

² For more information on this aspect, see Peter Dimitry's *Dynamics of Discourse: A case study illuminating Power Relations in Mental Retardation*.

³ cf. H. White: *Metahistory: The historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*.

Different theoretical understandings with regard to the writing of history have been propounded. Thus differentiation has to be made between the exponents of a positivistic understanding of history as consisting solely of brute facts and those who advocate an existential approach to history in which the historian himself / herself is involved. In this study therefore I will use the texts reproduced hereunder as both corroborative and vindictory material in respect of the representations afforded King Dingane, which are to all intents and purposes ideologically positioned.

1.2. THE INTER-SUBJECTIVE IDEOLOGICAL BIAS OF HISTORICAL NARRATION IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

As observed by Reill there has been a trend in historiography according to which historical understanding was to be based on the tactics of choice, limitation, and interpretation within the boundaries of a specific problem.⁴ In this mode of historiography, the historian was no longer the simple narrator of events, the passive and objective mirror of the past. Now he was also charged with the task of interpretation, a task usually consigned to theology or metaphysics. Moreover, it is implied that in the process of interpretation, the historian was also presumed to function as an agent in the production of understanding.⁵ This trend in historiography is attested to by Cape Governor, Sir George Napier's narrative account (which is given unabridged, due to the importance of its tone and the details that it contains) in which he declares:

My Lord, as most probably the report respecting the massacre of 274 emigrant Boers under Mr Retief by Dingaan will reach England I think it my duty to inform Your Lordship that although it is much feared it may eventually prove true in some respects, if not in all, yet no positive or authentic accounts have reached the colony of the melancholy event. I beg further to state that many people believe the report to be unfounded and, at all events, much exaggerated, I am so sorry that the emigration of the Dutch Boers still continues, though the above mentioned melancholy

⁴ P. H. Reill, 'History and Hermeneutics in the Aufklärung: The Thought of Johann Christoph Gatterer', p.29.

⁵ cf. P.H. Reill, 'History and Hermeneutics in the Aufklärung: The Thought of Johann Christopher Gatterer', p.29.

event, if true, will of course make them less inclined to quit the colony for such a distant location. Should any direct or certain accounts reach me respecting this event Your Lordship shall be apprised by the earliest opportunity. The last dispatches from the Lieut^{<entant>} Governor of the 9th instant, as well as the Commander's report, state all to be tranquil on the frontier and His Honor appears to be under no apprehension whatever of any interruption to peace. I have the honor to be, My Lord, Your Lordship's most obedient humble servant. (Signed) Geo^{<rge>} Napier⁶

It is evident from the above extract that a narrative is an account of events occurring over time. Thus a narrative takes as its ostensive reference particular happenings whose narration is inherently ideological. And the ideological dimension of the narrative is its narrative closure. The concept of closure refers to the ways in which a text persuades a reader to understand and accept a particular 'truth' or form of knowledge, to accept a certain view of the world as valid or natural.⁷ Closure is inherent in the text's form and the writing strategies and reading expectations. The above extract instills a sense of doubt in the reader (depending of course on the reader's responsiveness in this regard) in respect of the truthfulness of the 'melancholy event' thus rendering the account less authentic than it would seem at face value. Notably there is no denial of the fact that the 'melancholy event' did happen. But the rendition of its account is suspect of deliberative distortions intended to effect or evoke particular responses on the reader. Reill's argument to the effect that 'there is an inbuilt process of selection and understanding that is related in some direct manner not only to the material but also to the historian's own social and intellectual environment'⁸, is illuminating to our understanding of historical writing as ideologically positioned. The ideological positioning of historical narration is cogently enunciated by the oppositional texts reproduced (unabridged) hereunder. The first text is to all intents and purposes favourably disposed towards the emigrating farmers who were killed at the bidding of King Dingane.

Sir, since my letter of the 10th... further particulars of the disaster to the emigrating farmers have reached this place by

⁶ B.J.T. Leverton (ed.): *Records of Natal*, Vol.3, Aug. 1835-June 1838, letter by George Napier; also see GH 23/12, pp.39-40, Document No. 134.

⁷ cf. R. Webster: *Studying Literary Theory*, 1990.

⁸ P.H. Reill, 'History and Hermeneutics in the Aufklärung: The Thought of Johann Christoph Gatterer', p.46.

one Du Plooy who was present when it took place. He states that about the 15th or 16th of February, Retief, accompanied by sixty of his men, went towards Dingaan's residence for the purpose of making further arrangements and was murdered with all his party. Intelligence of the massacre having reached Port Natal an express was sent by certain of the English residents to Maritzburg but which unfortunately arrived too late to put them on their guard. On the 17th before day all the locations of Retief's party, and which extended to some distance from the camp of Maritz, were attacked and every soul put to death. The same day Maritz with a large force followed the track of the Kaffirs, recovered the sheep, which had been taken away and shot a number of the enemy. Maritz has since gone with 400 men in search of Dingaan, leaving an equal number to guard the camp. This information I have every reason to believe to be authentic as Du Plooy is reputed to be a man of veracity.⁹

In contradistinction to the foregoing text, the second text, which follows below locates King Dingane's act of killing the Boers in a somewhat justifying context:

I heard that the Boers then went off in connection with cattle that were with Sigonyela, cattle of Dingana's people that had been taken by Sigonyela. Eventually they returned. On their return they came and tried to surround Dingana's kraal during the night. When it became light this was seen from the hoofmarks of their horses. They did not surround the kraal, for it was too large. They did the same the following night; they again tried to surround the kraal. They took Dingana's white horse, the one which Piti had asked him for, and which Dingana had refused to give up. Again the hoofmarks were seen where they had tried to surround the kraal. It was seen that the horse was no longer there. Dingana sent off one of his brothers, perhaps Ngqojana. He said, "Fetch my horse from the Boers, who came to surround me during the night. I see that my horse has been taken by them. If you come across it do not leave it; come back with it." On his arrival among the Boers he suddenly came upon it. He said to the Boers, "I have come to fetch this horse of the king's." The Boers did not refuse. They simply said, "we think it must have smelt the other horses." But it was unlikely that the horse would have been attracted by the smell of strange horses and have left the ones with which it was familiar (for there were a small number of horses at Mgungundhlovu). That night Dingana ordered people to keep watch to see that nothing happened. The Boers came. The people saw them. They demanded of them, what is going on here? The Boers replied, "We are looking for our horses." The people said, "Where were the horses which you were looking for during the night, when you were trying to

⁹ B.J. Leverton (ed.): Records of Natal, Vol.3, Aug. 1835-June 1838, F. Rawstorne's letter, p.268; also see LG 194, pp.55-57, Document No.132, Annexure 2742.

synonymous with the figure in the text from whose perspective the events are seen. By contrast the second text presents itself as a realist text, which approximates reality. But given the ideological positioning of the author in relation to the events narrated, he/she does not presume disinterested pretensions with regard to authorial agency in the text. It stands to reason therefore that texts are constructed from within ideology and that the reality they articulate is dependent on the historical culture that surrounds them. In both texts authorial intention is processed through the narrative and rhetorical strategies employed by the authors. The strategies foreground the goals which the authors seek to achieve and the texts are seen as means to these stated ends. As Bruner points out:

Now obviously, research on anything will yield findings that mirror its procedures for observing or measuring. Science always invents a conforming reality in just that way. When we "confirm" our theory by "observation", we devise procedures that will favour the theory's plausibility. Anyone who objects can poach on our theory by devising variants of our own procedures to demonstrate exceptions and "disproofs."¹⁴

It can therefore be concluded that for the narrators in the two texts (as for Schwantes):

There is no such thing as a totally objective historian. No one studies the sources without any bias whatsoever. Like everyone else, the historian is steeped in the stream of history and can no more escape the prejudices of his generation than he can escape the air he breathes. He observes the past through the glasses of current philosophical outlook. Every new generation must rewrite past history to make it intelligible to itself.¹⁵

In the two texts in question the ideological substance of the narratives is not disguised. Thus the author's writing registers a determinate presence of authorial intention, which is overtly political in intent and as such fosters a conscious 'closure' of other possibilities. In both texts there is an audience to persuade to accept the truth of their narration of events and act accordingly. In this regard the narratives dictate their own rhetorical strategies of presentation. The first

¹⁴ J. Bruner: Acts of Meaning, p.104.

¹⁵ S.J. Schwantes: The Biblical Meaning of History, p.9.

discourse exerts an emotional appeal that serves as a mode of persuasion. For the narrator it is expedient to resort to the emotional appeal for it makes an allowance for the underpinning of the narrator's ideological values – thereby rendering the audience susceptible to the emotional-ideological substance of the narrative. As a mode of persuasion the emotional appeal will depend on the ability to arouse empathy in the audience.

In the second discourse there is evidence of the exertion of the rational appeal, which is attested to by the use of logical connectors such as, 'This, then, is what angered Dingana [sic]...' and also, 'he then deceived them by inviting them to a dance...' ¹⁶ It is apparent therefore that the narratives do not assume a disinterested position but have an intended effect (politically oriented), which is constantly reproduced in the texts by the use of specific rhetorical devices. These rhetorical devices are the basic tools, which orators have always used to sway their audiences in favour of their arguments or positions. These various devices can be subsumed under three broad categories, namely, the ethical appeal, emotional appeal and rational appeal. It can be argued therefore that in the two narratives in question the narrators do not appraise the past with detachment as would be expected of a staunch positivist historian. Jenkins argues that history should be conceived of as a vehicle for the delivery of a specific position for persuasive purposes and that 'history is never for itself; it is always for someone.' ¹⁷ It is evident in the texts' narration that the narrators' historical knowledge is constituted by specific interests, and these interests can be explicated as interpreted needs for orientation. ¹⁸

In the two narratives a predominant political orientation is discernible. The narrators' respective understanding and interpretation of the historical events as prompted by their subjective interests, I would argue, tacitly occasion this political orientation. Such an approach and interpretation could most conceivably reflect their positioning with regard to the events that are narrated in the texts. What transpires from such a position is best explained by Jenkins' assertion that there

¹⁶ JSA, Vol. 3, 1982, Statement of Mkebeni, p.206.

¹⁷ K. Jenkins: *Re-Thinking History*, p.17.

¹⁸ J. Rusen: *Studies in Metahistory*, p.53.

is 'no presupposition-less interpretation of the past.'¹⁹ The individual's preconceptions therefore exercise an influence over his/her interpretations of the past. History, according to Jenkins, then becomes 'a series of readings all of which are positioned.'²⁰ Such an interpretation of different 'readings,' according to Jenkins, is accounted for by the fact that 'history *per se* is an ideological construct'²¹, and that it is 'written by forces and pressures way beyond its ostensible object of enquiry – the past.'²² It is evident in the two texts that the ostensible object of enquiry, as is expected of historians, is overtaken by the political interests and values that are brought to bear on the narrator's understanding and interpretation of the historical events. Again, in these texts, history is depicted as asserting itself as 'an intentional and organized process of identity formation that remembers the past in order to understand the present and anticipate the future.'²³

It needs to be reiterated that, according to Jenkins, 'history is inter-subjective and ideologically positioned; that objectivity and being unbiased are chimeras.'²⁴ However, such an interpretation of history may lead towards pessimism and negativity. But as argued by White, 'this should allow us to entertain seriously those creative distortions offered by minds capable of looking at the past with the same seriousness as ourselves but with different ...orientation.'²⁵ This supports the notion that historians cannot be disinterested in their telling of events in which the agency of historical memory is indispensable. According to Jenkins, due to the ambitions of historians to discover not only what happened but how and why, as well as the meaning of the happening, it never really is the matter of the facts that are important *per se*, but the weight, position, combination and significance that the facts carry vis-à-vis each other in the construction of explanations that is at issue. He believes that '... historians transform the events of the past into

¹⁹ K. Jenkins: Re-Thinking History, p.40.

²⁰ Ibid., p.37.

²¹ Ibid., p.17.

²² Ibid., p.37.

²³ Duvenage in J. Rusen: Studies in Metahistory, p.1.

²⁴ K. Jenkins: Re-Thinking History, p.56.

²⁵ White in K. Jenkins: Re-Thinking History, pp.56-57.

patterns of meaning that any literal representation of them as facts could never produce.²⁶

In the two texts mentioned above, the narrators do not seem to have the choice to be 'unreflectively liberal,' as is the case in liberal discourse. As Jenkins points out, there is always posited in liberal discourse, somewhere and somehow, a sort of neutral ground from which it looks precisely as if you can choose or not. This neutral ground is not seen as another position one already occupies, but is viewed rather as a 'disinterested site from which one can sit back and objectively make unbiased choices and judgments.'²⁷

In contrast to the disinterested position that is championed in liberal argumentation, he (Jenkins) argues convincingly that 'there is no such thing as an 'unpositioned center,' no possibility of an unpositional site. The only choice is between a history that is aware of what it is doing and a history that is not.'²⁸ Marshall is of the view that 'history must not restrict its interest to the outside of events, but must also consider their "inside quality."²⁹ This is demonstrated in the narrators' act of ascribing political significance to the events narrated. The narrator's resolve to consider the 'inside' quality of historical events does not necessarily amount to a compromise of enquiry into the objective facts. It seems as if though Marshall anticipates potential objections against his position when he warns: 'what must be resisted is any suggestion that thereby history becomes less a matter of enquiry into the objective facts and more an expression of the subjective impressions of the historian.'³⁰

In engaging in a historical reminiscence the narrator is not merely 'collecting and checking every fact purely out of a disinterested passion for researching into the past.'³¹ On the contrary the narrator ascribes political significance / importance to the historical events he is narrating. Having said this it can emphatically be

²⁶ K. Jenkins: Re-Thinking History, pp.32-33.

²⁷ Ibid., p.69.

²⁸ Ibid., p.69.

²⁹ I.H. Marshall: Luke-Historian and Theologian, p.27.

³⁰ Ibid., p.27.

³¹ Ibid., p.47.

reasserted that in the two texts in question one discerns the foregrounding of the narrator's own positionality and interest in the narrative. So in the narratives history subserves the political interests that are manifested in the rhetorical strategies used by the narrators in their respective narratives.

The political perspective from which the narrator(s) narrates is best accounted for by Harris' aversion that 'where an individual speaks from affects both the meaning and truth of what he / she says and thus he / she cannot assume an ability to transcend her / his location and that a speaker's location has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker's claims and can serve either to authorize or de-authorize his / her speech.'³² Similarly, Gatherer, as cited by Reill, is of the view that, due to the fact that the historian cannot transcend his own point of view, impartial history is impossible. Even in the case of a historical genius whose work of art speaks to all ages – his point of view flashes forth from all his pages because every individual is a captive of his own self and surroundings. No one can free himself from the web spun by the complicated forces of time, place, character and social position. Gatherer believes that there are many forces that influence the historian, including public and personal pressures. In this regard, the public sphere 'encompasses the spirit of the times, the prevailing customs, the political constitution, the forms of religion, the character of the nation, and the social position of the author.'³³

1.3. REFERENTIAL LANGUAGE USAGE – TOWARDS A MORE OBJECTIVE REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

In this study I am arguing that the depiction of King Dingane as an untrustworthy, barbarian and evil king is, in Golan's terms, 'largely a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as are attempts to find rational explanations for his alleged brutal behaviour.'³⁴ Golan further avers that 'through the middle of the nineteenth century, however, it was in the writer's interest to portray King Dingane as an intelligent, if barbarian king, who was in any case, a more

³² H. Harris (ed.): *Identity*, p.98.

³³ P.H. Reill, 'History and Hermeneutics in the Aufklärung: The Thought of Johann Christoph Gatterer', p.47.

³⁴ D. Golan: *Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History*, p.25.

promising potential ally than his brother King Shaka.³⁵ Long before Piet Retief was befallen by the 'melancholy event' at the bidding of King Dingane, the latter had already demonstrated reasonableness in his dealings with the British residents at 'Port Natal'. King Dingane's reasonableness and political astuteness in this regard is attested to by the 'treaty' concluded between Dingane, King of the Zulus and the British residents at Port Natal. The stipulations of the treaty are reproduced in full hereunder:

1. Dingaan from this period consents to waive all claim to the persons and property of every individual now residing at Port Natal in consequence of their having deserted from him and accords them a free pardon. He still, however, regards them as his subjects liable to be sent for whatever he may think proper.
2. The British residents at Port Natal on their part engage for the future never to receive or harbour any deserter from the Zulu country or any of its dependencies and to use every endeavour to secure and return to the king every such individual endeavouring to find asylum among them.
3. Should a case arise in which this is found to be impracticable, immediate intelligence, stating particular of the circumstance, is to be forwarded to Dingaan.
4. Any infringement of this treaty on either part invalidates the whole.

Done at Congella this 6th day of May 1835 in the presence of UMTHELLA, TAMBOOZA, Chief indunas and head counselors of the Zulu nation, Mr George Cyrus, interpreter. Signed on behalf of the British residents at Port Natal, (Signed) Allen F. Gardiner.³⁶

It is evident that the sentiments expressed in the above treaty attest to the reasonableness of King Dingane in his diplomatic relations with both his subjects and the aliens who had come to inhabit part of his land. Moreover, even those who were as yet to become inhabitants of part of his land, depending of course on the success of their negotiation, attested to his (King Dingane's) humane disposition towards aliens. This is corroborated by Golan's assertion that Piet Retief in November 1837 led a party of horsemen to visit Dingaan's (sic) capital in order to obtain his approval for a settlement in the regions south of the Tugela River. After the visit, Retief wrote that 'the king behaved to me with great kindness during all the time I was with him.' However, 'a later visit by Retief in

³⁵ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.25.

³⁶ B.J.T. Leverton (ed.): Records of Natal, Vol.3, Aug.1835-June1838, p.15; also see GH 19/4, pp.825-826, Document No. 10, Annexure 1, Enclosure 1.

February 1838 was ended in Retief's death, and in the death of the 70 trekkers who had accompanied him.³⁷

It can be inferred from the above extracts that King Dingane is depicted as someone who is unpredictable because whereas on 5-8 November in the year 1837, Piet Retief asserts that 'the king behaved to me with great kindness during all the time I was with him', but in the year 1838, 'a later visit by Retief ... was ended in his (Retief's) death and in the death of the 70 Trekkers who had accompanied him.' Notably this text portrays King Dingane as unpredictable and it is to all intents and purposes biased in its rendition of what actually happened. The text, as it stands, is far from rendering a full account of all the precipitating factors that led to the massacre. This biased rendition of what actually happened is accounted for by the fact that the earliest works on the Zulu were written mainly by travelers and traders, whose journeys took them to Zululand. As travel literature, these works are characterized by their stress on the 'other', on what was different and strange in Zulu customs, and they usually take the form of a diary. The writer portrays himself as 'discovering' lands, and calls for the colonization of Natal. The author's economic motives underlie the way in which they describe the Zulu. Zululand bore the halo of the unknown; it was a dark and romantic country, well worth conquering.³⁸

Golan, in his *Construction and Reconstruction in Zulu History*, points out that the earliest works on the Zulu were written in the form of travel literature, mainly by travelers and traders, whose journeys took them to Zululand. These works, mainly diaries, characteristically stress the 'other' – that which is different and strange in Zulu customs. In that way the writer is able to portray himself as a discoverer of lands, while promoting the colonization of 'Natal'. According to Golan, '... the authors' economic motives underlie the way in which they describe the Zulu. Zululand bore the halo of the unknown; it was a dark and romantic country, well worth conquering.'³⁹

³⁷ D. Golan: *Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History*, p.23.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

Although at first Piet Retief is alleged to have led a party of horsemen in November 1837 to Dingaan's capital in order to seek his approval for a settlement in the region south of the Thukela⁴⁰ River, his (Retief's) sinister motives cannot be disclaimed. The following letter by the British subjects reproduced in full hereunder confirms this argument:

Your Excellency, it is with feelings of the utmost regret that we, the commandant burghers at present without the boundaries of this colony, have ascertained, through the medium of the Commercial Advertiser, that Mr P. Retief, commandant of a small portion of the burghers at present encamped on the "Dongella" river, is likely by the publication of his disloyal sentiments towards in the above mentioned paper to cause great displeasure towards Her Majesty's government. We therefore, feeling it a duty incumbent on ourselves to come forward and disclaim any participation in his desperate proceedings and in the voice of the people at large, not only to declare ourselves totally averse to his proceedings but that we will by every means in our power frustrate any sinister designs that he may have against Her Majesty's government. We have also most respectfully to request that Your Excellency will always consider us and our whole "lager" as loyal and devoted subjects and worthy of Your Excellency's favour and protection and that Your Excellency will be pleased to make use of our services whenever they may be required and in whatever shape Your Excellency may think proper. Any communication Your Excellency shall think proper to make to us we respectfully fully request may be forwarded to our agent Mr James Howell at Port Elizabeth who will immediately bring the same to its place of destination and who can also give Your Excellency any further information that Your Excellency may require, he having lately visited us at our encampment. We have the honor to be, with the greatest respect, Your Excellency's most humble and obedient servants.⁴¹ P.L. Uys.

The above letter is characteristically prophetic in its articulation of Retief's demeanour towards his potential political rivals as occasioned by his desire for independence. Notably, earlier texts painted a positive picture of King Dingane. For example, 'King Dingane,' argued Isaacs, 'may doubtless become, in no great distance of time, so far advanced in civilization, as to make his country a favourable spot for colonizing.'⁴²

⁴⁰ Thukela is the correct Zulu spelling for the name of this historic river, as opposed to 'Tugela', which is generally used in history books.

⁴¹ B.J.T. Leverton (ed.): Records of Natal, Vol. 3, Aug. 1835-June 1838, p.258; also see CO 3999, pp.470-473, Document No. 123.

⁴² L. Herrman (ed.): Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa Vol. II, p. 234.

The incidental positioning of events in relation to the years in which they took place, makes out a convincing case for ascribing blame for the resultant massacre. Three historical moments are of interest here. Firstly, the somewhat prophetic complaint by the burghers on 24 January 1838 about Piet Retief's activities, are characterized as repulsive. Secondly, Retief's visit to King Dingane on 3 February 1838 clearly included reproachable behaviour, thus giving cause for King Dingane to suspect him of malicious intent. Thirdly, the resultant massacre on 7 February 1838 can be seen as the fulfilment of the somewhat prophetic complaint by the burghers.

Given his political astuteness King Dingane discerned the impending threat to his kingdom and had to act timeously as it befitted his nationalistic proclivity. Whether his (Dingane's) resolve to quickly resort to the massacre was the appropriate means at the time to defend the Zulu nation against foreign encroachment is a question that is beyond the scope of this study. But just like the British subjects who had declared that 'we will by every means in our power frustrate any sinister design that he (Piet Retief) may have against Her Majesty's government,' King Dingane deemed it fit at the time to use the massacre as a means to an end. As observed by Golan, the relationship between the Europeans and Zulu was dramatically different during the first and second halves of the nineteenth century. When the settler community started growing in the 1850s, the White farmers saw the Zulu king and the Zulu homestead system as the main causes for their shortage of labor. This view of the king as the main stumbling block in the way of prosperity is common in the historical literature, even after the destruction of the Zulu kingdom in 1879.⁴³ The aforementioned provides the requisite background against which we have to understand and interpret King Dingane's alleged barbarism and tyranny, which renders him guilty of satanic treachery in respect of what befell Piet Retief and his party.

Thus far I have attempted to demonstrate by the use of varying narrative accounts on the same event that a historian, in Marshall's terms, 'records what

⁴³ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, pp.12-13.

he considers to be significant and memorable and that historical facts are precisely those facts which a historian thought worthy of being recorded.' Again, as asserted by Marshall, 'historians are not disinterested.'⁴⁴

It is evident from the foregoing discussion, as observed by Dolezel, that historical writing consists of two levels, namely the 'account of events already established as facts,' and the 'poetic and rhetorical elements by which what would otherwise be a list of facts is transformed into a story.' On the first level, 'competing narratives can be asserted, criticized, and ranked on the basis of their fidelity to the factual record, their comprehensiveness, and the coherence of whatever arguments they contain.' Among the elements on the second level are those 'generic story patterns we recognize as providing the plots.' ... 'Here the conflict between "competing narratives" has less to do with the facts of the matter in question than with the different story-meanings with which the facts can be endowed with emplotment.'⁴⁵

1.4. INTERVENTIONIST TEXTS VERSUS A REALISTIC POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF HISTORY

The following is a discussion of the extant writing trends and use of language adopted in Rawstorne and Mkebeni's writings. Writing within the conventions of traditional historicist discourse, Rawstorne and Mkebeni engage in a realistic political representation of King Dingane's elimination of the Voortrekkers at the bidding of King Dingane. In the two narratives the narrators make assertions about the actual world and they present an account of verifiable historical events.

It can therefore be said that the two narratives by Rawstorne and Mkebeni's are interventionist texts in which the 'use of language ...entails a particular political positioning of the user in relation to the world' and that this, as asserted by Hutcheon, renders 'all language ...politically contaminated.'⁴⁶ Such writing also bears out the old rhetorical dictum, which involves 'moving the audience.'

⁴⁴ I.H. Marshall: Luke-Historian and Theologian, p.47.

⁴⁵ L. Dolezel, 'Possible Worlds of Fiction and History', p.791.

⁴⁶ L. Hutcheon: A Poetics of Postmodernism, p.193.

It is worth taking into account the fact that the particular demands and constraints of their situations determine the writers' act of writing where language cannot be abstracted from material circumstances. Thus in Rawstorne and Mkebeni's texts, 'language is shown to be a social practice, an instrument as much for manipulation and control as for humanist self-expression.'⁴⁷ Rawstorne and Mkebeni are writing within a domain where language unequivocally assumes a referential character. As argued by Yule, reference is 'an act in which a writer uses linguistic forms to enable a reader to identify something.'⁴⁸ The concept of referential index is significant for the purpose of my argument in this thesis.

Rawstorne and Mkebeni's referential use of language is typical of 'the version of reference in which there is a basic "intention-to-identify" and a "recognition-of-intention" collaboration at work.'⁴⁹ Again in Rawstorne and Mkebeni's use of language there is, to use Yule's terms, a 'pragmatic connection between proper names and objects that will be conventionally associated within a socio-culturally defined community with those names.'⁵⁰ In the two authors' texts writing, 'as a social activity which takes place within a socio-political context,' deploys a language that is amenable to social representation.⁵¹

The use of language in their texts 'posits a relation of reference (however problematic) to the historical world both through its assertion of the social and institutional nature of all enunciative positions and through its grounding in the representational.'⁵² Again the use of language in Rawstorne and Mkebeni's texts 'refuses any formalist or deconstructive attempt to make language into the play of signifiers discontinuous with representation and with the external world.'⁵³ Thus the 'playfulness of writing' and the 'disinterested expressivity' that characterize modernist writing are hardly discernible in Rawstorne and Mkebeni's writings. Their texts, as typical realist texts, deploy language in a way that

⁴⁷ L. Hutcheon: *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.186.

⁴⁸ G. Yule: *Pragmatics*, p.17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁵¹ Clark in N. Fairclough (ed.): *Critical Language Awareness*, p.118.

⁵² L. Hutcheon: *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.141.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.144.

renders the reported content or narrated events unequivocally intelligible to the reader or interpreter. Thus Rawstorne and Mkebeni's writings are without linguistic opacity and one can hardly detect the disposal agency of language, as is the case with other modes of writing (especially the modernist mode).

Their texts do not treat language with iconoclastic freedom. Instead they passionately deploy language within the conventions of realistic writing. Rawstorne and Mkebeni's act of adhering to conventions is accounted for by the fact that 'the language which a writer uses is not his own creation but a selection from a system which is shaped by values and presuppositions shared or opposed by people.'⁵⁴

In view of this, I am inclined to believe that Rawstorne and Mkebeni are social realists and that their writings are addressed to a clearly defined constituency as opposed to 'seeking to address themselves to some abstract humanity.'⁵⁵ Rawstorne and Mkebeni's act of writing cannot be conceived of as an instance of a freely individuated authorial intention that seeks to impose itself upon language from 'outside.' Their acts of writing have been precipitated by the pressure of a particular historical context and as such have an inherent 'expressive function.'⁵⁶ It could be said that both Rawstorne and Mkebeni are writing within a particular discursive practice that takes into account the factuality of the events narrated. Their linguistic act is an act with practical implication as they write with a definite vision inherent in which is a determinate genetic intention.

Daichies's assertion that 'differences can be noted between the different kinds of language employed by writers of different kinds of literature'⁵⁷ seems apposite in this context. Rawstorne and Mkebeni's narratives or writings are written with a 'real reader in mind and real consequences to their decisions.'⁵⁸ Again Rawstorne and Mkebeni's writings/texts have a propensity toward realism and empirical detailing as they are not detached from the event(s) they are narrating.

⁵⁴ M. Chapman, et al: Perspectives on South African English Literature, p.137.

⁵⁵ Onoge in G.M. Gugelberger: Marxism and African Literature, p.38.

⁵⁶ F. Lentricchia: After the New Criticism, p.192.

⁵⁷ D. Daichies: Critical Approaches To Literature, p.24.

⁵⁸ Clarke in N. Fairclough (ed.): Critical Language Awareness, p.124.

With regard to reference in language, 'postmodernism suggests that the language in which realism or any other mode of representation operates cannot escape ideological contamination.'⁶⁵ However, 'postmodern discourses do not "liquidate referential" so much as force a rethinking of the entire notion of reference that makes problematic both the traditional realist transparency and this never reduction of reference is simulacrum.'⁶⁶ I therefore believe that the inadvertent ideological loadedness of language in Rawstorne and Mkebeni's texts is accounted for by the socio-political circumstances surrounding the writing at the time.

At this point, it is worth reiterating the argument that writing as an act of communication does not exist in an empty space and that the writer (especially the realist writer) cannot pretend to write as if though there is no context. Christian puts it aptly when he asserts that, history is 'all about context.'⁶⁷ In realist texts, such as the ones by Rawstorne and Mkebeni, one can detect a theme, an idea or underlying argument that runs through the narration and is maintained in the author's narration. This being the case, it is fairly logical to claim with particular reference to the texts in question, that in realist texts meaning is determinable and that the author's intention often serves as a reliable guide to this determination. The same view of meaning in texts is also implied in Thiselton's assertion that 'without the constraints imposed on meaning by the text's context or situation and the directness of the author's utterance, meaning becomes infinitely variable and polyvalent.'⁶⁸ But Thiselton observes that Reader-response theorists 'would claim that this notion of "constraints" is arbitrary, artificial, and illusory, whether they are perceived as textual constraints or as socio-critical constraints which offer a critique of the interests of a particular community of readers.'⁶⁹ Having said this, it is worth noting Lukes' illuminating caution to the effect that 'there are no good reasons for supposing that all criteria

⁶⁵ L. Hutcheon: A Poetics of Postmodernism, p.180.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.229.

⁶⁷ D. Christian, 'World History in Context', p.1.

⁶⁸ A.C. Thiselton: New Horizons in Hermeneutics, p.50.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.50.

of truth and validity are context-dependent and variable.⁷⁰ Lukes further asserts that,

A wide range of thinkers in various traditions of thought have been tempted by the view that criteria of truth, or logic, or both, arise out of different contexts and are themselves variable. The temptation consists in an urge to see the rules specifying what counts as true and / or what counts as valid reasoning as themselves relative to particular groups, cultures or communities. Among those who have succumbed to the temptation in varying degrees have been a number of sociologists of Knowledge, as well as philosophically minded social anthropologists and philosophers interested in the social sciences, linguists and, most recently, historians and philosophers of science.⁷¹

The above quotation does not nullify the argument that all writing is situated and that writers are positioned in real human communities where values and discourses are constantly competing for ascendancy. The author joins this process by inscribing his / her voice within this milieu as part of a historical and discursive community, and his / her writing is necessarily an intervention within that specific history and community. Hodge's assertion that 'writers normally write for some kind of readership whose presumed interests as real readers affect that writing'⁷² bears out this relationship. Hodge basically believes that there is no impartiality in writing. Hodge further argues that 'writing and reading occur within logonomic systems which constrain and determine meanings.'⁷³ And Lemke advocates the same view in his assertion that 'a theory of meaning must be essentially social, historical, cultural and political, because the unit of meaning is a human action "addressed" to real and potential others.'⁷⁴

It is an act-in-community, a material and social process that helps to constitute the community as community. Due to the situated state within which all writing finds itself, I do not view reading and interpretation as 'disinterested' events, but as events that are laden with value and that are aimed at satisfying particular interests. For Mannheim, as asserted by Lukes, the sociology of knowledge is an

⁷⁰ Lukes in M.T. Gibbons (ed.): Interpreting Politics, p.64.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.65.

⁷² R. Hodge: Literature As Discourse, p.48.

⁷³ Ibid., p.48.

⁷⁴ J.L. Lemke: Textual Politics, p.8.

attempt to analyze the 'perspectives' associated with different social positions, to study the orientation towards certain meanings and values which inheres in a given social position (the outlook and attitude conditioned by the collective purposes of a group), and the concrete reasons for the different perspectives which the same situation presents to the different positions in it.⁷⁵

1.5. DECOLONISING AFRICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY IN ORDER TO RESCUE MARGINALISED HISTORY

In the context of this study the 'same situation' is embodied in the massacre of Piet Retief and his party. This 'same situation' resulted in the adoption of different perspectives from which it (the same situation) was read and interpreted in line with the different social positions and values that individuals ascribed to the massacre. To the Boers the massacre epitomized the barbarism and tyranny that was later ascribed to King Dingane. But to the Zulu people the massacre is an embodiment of the nationalistic proclivity, which is the hallmark of nationalism. Lukes furthermore argues that:

It might be shown that a certain group of persons have certain good reasons or motives to adopt or adhere to certain beliefs because such beliefs accord with their desires, purposes, aspirations or interests: beliefs are imputed to them as expressing, whether in a transparent or distorted form, their aims or interest in a particular historical situation. They believe their beliefs because they have intelligible reasons for doing so, which can be explicated by an analysis of their situation.⁷⁶

The sentiments expressed by Lukes in the above quotation are collaborated by Dolezel, who believes that historical worlds are incomplete in a different manner and handle the gaps in a radically different way. He furthermore believes that the incompleteness of historical worlds is epistemological due to the limitations of human cognition. Dolezel quotes Paul Veyne, who expressed this incompleteness in a grand metaphor as follows: "History is a palace whose full extent we do not discover...and of which we do not see all the suites at once". Dolezel postulates that the first source of gaps is the historian's selectivity, which

⁷⁵ cf. M.T. Gibbons: Interpreting Politics.

⁷⁶ Lukes in M.T. Gibbons (ed.): Interpreting Politics, p.69.

is guided either by purely practical considerations (the scope of the investigation), or by a chosen “plot” structure – as Veyne and others would have it.⁷⁷ He therefore believes that:

Whatever the motivation, these gaps result from a conscious decision on the part of the historian about the relevance of facts, and he or she must be ready to defend it. Selectivity involved in history writing and gaps existing in historical worlds do not free historical worlds from the requirements of adequacy. The other kind of gaps in historical worlds, those that are due to lack of evidence, can be filled when new documents become available.⁷⁸

According to Dolezel, it is evident that there is no impartiality in writing as the texts will always reflect authorial intention. Notably the authorial intention is, of course, the author’s personal perspective and purpose in writing the text but this intention must not be divorced from the social, cultural, historical and other circumstances of the author’s time and place. Thus the position adopted in this thesis to the reading of realist texts is informed by the mimetic perspective and the conventional view of texts as ‘things’ that have ‘meaning;’⁷⁹ and second, by the pragmatic perspective and the view of the text ‘as something made in order to effect requisite responses in its readers.’⁸⁰

Wilson and Thompson in their preface to *The Oxford History of South Africa* argue that South African history has laboured under the influence of an ideologically based subjectivity. Nowhere is this ideologically based subjectivity more forcefully reflected than in the writings about King Dingane. This, however, is to be expected, given that those who shaped South African historiography, as argued by Carlean in his paper, *Myths of the Mfecane and South African Educational Texts: A Critique*, were ‘the products of educational systems which tended to enforce certain orthodoxies unquestioningly. In the case of South Africa, the disturbing reality is that these orthodoxies are often the product of insidious propagandists whose aim is to justify the present via the distortion of

⁷⁷ L. Dolezel, ‘Possible Worlds of Fiction and History’, p.795.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.795.

⁷⁹ P. Waugh: *Practising Postmodernism / Reading Modernism*, p.207.

⁸⁰ D. Abrams, et al: *Social Identity Theory*, p. 15.

the past.’⁸¹ For example, Cobbing argues that ‘while black self-destruction was heavily overexposed, often on the flimsiest of evidence, the impact of British and Boer expansionism on African societies was systematically downplayed, usually by ignoring it altogether.’⁸²

In my attempt to reconstruct the history of King Dingane, Mangosuthu Buthelezi’s advocacy that historiography needs to be more sensitive to ‘context, cultural paradigms and [other] historiographic frames of reference’ is particularly pertinent and will thus be used to sustain the underlying argument of this study. Buthelezi, in a paper delivered at the Biennial National Conference of the Historical Association held at the University of Zululand on 24 August 2000, stated his belief that a new country must search for and find new cultural paradigms, particularly in respect of history and historiography. In his view, ‘Historiography is somehow more important than history itself,’ because it ‘... embodies the culture of an age by determining how we look at, read and assesses the otherwise incomprehensible objective facts of the past. It changes the assessment of past events from right to wrong and then back to right again, to adjust to the sensibility and ideology of the present.’ For this reason, he felt that historiographers should be particularly attentive in developing a genuine South African historiography capable of expanding, rather than limiting, our cultural horizons and our in-depth understanding of historical events. Buthelezi believed that, as new paradigms developed, there would be the temptation to create dogma. He believed that relativism should remain the preferred option for prudence and pragmatism, especially at this particular juncture of South Africa’s transformation. He found it important for both history and historiography to illuminate and give value to the history of all our people and believed that these should be read within their own context, cultural paradigms and historiographic frames of reference. Buthelezi emphasized the importance of context in historiography:

In respect of the history of African people, we are faced with the increased challenge of creating, for the first time, ways and means not only to tell the story, but also to understand it and

⁸¹ K. Carlean, ‘Myths of the Mfecane and South African Educational Text: A Critique’, p.14.

⁸² J. Cobbing, ‘The Case against the Mfecane’, p.11.

subdivision in the image of the European's history; they were usually the objects of dispute.' Mphahlele also observes that:

South African history is seen as the tale of heroic Whites, struggling against incredible odds to establish their "place in the sun." Not the least of these "odds" were repeated attacks by savage, barbarous hordes of uncivilized black barbarians. Whites were often the innocent victims of Black duplicity; they were murdered, tortured and raped by those black tyrants, who stole, lied and were permanently drunk.⁸⁸

In extending this argument, and further challenging South Africa's biased historiography, Gebhard states that 'a pervasive sentiment is that history is in the dock of a court of law and is not telling the whole truth and nothing but the whole truth.'⁸⁹ The search for a new historiography as argued by Buthelezi, and the need to decolonize South African historiography with regard to Blacks, is best explained by Matthews who argues that, 'the past is like part of the "national dress" of a people.'⁹⁰ In extending Matthews's analogy, Gebhard argues that:

It is clear that the main objection is to the fact that the fabric of the national dress has been woven by people who have no empathy for the fibre that makes up the warp and the woof of Black history. And if this were not enough then the unsatisfactory cloth was cut according to patterns that had no relationship to the people who were supposed to wear it. The worst aspect of this ill-fitting suit was that the pupil had to wear it if he was to enjoy the accoutrements of White science and literature.⁹¹

The above quotation by Gebhard points to Black criticisms of both South African history and historiography in terms of the way they have dealt with – if they dealt with it at all – the history of Black people. Wilson and Thompson argue that 'there are insufficient studies of the experiences of specific African communities since they came into contact with White people.'⁹² It is however ironical, as argued by Gebhard, that Wilson and Thompson chose to ignore the works (on the history of

⁸⁸ Professor Eskia Mphahlele's Graduation Address.

⁸⁹ W.R.L. Gebhard: Black Perceptions of South African History, p.19.

⁹⁰ Z.K.Matthews: Freedom for my People, pp.58-59.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.19.

⁹² M. Wilson and L.M. Thompson (eds.): The Oxford History of South Africa, p.vi.

the Blacks) that were already available at that time. It is because of this reason, perhaps, that Gebhard argues in a tone of disappointment:

They did not consider the works as studies, since they were often written by people who did not have the schooling required to reflect the insights that Wilson and Thompson considered necessary for their work. Instead they were very often the personal reminiscences of individuals who wished to express the experiences to which Wilson and Thompson referred.⁹³

The inclusion of historical works that deal with the experiences of Black people under 'additional Bibliography' captures the flagrant disregard that South African historiography in general, and White historians in particular, have shown towards the history of Black South Africans. One of the aims of this study, therefore, is to rescue the deliberately marginalized history of Black people from virtual obscurity by placing it at the centre where it belongs.

1.6. CREATING AN UNBIASED RECORD THAT PLACES KING DINGANE IN A FRAMEWORK OF AFRICAN HISTORY

This study is an investigation aimed at exploring available sources with the view of constructing a record that places King Dingane within the framework of South African history. This should be done in a manner that restores not just a modicum of the whole truth about him, but in a manner that dispels myths, misperceptions, and the volumes of accusations that have been leveled against him, much against the facts of history.

In this study, a person is regarded as a nationalist when he / she is rooted in a particular environment in which people with a national identity live. It denotes historical and national consciousness in an individual; someone who identifies himself or herself with a group of people that emanate from that descent historically. There could be a sociological dimension in the sense that one may not be part of a nation because one has the same ancestor, but because one has a similar historical consciousness. One, who has lived in a particular

⁹³ W.R. L. Gebhard: Black Perceptions of South African History, p.6.

environment and shared history for a period that is substantially long enough to claim to belong to that environment and to those people by virtue of sharing a history with them, can also lay claim to that nationality. Thus, a nationalist, it could be argued, is that kind of person who has an ancestral, historical and sociological claim to a particular nationality and espouses its national consciousness. This description/conception of a nationalist is central to this study, which seeks to examine King Dingane as a nationalist. In the subsequent discussion, it will be clear that one is dealing with a person who had been a king of the Zulu people. The concept of nationalism is often exclusively deployed in terms of modernity and the invention of what Benedict Anderson refers to as 'imagined communities'.

This study adopts a more expansive view, which attributes a nationalist consciousness to national groups long before the advent of the modern nation state. This 'national' consciousness, evidence in action and in a fervent loyalty to the ideals of the 'nation', is what makes a nationalist.

It is worth emphasizing that Africans also had their own nationalism, and like nationalism elsewhere in the world, African nationalism is not new. Khapoya argues that:

Contrary to a common view in Western scholarship of Africa, African nationalism predates colonialism. And in the annals of African history, one finds coherent organized African communities with a very strong sense of identity, prepared to defend their territorial and cultural integrity against those who would want to destroy or undermine them.⁹⁴

The following is what Khapoya alleges to have been the pronouncements of the king of the Yao people in Tanzania to a German commander who had been sent to him to affirm the German colonial claim to his country in 1890:

I have listened to your words but can find no reason why I should obey you – I would rather die first... If it should be friendship that you desire, then I am ready for it, today and

⁹⁴ V.B. Khapoya: The African Experience, p.149.

always; but to be your subject, I cannot be...If it should be war you desire, then I am ready, but never to be your subject...I do not fall at your feet, for you are God's creature just as I am...I am Sultan here in my land. You are Sultan there in yours. Yet listen, I do not say to you that you should obey me; for I know that you are a free man...As for me, I will not come to you, and if you are strong enough, then come and fetch me.⁹⁵

Khapoya also states that a leader of the Nama people in modern Namibia once told the Germans that 'the Lord has established various kingdoms in the world. Therefore I know and believe that it is no sin or crime that I should wish to remain the independent chief of my land and people.' In Khapoya's view the sentiments expressed by the kings demonstrate nothing but nationalism by a people who wanted either such relations with foreigners as exist between equals or to be left alone. By the same token, the killing of the Voortrekkers by King Dingane at eMgungundlovu was necessitated by King Dingane's nationalistic attempts to defend the Zulu Kingdom, especially by preemptively defending the land of his people from being expropriated by the invaders.

This study on King Dingane should therefore be viewed within the context of the significance of African history in general and Zulu point of view in particular. In a speech on '*The Significance of African History*,' the Caribbean-American writer Richard B. Moore rightly observes that the significance of African history is shown, though not overtly, 'in the very effort to deny anything worthy of the name of history to Africa and the African peoples.' He states that the fact that this widespread and almost successful endeavour was maintained for almost five centuries in order to erase African history from the general record should be quite conclusive to thinking and open minds. According to Moore, it is unthinkable that such an undertaking would ever have been carried on, and at such length, in order to obscure and to bury what is actually of little or no significance. The significance of African history becomes even more manifest, according to Moore, when one realizes that the deliberate denial arose out of European expansion and invasion of Africa since the middle of the 15th century. Moore believes that this compulsion was prompted by an attempt to justify such colonialist conquest, domination, enslavement, and plunder:

⁹⁵ V.B. Khapoya: *The African Experience*, p.150.

Hence, this brash denial of history and culture to Africa, and indeed, even of human qualities and capacity for civilization to the indigenous peoples of Africa.⁹⁶

In essence, Moore is saying that African history must be looked at anew and that it should be seen in its relationship to world history. The reappraisal of the history of King Dingane should therefore be viewed within the context of what the above quotation propounds. Indeed, as Marcus Garvey warned, 'the history of African people would have to be written by themselves if the truth has to be told.'⁹⁷ Mutwa unapologetically supports Garvey when he asserts that:

Few white people have ever bothered to study the African people carefully – and by this I do not mean driving round the African villages taking photographs of dancing tribesmen and women and asking a few questions, and then going back and writing a book – a useless book full of errors, wrong impressions and just plain nonsense. Many of the books written by Europeans about Africans should be relegated to the dustbin.⁹⁸

Coetzee, apart from the ethnocentric and supercilious language he uses when referring to Black people, is also correct when he asks:

And who else than the Bantu historian, if steeped in the principles of scientific honesty and intellectual responsibility, could be better suited for the task of probing into his distant past? Without cutting himself off the mainstream of historical thought, the Bantu historian will be admirably suited to take contemporary African mentality into account. At the same time he would be capable of penetrating the world of the tribe, the chiefdom or the clan, making use of oral tradition, myths and legends and data derived from the related disciplines of archaeology, ethnography, linguists, physical anthropology, as well as astronomy and ethno-Botany.⁹⁹

Le Cordeur is also instructive when he observes that until sufficient numbers of Black historians exist, there will continue to be a major gap in South African history – a history not merely from below, but also from within:

⁹⁶ Moore in J.G. Jackson: Introduction to African Civilization, pp.6-7.

⁹⁷ N. Nangoli: No More Lies About Africa, p.2.

⁹⁸ V.C. Mutwa: Indaba My Children, p.x.

⁹⁹ C.G. Coetzee, 'The Bantu and the Study of History', p.97.

This is not to argue that only blacks can write the history of blacks (or of South Africa), but that without black contribution an essential dimension of South African history in general will be missing. Nothing short of a Copernican revolution in our thinking is demanded.¹⁰⁰

True, the experience of being Black can give Blacks a special insight into their own history, and this is precisely what this study hopes to provide by 'filling the missing pages' of the history of King Dingane. This will contribute to the 'new history' in South Africa. Fundamental to such a 'new history', argues Le Cordeur, would be the incorporation of a Black Nationalist perspective.¹⁰¹ Writing in the 1980s, Le Cordeur had the following to say about the state of affairs of South African history:

In South Africa's current need to re-define itself, what is required of its historians is an act of reflective synthesis and of imaginative power...For we need now to strike beyond the all too many deadlocks at which we have arrived in the battle of the paradigms, and we need also to achieve a more explicitly interdisciplinary approach than has been done in anything that we have hitherto seen.¹⁰²

Le Cordeur's perceptive observation is as relevant today as it was at the time of its writing. The 'new history', Le Cordeur further argues, will have to be far more eclectic in its approach. He advises that if South African history is to emerge from its present *cul-de-sac*, it will be necessary to enrich it by 'borrowing from a much wider range of approaches.' Although it will have to 'integrate the best of whichever perspectives are most illuminating on each issue,' it should not be '... based upon a confused eclecticism, but upon a thoroughly opportunistic borrowing of the best of each tradition, carefully reconstructed and informed by the analytical insights of the present generation.'¹⁰³

In this study, I am adopting an eclectic approach, which involves written sources as well as finding recourse to oral tradition.

¹⁰⁰ B.A. Le Cordeur, 'The Reconstruction of South African History', p.8.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

As predicted by the *Times of Natal* of 21 November 1888, 'the future historian of South Africa will probably find it difficult to decide between the claims of wickedness, weakness, and folly for dictating the political history of KwaZulu.'¹⁰⁴ The gore-drenched portraits and misrepresentations inherent in the prejudicial historical works that have been published on King Dingane and the swirl of controversy that surrounds his maligned reign best encapsulate the significance of the *Times of Natal's* prophetic and perceptive comment. This thought provoking statement that appeared in the *Times of Natal* in 1888 suggests that due to the prejudices of the past, it may at some point be very difficult to get to the truth, and that it is the responsibility of historians to make this truth accessible to people. Fortunately, for South African historians, and Black historians in particular, an enabling and conducive environment has been created in South Africa for certain issues that had been distorted in the past to be redressed or addressed. Historians can now collect information and correct data or accounts that had been distorted by the ideologisation of history and life in South Africa. In a situation where people had, of necessity, to look at each other as enemies, history had to provide justification for that outlook of mutual antagonism, and the historical imagination invariably suffered.

Now, more than before, Black people naturally want to look at themselves as makers of history in South Africa, and more importantly, they want to get to the truth of what happened in the past, in the interests of their own integrity and innate pride. They want to do this because they want to leave an informed and balanced account for posterity. Biko argues that it has to be established whether 'our position (in terms of Black peoples' history) is a deliberate creation of God or an artificial falsification of the truth by power-hungry people whose motive is authority, security, wealth and comfort.'¹⁰⁵ Biko's concern about the position of Black history is ably explained by Kekana, who, as quoted in Gebhard, makes a distinction between a 'naïve' historian who, with the best of intentions, sought to write histories of South Africa that neglected or distorted the history of Africans. According to Gebhard, Kekana:

¹⁰⁴ *Times of Natal*: 21.11. 1888.

¹⁰⁵ W.R. L. Gebhard: *Black Perceptions in South African History*, p.15.

Seme also argues that 'history should have 'the open pen of truth' that will restore to the Black his rightful place in society and refurbish his dignity.'¹¹⁷ However, for that to happen, Manganyi points out that 'history will have to be purged of the "dehumanizing heroism" of the past in favour of a new heroism.'¹¹⁸ To this, Gebhard adds, 'there is no doubt that the "dehumanizing heroism" that Manganyi refers to is that history which "relegates the heroes of black history to the status of bloodthirsty tyrants..."'¹¹⁹

1.7. THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGENDS AND ORAL ACCOUNTS

The present study attempts to present a view that was suppressed for too long, especially by those who claim to be authorities in Zulu history. It is against this background that the challenge must be seen that is faced by Black people – and Zulu people in particular – in reconstructing their history with the aid of legends and oral accounts. Fortunately, today an increasing degree of importance is accorded to orality. It is not sufficient to depend solely on written sources, especially when, as in this instance, the available sources are either limited in scope or biased in their treatment of the issues in question. We have to look at alternative accounts and in so doing acknowledge that such renditions need to be read alongside other scribal accounts that supposedly carry the authority of the written document. In short, the underlying argument is that not everything that has been written on King Dingane is based on accurate understood facts. If based on facts, such facts have been perhaps deliberately falsified through interpretation. The same trend of deliberate falsification obtains in Hellenistic historiography, as it was common practice for historians to manipulate facts to suit their own interests. With regard to the writing of King Dingane's history, it is certainly true that the colonizers were not yet well acquainted with South Africa at the time. For this reason, and in order for them to gain acceptance from the indigenous people, they had to justify whatever treatment they would mete out to King Dingane. For the same reason they also had to falsify the accounts of events surrounding King Dingane's reign – hence the negative portrayal of King

¹¹⁷ P. ka I. Seme in W.R. L. Gebhard: Black Perceptions of South African History, p.15.

¹¹⁸ N.C. Manganyi, 'The Making of a Rebel', p.176.

¹¹⁹ W.R.L. Gebhard: Black Perception of South African History, p.17.

Dingane as a 'barbaric tyrant,' who was also 'cruel,' 'savage,' 'treacherous' and the like. The colonizers' perceptions of King Dingane were mostly imperialistic because they were imposing their view on how King Dingane should have reacted to the invasion of his kingdom.

The point here is that history will not always have at its disposal the written literature to which it can refer. Sometimes one has to depend on word of mouth, and as long as this is acknowledged in the text, it is a valid account because it implies that one has to depend on the available evidence, however defective it might be as compared to written accounts. But, at the same time, written accounts are not always reliable or truthful because they are ideas produced by individuals who themselves are influenced by their own circumstances. South African history provides a good example of such unreliability and circumstantial constraints.

The following explanation of oral traditions provides the necessary background against which historical accounts of events based on oral traditions are to be approached and interpreted. In Hamilton's view 'traditions play a key role in the construction of the ideologies of nationalism, imperialism and radicalism as they (traditions) draw on the past selectively to suit or satisfy particular political or material objectives and as such present themselves as a form of social engineering.'¹²⁰ In this context, they 'define 'popular memory' as a 'dimension of political practice', an active force in shaping prevailing political consciousness and a site of political struggle.'¹²¹ Hamilton furthermore believes that 'oral traditions are implicitly considered to be products or artifacts of ruling group ideologies, and are understood to be imposed on society in the form of a 'false consciousness' functioning to mask the reality of power relations and oppression in the society.'¹²² This approach, in Hamilton's terms, 'suggests that no direct or alternative cognitions of the real conditions of life are possible, that the experience of life is a perpetual illusion, and the distortion of reality is at the whim of the ruling class.' Notably, according to Hamilton, in pre-colonial Zulu society,

¹²⁰ C. Hamilton: Ideology, Oral Tradition and the struggle for power in the early Zulu Kingdom, p.49.

¹²¹ Ibid., p.49.

¹²² Ibid., .51.

where a form of ancestorship prevailed, history took on powerful ideological connotations. References to ancestors in the previous order of things evoked not only the sanction of past experience, but also the approval of the ancestors who had power to influence the present. As a result, appeals to history and apparent continuity with the past in such a society constituted ideological elements of much greater power and effect than they did in twentieth-century, capitalist societies.¹²³

Oral history or the pursuing of fieldwork, as some call it, is a valuable tool for recording history, and the necessity of recording oral history is more urgent now than even before. Similarly, Hamilton believes that 'oral traditions as the pliant tools in the hands of a society's rulers.'¹²⁴ Hamilton's argument that 'oral traditions are by definition unfixed, at least until recorded,'¹²⁵ is worth noting. In this regard 'they are usually in daily currency in a society.' Consequently, Hamilton believes that 'lived experience constantly confronts the hegemonic ideology represented in the traditions and where antagonistic interests are represented in the traditions, a dialogue is set up to which the traditions, precisely because they are not fixed texts, can respond immediately.'¹²⁶ It is worth reiterating that 'oral traditions are not merely the vehicle of hegemonic ideology, but the very site of the expression of the dialogue and the conflict in which it engages, and of the friction between lived experience and imposed consciousness.'¹²⁷ According to Hamilton, 'the very process of remembering is creative, selective and involves restructuring.' Therefore, 'traditions are active, and in certain senses autonomous, mediating among the interests of several groups, sometimes compelling the ruling group to bend to the needs of the rules.'¹²⁸ In this regard, 'traditions are bound to manifest a degree of evenhandedness sufficient to allow social conformity and as such 'must validate themselves ethnically in the eyes of several interest groups, and not just the rulers.'¹²⁹

¹²³ C. Hamilton: Ideology, Oral Tradition and the Struggle for power in the early Zulu Kingdom, p.55.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.56.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.60.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.60.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.60.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.61.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.61.

In stressing the importance of oral history, Mothibe points out that 'talking with informants in the field lies at the methodological heart of Africanist history.' It is indeed quite disturbing to observe that a chunk of Zulu oral history has not been recorded by Zulu people, but by people who could be handicapped in terms of understanding the context that underpins Zulu culture and history. An important case in point is that of the James Stuart Archives, an archive on Zulu oral history. International and national scholars still rely heavily on the James Stuart Archives while doing research on African history. Whereas the information contained in these archives may be relied upon, it is not without its shortcomings. Golan captures some of the shortcomings of the James Stuart Archives when she points out that Stuart's influence on the reconstruction of the Zulu past cannot be overestimated, 'especially given that he created the impression that the izibongo (praises) were fixed texts, of which he had obtained the real or official versions.'¹³⁰ According to Golan, Stuart was responsible for the common belief that the time and place in which the praise poems were sung, and the ability of the bard, were of no importance. Moreover, 'his facility for freezing oral poetry into official texts contributed to yet another process of falsification. As in the case of other oral traditions, the izibongo were adapted by bards to the necessities of the hour. Izibongo contain not only praises, but were used as a tool for social and political criticism.' Golan explains how this criticism was expressed:

Very often double entendre or deeper language was used to introduce the criticism into the praises. Stuart, by claiming to have recorded the 'true' versions of the Izibongo, neutralized the praises and eliminated the criticism that was there when he recorded them. If the function of the praise poem is, as Trevor Cope argues, to produce conformity and to approve patterns of behaviour, the approved patterns must change along with the cultural values that direct them.¹³¹

Golan states that Stuart left us with praises, which reflect early twentieth-century expectations of chiefs, but did not allow for the possibility of subsequent changes in the content of the praise or of the introduction of criticism. Golan further explains: 'We no longer have access to the izibongo in their dynamic function,

¹³⁰ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, pp.60-61.

¹³¹ C. Hamilton: Ideology, Oral tradition and the struggle for power in the early Zulu Kingdom, pp.60-61.

and are therefore no longer able to witness changes in what was expected of the leaders.¹³² Nevertheless, Golan's argument about izibongo is faulty. Izimbongi, like the eminent Magolwane and Mshongweni, had a poetic license to criticize questionable conduct on the part of Zulu kings.¹³³ In fact, there are actual verses in King Dingane's izibongo wherein the King is criticized for abusing power by both Izimbongi (praise-singers). The Izimbongi were so powerful that the then Zulu kings did not expect one-sided portrayals of themselves. In King Dingane's case, relative stability and reliability of izibongo (praises) is demonstrated in that they collectively reveal a profound ambiguity that documents both negative and positive aspects of his personality.

Sayigh also points out possible handicaps that Stuart encountered in contextually recording the oral history of the Zulu people. Recognising that oral history takes place in the frame of political action rather than academic work, Sayigh believes that its methods and interpretation need to be subjected to several kinds of scrutiny, including people's memories of the past – which cannot but be affected by certain factors which researchers and readers need to take into account. These include questions concerning the representativeness of particular speakers – the effects of class, political affiliation, age, or gender on what they say, but more importantly, the effect on speech and memory of the situation at the time of recording. In this case, 'situation' includes overall and local political conditions, mood, the particular moment and place of recording, and the researcher's identity and relationship with the history-givers. Sayigh believes that particular phases of the past may seem good or bad depending on their relationship to the present. People may speak differently depending on the place at which they find themselves, the people present or absent during the interview with the researcher, and the researcher's nationality, class and gender. But beyond such basic situational factors, Sayigh believes that the way in which people tell history is necessarily shaped by culture: 'oral histories should not be

¹³² C. Hamilton: Ideology, Oral Tradition and the Struggle for power in the early Zulu Kingdom, pp.60-61.

¹³³ See Chapter 1 of S.M. Ndlovu's thesis, The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History. University of Witwatersrand, 2001.

read primarily as source of historical "fact" but rather of historical experience and the cultural frameworks through which it is lived and recollected.'¹³⁴

Stuart's role in recording Zulu oral testimonies and traditions has been the subject of critical scrutiny and scholarly debate, especially between Hamilton and Cobbing. According to Ndlovu, Hamilton accuses academics, such as Golan and Cobbing, of distortions of the Zulu past and of diminishing the historical value of the collections made by colonial officials such as Stuart and the missionaries. These academics, argues Hamilton, write off as mere propaganda or invention documentary sources on the precolonial history of Southern Africa written by Europeans. She explains that there is a far more complex relationship between indigenous narratives and colonial ones, and the process of representation in which they engage, than Golan and Cobbing allow.¹³⁵ Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe bring a totally different dimension to this debate when they argue that the main problem with African social historiography is not the succession of written tradition to oral, but the interaction of the two traditions in a context politically dominated by the written.¹³⁶

My concern with Stuart is his apparent selectivity with regard to the questions that he asked of the Zulu informants. Hence, I agree with Ndlovu when he argues that even though independent authorial orientations are apparent with regard to Stuart, the latter related the oral testimonies and traditions according to the questions he posed. I also wish to point out that even the people that Stuart interviewed were anti-King Dingane. For example, Tununu from the amaQwabe clan was, for political reasons, pro King Shaka and anti King Dingane. It is a well known fact that the relationship between King Dingane and the Qwabe clan was antagonistic. Surely one would be deluding himself / herself to expect a somehow balanced view of King Dingane from Tununu.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ R. Sayigh: *Too Many Enemies*, p.6.

¹³⁵ S.M. Ndlovu: *The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical literature: A case study in the construction of historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History*, p.30. Also see C. Hamilton's 'Authoring Shaka'.

¹³⁶ B. Jewsiewicki and V.Y. Mudimbe, 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa,' p.4.

¹³⁷ S.M. Ndlovu: *The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the historical construction of Historical knowledge in the 19th and 20th century of South African History*, p.32. Also see JSA, KCM 24259, evidence of Tununu.

Similarly, Mtshapi kaNoradu ka¹³⁸ Magwaza, when interviewed by Stuart, spoke negatively about King Dingane. This was to be expected because Mtshapi's forefathers were in the line of the Magwaza chiefs, whose chieftdom was destroyed by King Dingane.¹³⁹ It should be made clear that 'informants,' or 'public intellectuals' or 'organic intellectuals,' as Ndlovu would call them, played a great role in the writing of Zulu history. Unfortunately, they are not given the respect and recognition that they deserve for the part that they played in the preservation and promotion of Zulu history. 'Informants' possess so much educative information and archival material belonging to their respective communities that so -called experts such as Bryant and Stuart as students, made use of such important information and knowledge according to their own needs, agenda, propaganda and world view. People such as the Bryant's and Stuart's did not have an inkling of knowledge about South East Africa until they met local 'informants' who educated these anxious students from Europe and other climes about the social system and history of the amaZulu. Carolyn Hamilton also propagates a corresponding argument in her doctoral thesis¹⁴⁰ and subsequent publications on King Shaka. She suggests a complex interplay between African authors/transmitters and the recorder James Stuart, with the former playing a more influential role. In short, the relationship between 'the informants' or public intellectuals and their students such as Bryant and Stuart is more complex than Golan, Jawscewicki and Mundimbe would like to admit. It was not a one-sided relationship.

After all has been said and done, it is important to note that one of the values of oral history is its potential to reveal the other viewpoint, contrary to the established one; and the status of the researcher or the narrator's / informant's perception of himself / herself determines the quality of the material made available or the information divulged. It is my contention therefore that Zulu oral history recorded by White researchers may have certain shortcomings in terms of eliciting the historical truths about Zulu history. To illustrate this line of argument, when Mothibe, a Black historian, conducted his research in Zimbabwe

¹³⁸ The prefix Ka in Zulu stands for or means 'son of'.

¹³⁹ See evidence of Mtshapi JSA, Vol.4; Mtshapi was interviewed by Stuart in 1918.

¹⁴⁰ C.A. Hamilton: Authoring Shaka Models, Metaphor and Historiography. John Hopkins University, 1993.

by gathering oral statements, his respondents had the following to say to him: 'You are young: we can't tell you everything. Some secrets are traditionally reserved only for the ears of the elders.'¹⁴¹ Now, if Black respondents could say this to a black historian, one can imagine how difficult it could be for a White historian to elicit historical information. The shortcomings in the James Stuart Archives should therefore be understood against this background. This however does not vitiate the commendable work Stuart did in recording the Zulu oral traditions. I am convinced that I am not alone in extolling Stuart for taking the initiative that he did in recording the rich history of the Zulu people.

In emphasizing the importance of oral history, Vansina argues that when historians study documents, the voice of their authors is heard once and for all, meaning that the subjective interpretation, which they bring to the writing of a document, is given once and for all. Although it can only be partially circumvented by comparing documents, such comparisons do not hold in the case of oral information. Vansina explains that, in dealing with living people, it is possible to find a larger number of points of view to compare and to acquire a better sense of what exactly informs the subjectivity of different sources. It therefore 'follows that there is less room for the historical imagination of the historian than in the case of written sources that cannot talk back.'¹⁴²

Vansina's argument, above, succinctly illuminates the inability on the part of historians to elicit historical information, especially from written sources, and, on the other hand, it indicates what one needs to take into account when recording oral history. Adenaike points out that the inadequacy of interview schedules for eliciting historical information has been underscored on the grounds that they leave no room for the historian to learn what questions need to be asked. So has the fact that historical information may be intentionally withheld in the absence of a firm relationship of personal trust. According to Adenaike, the inherent contradiction in the study of life histories has been highlighted as 'an inability to obtain information about experiences, which one does not share.'¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Mothibe, as cited by C.K. Adenaike and J. van Vansina (eds.): *In Pursuit of History*, p.15.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.138.

Julia Reed is also dismissive of oral history when she points out that 'by nature oral history lacks a consistent point of view.'¹⁴⁴ Thus, the collection of oral history or tradition is not without its drawbacks, as Vansina puts it so well by stating that 'oral history is not a magic wand that transforms every pumpkin it touches.'¹⁴⁵

Vansina mentions four main generic drawbacks with regard to oral history. The first is the phenomenon of zero time that tends to introduce a retrojection of later conditions into earlier situations if the fieldworker is not explicitly aware of its dangers. He warns that reconstructing a history on this basis is inclined to result in fatal distortions. Second is the false assumption that experienced fieldworkers fall prey to, namely to believe that no one has withheld any information from them concerning the topic of their research. Thirdly, a more insidious effect of fieldwork is the acquisition of a secondary ethnocentricity – a phenomenon not unknown among other historians who often tend to side with their historical actors against their historical adversaries. Vansina explains that, as they shed some of their original ethnic preconceptions, fieldworkers adopt local ones and then tend to over-evaluate the contributions and the virtues of their adopted ethnic group compared to its neighbours. Finally, Vansina believes that the very intensity of personal experience leads to hubris and to an adoption of the argument of authority: 'It tends to make one overrate its value to the point of believing that one's interpretation has become the only plausible one. But this is no less true for historians studying their own culture than it is for fieldworkers.'¹⁴⁶

In Vansina's view, these drawbacks merely underline the fact that fieldworkers are just as fallible as other historians and should neither benefit from credence based on the argument of authority, nor be immune from scrutiny. He believes that just as other historians are expected to justify their interpretation by referral to the written sources used, which can then be consulted by others, so should fieldworkers. Just as written records are available to other historians, the records pertaining to fieldwork, including diaries if any, should also be made available. Unfortunately, the crucial importance of this point often still eludes historians of

¹⁴⁴ The New York Times: Book Review, 14 December 1997, p.4.

¹⁴⁵ C.K. Adenaike and J. van Vansina (eds.): *In Pursuit of History*, p.xviii.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.138-139.

Africa. The stringency of this requirement equals the crucial place of fieldwork in the discipline.¹⁴⁷

Vansina, however, is of the opinion that 'this is not an easy requirement to meet.'¹⁴⁸ He furthermore argues that certain information cannot be checked due to the fact that fieldwork itself cannot be replicated as much of it is confidential and the researchers feel that certain of their records are too personal for public display. Furthermore, they fear that others will exploit their hard-won data before they, as the original researchers, can do so. Finally, there are no organised repositories that could be used in which to deposit such materials.¹⁴⁹

Vansina furthermore believes that while such objections are worthy, they can be overcome, either by initially making the data available on demand only and later depositing them, or by depositing the records quickly with the requirement that they should remain closed for a specified number of years. In the end, however, he feels that all records should be deposited together with an account of the vagaries that the research design has undergone from the inception to the conclusion of the research project.¹⁵⁰

Indeed, as Thompson points out, despite its flaws oral history can't be ignored as '...is as old as history itself. It was the first kind of history.'¹⁵¹

Oral history is a very important topic and, as the foregoing arguments indicate, it needs to be methodologically rigorous both in design and execution. This is a challenge that this study readily accepts.

1.8. THE IDEOLOGICAL BIAS OF AFRIKANER HISTORY

The problem with the history written by South African historians, particularly Afrikaner historians, is that their history, I would argue, was largely reconstructed

¹⁴⁷ C.K. Adenaike and J. van Vansina (eds): In Pursuit of History, p.139.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.139.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.139.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.140.

¹⁵¹ P. Thompson: The Voice of the Past, Oral History, p.19.

at the time when they had reached a certain point in their political aspirations. The history was thus written to justify events and interpretations of the trials and tribulations they had gone through as people with a mission. Therefore, they had to write in a way that put them in a favourable light, and their enemies in the darkest of shadows. Afrikaner history was mainly written in the 1950s, that is, the accounts used in schools at the time when the Afrikaners had just ascended to political power and they had the opportunity to look back with contempt at others, by pointing at their experiences as evidence of what they had gone through. Their mission was to produce a national epic about themselves – an account of heroic deeds that deals out to other people the share of history that they think they deserve. Viewed against this background, I cannot take the accounts given by these historians as balanced, rational and scientific. It rather seems to be a matter of looking at South African history through certain ideological spectacles while producing accounts that fit such spectacles. This is particularly true when I look at the South African historical literature. This literature was mainly written during the colonial period, which is part of the ideological discourse of colonialism.

As already alluded to, Golan captures this sentiment well when she points out that 'while apparently written out of an interest in the history of the colonized area, the function of the historical texts was to justify colonial occupation and exploitation.'¹⁵² To further justify the colonization of African people, historical texts became saturated with ethnocentric views, as chapter two of this study will demonstrate. Again, Golan states that from the perspective of this history 'the barbarism of the native was deeply ingrained' and that it could therefore be concluded that 'the Europeans' attempt to civilize him could continue indefinitely, and that the European can persist in enjoying a position of moral superiority.'¹⁵³ It is this perception of moral superiority that saw Europeans coming to Africa to conquer the lands of African people. Golan points out that Europeans not only used their power to conquer and exploit Africans, they also used it to monopolize the Africans' history. 'The colonizers determined which themes in Zulu history would be stressed, and what would be forgotten. They selected the figures who

¹⁵² D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.1.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p.2.

would be remembered and defined the image in which the memory would be maintained.¹⁵⁴

Golan's perceptive analysis is exemplified by the interpretations found in the sources used by colonialists about King Dingane. The manipulation in the writing of African history is also perspicaciously explained by Clarke, the world-renowned African American historian who, in his seminal article, '*Why Africana History?*' argues that the Europeans not only colonized most of the world, but that they also made a start colonizing information about the world and its people. In order to do this, they had to forget, or pretend to forget, all that they had previously known about the Africans.¹⁵⁵

This probably explains why Clarke became so passionate about the study of African history that he wanted to dispel the myths, falsifications, distortions and misrepresentations about African people found in books written by European historians. It should also be remembered, as stated by Golan, that 'the colonialists did not write only for their own national audience, but addressed the colonized readers as well. The effects of their writings remain remarkably powerful.'¹⁵⁶ Golan points out that, 'like writers of fiction, historians select their themes, and shape the image they project onto their subject. Unlike novelists, however, the work of historians is commonly believed to be "true".¹⁵⁷ Thus, Golan asserts that the presumption of historiographic truth was perhaps reinforced in the South African situation because what colonialist authors did with their pens is very similar to what many colonial administrators did with their policies.¹⁵⁸

Golan also makes a further interesting observation that most of what the Zulus have written about their own past has been filtered through the ideology of their relations with Whites. He states that 'the first writings were those of Zulu people

¹⁵⁴ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.5.

¹⁵⁵ J.H. Clarke, 'Why Africana History', p.1.

¹⁵⁶ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.5.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.5.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.5.

who had internalized Western and Christian values, and who projected on their own history images, which they learned from Whites.¹⁵⁹

Golan further observes that 'later writings changed in tone and content, as they reflected the spirit of decolonization.' However, Golan is quick to add that these, as well as the most recent works that reflect notions of liberation and nationalism, are all strongly influenced by the relationship between Zulu people and Whites at the time they were written. 'They are all forged in the colonizer's mold, and remain, in one way or another, the product of the original colonial literature with its projection of its own notions onto the history of the subjugated Other.'¹⁶⁰

Apart from Golan's explication of how the pervasive influence of whites on Black South Africans during the colonial era could be seen as staging the developing trend in historiography, there were important exceptions in this regard, as shown by the deviant stance advocated by Colenso in respect of literary criticism as applied to the Bible. It is important to note that Colenso's position in respect of the literary criticism was a consequence of his contact with 'the intelligent Zulu,' 'the Zulu Philosopher', William Ngidi.¹⁶¹

William Ngidi was employed by Colenso as an assistant in translating the Bible. During the development of this relationship between Colenso and Ngidi, European superiority and Imperial dominance against the democratization of knowledge had reached its peak. Ngidi, as a colonial subject, could therefore never be thought of as a subject capable of asking the kinds of questions that he is alleged to have asked Colenso during the process of helping translate the Bible. As Guy sees it, it is central to this dominance that a literal reading of the Bible formed the fountainhead of all authority and that Ngidi's questions persuaded Colenso to publicly reject this literal reading. However, in so doing he seemed to challenge not only the Bible but also its authority,¹⁶² and as a

¹⁵⁹ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.6.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.6.

¹⁶¹ For more information on William Ngidi, see J. Guy's article, 'Class, Imperialism and Literary Criticism: William Ngidi, John Colenso and Matthew Arnold', Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 23, No.2, 1997.

¹⁶² J. Guy, 'Class, Imperialism and Literary Criticism: William Ngidi, John Colenso and Matthew Arnold', p.240.

consequence thereof 'tensions already brought into existence by the challenges of science and social change to existing religious belief allowed the intelligent Zulu's questions to become part of the contemporary debate at the metropole – where they were promptly ridiculed.'¹⁶³ It therefore needs to be emphasized that Ngidi's questions had a great impact on Colenso's reading, understanding and subsequent interpretation of the Bible. Because of this he (Colenso) declared that the Bible, just like all other literary texts, was fallible. It is this respect that Guy avers with regard to Colenso's newly-found critical stance that 'not only did he say that the Bible was not true, but that he had been led to this conclusion by the questions of his assistant in translations – an "intelligent Zulu."¹⁶⁴

Colenso's newly-found viewpoint in respect of the tenet of literary criticism, especially with regard to the Bible, earned him the wrath of those who were against the 'democratization of knowledge' for in their view nothing of substance could possibly come from Africa. Colenso was therefore dismissed as a 'heretic' and excommunicated by the church. This state of affairs resulted in Colenso's ostracization - but 'the laughter at the story of the Zulu who converted the Bishop was not just derisive – it was also nervous.'¹⁶⁵ Even more, it was laughter at a disturbing reversal of the idea of colonizer and colonized that exchanged or deconstructed the concepts of dominated for dominant, unlearned for learned, heathen for Christian, savage for civilized, the self and the Other.¹⁶⁶ It is not surprising therefore that Colenso's subsequent book 'was found guilty' when it was 'brought before the court of literary criticism.'¹⁶⁷ Viewed against this background, Golan's explication in respect of the pervading influence of Europeans on the Africans is not to be construed as a sweeping statement as there are evidently exceptions in this regard.

¹⁶³ J. Guy, 'Imperialism and Literary Criticism: William Ngidi, John Colenso and Matthew Arnold', p.237.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.221.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.221.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.221.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.234.

1.9. PLACING THE HISTORY OF KING DINGANE IN PERSPECTIVE

It is contended in this study that there should be an expansion of our vision with regard to King Dingane's history. There is a need to remove images built into that vision and to provide an account that places King Dingane within the framework of the history of the time in which he lived, using a scale of values consistent with the time.

I would like to argue that in the case of King Dingane the scale of the time was determined by the need to defend the Zulu kingdom against possible Voortrekker invasion as it was portended by Piet Retief's actions. It is therefore unfair to judge King Dingane by current standards. For example, in present day South Africa we have rules; we have the judiciary, courts, and various structures that attend to social relationships and disputes. In the past, disputes were solved in other, different ways. It was possible for the witness, the complainant and the victim to be the policeman, the prosecutor, magistrate and executioner. Today we have division of powers. Those dissatisfied with human rights issues therefore find it tempting to compare times and to pose the question about how many people King Dingane had killed. In his time, poachers in Great Britain would also be hanged or deported to Australia. But this would be an unfair approach if framed within the context of the present moral parameters. We will only be able to achieve more historical accuracy and better judgment if we posit our inquiries in the context of Dingane's own times rather than our own.

So, the historicity of the period in which King Dingane lived has to be taken into account. It is a question of historicity rather than currency. The currency of values that we cherish needs to be removed from the historicity of the events one is looking at, and historians have to approach the events phenomenologically. In other words, looking at events and describing them in the way the events would describe themselves. In fact, history is a classical subject where the phenomenological approach is appropriate because it is an approach in which the investigator relives the experiences of the phenomenon, and describes it in the way that the phenomena would describe itself. After all, the historian, according to Gottschalk:

...is different from the reader of novels. Instead of living vicariously the lives of his / her characters, to a large extent he / she makes his / her characters live his / her life, since he / she can understand them only by analogy, comparison, or contrast with his / her own experience.¹⁶⁸

In short, as argued by Tempelhoff, the integrated nature of making histories and living history is part of the historian's existence. The preacher, on the other hand, would look at the events and pontificate about them in the way that he / she thinks appropriate for the events. Those historians who adopt a sermonistic approach and/or the phenomenological approach are guilty of distortions, of denying events of their historicity, and of superimposing their value system on events that were governed by different sets of values, and different standards of morals. They seek to pass judgment on the past, in which they did not live. This has been one of the indictments against historians, particularly South African historians.

1.10. SUBJECTIVITY AND OBJECTIVITY IN THE COMPILATION OF HISTORY

Much that has been written about King Dingane abounds with contradictions and paradoxes because he has been presented within the perspective of colonial conquest. This is not surprising because the history of Black South Africans, particularly Zulu history, has largely been the product of an intellectual tradition and method of thinking fashioned by European colonial subjection of non-Europeans in general, and Africans in particular. As Steven Bantu Biko wrote in 1973 that great nation builders like Shaka have been portrayed by many historians as cruel tyrants who frequently attacked smaller tribes for no reason other than for sadistic purposes. He believed that not only was there no objectivity in the history taught to Blacks, there was frequently also an appalling misrepresentation of facts that sickened even the uninformed student. He warned his fellow Blacks that they should pay a great deal of attention to their

¹⁶⁸ L. Gottschalk: Understanding Historical Method, p.15.

history if they wanted to aid each other in their coming into consciousness. According to Biko,

We have to rewrite our history and produce in it the heroes that formed the core of our resistance to the White invaders. More has to be revealed, and stress has to be laid on the successful nation building attempts of men such as Shaka, Moshoeshe and Hintsa...We have to destroy the myth that our history starts in 1652, the year Van Riebeeck landed at the Cape.¹⁶⁹

The salient point of the above quotation is that of objectivity. Walsh regards 'the problem of historical objectivity ...at once the most important and the most baffling topic in critical philosophy of history.'¹⁷⁰ But why is objectivity regarded as being so difficult and crucial to the understanding of history? According to Cubbin it is because implicit are the two poles of historical activity, namely objectivity – the desire for truth, and subjectivity, which is the self with all its innate biases.¹⁷¹ Carr points out that, in an examination of the relation of the historian to the facts of history, he finds the latter in an extremely precarious position, 'navigating delicately between the Scylla of an untenable theory of history as an objective compilation of facts, of the unqualified primacy of fact over interpretation, and the Charybdis of an equally untenable theory of history as the subjective product of the mind of the historian who establishes the facts of history and masters them through the process of interpretation, between a view of history and having a center of gravity in the past and a view having the center of gravity in the present.'¹⁷²

Schwantes is instructive when he points out that:

There is no such thing as a totally objective historian. No one studies the sources without any bias whatsoever. Like everyone else, the historian is steeped in the stream of history and can no more escape the prejudices of his generation than he can escape the air he breathes. He observes the past through the glasses of current philosophical outlook. Every

¹⁶⁹ Steve Biko, as quoted by L.L. Ntloedibe, 'The Need to Rewrite South African History', p.5.

¹⁷⁰ W.H. Walsh: *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, p.93.

¹⁷¹ A.E. Cubbin: *A study in objectivity: The Death of Piet Retief*, p.1.

¹⁷² E.H. Carr: *What is History?*, p.29.

new generation must re-write past history to make it intelligible to itself.¹⁷³

The argument that is being advanced would seem to be questioning the historian's reliability and ability with regard to the handling of historical facts. The rewriting of history has as its objective the rehabilitation of what has been distorted. Historians deal with real events – in other words, they do not make up events. The element of objectivity therefore has more to do with accounting for what has really happened. But according to the way in which historians look at events and interpret them, we can discern the element of subjectivity, and subjectivity is always informed by what one has experienced.

Carr argues that ... 'the facts of history cannot be purely objective since they became facts only by virtue of the significance attached to them by the historian. Objectivity in history ... cannot be an objectivity of fact, but only of the relation between fact and interpretation, between past, present and future.'¹⁷⁴ In this study it means that while whatever has been recounted about King Dingane has to do with real events that took place, the interpretation of those events must be understood in relation to the historian's ideological perspective and social positioning. It is against this background therefore that Jenkins believes that history 'is a shifting problematic discourse, ostensibly about an aspect of the world, the past, ideologically and practically positioned and whose products... are subject to a series of uses.'¹⁷⁵ In short, this means that one can use history to affirm one's ideological values, and this is exactly what obtains in the works of those who have written about King Dingane.

The way King Dingane has been portrayed explains the social positioning of those who were writing about the events surrounding him. Most importantly, the distortion on the part of those who depicted him as 'treacherous', and 'barbaric' was deliberate as it served their own specific interests. The act of writing history might be construed as an innocent quest to record past experiences, but rightly understood, it has ideological underpinnings. This is best exemplified in the

¹⁷³ S.J. Schwantes: The Biblical Meaning of History, p.9.

¹⁷⁴ E.H. Carr: What is History?, pp.119-120.

¹⁷⁵ K. Jenkins: Re-Thinking History, p.26.

manner in which the history of King Dingane has been written. Peter Novick is instructive when he maintains that:

Objectivity is unattainable in history; the historian can hope for nothing more than plausibility. But plausibility obviously rests not on the arbitrary invention of an historical account but involves rational strategies of determining what in fact is plausible...¹⁷⁶

Although subjectivity is viewed by some people with cynicism, I would argue that it is not without its positive aspect. This line of argument is supported by Rusen's illuminating assertion that subjectivity means involvement in the current affairs of practical life, and that such involvement is rooted in historical thinking and practical life. Rusen believes that involvement takes the form of viewpoints on current affairs, from which historians look at the past. While these standpoints are conditioned, they are not definitely determined by the pre-given circumstances of the historian's life; for instance, by his belonging to a class, a specific culture or any other form of society or group. Rusen believes that such circumstances 'generate needs for orientation in the present life, and thus they become effective in historical thinking, as practical interests, relating them to situations and problems in the life-world of historians and their audiences.'¹⁷⁷

Rusen points out that it is the subjectivity of the historian, which brings his standpoint into practical life and opens up the significance of the past in understanding present time, while moulding the future perspective of human affairs. He believes that subjectivity generates questions out of the experience of present times, which lead to the past and its treasures of experience:

Subjectivity brings the experience of the past into the eyes of the historians. Thus it leads to the primary sources information possible. So there is a strict and positive relationship between the degree of being involved in and attached to topical affairs and the depths of historical insights.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Peter Novick, as quoted by D. Chakrabarty, 'Minority histories, subaltern pasts', p.17.

¹⁷⁷ J. Rusen: Studies in Metahistory, p.54.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.54.

It is apparent from Rusen's analysis of subjectivity that the fundamental issue it addresses affirms Schwantes' argument that 'there is not such a thing as a totally objective historian. No one studies the sources without any bias whatsoever.'¹⁷⁹

Von Ranke, the great German historian, also claimed to have been objective in his dealings with history. But if one carefully considers his historical writings, one will discover that he was undoubtedly writing from a Prussian and Lutheran church point of view. This is accounted for by the fact that he was living in Prussia and supported the Lutheran church. In short, his writings reflect a subtle subjectivity from which he seems unable to escape. In this respect, historians view the past through a particular perspective or from a particular standpoint. Nipperdey, a subscriber to Von Ranke's argument that 'objective truth' about the past can be arrived at, in his article, '*Can History Be Objective?*' is of the opinion that the historians' statements are scientific statements. He emphasizes that they are not subjective (not simply opinions or convictions, but rather they make the claim of being objective, of containing truth about the past) in that:

They can be reconstructed, verified and communicated. We test and measure every historical statement on this claim to objectivity. The truth about the past is not an invention or construction of the historian, but rather the historian looks for and finds or discovers this truth.¹⁸⁰

Ironically, Nipperdey in the same article contradicts himself when he points out that 'historians view the past through a perspective or from a particular standpoint.'¹⁸¹ A contemporary of Ranke, J.G. Droysen, called Ranke's objectivity "eunuch-like". In Droysen's view it is 'impossible to be neutral amidst the conflicts of the present.' He believes that commitment toward one's own society is a moral duty and that, since historical science is connected with the conduct of our lives in that it influences and therefore guides or legitimizes our actions, the historian bears a responsibility. According to Droysen, the historian is furthermore charged with the duty of presenting the past on the basis of his commitment not *sine ira et studio*. The past, which is portrayed in a neutral and

¹⁷⁹ S.J. Schwantes: *The Biblical Meaning of History*, p.9.

¹⁸⁰ T. Nipperdey, '*Can History be Objective?*', p.1.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

impartial way, according to Droysen, is bloodless, irrelevant and meaningless for the present. Since the proper role of the historian in many of the cultures of the 19th century was that of political tutor of his community, the historian's commitment toward his own group was therefore rated higher than the quest for an objective picture of the past. In the Western world there is a tendency among certain historians to adopt the same approach today – only in a different direction. They no longer want to praise particular aspects of the past in order to justify the present, but instead want to indict the past, which is always seen to have been bad. The Western world tends to conduct a trial on the past in which they are public prosecutor and judge at the same time. As Droysen points out, 'the past is nothing but guilt and failure – and this is measured according to a so-called progressive ideal. The perspective is that of an absolute criticism. But this, according to Droysen, is apparently also only one perspective.'¹⁸²

Despite the supposedly inherent flaws of subjectivity according to Droysen, it does not mean that Ranke's historical writings are of no significance. I believe that, in spite of certain flaws in his writings, Ranke's insight proves to be illuminating in certain respects. For this reason, one cannot totally discard histories written by historians of previous generations or from other parts of the world. This is one of the reasons why history must always be rewritten. In our present time, these histories must only be carefully and critically utilized.

The question of subjectivity is also succinctly captured by Said when he contends that, if it is true no production of knowledge in human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. Instead, Said believes that it meant and means:

...being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that

¹⁸² T. Nipperdey, 'Can History be objective?', p.5.

one belongs to a part of the earth which a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer.¹⁸³

In this regard, Cubbin also points out that the historian is an integral and individual member of society and possesses 'multifarious and ineluctable subjective qualities.' Apart from inherited traits, a human being has a peculiar and definite heredity, namely individual subjectivity that results in a highly developed personality and character with complicated likes and dislikes. According to Cubbin, the human being '... has (or has not) a creative imagination and possesses beliefs, values, presuppositions, preconceptions, interests, ambitions, points of view, and philosophical assumptions.'¹⁸⁴ He furthermore believes that human character displays

... original behavior patterns and moral concerns; he is a member of a certain social environment from which milieu he has inherited definite parochial values, national aspirations, religious scruples, and social class phobias. Finally, he is the product of a certain epoch, which he both reflects and addresses.¹⁸⁵

Cubbin argues that the historian can never emancipate himself from formative influences while hoping to achieve an Olympian impartiality. The reason for this, as Elton points out, is that the historian's personalities and private views are a fact of life, like the weather; and like the weather they are not worth worrying about as much as in practice they are worried over. Cubbin agrees that they cannot be eliminated, nor should they be. In his view, the historian who believes that he has removed himself from his work is almost certainly mistaken. In fact, he is more likely to have proved that he is the possession of a colourless personality, which instead of making his work eminently impartial renders it merely dull. However, neither dullness nor self-consciousness flamboyance is a virtue. Cubbin believes that the historian need not try to eliminate or intrude himself:

... let him stick to the writing of history and forget the importance of his psyche. It will be there all right and will no

¹⁸³ E.W. Said: Orientalism, p.11.

¹⁸⁴ A.E. Cubbin: A study in Objectivity: The Death of Piet Retief, p.6.

¹⁸⁵ ibid., p.6.

doubt be served by his labours, but really it matters less to the result than critics lament or friends acclaim, and it matters a great deal less than does his intellect.¹⁸⁶

Cubbin furthermore believes that 'subjectivity holds considerable advantages for history handled with discrimination.'¹⁸⁷ In this regard, he agrees with Sturley, who also holds the view that:

...there must be a degree of subjectivity in all historical writing because selection of what is to be considered as significant and relevant is an essential part of the historian's business. Such value judgment will be influenced to a greater or lesser degree by personal likes and dislikes, by social, religious or national prejudices, by interpretations of the nature and purpose of history, and by views on human nature and on life itself.¹⁸⁸

Again, Cubbin asserts that:

Every historian has some insight into what really happened but this largely depends on his 'point of view' and philosophies e.g. Catholic and Protestant interpretations are both acceptable but each must be judged on its own standards. Not only must the historian come to terms with his individuality but also it is also essential that he develop and enrich his individual experience so that he is in a better position to understand and appreciate the vast depths of historical experience.¹⁸⁹

From the foregoing argument about subjectivity and objectivity it is quite clear that there will never be consensus on the question of these two concepts, especially with regard to the study of historical events. It is worth reiterating that nobody writes from a 'disinterested position.'

1.11. ETHNOCENTRISM AND THE MYTHS ABOUT THE 'DARK CONTINENT'

With this study I am not implying that, in an overzealous attempt to enhance Africa's image, new misrepresentations should replace the falsifications and distortions of the past. However, I still believe that it remains the task of

¹⁸⁶ G.R.Elton: The Practice of History, p.134.

¹⁸⁷ A.E. Cubbin: A study in Objectivity: The death of Piet Retief, p.9.

¹⁸⁸ D.M. Sturley: The Study of History, p.37.

¹⁸⁹ A.E. Cubbin: A study in Objectivity: The death of Piet Retief, p.7.

contemporary African historians to rid African history of the negative images that are attributed to Africa and her peoples. For example, Sundkler once wryly remarked that 'Africans have no conception of history, no capacity for apprehending notions of time and sequence and the relatedness of events.'¹⁹⁰ In contradistinction to Sundkler's remark, Cantor is of the view that:

The historical attitude to things seems to be a fundamental dimension of human thought. No man is without some conception of historical change. It is natural to man to consider himself and the world around him from the point of view of how things came to the way they are.¹⁹¹

Hugh Trevor-Roper, the renowned Oxford history teacher, when approached by a black student who wanted Oxford to teach African history, had the following to say:

Undergraduates, seduced, as always, by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. Perhaps, in the future there will be some African to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...and darkness is not a subject for history. Please do not misunderstand me, men existed even in dark countries and dark centuries, but to study their history, would be to amuse ourselves with the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe.¹⁹²

John Henrik Clarke, an African American historian, challenges the Eurocentric myth of a 'Dark Continent' when he argues that:

Civilization did not start in European countries and the rest of the world did not wait in darkness for the Europeans to bring the light...it is possible for the world to have waited in darkness for the Europeans to bring the light because, for most of the early history of man, the Europeans themselves were in darkness. When the light of culture came for the first time to the people who would later call themselves Europeans, it came from Africa and Middle Eastern Asia...¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ B. Sundkler: The Christian Ministry in Africa, p.218.

¹⁹¹ C.G.Coetzee, 'The Bantu and the Study of History', p.101.

¹⁹² S. Samkange: African Saga, p.11.

¹⁹³ L.A. Hoskins, 'Eurocentrism v/s Afrocentrism,' p.2.

I want to argue that the darkest thing about Africa has always been our ignorance of it. Samkange also challenges this 'Dark Continent' myth when he asserts that 'if there is any darkness about, it is not on the African continent but in the minds of those who proclaim that Africa lacks history.'¹⁹⁴ In further challenging the views of Trevor-Roper, Samkange points out that 'as far as people are concerned, until the advent of the white man, Africa had no history. To them the history of Africa is the story of the white man in Africa, for Africa has only 'his story' and no history.'¹⁹⁵

Another Oxford professor of colonial history remarked that 'what happened with the coming of the Europeans was the introduction of order into blank, uninteresting brutal barbarism.'¹⁹⁶ Sir Reginald Coupland, another eminent teacher of colonial history at Oxford University thought along the lines of his colleagues when he expounded that African history had:

... begun in the middle of the nineteenth century. Before then there had been nothing, or nothing worthy of attention. The main body of the Africans... had stayed, for untold centuries, sunk in barbarism...stagnant, neither going forward nor going back.¹⁹⁷

It is disheartening to note that Africa was for generations presented to the outside world by her invaders as a 'dark continent' inhabited by savages, intellectually lacking, unchristian and morally uncivilized people. Jackson writes as follows about this:

[The] picture we get today of Africa in past ages from the history taught in our schools is that Africans were savages and that, although Europeans invaded their lands and made slaves of them, they were in a way conferring a great favour on them, since they brought to them the blessings of Christian civilization.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ S. Samkange: African Saga, p.11.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.12.

¹⁹⁶ B. Davidson: The Search for Africa, p.67.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.67.

¹⁹⁸ J.G. Jackson: Introduction to African Civilization, (cover page).

Reid argues that 'even before the nineteenth century, Europe's knowledge of the African was based on rumour, half-truth and imagination; and savage tribal warfare was one of the key themes of the reportage.'¹⁹⁹ He quotes Bethwell Ogot, the Kenyan historian, in saying that Africa is '...frequently depicted as a "continent of warring natives."²⁰⁰ Reid also agrees with the idea that common attributes of such warfare are necessarily bloodthirstiness, economic and social irrationality, and a lack of grand – or often even limited – objectives. He argues that slave and cattle-raids could hardly be described as powerful influences of social, political or economic change, even though they may lend weight to Hugh Trevor-Roper's description of African history as the 'unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes.'²⁰¹ In the last analysis, Reid believes that although there is no continent without its history of 'unrewarding gyrations,' only the African past has been so summarily dismissed – as it is also being disregarded in present times.²⁰² Thabo Mbeki, the president of the Republic of South Africa, adds his voice when he points out that 'despite the fact that is accepted wisdom that Africa is the cradle of humanity and one of the most advanced civilizations, the interpretation of the continent continues to be Eurocentric, colonial and racist and therefore in denial of the fact that all humanity is descended from Mother Africa.'²⁰³

It is important to note that there are links between the reluctance to recognize African societies as historical and political entities in their own right and their subjugation by the west from the period of the slave trade to colonization. Sir Harry H. Johnson, for example, one of the early theorists of British imperialism, also 'doubted whether Africans had had a history before the coming of the Asian and Europeans.'²⁰⁴ Coloured with a sort of biblical or political mysticism, the study of migrations, or research into the origins of ethnic groups and the identification of dominant peoples dominated colonial historiography. Bayart points out that 'the equation between the lack of historicity of African societies and the pathological nature of power within them nevertheless has its roots in an

¹⁹⁹ R. Reid, 'A Fierce Race', p. 1.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.3.

²⁰³ T. Mbeki: Speech delivered in Accra, Ghana, 5 October 2000, p.1.

²⁰⁴ Jean-Francois Bayart: The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly, p.127.

intellectual tradition which goes back at least as far as Aristotle.²⁰⁵ Bayart, for example, believes that 'the Greeks had the right to rule over barbarians as a result of the latter's supposed servility, which was believed to help them to bear despotic power.'²⁰⁶ This prejudicial belief persisted throughout the centuries and across continents. According to Hegel, the prominent German intellectual, 'want of self-control distinguished the character of Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or culture, and as we have seen them at this day, such have they always been – (Africa) is no historical part of the world.'²⁰⁷ Again, following in this repertoire, Hegel's other peremptory statement is literally paradigmatic:

Africa is not interesting from the point of view of its own history, but because we see man in a state of barbarism and savagery which is preventing him from being an integral part of civilization. Africa, as far back as history goes, has remained closed and without links with the rest of the world. It is the country of gold, which is closed in on itself, the country of infancy, beyond the daylight of consciousness history, wrapped in the blackness of night.²⁰⁸

The ethnocentrism that permeates the above passage and other passages cited in the foregoing discussion about negative views expressed by European scholars with regard to Africa is to be expected. Hoskins points out that since the 15th century, ethnocentrism and xenophobia have characterized, fashioned, and conditioned the European attitude or mind-set toward African peoples. Therefore, in the spirit of Eurocentrism, the African could not and cannot be integrated as a social equal. Eurocentric exclusiveness and its striving for global dominance left no place for the African except servitude and second-class citizenship. Hoskins believes that:

Eurocentric ideology has refused to accept Africans on the basis of their humanity because of the color of their skin. As a result, Eurocentric history (His-Story) deliberately promulgated the myth that Africa was a 'Dark Continent' replete with cannibals, savages, and inferior, uncivilized, backward, primitive peoples, devoid of knowledge and culture and possessing evil traits and desires.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Jean-Francois Bayart: The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly, p.2.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p.2.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.3.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p.3.

²⁰⁹ L.A. Hoskins, 'Eurocentricism v/s Afrocentricism,' p.2.

As chapter two of this study will indicate, these were the same views that were advanced by the so-called European explorers to justify the colonization of the African continent.

This study therefore seeks to add weight to work already done by other scholars who understand the validity of the African point of view with regard to historicity. Peoples of Africa and African descent have reason to look at Africa proudly, as a continent with a revered past and to draw inspiration from that past, as the basis for the present and hope for the future.

It was the White man's version of Black history, which in the 1970s saw the Black Consciousness Movement protest vehemently that:

The white rulers of South Africa were not satisfied merely with holding a people in their grip and emptying the Native's brain of all form and content, they turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it...No wonder the African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school. So negative is the image presented to him that he tends to find solace only in close identification with the white society.²¹⁰

Similarly, Malcolm X perspicaciously captured the reality of the above passage in his speech delivered on November 10, 1963 in Detroit when he argued that:

The black man has no self-confidence; he has no confidence in his own race because the white man destroyed you and my past; he destroyed our knowledge of our culture and by having destroyed it, now we don't know of any achievement, any accomplishment and as long as you can be convinced that you never did anything, you can never do anything.²¹¹

It must be understood that a paramount *modus operandi* of imperialism was to link Eurocentrism with innate qualities of excellence in intelligence, beauty and the right to rule other races. This goal was achieved through the miseducation of the African and falsification of his history. As Kwame Ture once said:

²¹⁰ B.A. Le Cordeu, 'The Reconstruction of South African History', pp.4-5.

²¹¹ L.A. Hoskins, 'Eurocentricism v/s Afrocentricism', p.2.

Make them as blood-thirsty as you can...and describe the frivolous crime people loose (sic) their lives for, introduce as many anecdotes relative to Chaka as you can, it all tends to swell up the work and make it interesting.²¹⁴

It is interesting to note that the first volume of Isaacs' book is devoted to King Shaka and the second to King Dingane. Isaacs paints the images of both Shaka and Dingane as complementary and reversed. Where Shaka is depicted as a 'tyrant', an 'insatiable and exterminating savage', Dingane, he argues, at one time, may doubtless become, in no great distance of time, so far advanced in civilization, as to make his country a favourable spot for colonizing.²¹⁵

In Golan's view, King Dingane is portrayed as an 'advanced' ruler as opposed to King Shaka, who in Isaacs' hyperbolic language is depicted as a 'monster.'²¹⁶ Interestingly, as argued by Golan, King Dingane is positively portrayed so that commercial relations with him would seem possible.²¹⁷

Roberts argues that Isaacs' book is full of contradictions and is hopelessly biased against the Zulus, particularly their kings, Shaka and Dingane. Appearing in the Sunday Independent Newspaper of 2000 in the book review section, Cummiskey made a startling revelation when he pointed out that:

It has since been discovered that the near-illiterate Isaacs had the book ghost-written (probably by someone who had not set foot in Africa) and that this pioneering 'reliable eyewitness' was nothing more than an unscrupulous adventurer engaged in slave trading and gun running in the area. Isaacs's dubious reports go hand-in-hand with the equally questionable "diary" of Henry Francis Fynn, which is riddled with contradictions and inaccurate geographical data.²¹⁸

What is more disconcerting is that Isaacs' book has been long regarded as an authoritative eyewitness account, not only of both Shaka and Dingane's reigns, but also of the early history of 'Natal', and Africa in general.

²¹⁴ Isaacs to H.F. Fynn, 10 December 1832. Letters received H.F. Fynn Papers. NA.

²¹⁵ N. Isaacs: Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, Vol.2., p.234.

²¹⁶ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.20.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.20.

²¹⁸ Cummiskey in The Sunday Independent Newspaper 2000

The authority of accounts rendered by white historians cannot be embraced without misgivings about their objectivity. Nangoli, an African writer, questions such objectivity when he points out problems with the white concept of 'discovering unknown lands':

At no time in recorded memory, was Africa LOST – therefore Africa couldn't have been FOUND! At no time was Africa without the magnificence of her sunshine – so Africa couldn't have been "dark." If some European traveler arrived on the shore of Africa during the night and left before sunrise, then whoever believed the bastard swallowed a bitter lie and nothing else. At no time was Africa without the wonder of her rivers, lakes, mountains, vegetation, minerals, rich soils for farming, game for hunting, crops and fruits, so she couldn't have been the uninhabitable place that books by Western scholars tell us it was. For people to have lived there in the first place, the conditions had to be livable. At no time was Africa without the uniqueness of her culture, languages, customs, technology and forms of dress, so civilization must have occurred there long before. At no time was Africa without the beauty of her populace there, reproducing and caring for their own as did other people. At no time were Africans searching for other lands beyond Africa, because they were dissatisfied with their own. Indeed, at no time was the African eager to depart from Africa, as the fierce resistance to being taken captive by Europeans later in the seventeenth century, demonstrated. The African was proudly African, content to be so and aspired to be nothing else.²¹⁹

This study, therefore, seeks to refute the depiction of King Dingane as a sadistic ruler attendant to which are vile aspersions and foul calumnies that have been heaped upon him for the last hundred years or so by jaundiced writers, particularly European historians. This study also attempts to render a corrective to some of the standard approaches to Zulu history and will, no doubt, disturb a large number of overnight 'authorities' on Zulu history who will discover that they do not really know the depth of the history of Zulu people and King Dingane's history in particular. Tempelhoff's views seem to accord with the goals of this study in that he believes that:

It is part of the historian's critical faculties to question any given perception on any particular subject. The ultimate

²¹⁹ M. Nangoli: No More Lies About Africa, p.5.

objective is to come to the "truth". We seldom are able to identify constant truths, because, as Ortega Y Gasset points out, truth is that which is true now and not that which humankind will discover in some undetermined future.²²⁰

Similarly, Nietzsche is also instructive when he asks:

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of many relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical and obligatory to a people... to be truthful means using the customary metaphors – in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory to all.²²¹

The substance of the quote from Nietzsche is graphically displayed by Pascal's observation to the effect that 'what is truth on one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other.'²²² Nietzsche's idea of a 'culturally ingrained obligation to lie according to a fixed canon or convention' is, like in King Shaka's case, exemplified by the manner in which the history of King Dingane has been handled and transmitted. It is possibly against this background that Wylie argued that 'the history of Zulu people is in large part the product of a core of almost incestuously close friends, that is, historians who uncritically made use of dubious sources when they wrote the history of Zulu people.'²²³ This is particularly true of early Zulu history.'

I believe that all South African historians worthy of the name have an obligation to write balanced history. The urgency for this arises from the necessity for South Africans to make a deliberate effort at understanding each other's points of view, even if it means accepting unpalatable truths. In South Africa the temptation to play down or even ignore the 'other' points of view due to emotion is still great. This therefore calls for historians to discipline themselves for the cumbersome task of creating a balanced synthesis of historical experiences.

²²⁰ J.W.N. Tempelhoff: *The Historian and History Teaching: The Way Ahead*, p.4.

²²¹ D. Wylie, 'Utilizing Isaacs: One Thread in the development of the Shaka Myth', p.1.

²²² Pascals in M.T. Gibbons (ed.): *Interpreting Politics*, p.69.

²²³ D. Wylie, 'Utilizing Isaacs: One thread in the development of the Shaka Myth', p.1.

I fully agree with Cubbin's argument that 'King Dingane might not have been Gustav Preller's "barbaar" but rather an astute and brave Zulu nationalist defending his peoples' traditional homeland.'²²⁴ With this point of view as a starting point, there is a need for texts written specifically for African people who take pride in their history and who view King Dingane not as a 'treacherous savage' but as a Zulu nationalist leader who tried to defend his forefathers' land from being usurped by the Voortrekker invaders. In 1935 Eric Walker, in his article *A Zulu Account of the Piet Retief Massacre in 'The Critic'* warned that 'we shall have to be prepared for shocks. We shall have to remind ourselves that what is sauce for the white goose is sauce for the swarthy gander.'²²⁵ Indeed, there are rewards inherent in this approach in terms of revisiting the contentious aspects about the reign of King Dingane with a view to offering a truer, more balanced African perspective. Such an approach will encourage greater understanding, empathy and even sympathy for the neglected Zulu point of view. This will no doubt contribute significantly towards a worthier, more relevant history for South Africa.

This study therefore attempts to give a balanced account of King Dingane's reign, and at giving equal attention to the other side of King Dingane's history. Degler points out that 'one of the most engrossing and stimulating aspects of historical study is that our view of the past is constantly changing...if it did not, historians would be guilty of dogmatism and be slavish purveyors of revealed truth from earlier historians.'²²⁶ This is true because historians need to acknowledge that as more research is conducted, certain interpretations and generalizations will become untenable and will no longer be acceptable.

This study also contributes to the growing body of revisionist history and sentiment that has started to flourish like weeds in a 'neglected garden' as regards making provision for the marginalized African perspective. The significance of this mood, this quest for new perspectives, is well summarized by Lerone Bennet, an African American historian, who said:

²²⁴ A.E. Cubbin, 'Retief's Negotiations with Dingana: An Assessment', p.15.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²²⁶ C.N. Degler (ed.): *Pivotal Interpretations of American History*, p.vii.

The overriding need of the moment is for us to think with our eyes. We cannot see now, because our eyes are clouded by the concepts of white supremacy. We cannot think now, because we have no intellectual instruments save those, which were designed expressly to keep us from seeing. It is necessary for us to develop a new frame of reference which transcends the limits of the white concepts, for white concepts have succeeded in making black people feel that they are inferior; they have wiped out their past history; or they have presented it in such a way that they feel not pride, but shame. They have successfully created the conditions that make it easy to dominate a people. The initial step towards liberation is to abandon the frame of reference to our oppressors, and create new concepts, which will release our reality.²²⁷

The significance of the above quotation is as relevant today as it was at the time of its writing. There remains recalcitrance on the part of some of the most supposedly knowledgeable scholars in respect of the historicity of African societies whose influence should not be underestimated. Most importantly, the fact that Africa is a historical entity forming a nerve of the mainstream of world history is longer in dispute. The Seligmans, the Hegels, the Henry Fords and not least the Trevor-Ropers of yesterday and today have all received their just rebuff. However, deeper insight into and fuller understanding of the rich cultural heritage of the continent is still seriously constrained by the clutches of the much-distorted colonial historiography.

The major challenge of the African historian is that of 'double orientation: a reappraisal of the distorted past and probing into the unknown.' This calls for a radical shift in emphasis and approaches. In short, it demands new analytical tools and conceptual frameworks all together. The present study therefore is a contribution to this new awakening. This is an awakening in the sense that it will possibly (depending of course on one's reading formation and / or perspective) reveal that it was King Dingane's valiant efforts in fighting the Voortrekkers, whose intention was to expropriate Zulu land, that carved for him a special niche in the history, not only of the Zulu people, but of all African people in South East Africa. This, I would argue, can only be achieved, not by way of uncritically glossing over issues that deserve condemnation on his part, but by attempting to

²²⁷ B. Moore (ed.): The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa, p.58.

address his, to some, seemingly inexplicable actions, like the killing of the Voortrekkers, which led to his being academically pilloried and lynched, and to endure, as Okoye aptly put, 'the undying hatred of historians.'

Dube, in a different context states it in this manner:

The history of African people has been written by persons who, from the word go, were intent on demonstrating the backwardness and barbarity of the denizens of the "Dark Continent," as they preferred to refer to our forefathers. It is thus incumbent upon historians, especially black historians, to set the record straight. Failure to do so would be abdication on their part and a further betrayal of our continent.²²⁸

What Dube propounds is a challenge that this study readily accepts, hence it attempts to provide a not only a new consciousness about King Dingane, but also a consciousness that was marginalized and suppressed by those who arrogated for themselves the responsibility of writing the history of the peoples of Africa, and in the process misrepresenting them. This resulted in bad history. Eric Hobsbawm points out that '...bad history is not harmless. It is dangerous.'²²⁹ 'Good histories,' on the other hand, maintains Chakrabarty, are supposed to 'expand our vista and make the subject matter of history more representative of society as a whole.'²³⁰ I want to argue that this is what this study has attempted to do with regard to the history of King Dingane.

1.13. CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that the historiography of the early years of the 19th century tended to deliberately represent King Dingane in a fashion that depicted him as a tyrant with neither nationalistic proclivities nor stately qualities. This was done through the selection of facts as well as preference and bias in the use of the vast archive of sources available to the historian, from the written to the oral. As pointed out by Dube, Eurocentric historians seem to have been intent on demonstrating the backwardness and barbarity of the denizens of the 'Dark

²²⁸ T. A. Dube at the conference on the battle of iNcome held at the University of Zululand, 27/11/98.

²²⁹ D Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts', p.15.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.15.

Continent.²³¹ It is therefore made clear in this chapter that it is incumbent upon especially black historians to set the record straight.

As, according to Ndlovu, all historical writing has some ideological component, it is no surprise that the Eurocentric literature on King Dingane failed to consider historical problems from more than one perspective.²³² This study attempts to provide an African perspective on King Dingane by asserting that, among other things, he was the first Zulu king to resist white invasion of the Zulu kingdom, and that he was a Nationalist who was resolved to use any means necessary to defend the sovereignty of his kingdom.

²³¹ T. A. Dube at the conference on the battle of iNcome held at the University of Zululand, 27/11/98.

²³² S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.212.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL AND DISCURSIVE CONTEXT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter characterises the mindset of the Whites coming to Africa. In general, their mindset emanated from a desire to conquer and subjugate the indigenous peoples and to acquire wealth and, in many cases, then to return home. The Whites believed that the indigenous people did not have a claim to the land because Africa was inhabited by uncivilized, backward and primitive savages. In short, this chapter addresses itself to an attitude, which later became a characteristic feature of all European explorers, entrepreneurs, missionaries, settlers and militarists in Africa: namely the attitude of focussing upon the continent an imperial gaze that sought to control, drastically change and re-order everything. Notwithstanding their acclaimed good intentions, the activities of European colonists had serious direct and irrevocable repercussions upon the indigenous people of Africa.

In contrast to those who came to Africa in the hope of enriching themselves and then to return 'home' again, many of the colonists who decided to stay adopted South Africa as their own country. The offspring of especially those who did not side with the English grouping chose to be known as 'Afrikaners' in order to emphasise their separate and 'unique' bond with Africa, which soon translated to Afrikaner nationalism that tended to deny right of existence to the African nationalism of the indigenous people. These divergent nationalisms gave rise to two distinct historiographies, namely Afrikaner Nationalist and African Nationalist. Both historiographies award a central place to King Dingane, albeit with sharply divergent interpretations that are examined in this chapter.

2.2. THE COLONISING SPIRIT OF IMPERIALISTS, MISSIONARIES, EXPLORERS, TRADERS AND SETTLERS

A telling scenario, which typifies this situation, is exemplified by the missionary-explorations of David Livingstone, a celebrated missionary-explorer icon. When David Livingstone anticipated his impending death, an event that would regrettably leave his exploration enterprise unfinished, he imploringly addressed a European audience in a speech at Cambridge University in this manner:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa; I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open: Do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to try and make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work, which I have begun. I leave it with you!¹

This address by Livingstone allows for no equivocation in its expression of the sentiments and intentions that guided the explorers and the goals they envisaged for their enterprise. The missionary-exploration enterprise as stated by Livingstone himself had a dual mandate, so to speak: namely to “open a path for commerce and Christianity”. This juxtaposition of commerce and Christianity can hardly be conceived of as without prejudice, given that commerce is an irreducibly capitalistic enterprise while the spread of Christianity is supposedly a religious activity. It is indeed a historical fact that the interplay of European interests and motivations in Africa, with specific reference to trading enterprises and missionary activities together with the African reactions that they generated, is a foundation of the present-day socio-political situation on the continent. For European countries, Christianity, especially in the heyday of colonial expansion, had always been no more than a stepping-stone for the establishment of trading enterprises. Clearly then, although Europe’s invasion of Africa was in large measure motivated by economic reasons, in some instances, as in the case of David Livingstone, this was also accompanied by the spread of Christianity. By the late nineteenth century, Europe’s imperialist zeal to change matters drastically in Africa was intensified.² This era marked the end of the period of informal empire and the beginning of the establishment of formal imperial rule. With the establishment of

¹ T. Pakenham: The Scramble For Africa, p.1.

² cf. J. Schmied: English in Africa.

formal empires, state administration and military protection secured the activities of traders and settlers.

It is noteworthy therefore that the activities of traders and settlers were executed within the context of a general colonising spirit, most characteristically expressed in the phrase 'the white man's burden'.³ Therefore, Livingstone's address is symptomatic of the context that fuelled King Dingane's fears about his kingdom being usurped by invaders. Though he may not have heard of this address, the address highlights the underlying motives of European incursion into Africa and, bearing this in mind, it becomes imperative that we do not simply condemn King Dingane who, it would appear, was intent on protecting his kingdom from a possible invasion by a formidable number of armed, mounted and uninvited people.

Pakenham observes that, 'to imperialism - a kind of "race patriotism" - they brought a missionary zeal'.⁴ So, here we have imperialism going hand in hand with the missionary enterprise. According to Pakenham, 'not only would they (Europeans) save Africa from itself. Africa would be the saving of their own countries.'⁵ This implies that the invaders, by coming to Africa on the pretext of trying to 'save' Africa, would in essence be saving their own countries through the exploitation of Africa's mineral and other resources and returning the manufactured articles to the lucrative African market. Freund argues that 'the imperial conquest of Africa was undertaken to tap African resources in order to help resolve the economic problems of Europe.'⁶ As a consequence, Africa would be exploited to further the needs of the European countries as represented by their agents, who were, as observed by Pakenham, 'outsiders of one kind or another but no less ardent nationalists for that.'⁷ In Pakenham's view, 'Europe had imposed its will on Africa at the point of a gun.'⁸ Indeed, Europe's power over Africa is summed up beautifully in Hilaire Belloc's famous lines:

³ cf. J. Schmied: English in Africa.

⁴ T. Pakenham: The Scramble For Africa, p.xxiv.

⁵ Ibid., p.xxiv.

⁶ B. Freund: The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800, p.111.

⁷ T. Pakenham: The Scramble For Africa, p.xxiv.

⁸ Ibid., p.xxv.

Whatever happens we have got
The maxim-gun and they have not.⁹

Indeed, it was through the gun that the conquest of Africa by white invaders was to be achieved, and they would also use the increasingly efficient gun to 'control' the indigenous people of Africa.

It is also very interesting to note that, even though Livingstone was a missionary or a Christian, the kind of things that he brought with him were a blot on his reputation as the bearer of the good news to the so-called heathens. At one time, Livingstone received the following items from his friend Stanley, who had brought him everything he needed: bales of cloth, boxes of beads, tin baths, huge kettles, cooking pots, medicine, ammunition, and all important – letters from home. Standing out in this list of items of domesticity is 'ammunition'. The question arises: was the ammunition meant for self-defence or attack? We do not know. All we know is that he received this all-important item. Bennett observes that 'despite Livingstone's efforts to avoid hostilities, he was not a pacifist; he was ready, at least during his younger and vigorous days, to use stern discipline whenever he felt it essential'¹⁰. Thus, commenting about Africa, Livingstone was to remark that:

There is no law of nations here. The weakest goes to the wall.
Though I am favourably disposed towards peace principles, I
believe it extremely questionable whether any Peace Society
man could...travel unarmed.¹¹

Bennett informs us that 'improvable as Livingstone thought Africans might be, there was a strong element of nineteenth-century racism in his attitude toward them.'¹² Livingstone's racial prejudices were revealed when he told the European members of the Zambezi expedition in 1858 that: 'We come among them as members of a superior race and servants of a Government that desires to elevate the more degraded portions of the human family.'¹³ Bennet also tells us that

⁹ A.A. Boahen: *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, p.26.

¹⁰ R.I. Rotberg (ed.): *Africa and Its Explorers*, p.53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.53.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.55.

Livingstone was by no means free of stereotypes in his descriptions of Africans who, according to him, bore 'the low Negro character and physiognomy,' and to whom 'the pleasures of animal life are ever present to his mind as the supreme good.'¹⁴ Even racial mixing demonstrated the inferiority of Africans, and after his Angolan experience Livingstone concluded 'it is probable that there will be a fusion or mixture of the black and white races in this continent, the dark being always of the inferior or lower class of society.'¹⁵ Nothing however best captures nineteenth-century racism towards Africa more succinctly than the comments made by Baker, which are best 'appreciated' in racist terms when read in his own words. Baker, an explorer like Livingstone, scathingly remarked that:

The Black man is a curious anomaly, the good and bad points of human nature bursting forth without any arrangement, like the flowers and thorns of his own wilderness. A creature of impulse, seldom actuated by reflection, the Black man astounds by his complete obtuseness, and as suddenly confounds you by an unexpected exhibition of sympathy. From a long experience with African savages, I think it is absurd to condemn the Negro *in toto*, as it is preposterous to compare his intellectual capacity with that of the white man.... In his savage home, what is the African? Certainly bad; but not so bad as white men would (I believe) be under similar circumstances. He is acted upon by the bad passions inherent in human nature....He is callous and ungrateful...He is cunning and a liar by nature....In the great system of creation that divided races and subdivided them according to mysterious laws, apportioning special qualities to each, the varieties of the human race exhibit certain characters and qualifications which adapt them for specific localities. The natural character of those races will not alter with a change of locality, but the instincts of each will be developed in any country where they may be located...Thus...the African will remain negro in all his natural instincts, although transplanted to other soils; and those natural instincts being a love of idleness and savagedom, he will assuredly relapse into an idle and savage state, unless specially governed and forced to industry.¹⁶

I wonder how many historians and writers writing about Africa bought into Baker's savage depiction of Africa and her peoples. Commenting on Baker, Collins is instructive when he observes that:

¹⁴ R.I. Rotberg (ed.): Africa and Its Explorers , p.55.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.55.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.158-159.

Baker's narrative of his travels, *The Albert N'yanza*, published in 1866, was widely read. His opinions, judgements, and prejudices deeply influenced his contemporaries and have since misled historians. Not only was he read; he was believed. He was rewarded with a Knighthood for "laborious research in Africa".¹⁷

These were the conceptions that missionaries and explorers like Livingstone had about Africa and Africans, and it was particularly such conceptions that would later be invoked to justify not only the inhuman treatment of Africans, but also the subjugation of their lands.

It is against this background that I want to add my voice to the argument that missionaries, even if they were not settlers, were acting parallel to the imperial or colonialist missions of settlers. At times it was impossible to tell the difference between a missionary and a settler, and this situation was compounded by the fact that, in some instances, missionaries were entangled in political squabbles between settlers and African kings. A case in point is that of Rev. Allen Gardiner, whose imperial proclivities were to be exposed during his short sojourn in the Zulu kingdom, with specific reference to his 'relationship' with King Dingane. Gardiner, after failing to convince King Dingane to have a mission station established in the Zulu kingdom, recommended to the British government that the kingdom should be militarily occupied. The missionary / settler dichotomy is well illustrated by the Gikuyu proverb, *Gutiti mubia na muthungu* – 'there is no difference between a missionary and a settler'.¹⁸ In origin, as Welbourn points out, this saying is disparaging: 'One white man gets you on your knees in prayer, while the other steals your land'.¹⁹ Without meaning to contradict myself, in certain areas the European invasion of indigenous people would have been more brutal had it not been for the presence of missionaries.

It is interesting to know that the Gikuyu thought that Christianity was simply the ritual aspect of European colonialism.²⁰ According to Welbourn, 'the European invasion of Africa would certainly have had different consequences - and from any humanitarian point of view they would probably have been less desirable

¹⁷ R.I. Rotberg (ed.): *Africa and Its Explorers*, p.163.

¹⁸ V. Turner (ed.): *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, p.310.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.310.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.310.

consequences - if it had not included Christian missionaries along with settlers, and administrators.²¹ The latter point is explained by Low:

It was a great advantage to the Africans of Uganda - in contrast to Kenya, where missionaries, settlers and European government arrived together - that the European missionaries arrived before the European government, so that by the time the government arrived, the missionaries had become experts in Kiganda society to whom the administrators turned for advice.²²

In short, the Christian missionaries were not only important representatives of a number of colonial powers, but they also prepared the ground for the eventual takeover of the continent by the imperialists. Perhaps the most brutal indictment on the missionaries, as recounted by Cooper, is that they 'sought to "colonise minds" by forging an individual capable of thinking about his or her personal salvation, separated from the collective ethos of the community.'²³ The missionaries' colonisation of the mind of the Africans is adequately explained by a Ghanaian Minister of Communications who, when he addressed the Ghana Methodist Church, said:

Out of loyalty to England's kings and queens, missionaries in colonial days used the pulpit to disseminate ideologies enhancing the exploitation of the people.²⁴

It was therefore against this background that S.C. Neill was to write that:

Christian missionary work is often understood by the peoples of Africa and the East, not as the sharing of an inestimable treasure, but as an unwanted imposition from without, irreparably associated with the progress of the colonial powers.²⁵

It is also worth noting that the Christian missionaries, 'viewing Africa as a *tabula rasa* on which civilisation (and for many this meant "Christian civilisation") might readily be imprinted, knew "what was good for the Africans" and were determined

²¹ V. Turner (ed.): Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, p.310.

²² Ibid., p.310.

²³ F. Cooper, 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', pp.1526-1527.

²⁴ V. Turner (ed.): Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, p.314.

²⁵ Ibid., p.316.

to impose it with or without the consent of Africans.²⁶ This is how colonialism was imposed on Africa and, as Welbourn correctly points out, this colonial mentality of 'knowing what was good for the Africans' was to 'dominate all colonial dealings with Africa, whether the colonial agents were Catholic or Protestant, missionaries, settlers or government officers.'²⁷

Asselin, on the question of colonising the mind of the colonised, and on colonialist discourse in particular, is helpful when he observes that colonialist discourse would not have been the effective weapon of domination it was, however, if it had consisted solely of the mere tautological assertion of power over others. He describes the success of colonialist discourse as follows:

Its effectiveness was in its magical nature, in that it sought primarily to enable the conqueror to possess the conquered, to make it possible for the colonizer to occupy the mind of the colonized, so that ultimately the colonized would identify with the colonizer and adopt the latter's worldview. Colonialist discourse was successful, then, to the extent that the colonized came to accept their subservience as being in the natural order of things and were even ready to embrace the master's cause and to defend the latter's right to rule over them.²⁸

It should never be forgotten that the greatest achievement of Europe in Africa was not the colonisation of Africans politically and economically, but the colonisation of the African mind. And this colonisation was achieved through the mis-education of the African and the falsification of his history.

Carter G. Woodson, an African American historian, in his famous book *Mis-education of the Negro*, argues that mis-education is a vicious circle that results from mis-educated individuals graduating then proceeding to teach and mis-educate others. The mis-education of the African is what the teachings of the black consciousness philosophy strive to rectify. As Black consciousness exponents would put it, 'the Chinese are Chinese, the East Indians are East Indians, and the English are English, and this is in spite of other cultural influences.' The implication is that while all these groups retain their cultural

²⁶ V. Turner (ed.): *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, p.316.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.316.

²⁸ C. Asselin, 'Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus', p.4.

identity in spite of colonial and other influences, the African is denied his. This type of mis-education occurs when an educated Cameroonian or Senegalese or an Ivorian Coast intellectual actually thinks he is an assimilated Frenchman. Mis-education involves the wholesale denial of one's reality, one's culture and, most importantly, one's history. This systematic denial of an African reality began as an integral part of the history of the Western encounter with Africa. From the initial point of this encounter to the present, Africans have had to justify and defend their African identity. They have had to prove that African history did not begin when the first Europeans reached Africa. Africans have had to prove or still have to prove that African nationalism was not a mere extension of European nationalism.

2.3. DECONSTRUCTING COLONIALISM

To return to Livingstone's address and, with the view of bolstering the latter's admonishment, Cameron points out that:

The interior (of Africa) is mostly a magnificent and healthy country of unspeakable richness. I have a small specimen of good coal; other minerals such as gold, copper, iron and silver are abundant, and I am confident that with a wise and liberal (not lavish) expenditure of capital, one of the greatest systems of inland navigation in the world might be utilised, from 30 months to 36 months begin to repay any enterprising capitalist that might take the matter in hand.²⁹

This passage lists some of the things that the Europeans claim to have 'discovered' in Africa. Earlier on, Livingstone had said: 'I beg to direct your attention to Africa; I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country which is now open.' The idea of an 'open' country was deliberately propagated by the so-called explorers to draw the attention of the imperial powers and the capitalists to the land and thus open the way for occupation and exploitation. That Africa is 'open' implied that the indigenous people were irrelevant or simply non-existent. Europe regarded itself as the measure of all things. Europe was the 'Self' and Africa was the 'Other.' This binary conception of the relationship between Europe and Africa generated a set of tropes for describing Africa and Africans in their oppositional relationship to Europe and Europeans. The following passage in a

²⁹ Cameron, as quoted by T. Pakenham: The Scramble for Africa, p.12.

letter written by Columbus to the Spanish monarchs reporting on the 'Arawaks' (the non-European peoples) he found on his first voyage, illustrates clearly the European outlook on the 'Other' that was already crystallising in the first years of the modern era:

They should be good servants, and very intelligent, for I have observed that they soon repeat anything that is said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, for they appeared to me to have no religion. God willing, when I make my departure I will bring half a dozen back to their majesties so that they can learn to speak.³⁰

This is indeed, as observed by Asselin, 'a distillation of the basic attitudes by Europeans over the centuries in their dealings with the non-Western peoples they dominated.' In *Orientalism*, Edward Said investigates and documents the process by which Europe's 'othering' of the people of the Orient was achieved. At the end of this process, a series of contrasts had been established. According to Said, Westerners are said to be 'rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things.'³¹ Thus, the 'Self' is seen as rational, peaceful, liberal and logical while the 'Other' lacks all of these things. In the same vein, while the European settlers in South Africa were said to be civilized, King Dingane was seen as the "barbarian." In this regard, Cesaire's analysis of the claims of Europe and western civilization is illuminating. He believes that a civilisation that proves incapable of solving the problems of its own creation is decadent. When it chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems, it is a stricken civilisation, and it becomes a dying civilisation when it uses its principles for trickery and deceit. The Western civilisation, according to him, is guilty of such behaviour:

The fact is that the so-called European civilisation – "Western" civilisation – as it has been shaped by the two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of "reason" or before the bar of "conscience;" and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a

³⁰ Columbus, as quoted by C. Asselin, 'Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus', pp.3-4.

³¹ E.W. Said: *Orientalism*, p.49.

hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive.³²

Furthermore, Cesaire gives an incisive analysis of the hypocrisy of those who lay claim to civilisation while acting in a barbaric manner:

This (guy) claims that he is the harbinger of a superior order; that they kill; that they plunder; that they have helmets, lances, cupidities; that the slaving apologists came later; that the chief culprit in this domain is Christian pedantry, which laid down the dishonest equations christianity=civilisation, paganism=savagery, from which there could not but ensue abominable colonialist and racist consequences, whose victims were to be the Indians, the yellow peoples and the Negroes.³³

Basically, Cesaire is deconstructing the binary oppositions on which the European claims are founded. In other words, if they were the forerunners of the 'superior order,' this 'superior order' is only defined in their own terms. This 'superior order' was also implicated in atrocities such as 'killing, plundering and the like.' This then prompts Cesaire to ask:

What am I driving at? At this idea: that no one colonises innocently, that no one colonises with impunity either; that a nation which colonises, that a civilisation which justifies colonisation – and therefore diseased, that irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another ... Colonisation: bridgehead in a campaign to civilise barbarism, from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilisation, pure and simple.³⁴

Cesaire's argument that 'no one colonises innocently' is supported by the explorer Golberry who wrote in 1802 that:

It will not be enough, after having civilised and instructed [Africa], to succeed in exporting from it no longer men but a mass of precious articles, which will allow us to demand much less of our colonies [by implication, America]; it will also be necessary to find a compromise between absolute freedom

³² Cesaire, as quoted by P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds.): Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader, p.172.

³³ Ibid., p.173.

³⁴ Ibid., p.176.

and an excessively severe form of slavery for these necessary workers.³⁵

This prophetic vision, as argued by Suret-Canale, a whole century ahead of its time, stated exactly the very economic and social system of the colonisation established at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁶

Ernest Renan, the French philosopher, brilliantly illuminates the ideology of colonialism. His analysis of colonialism clearly conveys the West's will to power and sense of superiority over all non- Western peoples:

We aspire not to equality but to domination. Countries inhabited by foreign races must become again countries of serfs, farm laborers, and factory workers. The goal is not to suppress inequalities, but, rather, to amplify them and to make of them a matter of course...the regeneration of the inferior or bastard races by the superior ones is consistent with God's plans for humanity. The man of the people, in our countries, is always a fallen aristocrat; his hands are made to handle the sword rather than the laborer's tools. He prefers warring to working, that is, he returns to his original calling.³⁷

One interesting development, as observed by Asselin, with regard to imperialism was the systematic attempt to give the whole imperialist enterprise a scientific foundation.³⁸ Lubbock, a turn-of-the-century British anthropologist, described the crucial role played by a certain science in the pursuit of imperialist goals:

The study of the life of savages is particularly important to us Englishmen, citizens of a great empire, which possesses, in every part of the world, colonies whose natives have attained different levels of civilization. ...we have studied the population of the lowlands like no conqueror has ever studied or understood a conquered race. We know their history, customs, needs, weakness, and even prejudices. This intimate knowledge gives us a basis for policy decision, both administrative and political, that would satisfy public opinion.³⁹

³⁵ Colberry, as quoted by J. Suret-Canale: Essays on African History, p.184.

³⁶ J. Suret-Canale: Essays on African History, p.184.

³⁷ E. Renan, as quoted by C. Asselin, 'Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus', p.8.

³⁸ C. Asselin, 'Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus', p.8.

³⁹ Lubbock, as quoted by C. Asselin, 'Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus', p.8.

According to Asselin, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in terms of illustrating the domination of the West over non-Western peoples, uniquely exemplifies the ideology of colonialism. *The Tempest* brilliantly explicates the ideology of colonialism and the dialectics of freedom and oppression in that the face-off between Prospero and Caliban dramatises the opposition between coloniser and colonised unambiguously:

Prospero articulates clearly the economic logic of colonialism as a self-perpetuating system of exploitation. Says Prospero about Caliban, "We cannot miss him: he does make our fire, / Fetch our wood, and serves in offices/ That profit us" (Act 1, Scene 2).⁴⁰

Caliban, on the other hand, has a clear understanding of the dynamics of colonialism as a system aimed not only at controlling the body but also, through language, the mind of the conquered:

"You taught me language, and my profit on / Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For leaving me your language" (Act 1, Scene 2). In the end, however, as if to signify the immutability of the colonial arrangement, both characters remain in their original role. Prospero is still the master, and Caliban is still a slave, albeit one who harbors rebellious sentiments.⁴¹

It is important to note that in order for the West to subject the so-called non-Western peoples, they had to both conquer and deprive them the ownership and control of their land. As argued by Asselin, this discourse 'places Europeans on high moral ground and sanctifies their enterprise as the will of God. At the same time, it demonizes the targets of aggression and denies their humanity.'⁴² It is against this background therefore that King Dingane is depicted as 'treacherous' and 'inhuman,' while many other epithets are added to portray him as an evil person.

⁴⁰ *Tempest*, as quoted by C. Asselin, 'Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus', p.6

⁴¹ Caliban, as quoted by C. Asselin, 'Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus', p.6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.3.

Within the world of colonialist discourse, there is no room for a mutual recognition of each other's humanity nor is there space for empathy. If one was good, the other had to be evil; if one was the bringer of light, the other had to be the bearer of darkness; the world exists in black and white and there is not a nuance or a shade between. Césaire describes this binary cleavage in the following manner:

Between the coloniser and colonised there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. No human contact, but relations of domination and submission, which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production.⁴³

In the world there is only space enough for two positions: those of the slave and the master. For the local chiefs who agreed to serve, there could be collaboration with the master, thereby reinforcing the tyrannical rule of the master. Again Césaire is instructive when he says:

I have added that Europe has gotten on very well indeed with the local feudal lords who agreed to serve, woven a villainous complicity with them, rendered their tyranny more effective and more efficient, and that it has actually tended to prolong artificially the survival of local pasts in their most pernicious aspects.⁴⁴

The crucial point with regard to the above passage is that if King Dingane had collaborated and agreed to serve the Europeans he would have become a puppet king beholden to his masters. Even though the Europeans had supposedly come to establish amicable relations, the consequent stage of colonial subjugation would have followed, as it eventually did.

2.4. KING DINGANE'S JUSTIFIED FEARS

To distinguish between mere personal caprice and a broader social vision, it is perhaps instructive to utilize Lacan's distinction (for which he is indebted to Freud)

⁴³ Césaire, as quoted by P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds.): Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader, p.177

⁴⁴ P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds.): Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader, p.179.

between the ego and the superego where the individual's social role is concerned. In this regard, King Dingane's fears of the threat of colonial domination should be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, we should look at him as an individual, that is, as a king with his own personality and personal concerns. For him it would be a great humiliation to lose his throne. This is one of the reasons, which could have motivated his killings. Beyond his individual concerns, there is another aspect, that of defending the nation as a whole. In other words, King Dingane had the responsibility to act decisively in the face of armed invaders. These two factors, the individual and the national, are main psychological and socio-historical motivations that drove him to act in the manner that he did. Historians who fail to factor in these motivations in their analysis run the risk of ignoring the whole picture by occluding their vision.

Analysing King Dingane's character or personality is indeed appropriate in understanding what was happening in his mind when he came face to face with the European invaders. For any study of the mind of King Dingane to be well grounded, it has to look at the social circumstances in which he found himself. His responses were stimulated by events around him. King Dingane had to respond to what was happening at that time. In other words, to simply ascribe savagery and barbarism to King Dingane without actually looking at the social circumstances would be to miss the point. This is precisely the reason why we have to know what was happening politically and then locate these circumstances within the context of a psychoanalytical perspective as it relates to his fears and motives.

The individual has to be understood in relation to two constitutive elements, namely: the personal, which relates to the ego, and the societal, which relates to the notion of the superego. In this respect, the personal as informed by the ego and the societal (as informed by the superego) are to be seen as interrelated. Lacan defines the ego as:

Constituted by an identification with another object, an imaginary projection, an idealization ... The ego is thus not an agent of strength, but the victim of an illusion of strength, a fixed character-armour, which needs constant reinforcement.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Lacan, as quoted by A. Jefferson and D. Robey (eds.): Modern Literary Theory, p.156.

As a result of the imaginary projection as captured by the above-passage, King Dingane already anticipated the seizure of his throne, hence the need to defend it. The ego in this study relates to King Dingane's internal conflict, that is, the probable fears that he had about the possible loss of his kingdom and the humiliation that he subsequently stood to suffer and endure. Ironically, and arguably, true to the latter's fears, the humiliation did indeed take place when King Dingane had to ignominiously flee from his brother, Prince Mpande, who collaborated with the Voortrekkers to oust him from power.

Secondly, Lacan's superego has bearing upon King Dingane's socio-political concerns for the nation, even though these could find expression under the guise of protecting his own interests. In short, it is believed that King Dingane's private ambitions and individualistic aspirations were, to a large extent, superseded by his concerns for the nation as a whole. It is possible that King Dingane's act of killing Shaka was driven by selfish ambitions. Contrary to that view, however, it is argued that his concern was to save the nation. This is also illustrated by his killing of the Voortrekkers. He saw himself as an agent of the Zulu nation. Being the king, he was both the guardian and protector of his people.

King Dingane's act of killing the colonisers should be seen as a projected desire to defend the Zulu nation as informed by the fear of a possible subjugation to White domination. It is worth mentioning that the initial encounter between the Zulus and the Voortrekkers was amicable, but this amicability should be seen as a strategy on the part of the Voortrekkers to lure the Zulus into believing that they did not come with ulterior motives. The so-called amicability is accounted for by the fact that the Voortrekkers were at the time without land, which then necessitated favourable negotiations with those who owned the land. Piet Retief's amicability was seen by King Dingane as a ruse to catch him napping together with the Zulu nation as a whole. It is to King Dingane's credit that he managed to read the situation very well, even though he might have underestimated the strength of the Voortrekkers. King Dingane's rationality was to some extent compromised by his fears, as evidenced by the killing of his own brothers. Since colonial conquest is characterised by brutality and, in most cases, bloodshed, it is therefore unfair to see King Dingane as "bloodthirsty" given the fact that he was

responding to a hostile situation. It is therefore appropriate to understand King Dingane's decisive action (of killing Piet Retief and his men) in terms of his character and in relation to the socio-political circumstances at the time (with specific reference to colonial conquest). King Dingane's own fears were not only informed by the political instability within the Zulu nation, but also by the possible consequences that he was anticipating should the Zulu people be subjugated by the colonisers.

Quite obviously, one of the consequences of the latter outcomes would be relegation to subservient positions, as it indeed turned out to be after the conquest of the Zulus. King Dingane's fears should also be read in relation to the Voortrekkers' quest for land for grazing and water for their cattle, which would have serious repercussions for the Zulu nation as their needs were almost identical. It should be stressed that the quest for land and its appropriation was a central issue for the Voortrekkers, which regrettably impinged on the right of ownership, which the Zulus enjoyed from time immemorial. If the Voortrekkers are seen as colonists, which they obviously were, then King Dingane's fears of them as colonists are best captured by Cesaire's illuminating insight on the nature of colonialism:

Wherever there are colonizers and colonized face to face, I see force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, and the hasty manufacture of a thousand subordinate functionaries for the smooth operation of business.⁴⁶

The coming of the Voortrekkers was conceived of as a surreptitious encroachment that would eventually culminate in the subjugation of the Zulu nation. King Dingane's fears in this regard were later confirmed. Historians, particularly those of European descent, overlooked this background information when analysing the activities of King Dingane since they were producing literature, which had a functional purpose. Wylie reminds us that, 'history itself is a form of oppression, is part of the armature of what Edward Said calls a "saturating hegemonic system" which is "predicated upon exteriority."' ⁴⁷ Wylie furthermore

⁴⁶ Cesaire, as quoted by P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds.): Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader, p.177.

⁴⁷ D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.359.

argues that, 'history itself is a discourse deployed within political contexts. It has implications in the wielding of power relations.'⁴⁸ One 'fictions' history, in Foucault's Nietzschean terms, 'on the basis of a political reality that makes it true.'⁴⁹ Or as Kellner expresses it more mildly, 'That this [historiographical] tradition supports itself as a discourse of morality and a discourse of power by means of its image of itself, its history, is clear.'⁵⁰ I agree with Wylie when he argues that 'this morality', developed in the 19th century and intimately connected with the spread of Western imperial hegemony, permeates the literature on King Dingane.⁵¹

2.5. EUROCENTRIC EXPECTATIONS AND AFRICAN REALITY

White historians are imposing the notion of a fixed identity on the human subject. In fact, they had their own preconceived understanding of how people had to behave, irrespective of their racial origin and affiliation. As a result, they could not understand King Dingane's protean character. It is true that people, the Voortrekkers and the English settlers in particular, had fixed identities that they ascribed to King Dingane. Surprise at King Dingane's protean character therefore flows from the clash between their (Westerners and white historians in particular) fixation and the actual fluidity of identities. The Voortrekkers expected King Dingane to behave in a predictable way, in line with their general expectations.

When King Dingane's character is critiqued, it is done against these general expectations, which are necessarily culturally biased as they are informed by a particular world-view. Laurens van der Post explains European one-eyed vision as follows:

European man has walked into Africa like a one-eyed giant; he has walked into it, moreover, at a moment when he already feels threatened from within. He is instinctively aware of danger and takes desperate precautions against it, but he takes them in the wrong direction of reality. He too has confused the reflection of danger within the mirror without. So he projects his fear of danger onto the Black man around him,

⁴⁸ D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.10.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.10.

⁵⁰ Kellner, as quoted by D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.10.

⁵¹ D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.10.

and this he does all the more readily because of the miraculously preserved archaic quality of Africa and the Africans. So many of the qualities which the European one-eyed vision despises and rejects within himself reappear in the indigenous society round about him.⁵²

The European therefore becomes a victim of the wrong dimension that results from the imposition of his own cultural practices on the African. In this instance, he has fears about something that does not exist. Thus, he projects his 'fear of the danger onto the Black man around him.' 'One-eyed vision' implies that the European only looked in one direction, thereby forfeiting critical engagement with other aspects of the reality that he came into contact with. The fact that he came to Africa as a stranger accounts for his fears. But these fears only served to further handicap him in attempting to understand and evaluate African reactions.

It is also interesting to note that in King Dingane's portrayal, the focus has been mainly on the major blows suffered by the Voortrekkers. As a result, a lot of what actually happened (in particular the prevailing circumstances at the time) and that, which might have motivated King Dingane to kill the Voortrekkers, has been deliberately disregarded. In other words, we do not get a comprehensive account of what really happened. In fact, Gottschalk appears to be challenging King Dingane's portrayal when he says:

Only a part of what was observed in the past was remembered by those who observed it; only a part of what was remembered was recorded; only a part of what was recorded has survived; only a part of what has survived has come to the historian's attention; only a part of what has come to their attention is credible; and only a part of what is credible has been grasped...History as told...is only the historian's expressed part of the understood part of the credible part of the discovered part of history-as-recorded.⁵³

The act of overlooking the dynamics of King Dingane's socio-political circumstances is informed by the historian's world-view or perspective. The historians' perspective is often (if not always) informed by one's own social positioning.

⁵² D. Wylie: Utilizing Isaacs, 'One Thread in the Development of the Shaka Myth', p.16.

⁵³ Gottschalk, as quoted by W. Bromberg: The Mind of Man, p.6.

The present study is informed by the scholarship of once-colonised regions. This trend is also found in the work of the Subaltern Studies Group, which in the process of making history, especially that of the 'once colonised regions', have striven 'to recover the lives of people forgotten in narratives of global exploitation and national mobilization.' According to Cooper, author of *'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History'*, this group of historians has questioned '... the very narratives themselves, indeed, the source material, theoretical frameworks, and subject position of historians.' In doing so, according to Cooper, the group has uncovered the 'subalternity of non-Western histories' as much as the subalternity of social groups within those histories has been uncovered.⁵⁴

Cooper explains the reasons for the existence of those histories as follows:

Those histories exist in the shadow of Europe not solely because of colonization's powerful intrusion into other continents but because Europe's self-perceived movement toward state-building, capitalist development, and modernity marked and still mark a vision of historical progress against which African, Asian, or Latin American history appears as "failure": of the "nation to come to its own," of the "bourgeoisie as well as of the working class to lead."⁵⁵

2.6. EXAMINING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN COLONISER AND COLONISED, AND THE 'RULE OF FEAR'

The present study attempts to reconstruct the history of King Dingane and, in line with the views advocated by the Subaltern Studies Group, to make sure that 'the subject positions of colonised people that the European teleologies obscure should not simply be allowed to dissolve.'⁵⁶ This is precisely what this study attempts to do. Given that many sources on colonial history included diaries, records and documents of the missionaries, the Subaltern Studies Group has enquired '... whether categories of colonial knowledge set the terms...in which oppositional movements could function and in which colonialism itself could be critiqued.'⁵⁷ As Cooper correctly argues, this trend as advocated by the Subaltern

⁵⁴ F. Cooper, *'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History'*, p.1516.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1516.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1518.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1527.

Studies Group 'has opened up possibilities of seeing how deeply colonies were woven into what it meant to be European and how elusive, and difficult to police, was the boundary between colonizers and colonized.'⁵⁸

Cooper mentions that the problem of recovering the histories of the once-colonised regions while understanding how colonial documents construct their own versions of them has been the focus of thoughtful reflections by Subaltern scholars, particularly Ranajit Guha.⁵⁹ Questions, such as what made narratives credible, what was remembered and what was forgotten, how written and oral texts derived authority from each other, have received increasing attention from the Subaltern Studies Group. The present study has indeed drawn quite substantially from the insights of the Subaltern Studies Group. Most significantly, the Subaltern Studies Group has had a profound impact in aiding historians to recover the histories of the 'once-colonised regions'. In detailing the European encounter with Africans, Cooper observes that recognition of the much greater power of the Europeans in the colonial encounter does not negate the importance of African agency in determining the shape the encounter took. Cooper makes the fascinating observation that while the conquerors could concentrate military force to defeat African armies, 'pacify' villages, or slaughter rebels, the routinization of power demanded alliances with local authority figures, be they lineage heads or recently defeated kings. In this regard, he remarks:

A careful reading of colonial narratives suggests a certain pathos: the civilizing mission did not end up with the conversion of Africa to Christianity or the generalization of market relations throughout the continent, and colonial writing instead celebrated victories against "barbarous practices" and "mad mullahs." Colonial violence, in such a situation, became "acts of trespass," vivid and often brutal demonstrations distinguishable for what they could violate more than they could transform.⁶⁰

I would agree with this observation. Indeed, to finally oust King Dingane from power, the Voortrekkers had to enlist the support of King Dingane's half brother, Prince Mpande, an authority figure within the royal family. This collaboration

⁵⁸ F. Cooper, 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', p.1527.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1528.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1529.

between Mpande and the Voortrekkers not only culminated in the overthrow of King Dingane, but it also led to the entrenchment of the Voortrekker hegemony in the land of the Zulu people. Contrary to the views that the conquest of Africa was motivated by the mission to bring civilisation to the so-called backward peoples, Maurice Delafosse, an enlightened colonial, wrote as follows in 1921 – in what is perhaps the most honest account to have ever come out of Europe:

If we are prepared to be honest with ourselves, we have to admit that altruism did not bring us to Africa, at least not as a nation... Sometimes we wanted to find markets for our commerce, and resources of primary materials for our industry; sometimes we needed to protect the security of our nationals or prevent ourselves from being outdistanced by our foreign rivals; sometimes we were moved by an obscure and unconscious desire to obtain a little glory for our country - and sometimes we simply obeyed the whims of chance or followed in the footsteps of an explorer because we did not believe we had a choice to do anything different. Nowhere can I find, as the motive of our colonial expansion in Africa, a genuine and reasoned wish to contribute to the wellbeing of the populations whom we went to subjugate. The facile excuse was one that we gave ourselves retrospectively, but it was never part of the design.⁶¹

Delafosse ended with this warning:

It is absolutely necessary that our intervention should be a cause and an element of progress and wellbeing for them [the African societies - J.S.-C.]. If those things were not present, all colonial endeavour would stand condemned. By the same token, its eventual bankruptcy would be foredoomed.⁶²

Maurice Delafosse's wish, as pointed out by Suret-Canale, 'remained a wish and what he feared came to pass: the colonial enterprise was condemned and it became bankrupt.'⁶³ Given Delafosse's candid and honest assessment of what the colonising mission was all about, King Dingane's fears were not far-fetched and unjustified. Thus, whatever he did to defend the Zulu kingdom should therefore be understood against this background. It is also against this background that Peter Becker's, *The Rule of Fear*, should be read and understood. This is a book that attempts to give a picture of KwaZulu during the

⁶¹ M. Delafosse, as quoted by J. Suret-Canale: Essays on African History, p.193.

⁶² J. Suret-Canale: Essays on African History, p.193.

⁶³ Ibid., p.193.

reign of King Dingane, and its author is the first white author to devote an entire book to the 'rule of fear' of King Dingane. While indeed readable, I agree with Golan 'that the book does not reveal any new information or interpretation of the events already described in the published works of colonial writers like Fynn, Isaacs, Owen and Bryant.'⁶⁴ As observed by Golan, Becker's only innovation lies in his decision to write about King Dingane, usually remembered only in connection with the killing of Piet Retief.⁶⁵

Becker's book, it would seem, succeeded in powerfully reinforcing and further entrenching the 19th century European bias and prejudice about the Zulu people, and King Dingane in particular. Becker, with his unverifiable claims, seemed determined to project the most devilish image of King Dingane. According to Malaba, 'it is tempting to suggest that Becker's biographies were inspired by Ernst Ritter's enormously influential "biography" of Shaka, which presents the first Zulu king as a "neurotic", "sadistic" and "cunning" ruler who imposed his will on his largely passive subjects.'⁶⁶ *The Rule of Fear* is typical of the gutter journalism that permeates the books written mainly by European writers about Africa; the aim being to pander to the whims of the European readership.

In counteracting Becker's vindictive assessment of the reign of King Dingane, Golan observes that:

Relying on Fynn and Isaacs, Becker describes Shaka's "tyrannical rule", claiming that Dingane assassinated him on the advice of Mkabayi, his aunt, in order to free the Zulu people from the tyrannical reign of a cruel king. While the author does provide some examples to illustrate Shaka's capricious nature, he offers no clue as to why he calls Dingane's reign the "rule of fear".⁶⁷

The 'incestuous relationship' among writers like Ritter, Fynn and Isaacs, takes us back to the intentions of the first traders. In the letter that Isaacs wrote to Fynn, who, ironically, was also engaged in writing a diary about his own experiences in

⁶⁴ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.72.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.72.

⁶⁶ M.Z. Malaba, 'In A Mirror Dimly': An Analysis of Peter Becker's Biographies of Mzilikazi, Moshesh and Dingane', p.158.

⁶⁷ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.73.

the Zulu kingdom, Isaacs advised Fynn that in writing about Shaka and Dingane, he should:

Make them out as blood thirsty as you can... and describe the frivolous crime people lose their lives for, introduce as many anecdotes relative to Chaka as you can. It all tends to swell up the work and make it interesting.⁶⁸

It was probably because of such sentiments, as exemplified by Isaacs' advice to Fynn, that Buthelezi, as pointed out by Pridmore, was to write that 'the Europeans in 'Natal', were, in historical times, responsible for a biased version of the Zulu past, Fynn being the obvious culprit through the writing of his diary.'⁶⁹ Commenting on Fynn's writings, Pridmore is of the view that 'it is possible that Fynn's writing was in part a result of his education at Christ's Hospital, where he would probably have been exposed to the stereotypes of Africa contained in textbooks in the late 18th century.'⁷⁰

Wylie, addressing the 'incestuous relationship' among writers like, Ritter, Fynn and Isaacs, talks about 'the guiltless plagiarism of one account by another, often many times repeated.'⁷¹ This is precisely what is found in the books of these writers. As Wylie has brilliantly demonstrated in his perceptive analysis of King Shaka, we also believe that the relationship between writer and society is not an area that has attracted much attention from commentators on Zulu literature.⁷²

In short, as Wylie puts it, Zulu historians' personal and societal biases have never been properly investigated.⁷³ In addressing the personal biases of Fynn, Isaacs, and Becker, Wylie argues that, 'the historiography is, in short, an icon of cultural identity, constitutive and reflective of a particular order and authority.' He cites Barthes who supports the advocacy of 'one of those formal pacts made between the writer and society for the justification of the former and the serenity of the latter.'⁷⁴ It is time that historians began pursuing with rigour Collingwoods' long-

⁶⁸ Isaacs to H.F. Fynn 10 December 1832. Letters received H.F. Fynn Papers NA

⁶⁹ J. Pridmore: Henry Francis Fynn: An assessment of his career and an analysis of the written and visual portrayals of his role in the History of the Natal region, pp.284-285.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.30.

⁷¹ D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.35.

⁷² Ibid., p.10.

⁷³ Ibid., p.10.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.10.

standing injunction to study the historian before studying the history.⁷⁵ This will help to identify the personal biases that, to a large extent, obscure the truth.

William Holden finds Nathaniel Isaacs 'an author on whom he cannot rely.'⁷⁶ Donald Morris asserts that Isaacs was 'utterly untrained in observation.'⁷⁷ Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, in their Oxford History of South Africa cautiously note that, 'there is reason to believe that Isaacs' account of Zulu history has many distortions.'⁷⁸ Brian Roberts also describes Isaacs as 'full of contradiction.'⁷⁹ As for Fynn, Wylie correctly argues that 'internal analysis of the text of the Diary (Fynn's Diary) itself reveals problems of interpretation and authenticity still inadequately recognised.'⁸⁰ In no sense, then, argues Wylie, can the Diary be regarded as transparently or empirically 'referential,' or even as containing isolatable 'nuggets of truth' in obscuring rubble.

Still on Fynn and, perhaps even Isaacs, Montrose is instructive when he asserts that:

To resolve history into a simple antinomy of myriad expendable details and a single irreducible essence is precisely to refuse history - to refuse history by utterly effacing its constitutive differences, by effacing those complex historical formations in which not only the details but also the essences are produced, revised, challenged, and transformed.⁸¹

This explains therefore why *The Rule of Fear* had such popular impact and why it is a highly readable book as it 'conformed to more popular narrative modes.' Thus, concludes Wylie, 'there is something slightly disingenuous in the generalisation in Becker's book.'⁸²

Still on Becker, describing the coronation of King Dingane, he comments that 'tyranny had returned to Zululand.' It is interesting to note that Pridmore, in her

⁷⁵ D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.10.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.48.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.48.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.48.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.48.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.48.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.71.

⁸² Ibid., p.71.

thesis about Fynn, writes that 'earlier authors, like Ritter, had placed Fynn's positive European qualities in contrast to Shaka's supposed character flaws.' She points out that Becker used the same construct, but exchanged King Shaka for King Dingane. In opposition to the 'tyranny' encapsulated in King Dingane's character, Fynn, according to Pridmore, represented the voice of reason that expressed disgust at a decision to carry out executions, following which he 'refused to be implicated in an act of murder or to permit further shedding of blood at 'Port Natal'.⁸³ Pridmore also points out that Becker even tried to excuse seemingly unscrupulous behaviour on Fynn's part, such as the shooting of his retainer, Lukilimba, by pointing out that Fynn had been 'furious' following a restless night.⁸⁴

In rebutting Becker's overtly prejudiced portrayal of King Dingane, Golan correctly argues that the comment that 'tyranny had returned to Zululand' and the book's title 'directly contradicts the description of King Dingane throughout the book as a reasonable, generous, and hospitable leader.' Buthelezi is informative when he argues that:

If King Shaka and those illustrious Zulu kings who followed in his footsteps were tyrants, that great humanist philosophy of Ubuntu-Botho would never have come forth to rule in the hearts and minds and the very souls of Zulus... Zulu culture is a culture of a people who share because they deeply value the dignity of man. That could never have been the product of brutal tyranny of the kind depicted in so many history books.⁸⁵

Golan also observes that having devoted the bulk of his book to King Dingane's relations with the White traders, Becker provides:

...no new insight into the way the king ruled his kingdom or organised the bureaucracy or his military regiments. The description of Dingane's relationship with the White traders nearly replicates Fynn's diary, offering nothing to justify calling Dingane a tyrant. On the trader's evidence, the King was generous in providing the white visitors with food and cattle, and was very eager to trade with them.⁸⁶

⁸³ J. Pridmore: Henry Francis Fynn: An assessment of his career and an analysis of the written and visual portrayals of his role in the History of the Natal region, p.200.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.200.

⁸⁵ Address by M.G. Buthelezi on 27 September 1986, KwaZulu Legislative Assembly Buildings, Ulundi.

⁸⁶ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.73.

Golan observes that, 'Becker draws for his point from the deterioration of the relationship between the Whites and the Zulus.'⁸⁷ According to Golan, 'Becker mentions two incidents in detail to document King Dingane's alleged "tyranny". One is the gradual demise of King Dingane's good relationship with the traders in 'Port Natal'; the other is the killing of Retief and the Voortrekkers.'⁸⁸ The so-called two incidents best capture the biggest flaws of Becker's book. Surely King Dingane cannot be said to have become a 'tyrant' just because of the deterioration of the relationship between himself and the Whites. Secondly, and most importantly, at least Becker is honest in saying that it was the killing of Piet Retief and the Voortrekkers that earned King Dingane the title of 'tyrant'. This shows how morally selective Becker is. What about the killings committed by King Dingane against his own people? Is King Dingane a 'tyrant' just because he killed White people? Does this mean therefore that if King Dingane had not killed Piet Retief and the Voortrekkers he would not have been referred to as a 'tyrant'?

Following Fynn, Golan observes that Becker blames Jacob, King Dingane's apparent interpreter, for the deterioration of the relationship between the Zulu and the Whites. Jacob is said to have lied to King Dingane, giving bad impressions of the Whites, and thus causing the king to fear and distrust not only the British at 'Port Natal' but also all Whites in general. As fate would have it, the Voortrekkers, in fact, proceeded to act exactly as Jacob had warned King Dingane. In attempting to demonstrate King Dingane's alleged 'treachery', Golan observes that Becker uses information from Gustav Preller's *Piet Retief*- (which is a landmark in Afrikaner nationalist literature) and on Owen's diary to relate the story of the Voortrekkers. With regard to Francis Owen's diary, Golan informs us that the diary, which was said to provide a first-hand account of King Dingane's encounter with the trekkers, was not published until 1926, when Afrikaner nationalism was at its height. It was mainly after the South African war of 1899 – 1902 that the story of King Dingane and Piet Retief became a focus of Afrikaner literature and was utilized by colonists as proof of the evil character of their black neighbours.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.73.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.73.

⁸⁹ D. Golan: Inventing Shaka. Using History in the construction of Zulu nationalism, pp.39-40.

When reading Becker's book, one gets the impression that the author deliberately eschewed the pertinent issues involved in the reign of King Dingane and concentrated on scurrilously undermining the integrity of the Zulu king. As already alluded to, Becker drew some of his information from Preller. Ironically, Preller is alleged to have intimated that he was sceptical about the genuineness of the information he had made use of when writing his book. To put it differently, Preller is alleged to have said that he doubted what was recounted to him, particularly the prejudicial portrayal of King Dingane. In short, Preller is alleged to have advised, if not warned, future historians that the prevailing views on King Dingane, even those found in his book, should be taken with a pinch of salt. In spite of this, Becker repeated Preller's prejudicial views on King Dingane, even though Preller was sceptical of his own book.

Rather than heed Preller's advice, Becker instead chose to sensationalise the history of King Dingane. In short, Becker drew quite uncritically on Preller's book. It is against this background that Wylie calls *The Rule of Fear* 'a piece of gutter journalism which, with an incredible gullibility, was accorded instantaneous "historical" status.'⁹⁰ Becker's lack of critical inspection of Preller's work resulted in the former author's adaptation of a popularising approach that consists essentially of disconnected and sensationalist anecdotes. Sadly, as Wylie points out, 'the manner in which mainstream historians (including Becker, though not a historian, but a well-known Doctor of Sociology) have unquestionably repeated these anecdotes, and invented still others, amounts to the most serious dereliction of scholarly duty in South African historiography.'⁹¹

Golan also points out the contradictions found in Becker's book by stating, for example, reasons mentioned by Becker himself for King Dingane's decision to get rid of the large numbers of armed and mounted Voortrekkers, who had started to arrive post October 1837 on royal lands:

Among other episodes, Becker relates how Retief, who was asked to look for Dingane's stolen cattle, ignored the request

⁹⁰ D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.11.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.12.

to bring Sikonyela, the chief who was responsible for the theft, before Dingane to face trial. The author also refers to "an astoundingly tactless letter" written by Retief to the Zulu king, in which Retief mentioned the overthrow of chief Mzilikazi by the trekkers as a punishment, which the chief had brought on himself. But none of this, nor the trekker's eagerness to demonstrate the power of their guns and the speed of their horses, is seen by Becker as sufficient explanation for the King's fear of the voortrekkers.⁹²

Commenting on Peter Becker's *The Rule of Fear*, Laband asserts that this book was the culmination of a long tradition that grew out of the disapproving portrayals by the 'Port Natal' settlers, hunters and missionaries of King Dingane's character and conduct, and which fed on the furious denunciations of the Voortrekkers:

The picture that emerged was one of a capricious, untrustworthy, cruel, blood-thirsty, self-indulgent and indolent despot with none of the intellectual or physical abilities of his brother Shaka. Even his physical appearance was counted against him. White observers dwelt scathingly on his corpulent and fleshy build, short neck and heavy foot, and drew attention to the banality of his not unpleasant countenance, which they believed belied his vicious disposition.⁹³

Golan ends his critique of Becker's book on King Dingane by observing that the book, which was mainly written for a South African audience, merely confirmed the existing stereotype of King Dingane as a tyrannical, superstitious and unpredictable king:

Even when the author's own evidence fails to tally with these assumptions, Becker remains loyal to the cliché. Sometimes it appears almost as if he attempted to write an 'honest' biography, but an editor added the titles and a few lines to make sure the racist stereotype would not be destroyed.⁹⁴

Wylie points out that 'scholarly biographies of Shaka, Dingane and Mpande remain unwritten.'⁹⁵ This is particularly true of King Dingane, whose biography by Becker was nothing but an 'apocryphal character assassination.' Wylie correctly points out that 'in the 19th century, accounts on Zulu history were openly intended as ammunition for the hegemonic requirements of colonial settlement and

⁹² D. Golan: *Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History*, pp.74-75.

⁹³ J. Laband: *Rope of Sand*, p.57.

⁹⁴ D. Golan: *Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History*, p.75.

⁹⁵ D.A. Wylie: *White Writers and Shaka Zulu*, p.11.

government.⁹⁶ The marginalisation of the early Zulu in historical accounts was, as Leonard Thompson pointed out a long time ago, not merely due to lack of evidence, although this was partly a factor.⁹⁷

It is interesting to note that in the case of *The Rule of Fear*, the stereotype, as observed by Golan, is so dominant that the author does his best to ignore evidence to the contrary. The suppression of contradictory material or evidence is a deliberate effort to maintain stereotypes that are meant to 'convey a certain message to the readers.' Golan is of the view that Becker's book and other White South Africans' biographies of historical figures or novels about the Zulu past constitute a unique phenomenon. Written from the 1950s to early 1970s, they indicate a specific development in the relationship between Blacks and Whites and offer a variation on the colonialist discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

While colonialist discourse studied the 'others', attempting to show their unique habits, different set of values, and distinct customs, the opposition between "them" and "us" becomes less obvious in the writings of the 1950s and 1960s. Early colonialist literature explored a world that had not yet been domesticated by European signification, a world, which was perceived as uncontrollable and inaccessible. By the 1960s, White South Africans could claim to know the Zulu well enough to write "for them." Like the earlier literature, these novels of the 1960s and 1970s continue to affirm the ethnocentric assumptions of their creators. The writers' point of view may have changed, and they no longer stress the inherent difference of the subject, but the ways in which they characterise the other is not finally so different.⁹⁸

The story of King Dingane recounted by historians should differ from the story written by people who want to include much sensationalism and anecdotal material based on their interpretation of certain events. Incidentally, biographers, including Becker, are people who write like novelists. A novelist needs characterisation and plot to link up certain things that would otherwise remain inexplicable, hard to understand and hard to connect. So, it could be acknowledged that in the writings about people like King Dingane, there is a tendency to read into his character things, which the writer feels explains certain

⁹⁶ D.A. Wylie: *White Writers and Shaka Zulu*, p.11.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹⁸ D. Golan: *Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History*, p.76.

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⁹⁶ D.A. Wylie: White Writers and Shaka Zulu, p.11.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.12.

⁹⁸ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.76.

actions. For example, writing about a person's psychic life, on what is happening in his mind, in what would normally be called psychoanalytic perspective, goes beyond the observable factors that are not really observable but can be inferred from behaviour. When it is argued that a person rules with fear, we are reading this assumption into the individual, regardless of the circumstances in which he lived.

Since Dingane had been part of the assassination of King Shaka together with Mhlangana and Mbopha, he must have understood the nature of political intrigue and conspiracy. If one collaborates in the act of fratricide, as Dingane did with certain individuals, and he is installed as a king, what would stop these very people from dethroning him so that they can also be installed as kings? So, if there is evidence that King Dingane had to dispose of his half brothers (and there was evidence) then the reason is clear that they (brother(s)) had collaborated with him and it was difficult for him to accept that they would not do the same against him. Because of this, therefore, he had to dispose of them and start with a new crop of people who would be loyal to him. This is only political expedience. One cannot live with a potential enemy.

It is also important to understand the decisive role that Mkabayi kaJama, Dingane and Shaka's aunt, played in disposing Shaka. Dingane and other people were complaining about the incessant campaigns to which Shaka was sending them, and the fact that they might also be killed in the process. Although Shaka is generally considered a nation builder, the people of the time judged him differently. They (the Zulus) felt overwhelmed by the endless and tiresome campaigns. The principle of self-preservation may have made them realise that continual exposure to danger in warfare may lead to their own death. People are likely to do anything to preserve their own lives. So, the assassination of Shaka should not only be seen as a mark of cruelty on the part of people who disposed of him, especially with regard to Dingane. The killers of Shaka should rather be seen in the context of the principle of self-preservation. Dingane and other accomplices were not given the kind of treatment that made them feel they were part of the commanders that would sit back and send armies to battle. They were part of the expeditors, the frontline fighters who went into battle. If they had been

given a different kind of treatment, they probably would not have resorted to assassinating King Shaka.

One of the conspirators in the assassination of Shaka, Mkabayi, says amongst other things, in Zondi's drama *Ukufa KukaShaka*, 'Nina Dingane, nicabanga ukuthi ningamadoda ngoba nilengise amalengisi. [You Dingane think you are man simply because you bear masculine features]'.⁹⁹ Although Zondi's account is imaginatively reconstructed, this drama captures the mood in which Mkabayi influenced Dingane and other people to dispose of Shaka. In fact she insists on this act showing Dingane how advantageous the act would be for him because he would be installed king, and would restore a different kind of calm and order. Dingane was also the kind of person who wanted to see a certain kind of order prevailing. The story of Mkabayi kaJama influencing Dingane is the one that shows that Dingane was not nearly brave enough to carry out the assassination of Shaka. But when he looked at the possibilities and advantages, he realised that it would save the Zulu nation to have Shaka disposed of.

The point being made is that King Shaka was disposed of under circumstances that do not necessarily portray King Dingane as a person who would rule with fear as his weapon. He, in fact, had reasons of his own to fear. How could he have collaborated with his half-brothers and thought that they were going to keep him in power forever, when they themselves were born of the royal family and could have the same appetite for power? The idea of King Dingane ruling by fear is grossly exaggerated. Although King Dingane took his counsel from Ndlela kaSompisi Ntuli, who said Prince Mpande was not a problem, he (King Dingane) indeed listened to Ndlela to his detriment. If King Dingane were the type of person characterised as ruling by fear, he would not have listened to Ndlela at all. He would have disposed of Mpande – as by sparing Mpande's life, King Dingane, in fact, dug his own grave. That we know from what happened subsequently. Therefore, the conclusion that King Dingane ruled through fear is an analysis that does not show an intimate understanding of the factors that influence individuals, but rather proof of a desire to write testimonies to please certain audiences. That is exactly the problem with Becker's biography of King Dingane.

⁹⁹ E. Zondi: *Ukufa kukaShaka*.

The question of audience and readership is very important because writers of works on historical figures such as King Dingane often pander to the expectations of certain audiences at the expense of historical accuracy and truth. And indeed, Becker scored brilliantly by producing this fascinating biography – thereby confirming the perceptions that people had about King Dingane.

2.7. THE VOORTREKKERS AND THE ZULUS: A CLASH OF INTERESTS AND CULTURE

Closely watched by suspicious Zulu onlookers, they realised that if they wanted to visit the royal homestead, they would have to wait at a respectful distance and hope for an invitation. According to accepted protocol, visitors were expected to assemble in a group so that they could be directed to a place where they could wait while their presence was reported to the king. The oral account we have at our disposal is that the Voortrekkers were prying. They were caught intruding around the king's palace at night and this aroused suspicion. What is not adequately recorded by a number of historians is the significance that the Zulus attached to this kind of action at the time. According to African tradition, anybody who walks around at night while looking in through doors is a malefactor. The Zulus believe that people who walk about in the night are responsible for practising witchcraft. When king Dingane was told that his visitors had been spotted wandering about at night, he believed the worst. Even before he agreed to meet with them, he was convinced that they were up to no good.

The death penalty that was given to the commando did not surprise the King's Counsel. The only people who were taken aback were the victims themselves. They did not know enough about the Zulus and their customs to have prepared them for their fate. Nor did they ask for advice from people who would have warned them of previous experience, for example, the Qadi and Matiwane. What remains true is the fact that there had to be a valid reason to kill the newcomers. Even for the supposedly 'bloodthirsty' Zulu, the issuing of a death sentence did not come about at the proverbial drop of a hat, but due to the fact that the Voortrekkers' behaviour patterns were not only foreign, but totally unacceptable. The utterance 'kill the wizards' should therefore be understood in the context of

African belief, experience and African behaviour patterns. A wizard behaves in a certain way. He or she walks around prying at night. He has a strange appearance. He is pink in colour, approximating a ghost, or something mysterious and perhaps supernatural. It can direct evil forces to undo anyone.

There is a story that is recounted by the Zulus themselves that captures the moment of arrival and the stay of Piet Retief and his men at the palace. The story alleges that their (the Voortrekkers) walking around the royal palace led them to peep through the door of a hut where one of King Dingane's wives was sleeping. It is said this wife was pregnant. Now, if we went to the royal kraal of olden times, we would find that the treasured women, the wives of kings, were people who stayed at one spot to be nursed, to be given all favours, with attendants to see to their needs. These were people who would hardly see the sunlight from sunrise to sunset, and who for the most part of the day would keep to their enclosures, where they were given all the things that they needed. It is said that this pregnant woman was frightened when what she believed to be a ghost appeared on her threshold. The story furthermore relates that she was so traumatised by this experience that she had a miscarriage. Maphalala confirms this when he asserts that:

Retief and his men moved about looking at the huts. In one of the huts there was a Zulu woman who was pregnant. The shock of seeing Whites for the first time resulted in her giving birth prematurely. This incident was reported to Dingane. As superstition was still rife in those days the king came to the conclusion that Retief and his men were "Abathakathi," i.e. people who practise witchcraft. Consequently an order was given for them to be put to death.¹⁰⁰

This story explains why King Dingane called the Voortrekkers wizards. They would go around at night peeping through doors. They thought that they had the privilege to inspect the royal palace uninvited, but in the process they were violating the protocol that directs behaviour at the royal palace. This is one of the oral accounts that are given about the behaviour of the Voortrekkers and the reason why King Dingane had them put to death.

¹⁰⁰ S. Maphalala, 'The Black man's interpretation of South African History', paper given at the University of Stellenbosch, 14 October 1981.

Stories in history books written for secondary schools allege that one of the events that show that King Dingane was treacherous was that he sent the Voortrekkers to retrieve his cattle from Segonyela. Unfortunately, history is replete with acts of trickery, where the enemy is made to perform certain acts. It is part of diplomacy to have people do what one needs in a manner that makes them accepted. In our view, if the Voortrekkers were prepared to arrest Segonyela¹⁰¹, they could expect King Dingane to do the same with them. They tricked Segonyela into believing that the handcuffs they had were beautiful bangles, and after arresting him, they were able to take back their prisoner together with the cattle and rifles that they had confiscated. People are inclined to apply a selective morality with regard to the actions of others, especially in the case of King Dingane. Dealing with an enemy requires careful consideration.

I would like to argue that the killing of Piet Retief and his men was also necessitated by a clash of interests and cultures, as took place in the meeting of the Voortrekkers and the Zulus. Indeed, nothing better exemplifies the clash of cultures more forcefully than an incident that took place in Switzerland in the year 2000. The praise-singer of King Mswati was allegedly arrested for making a 'noise.' In line with the African tradition, the latter delivered the praise-songs of King Swati as he was about to ascend the stage.

In the case of the Voortrekkers and King Dingane, I would like to argue that the clash of interests was more pronounced than the clash of cultures. The Voortrekkers had their own interests at heart. They wanted something and they had come looking for it. They were also curious to find out about the Zulus so as to be able to deal with them effectively. On the other hand, King Dingane and his people had interests of their own. In the first place, they wanted to secure their territory against foreign encroachment and invasion. The clash of cultures comes into the picture when we consider the behaviour of the Voortrekkers in relation to the life that prevailed at the royal kraal. In that respect, then, there was a clash of cultures because the Voortrekkers were not clever or shrewd enough, and they behaved in a manner that was not only unacceptable, but was also considered threatening and suspicious. However, they did not understand this because they

¹⁰¹ Segonyela was the chief of the Batlokwa tribe.

did not have someone well versed in the culture of the Zulu and all that pertains to the workings of the royal family at their disposal to guide them. Unfortunately, their own approach was at odds with the lifestyle of the Zulus, while the onus was on them to understand how life was lived in this environment. It did not dawn on them to find out about the way these people lived so that they would not overstep the bounds of the privileges that they had been given.

The argument of fear is also invoked to explain why Dingane killed all the people he is alleged to have killed. King Cetshwayo estimated 'that in his purges his uncle Dingane had executed at least eighty people of high position and dubious loyalty, and confiscated their accumulated wealth.'¹⁰² Again, we have to look at the circumstances under which these people died and the reasons that were given for their killing. If one looks at the way in which King Shaka was assassinated, that event should have triggered a great deal of suspicion among Shaka's close associates. The fact that he was assassinated implied that the people on his side also posed a danger to Dingane. Historically the statistics of the killings are not as significant as the reasons for the killings. As far as I am concerned, the circumstances under which King Shaka was assassinated were themselves enough grounds for suspicion that Dingane's life was in danger.

Any indication that certain people posed a danger to the king would trigger this response. Among the reasons for kings to execute people, is spying, disloyalty, unfaithfulness and being in cahoots with people who are planning dastardly acts. If, for example, Mhlangana, Dingane's half brother, had certain associates, and was put to death, the associates had to suffer the same fate. If there were rumours that certain people were not happy about certain things that King Dingane was doing, that would call for reaction. Because of this, the number of people killed is important, but the reasons are even more important. Unfortunately, the reasons have been misread because the prevailing notion is that King Dingane was 'tyrannical'. But when we say that, we actually gloss over reasons for individual cases. Even if King Dingane ruled with fear, this fear could be expressed in different ways, depending on the case at hand at a given time. Unfortunately, many writers do not deal with individual cases or explore the

¹⁰² J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.53.

circumstances under which individuals were put to death. This darker side of history often fuels speculation that is turned into so-called factual accounts. In short, a discursive context highlights precipitating factors that led to certain events – for example, the desire of Europeans to conquer Africa. Another example with regard to the present study is the Afrikaners' desire to establish their own national state, independent of the British, when they left the Cape Colony. In order to achieve this they had to do what all Europeans before them have done, namely to paint the indigenous people in a negative hue in order to justify their own gaining of property, possibly through the expropriation of land.

2.8. AFRICAN NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

If the basic premise that I proceed from in analyzing and contextualizing King Dingane's contribution to history is that he was an African nationalist, then the debate about scholars who purport to be pro-King Dingane and those who are anti-King Dingane ceases to be a point of contention.

Nationalism, by definition, is rooted in the preservation, promotion and advancement of the values of a people that share the same experiences and aspirations. The political movements in Africa pursuing a programme of freeing themselves from colonial rule, white domination and denial of a peoples' humanity share basically the same values of self-preservation and self-actualization as that which King Dingane had exhibited in a single, momentous event about which scholars have written copiously.

At the core of King Dingane's strategic objective was the obliteration at its inception of a people or group of persons representing the ideas of domination or hegemony pursued by the Voortrekkers. The latter was exhibited by their conduct of overt negation of the humanity of the African person, which usually is an overture to slavery, which in its essence is nothing but a negation of another person's humanity. King Dingane seemed to have been alerted to the nascent danger of slavery that Piet Retief and his Voortrekkers seemed to represent to the indigenous people.

It may have dawned on King Dingane at the time that persons of the same ilk as Piet Retief and his group would in later years decimate the vestiges of a humane and responsive legal and political order. As a result, King Dingane through foresight attempted to staunch at its inception a nascent spirit of domination and control over the African. Subsequent political movements spearheaded by the African National Congress actually pursued to its conclusion a programme which is rooted, if viewed objectively, in King Dingane's nationalist idealism.

Scholars who have written about King Dingane and who are conveniently categorized in this study as pro- and anti-King Dingane, or radical African nationalists and conservative African Nationalists, shed an interesting light on the perceptions of both academics and intellectuals with regard to King Dingane. These scholars represent the African Nationalist Historiography that is making significant inroads in the rewriting of South African historiography, as exemplified by the views that permeate their discourse on King Dingane. These African nationalist historians are not anti-white and their views are dynamic, as exemplified by the shift of their perceptions and views with regard to King Dingane. Indeed, in their quest to 'promote and preserve' Zulu history, these scholars were to take divergent, sometimes diametrically opposing viewpoints. It is against this background that they are differentiated as 'conservative African Nationalists' and 'radical African Nationalists.'

Two Schools of Thought

As mentioned above, two distinct and opposing schools of thought can be found with regard to King Dingane. These are represented by the radical, pro-King Dingane scholars, and the conservative, anti-King Dingane camp.

The pro-King Dingane scholars belong to the category of African intellectuals who remain faithful to their cultural heritage, which is of course reflected in their political aspirations to remain independent. The resistance against western appropriation, assimilation and acculturation among pro-King Dingane scholars is accounted for by their rootedness in African culture. As Ndebele remarked, 'African ... culture has an independent life of its own right, being in the middle of "civilisation," of western

"rationality." The surrounding "superior" civilisation is rendered of no consequence whatsoever. It is as good as not there.¹⁰³

The pro-King Dingane scholars, who are also known as radical African Nationalists, include Herbert Dhlomo, Sibusiso Nyembezi, Selope Thema and Jordaan Ngubane. There were other radical African Nationalists who were also sympathetic to King Dingane. These included Isaiah Shembe and Petros Lamula, and their writings were underpinned by the 'centrality of land; Zulu land – and the loss of it.'

The radical African Nationalists depicted in their writings positive images of King Dingane. They perceived King Dingane as a hero and a leader with a vision as he led the struggle against the tyranny of the white settlers who wanted to usurp the land that belonged to Africans.¹⁰⁴ The radical African Nationalists' representations and appropriations of King Dingane also question conventional depictions of colonial conquest and show the importance of African resistance for liberation to be achieved. The radical African Nationalists completely disagreed with the demeaning and destructive judgements peddled by the conservative African Nationalists with regard to King Dingane. Instead, they accorded King Dingane the status of a martyr and viewed him as a hero because of his resistance to white encroachment. The radical African Nationalists believed that the events that led up to the Battle of 'Blood River' were based on suspicion and fear of conquest by the Africans. They also believed that King Dingane was intelligent enough to know that the Voortrekkers enslaved and ill-treated other peoples and disregarded their cultural practices because they claimed to be a 'chosen' race in search of the 'promised land.'

The anti-King Dingane scholars are the opposites of those who resist western values. They live in a state of ambivalence and are inclined to appropriate western cultural values. Their identification with these values goes beyond appropriation towards assimilation and acculturation that account for their finding of barbarism in King Dingane. It is only possible to see King Dingane as a barbarian if one is not rooted in African culture, but in western culture. The scholars in this camp find civilisation, rationality and superiority in western culture – hence their denigration of

¹⁰³ N. Ndebele: Rediscovery of the Ordinary, p.54.

¹⁰⁴ S.M. Ndlovu, 'Africans, Land and Images of Dingane', p.126.

the indigenous culture in favour of a different culture to which they do not fully belong.

The anti-King Dingane scholars, who are also known as conservative African Nationalists, include Rolfes Dhlomo, John Dube and M. Fuze. Extremely negative images as well as 'dismissive views' of King Dingane dominate the writings of the conservative African Nationalists. They viewed King Dingane's reign or role in history as 'troublesome' and was inclined to dismiss it as 'barbaric.' A. T. Bryant, one of the first amateur historians in this category, airs the following views of King Dingane in his *'Olden Times in Zululand and Natal'*:

Dingane was gifted neither with the intellectual ability nor the physical activity of his brother, Shaka; but he was not less brutal. His disposition was neither bellicose nor ambitious; so he possessed no martial capabilities and made no conquests. Tall and obese of build, and indolent and luxurious by nature, he rather preferred to while his days at home in the genial company of a few selected courtiers and a host of pretty concubines... [After the arrival of the voortrekkers] ...the state of savage vendetta, accompanied by acts of mutual perfidy, butchery, and heroism, that hereafter ensued between Zulus and Whites, has been so frequently described as to need no further repetition. Immediately after his crippling defeat, on the 16th of December 1838, by the Boers at eNcome [Blood River], Dingane came to realise that, with the recent formidable increase of strength among the White settlers in Natal, his sovereignty was virtually ended in that direction.¹⁰⁵

The sentiments expressed in the above passage about King Dingane were to permeate the writings of conservative African Nationalists such as John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo. With the exception of African intellectuals like William Ngidi, I agree with Golan who maintains that the writings of people like Rolfes Dhlomo and Dube are:

All strongly influenced by the relationship between Zulu and Whites at the time they were written. They are all forged in the colonizer's mold, and remains, in one way or another, the product of the original colonial literature with its projection of its own notions onto the history of the subjugated Other.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ A.T. Bryant: *Olden Times in Zululand*, pp.674-679.

¹⁰⁶ D. Golan: *Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History*, p.6.

This is not surprising given the way that African history has been ideologically manipulated to serve a particular purpose. The dilemma in which conservative African Nationalists found themselves when attempting to reconstruct their own history is best captured by Jan Mahomed's analysis:

Colonialist ideology is designed to confine the native in a confused and subservient position... If he chooses to be faithful to the indigenous values, he remains, from the colonialist's viewpoint, a "savage", and the need to "civilize" him perpetuates colonialism. If, however, he attempts to espouse western values, then he is seen as a vacant imitator without a culture of his own.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, this colonialist ideology is best reflected in the 'dismissive views' about King Dingane in the writings of conservative African Nationalists such as Rolfes Dhlomo and John Dube. Blyden, referring to 'conservative African intellectuals,' including himself, it would seem, scornfully commented:

If the African educated on European lines...is unable or unwilling to teach the outside world something of the institutions and inner feelings of his people; if for some reason or other, he can show nothing of his real self to those anxious to learn and to assist him; if he cannot make friends feel the force of his racial character and sympathise with his racial aspiration, then it is evident that his education has been sadly defective, that his training by aliens has done but little for him - that his teachers have surely missed their aim and wasted their time.¹⁰⁸

Selope Thema's ambiguous Views with regard to King Dingane

Selope Thema moves between the two schools of thought with regard to his views on King Dingane. Initially, Thema went further than anybody else to rehabilitate Dingane's reputation, calling him a 'great man', a 'famous man' and 'our noble ancestor'. He also depicted King Dingane as a 'great warrior and patriot.' Mostly, he conferred on Dingane the status of a foremost African freedom fighter, staunchly defending his people and land.¹⁰⁹ In a very bold and courageous way, Thema absolved King Dingane of any wrongdoing by comparing him with other prominent

¹⁰⁷ A.J. JanMohamed: Manichean – The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa, p.5.

¹⁰⁸ F. Okoye: The American Image of Africa, p.151.

¹⁰⁹ S. M. Ndlovu, 'Africans, Land and Images of Dingane', p.122.

European leaders and by selecting 'appropriate' epochs of European history as a source.¹¹⁰

Thema was to later change his views about King Dingane, and came to recant all the arguments he had advanced to defend him. He thus began to regard King Dingane as a 'cruel barbarian.'¹¹¹ He also suggested that 16 December should be purged of racism and racist elements and become a 'Day of Reconciliation' (as it has become since April 1994) between Blacks and whites.

It is also interesting to note that the famous Afrikaner historian, Professor Floors van Jaarsveld, who was at a certain stage regarded as a conservative Afrikaner scholar, also underwent a Damascus-type of redemption. In the 1960s, Professor Van Jaarsveld was considered as a conservative Afrikaner historian who believed that whites had a right to enforce whatever legislation that would protect Afrikanerdom. However, in the 1970s, he underwent a total mind-shift and believed that whites in this country were living in a fool's paradise because what they saw was not reality. As reported by Maxwell, van Jaarsveld 'accused the Afrikaner of being narcissistic, surrounding himself with myths and legends, and not waking up to the realities of Africa today.'¹¹² Van Jaarsveld's mind-shift came with a price. He was branded, among the Afrikaner society, a traitor. His life and that of his family was threatened. His son, Albert van Jaarsveld, was shot at.¹¹³ He was also ostracized and was never invited to give addresses on issues of historical significance.

However, unlike Thema, Professor Floors van Jaarsveld, started off by being conservative and developed into a radical Afrikaner historian as a result of his views (according to Maxwell) on the Day of the Covenant, which he felt had been made into a 'man-made Sabbath.' He was tarred and feathered by the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging in 1979¹¹⁴ at the University of South African whilst giving a speech. Professor van Jaarsveld argued that since the 1961 constitution, whites in

¹¹⁰ S.M. Ndlovu, 'Africans, Land and Images of Dingane', p.122.

¹¹¹ For more in-depth discussion on the views of Thema with regard to King Dingane, see S.M. Ndlovu's thesis, The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History. University of Witwatersrand, 2001.

¹¹² K. Maxwell, 'White South Africa – a thing of the past', Sunday Express, 3. 02.1985.

¹¹³ Interview with Albert van Jaarsveld, 20 June 2004

¹¹⁴ K. Maxwell, 'White South Africa – a thing of the past', Sunday Express, 3.02.1985.

South Africa had begun to realize that South Africa was not a white man's country. As reported by Maxwell, Professor van Jaarsveld said, 'We're white Africans. Decolonization changed our position to an African state. You cannot speak any longer of a white South Africa.'¹¹⁵ Maxwell believed that for van Jaarsveld there was a coincidence between what he believed was the road to peace in South Africa and his interpretation of history, which he advocated as that which would probably be policy in the future.¹¹⁶ This, in fact, turned out to be the case, as exemplified by the post 1994 political dispensation.

Indeed, the shifting nature of interpretations of King Dingane, even by individual writers, highlights the fact that King Dingane and his reign were placed in a zone of extraordinary flux and instability in the thinking of African intellectuals and African nationalists. Among the most interesting findings of Ndlovu's thesis, for example, is the elasticity of the Zulu oral archives on King Dingane and the way in which changing intellectual/ political priorities led to its being accessed and exploited in different ways at different times.

2.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter focussed on the colonising spirit that manifested itself in Europe's imperialist zeal for drastic change in Africa, and on the political implications that accompanied this process, as exemplified by the struggle for power between King Dingane and the Voortrekkers. It is pointed out that, in general, the European mindset arose from a desire to subjugate the indigenous peoples in order to acquire wealth and, in many cases, then to return home. According to this mindset, the indigenous people had no claim to the land because Africa's denizens were uncivilized, backward and primitive savages. In short, this chapter addressed itself to the imperial attitude of wanting to control and change everything. Later on this became a characteristic feature of all European explorers, entrepreneurs, missionaries, settlers and militarists in Africa. In spite of their acclaimed good intentions, the activities of the European colonists had serious direct and irrevocable repercussions on the indigenous people of Africa.

¹¹⁵ K. Maxwell, 'White South Africa - a thing of the past', Sunday Express, 03.02.1985

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

In short, this chapter highlights the historical fact that the interplay of European interests and motivations in Africa, with specific reference to trading and missionary activities together with the African reactions that they generated, is a foundation of the present-day socio-political situation on the continent. The origins of African and Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography are also briefly examined and it is concluded that both are rooted in the power struggle between the Voortrekkers and King Dingane, with the latter identified as the first and foremost African Nationalist.

CHAPTER 3

KING DINGANE: THE MISUNDERSTOOD KING

History is all about Context

—David Christian

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to rescue King Dingane from his ignominious portrayal in history books. It is also an attempt at revealing King Dingane's greatness in dealing with matters of governance pertaining to his Kingdom, as well as with other issues that, unfortunately, were to have a profound impact in terms of the creation of false perceptions about him.

3.2. UNRAVELING THE ENIGMA

Of all the Zulu kings, King Dingane is the least revered. In fact, there are few if any divisions of opinion in regard to King Dingane. The negative views about him are widely accepted, albeit in varying degrees. He is consistently denigrated by both White and Black scholars, and the name 'Dingane' still arouses choking emotions in certain circles of the Afrikaner nation. This is a leader who is a figure of paradox and controversy. Much of the difficulty in terms of understanding King Dingane, it would seem, lies in his character.

Indeed, over the years there have been debunkers, idolaters and fictionalisers of facts, but the preponderance of historical works on King Dingane have yet to unravel the enigma that he represents. Most recently, in a beautifully produced, groundbreaking, and impeccably researched thesis,

Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu¹ wrote with refreshing illumination about King Dingane. However, I want to submit that there is plenty of room for an honest difference of opinion about aspects of King Dingane's life. It is against this background that this chapter attempts to shed light on the seemingly complex personality of King Dingane.

King Dingane was born in 1795 and died in March 1840. He was the son of King Senzangakhona's sixth wife, Mpikase, daughter of Mlilela of the emaQungebeni clan. King Dingane is said to have grown up under the influence of his maiden aunt, Mkabayi. Mkabayi was Princess Royal in the Zulu kingdom. She was the daughter of King Jama and a sister of Senzangakhona, the Zulu patriarch king. During her lifetime she was identified as the citadel of power in the Zulu kingdom.² Ndlovu refers to Regent Mkabayi as the doyenne of the royal household as she held responsibility for the continuity of the Zulu royal family, as well as success in social and political organization.³

Mkabayi's incredible power and influence was demonstrated when she schemed with Dingane to kill King Shaka, and when she wielded her influence by convincing the assembly after the death of King Shaka that Dingane should be the next Zulu king. She also successfully argued that Dingane was genealogically Senzangakhona's proper heir.⁴ Mkabayi played an important role in making sure that Dingane became King. As Jantshi noted, 'Dingane was made King by Mkabayi'.⁵

¹ See S.M. Ndlovu's thesis, The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History. University of Witwatersrand, 2001.

² A.B. Ngcobo and D.K. Rycroft: The Praises of Dingana, p.181.

³ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A Case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.29.

⁴ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.51.

⁵ JSA, Vol. 2, Statement of Jantshi, p.196.

According to Mdletshe, King Dingane never plotted to kill King Shaka. Princess Mkabayi was forever dropping hints that King Shaka's rule was unstable, and that King Shaka needed to be removed from the throne. Mkabayi often referred to King Shaka as that 'crazy lunatic who came from the Mthethwa.' Mkabayi lived in the fear that one day Shaka would sell the Zulu kingdom to the Mthethwa. These fears would be confirmed when Mkabayi heard King Shaka singing some of his favourite songs, including the one that goes: "...lezoinkomo ezakaMthethwa..." [those cattle belong to the Mthethwa].⁶

It is worth mentioning that Princess Mkabayi had not forgiven King Shaka for the cruelty he had displayed in killing Prince Sigujana before taking over kingship. According to Princess Mkabayi, King Senzangakhona had chosen Prince Sigujana as the next heir to the Zulu throne. Others even go as far as to claim that Prince Sigujana had undergone some of the rituals that are a preserve of a future king. That is why King Shaka killed Prince Sigujana before ascending the throne. It is also possible that King Shaka did not take kindly to the fact that his mother, Nandi, had never been married to his father King Senzangakhona. King Shaka knew that it would take a lot of doing for the Zulu nation to accept him as their own, let alone accept him as their King.⁷ Thus, according to Princess Mkabayi, King Shaka's reign had undermined the tradition that was followed to put someone on the throne. There was no other way of getting things back to normalcy except to remove King Shaka from power. According to Mdletshe, the reason behind Princess Mkabayi's plot to kill King Shaka was that she wanted the Royal House to retain the right to choose the heir to the royal throne, where this authority rightfully belonged. Princess Mkabayi therefore took it upon herself to preserve this Zulu tradition. Shaka had been brought up among the Mthethwa. In the eyes of Princess Mkabayi, King Shaka would always belong to the Mthethwa at heart; he

⁶ Interview with B.M. Mdletshe, 05/12/2003.

⁷ Ibid.

therefore did not deserve to be King of the Zulu nation.⁸ Dingane – the needy one⁹ – was according to Isaacs, 'excessively open to praise, and courted our (the Traders') approbation exceedingly; our applause appearing to be the very acme of his ambition.¹⁰ High on his list of his priorities were his women and his sensual propensities. There is nothing firm in the capacity of Dingaan, he is too vacillating, too capricious.'¹¹ Mutwa talks of his laziness and his pleasure-loving propensities and maintains that he was averse to violence.¹² After his assumption of power King Dingane announced, 'I have given up all ideas of fighting. I wish to enjoy myself with my nation, who have been fighting all their lives under Chaka, to cultivate the blessings of peace, and to do everything to promote the prosperity of my harassed country. This is now my sole object; and nothing else occupies my mind than how I shall govern in peace.'¹³ This was said on 18 April 1831.

King Dingane is usually described as a 'despot,' a 'complete dissembler, deliberative and calculating,' and as 'a savage, just emerging from the darkness of his nature ... balancing between ferocity and reason.'¹⁴ It is worth pointing out that on his first meeting with King Dingane, Isaacs found that the king 'had an implicit confidence in the white people who had settled in 'Natal'. '...I saw he was strongly impressed with a deep sense of the advantages that would, in all probability, ensue from granting to European settlers an unlimited right of commercial enterprise, and such other operations as they might be inclined to carry on.'¹⁵

Isaacs has left us a physical description of King Dingane at this time: 'Dingane has a commanding appearance; he is tall, at least six feet in height,

⁸ Interview with B.M. Mdletshe, 05/12/2003.

⁹ P. Becker: *Rule of Fear*, p. 14.

¹⁰ L. Herrman (ed.): *Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*. Vol. II, p.33.

¹¹ L. Herrman and P.R. Kirby: *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, p. 219.

¹² Mutwa, as cited by A.E. Cubbin: *Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal*, p.59.

¹³ L. Herrman (ed.): *Nathaniel Isaacs, Travels and adventures in Eastern Africa*. Vol.II, p.192.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II. pp.230, 203, 228.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II. p.29.

and admirably, if not symmetrically, proportioned. He is well featured, and of great muscular power; of a dark brown complexion, approaching to a bronze colour. Nothing can exceed his piercing and penetrating eye, which he rolls in moments of anger with surprising rapidity, and in the midst of festivities with inconceivable brilliancy. His whole frame seems as if it were knit for war, and every manly exercise; it is flexible, active, and firm.¹⁶ Also: 'he displayed extraordinary power in throwing himself into particular attitudes, which must have required great muscular strength to have accomplished, and this in fact his frame evinced. Dingana (sic) had a fierce, penetrating aspect; his eye was keen, quick, and always engaged, nothing escaping him, but every movement and gesture of his people was readily caught, and immediately noticed.'¹⁷ Isaacs, writing on May 1st, 1830, also states that 'Dingana seeks every moment to show that he wishes rather to reign in good opinion of his subjects than rule over them with the arm of terror.'¹⁸ Omer-Cooper furthermore considers, from available evidence, that King Dingane was personally inclined to peaceful pursuits.¹⁹

In comparing Shaka and Dingane, Isaacs observes that, 'Shaka was the bold and daring monarch of the Zulus, whose name struck a panic among the neighbouring tribes; Dingane, on the other hand, is too inert to be feared...Shaka was born and nurtured in war, which was his darling aim; but Dingane cultivates the repose of peace, and only wields his spear when necessity compels him: he is no warrior – he is a man whose soul seems devoted to ease and pleasure.'²⁰

¹⁶ L. Herrman (ed.): Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa. Vol. I., pp.232-233.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. I. p.33.

¹⁸ D.K. Rycroft and A.B. Ngcobo (eds.): The Praises of Dingana, p.161.

¹⁹ J.D. Omer-Cooper: The Zulu Aftermath, p.137.

²⁰ L. Herrman (ed.): Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa. Vol.II, pp.104-105.

Henry Fynn also informs us that, on his first visit to KwaDukuza, the King Dingane's palace, King Dingane had been exceedingly kind to him.²¹ John Cane also reported favourably on King Dingane: 'He (John Cane) states that he is deputed by Dingaan to make known to His Excellency the Governor that the Chief is disposed to live in peace and amity with the neighbouring nations; that he wishes to encourage a traffic between his people and the colony, with which view he will cause all traders who may enter his country to be protected; and that he is especially desirous a missionary should be sent to 'Natal' for the instruction of his subjects.'²² It boggles the mind, therefore, to note that people ascribe 'treachery' and 'barbarism' to King Dingane, while he went out of his way to graciously welcome people who would later, like alcohol in the stomach, turn against him and subjugate his kingdom. This is not surprising because humanity in its very colouration is deceitful, cruel, treacherous, murderous, and generally repellent.

3.3 ROYAL SUCCESSION: THE BANE OF THE ZULU KINGDOM

Much has been said about King Dingane's ascension to the Zulu throne, while others question his suitability as king. Nyembezi, one of the foremost Zulu scholars, points out that according to African traditions and customs, the throne rightfully belonged to King Dingane. Nyembezi bases his argument on the fact that Mpikase, Dingane's mother, was King Senzangakhona's eldest wife. To Nyembezi, it was therefore surprising that King Senzangakhona favoured his eldest son, Sigujana (who was subsequently killed by Shaka) over Mpikase's eldest son, Dingane, who was younger than Sigujana. In other words even though Dingane was younger than Sigujana, he (Dingane) was entitled to the Zulu throne by virtue of being the eldest son of Senzangakhona's eldest wife (Mpikase).

²¹ L. Herrman (ed.): Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa. Vol. II, p.185.

²² J. Bird: Annals of Natal. Vol. II. pp.196-197.

In short, Prince Dingane, according to Zulu customs and traditions, was the right person to take over after King Shaka. Similarly, according to Mdletshe, the Praise-Singer of His Majesty King Goodwill KaBhekuzulu, King Dingane was the next king who legitimately ascended the throne after King Senzangakhona. According to Mdletshe, when King Dingane ascended the Zulu throne, he was accorded the traditional installation indicating that his reign was accepted in the royal household. He also points out that the fact that tradition was followed in putting Dingane as King helped to preserve this sacred ritual for posterity. According to this ritual the prospective King must enter the royal cattle kraal and undergo the ritual of coronation there.²³

King Dingane is accused of many evils, including that of having killed his half brother, Prince Mhlangana. However, people forget that embedded in the concept of hegemony is the elimination of potential rivals or threats to the position assumed. This phenomenon is not strange in history. Going back to times immemorial, one could cite the history of Chinese dynasties. In some cultures this desire for total control has been achieved diplomatically; in others through violence. Against this backdrop, that is, the elimination of a sibling, followed by the refusal to leave behind any descendants, King Dingane's subsequent conduct in dealing with foreigners, and his handling of Piet Retief and his supporters can be understood in context.

It is worth mentioning that Prince Mhlangana had participated in the plot to remove King Shaka. After King Shaka's death, Mkabayi encouraged King Dingane to get rid of Prince Mhlangana. Mkabayi's argument was that Prince Mhlangana might have acquired certain ideas when the three of them were plotting Shaka's death. Prince Mhlangana might some day use the same tactics against King Dingane. In short, Princess Mkabayi firmly planted the seeds of doubt in King Dingane's mind about Mhlangana's loyalty to him.

²³ Interview with B.M. Mdletshe, 05/12/2003

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²³ Interview with B.M. Mdletshe, 05/12/2003

It did not take long for Prince Mhlangana to lay claim to the Zulu throne. Once Shaka laid dead and bleeding on the earth before his brothers, Mhlangana jumped over the corpse of his brother in a ritual of victory, as Shaka in his triumph had once leaped over the body of Phakathwayo of the Qwabe.²⁴ Nor could Dingane misinterpret what was meant. According to Laband, Mhlangana was demonstrating his claim to the right to succeed Shaka as King of the Zulu.²⁵ Prince Mhlangana, therefore, by jumping over the corpse of King Shaka, made it unequivocally clear that he wanted to succeed Shaka. From the beginning of King Dingane's reign, Prince Mhlangana posed a serious threat to King Dingane's claim to the throne. To compound the threat, Prince Mhlangana once made an attempt on King Dingane's life at the military kraal at Esiphezini.²⁶ Thus, it was clear that the only way out for King Dingane was to get rid of Prince Mhlangana.

Laband is of the view that at the heart of the Zulu kingship is the problem of royal succession, which saw contenders of Zulu kingship systematically eliminating one another. He believes that 'no settled principle of royal succession would ever become firmly established in the Zulu Kingdom,'²⁷ as borne out by the belief that Zulu ancestors had reminded King Cetshwayo in a dream, 'you of the Zulu are always killing one another in disputing the kingship.'²⁸ Laband also points out that 'from the very beginning, regicide and civil war characterized the Zulu kingdom, helping sap its ability to withstand the flowing tide of white colonialism which before the century was out, would sweep over Zululand.'²⁹

²⁴ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.xiv.

²⁵ Ibid., p.xiv.

²⁶ P. Becker: Rule of Fear, p.43.

²⁷ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.xv.

²⁸ Ibid., p.xv.

²⁹ Ibid., p.xv.

3.4. A MULTI-FACETED MONARCH

According to Laband, after the death of King Shaka, King Dingane was able to project himself as Malamulela, The Intervener, because he had stepped between the people and Shaka's growing madness.³⁰ King Dingane could promise a popular new policy, which would call a halt to the incessant military campaigning under his brother's rule, and which would put an end to his increasingly arbitrary and bloody regime that exposed the Zulu people to hardship and uncertainty.³¹

It is interesting to note that, in both oral traditions and Izibongo, King Dingane is presented as a complex and multi-dimensional individual. His images range from the highly positive to the extremely negative. For example, Cowie and Green, who visited King Dingane at Nobamba, had nothing but praise for King Dingane. They saw King Dingane as a:

...considerate, kind-hearted monarch whose only ambition was to make his subjects free and happy. Dingane was exceedingly popular, they observed, and they attributed this to his exceptional qualities of leadership – his magnanimity, his sympathetic understanding of social relationship and, furthermore, to a natural dignity which stamped him as a superior to any of the chiefs in the south.³²

The following phrases in Isaacs' diary corroborate this: 'Dingane, an intelligent and peace-loving King...' ...'this great ruler, blessed with extraordinary wisdom and foresight...' ³³ Likewise, Fynn saw King Dingane as a ruler of great wisdom and understanding.³⁴ During their brief sojourn in

³⁰ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.51.

³¹ Ibid., p.51.

³² Cowie and Green in P. Becker: Rule of Fear, pp.57-58.

³³ Isaacs, as quoted by P. Becker: Rule of Fear, p.88.

³⁴ Fynn, as quoted by P. Becker: Rule of Fear, p.89.

emGungundlovu the Portuguese came to regard King Dingane as a generous and kindly king.³⁵

According to Ndlovu, in both izibongo and oral traditions, King Dingane is characterized by five main characteristics: of being more liberal than Shaka; of possessing political dynamism, which characterized his reign; and of practicing consensual politics. His apparent weaknesses include his turbulent relationship with the whites in general.³⁶

King Dingane's liberality stems from his decision to permit courtship and freedom of choice in terms of marriage. Thus he inaugurated his reign by allowing all the amabutho freely to enjoy premarital intercourse, and by permitting several of the older amabutho to marry.³⁷ Moreover, he relaxed military discipline and ensured his amabutho such a superabundance of meat when they came up to serve at the amakhanda that it was said they could rub themselves clean with it.³⁸ Accordingly, in his izibongo King Dingane is portrayed as 'Owalamulela abafazi namadoda: walamulela izintombi namasoka'³⁹ [saviour of wives and husbands, marriageable women and womanizers]. King Dingane's izibongo also provide evidence illustrating his good heart, generosity and liberality with cattle and food supplies, in particular meat, to his needy subjects. This is captured in the following praise-names 'uMpankominamabele, ngob'uVezi ungipha izinkomo zifaka zonkana'⁴⁰ [giver of cows with full udders, because Vezi gave me cows that yield (calves) abundantly. King Dingane is further depicted as a kind and big-hearted man:

Ogez'izandla zazomel'ebandla

³⁵ P. Becker: Rule of Fear, p.85.

³⁶ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane In Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, pp.18-19.

³⁷ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.52.

³⁸ Ibid., p.52.

³⁹ JSA, KCM 24403.

⁴⁰ A.B. Ngcobo and D. Rycroft: The Praises of Dingana, p.233.

Ngokuba nenhliziye'enhli'madodeni.⁴¹
[who washes his hands and they dried while in council
Because he has a good heart among men]

With regard to the Zulu nation, an existing political order was its dynamism. According to Ndlovu, the state of affairs within the Zulu royal house was forever changing as had been the case since Malandela's times⁴² as the following praise words suggest: 'inhlabathi yoNdi noKhahlamba, Ngific[a] abakwaMalandela beyihlela. Nami ngafika ngahlala phansi ngayihlela'⁴³ [soil of uLundi and Khahlamba mountains, I found the children of Malandela leveling it. I too sat down and leveled it]. In this regard, Ndlovu argues that King Dingane took appropriate initiatives in formulating new policies and strategies concerning matters of state. These strategies had to keep the Zulu state intact and safe from the threat posed by enemies within and outside, as the leveling metaphor suggests. The encroaching white settlers from the Cape Colony required King Dingane to take immediate action, as they were a recognizable threat to the independence of the Zulu kingdom. He did this by adopting new political strategies.⁴⁴

In izibongo King Dingane is also depicted as an unpredictable character. It is also claimed that he played a key role in the death of his siblings, including Shaka and Mhlangana. This is the reason why he is referred to as 'uMgabadeli, owagabadela inkundla yakwaBulawayo', referring to the killing of Shaka and the destruction of his royal homestead of KwaBulawayo. King Dingane is described as a sly schemer and likened to a poisonous and dangerous snake, as the following praise names attest: 'uManyelela

⁴¹ A.B. Ngcobo and D. Rycroft: The Praises of Dingane, p.223 and p.233.

⁴² S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.20.

⁴³ Hoya kaSoxalase version of izibongo zikaDingane in S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.20.

⁴⁴ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, pp.20-21

njengeVuzamanzi' [stealthy mover like a water snake]. King Dingane was an introvert, quiet, withdrawn. As Ndlovu points out, people were warned of 'still water running deep' (isiziba esinzonzobe...).⁴⁵ King Dingane was also said to have been dangerous and capable of destructive mood swings:

Isiziba esinzonzobele
Siminzis'umuntu ethi uyageza
Waze washona ngesicoco
UMkhwamude wangisik'isilevu
Ngob'uCoco ngimbonile
Obephuma lapha kwaSodlabela
UNgama yena owasemaPhiseni angavuma⁴⁶

[Pool, dark, deep, still and overpowering
That drowned someone intending to wash
And he vanished with heading and all
Long bladed knife that cut my chin
Indeed I have seen Coco
Ngama of emaPhiseni can confirm it].

According to Ndlovu, the abovementioned praise names refer to the death and ambush of Mhlangana who was wearing isicoco, a headring normally worn by kings, princes and senior married men. It is suggested that Mhlangana was drowned whilst he was bathing in a river stream on orders of King Dingane and that Coco and Ngema were eyewitnesses. They happened to witness this incident by chance, as Coco was on his way from kwaSodlabela. But both eyewitnesses were threatened with violent death, if ever they 'spilled the beans,' their throats would be slit with uMkhwamude, a long-bladed knife used to cut whiskers. As a result, they were forced to remain silent.⁴⁷

The Izibongo also sheds light on King Dingane's actions towards Whites, and provides a rationale for his extermination of Retief and his party. Hoye ka Soxalase's version on this issue has two stanzas, which are located at the

⁴⁵ S.M. Ndlovu: *The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History*, p.23

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.23-24.

beginning and end of his praises of King Dingane. As observed by Ndlovu, these stanzas are a succinct commentary of the killing of Piet Retief, and also paint a picture of a leader who did not endure the threat posed by White settlers with placid passivity.⁴⁸ They read as follows:

Ihwanqa eladla amanye amahwanqa
 Ngoba ladla aseMgungundlovu
 Ngoba ladla okaPiti
 Amahwanqa akhawula ukuganga...
 Izibuko likaMenzi
 Elimadwala abutshелеlezi
 Kutshелеla uPiti nendodana
 Wamudla uPiti kumaBhunu
 Wamudla uMlom-gubu, kumaBhunu
 Wadla uMazinyo ansasa, kumaBhunu
 Wadla uJanesikaniso, kumaBhunu⁴⁹
 [The bearded one who devoured other bearded
 ones
 Because he devoured those ones who were at
 Mgungundlovu
 He devoured Piet and his party
 And the bearded ones stopped doing wrong
 things
 Ford of Menzi
 That has a slippery rock
 Which proved slippery to Piet and son
 He devoured Piet on the Boers side
 He devoured 'Mlomo-gubhu'⁵⁰ on the Boers side
 He devoured 'uMlomo-gubhu' on the Boer side
 He devoured 'Janesikaniso', on the Boer side].

Indeed, the presence and threat posed by the Voortrekkers hardened King Dingane's attitudes towards Whites in general.

There is also the claim that his advisors, Ndlela and Dambuza, easily manipulated King Dingane. As a result various izimbongi derided him in public and called him 'iMbuzi kaDambuza benoNdlela, abayibambe ngendlebe

⁴⁸ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p. 24

⁴⁹ JSA, KCM 24199-24211.

⁵⁰ The words in inverted commas are nicknames for Boers that were adopted by izimbongi.

yabekezela⁵¹ [goat of Dambuza and Ndlela, which they held by the ear and it was patient]. In counteracting this argument of manipulation, Ndlovu argues that the Zulu Kingdom was characterized by specific African traditions of governance and rights whereby decision-making was by consensus. The King and his council of elders, Dambuza and Ndlela as well as Queen Regent Mkabayi, had jurisdiction over all matters within the Zulu territory.⁵²

As pointed out by Cubbin, in the Zulu hierarchy the Indunas had inordinate power, which wasn't always obvious.⁵³ The system was explained to Reverend Owen as follows: 'umthlela (Ndlela) then took pains to inform me that the heads of the (Zulu) nation were 1. The King, Dingarn, 2. Mapeti (Mpande) – the King's own brother, 3. Umthlela "took the lead in conversation," 4. Tambooza (Dambusa); and that the King could do nothing without them; for whatever the King might appoint, it would not stand without their consent.'⁵⁴ This point is reinforced by King Dingane himself, 'I consent, but on important points I consult my chiefs.'⁵⁵ ' (Dingana) '...said he must consult with his Indoonas on this subject (building a school) as it was the custom of his country not to do anything important without their knowledge.'⁵⁶ King Dingane told Gardiner: 'I will not overrule the decision of my Indunas.'⁵⁷

We also have Mpande's evidence at the trial of Dambuza who 'prevailed upon the King to massacre your late Governor Retief and men.'⁵⁸ This was participatory democracy at its best. After all, a King is a king by his people. This is the consensual basis for decision-making. Knowing the level at which decisions are taken, both the procedure and mechanism for implementing

⁵¹ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁵³ A.E. Cubbin: A Study in objectivity: The Death of Piet Retief, p.74.

⁵⁴ G.E. Cory: Owen's Diary, p.52.

⁵⁵ D.J. Kotze (ed.): Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838, p.78.

⁵⁶ G.E. Cory (ed.): Owen's Diary, p.42. and L. Herrman (ed.): Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa. Vol. II, p.245.

⁵⁷ A.F. Gardiner: Narrative of a Journey to Zoolu Country in South Africa, p.68.

⁵⁸ Bird Papers, p.583., S.A.C.A. 10.2.1846.

them, no major decision could be taken without consultation with elder statesmen in the first place in the interest of his subjects. Maphalala points out that the Zulu kingdom was less centralized than historians contend, and 'the Zulus were used to the system of consensus which had been the cornerstone of the administration to King Shaka and King Dingane.'⁵⁹

3.5. A DISOWNED KING RE-INSTATED

King Dingane certainly provides an example of a king who had the misfortune of being *disowned* by generations upon generations of Zulu people. It is as if people deliberately chose to forget anything that had to do with King Dingane. It is interesting to note that it was only after the banning of the African National Congress that the latter's leadership adopted a pro-King Dingane stance.⁶⁰ Earlier on, King Dingane was hardly mentioned by the ANC's leaders, particularly by its leader Mr Oliver Tambo, when great African kings were mentioned. After the change of heart towards King Dingane, the ANC, through Sechaba, its newsletter, extolled the virtues of King Dingane's amabutho as freedom fighters:

The African National Congress calls you to observe the Day of the People's Heroes, December 16. Let us together rise on this historic day to pay tribute to the heroes of the freedom struggle, the day on which King Dingane's brave soldiers laid down their lives with honour in defence of our freedom, the day on which Umkhonto weSizwe was formed in 1961.⁶¹

Editorial comment in Sechaba included the following about 16 December:

December 16 is an important day in the history of our movement! On December 16, 1838, one of the fiercest battles took place in the Natal province of South

⁵⁹ S. Maphalala, 'Troubles in Umvoti division of the Natal Colony', a paper given at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg 24 October, 1984.

⁶⁰ For more information on this discussion, see chapter 6 of S.M. Ndlovu's thesis: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History.

⁶¹ Sechaba, December 1981, p.4.

Africa...The history of anti-colonial resistance in South Africa knows many such incidents. Our people fought valiantly and this tradition is part of our history and heritage.⁶²

Ndlovu points out that it was during the late 1970s and early 1980s that uMkhonto weSizwe's own journal, *Dawn*, published various articles on African leaders and kings, including Makanda, Shaka, Sekhukhune, Moshoeshoe and Dingane. These triumphalist articles eulogized their greatness as African nationalists and 'freedom fighters.'⁶³

Ndlovu continues to point out that the same articles also provided a revisionist account of the battle at iNcome. The author of the December 1979 article argued that Boers, the so-called forces of 'light' and 'civilization' did not defeat nor depose King Dingane from his throne.⁶⁴ Rather, it was King Dingane's brother, Prince Mpande, who defeated and deposed him at the battle of Maqongqo in 1840:

Every year, on December 16, there is a spate of claptrap from pulpits and platforms and press about how, at Blood River, on December 16, 1838, the forces of civilization and of light, the messengers of God...Himself, destroyed the power of barbarism and darkness in the shape of Dingane's Zulus...That was on December 16, which the Afrikaners now celebrate as a public holiday to mark what they have been taught by Nationalists historians to believe was the "decisive" battle between white and black. In fact however, Blood River was by no means a decisive battle. The Afrikaners lacked the military power of the British...It was only in January 1840, when Dingane's treacherous brother, Mpande...that the latter (Dingane) was defeated and forced to flee.⁶⁵

⁶² Sechaba, December 1981, p.4.

⁶³ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.232.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.233.

⁶⁵ Dawn (ANC's newsletter) in S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.233.

The Pan Africanist Congress, through its leader, Dr M. Pheko, viewed King Dingane in a positive light. Pheko adopted an unashamedly pro-King Dingane stance. According to Ndlovu, Pheko postulated the theory that African states, kingdoms and societies lived a harmonious, static lifestyle that was destroyed by the arrival of White settlers.⁶⁶ Pheko also viewed the commemoration of December 16 as a charade and an insult to his people's dignity, civilization and character. He described King Dingane as a Friend of True (African) Civilization.⁶⁷

The Inkatha Freedom Party, and Dr Buthelezi in particular, hardly mentioned the name of King Dingane in his speeches. King Dingane's spirit is only invoked by political parties through political expedience, as exemplified by the Ingwavuma episode, when the then Apartheid government wanted to cede Ingwavuma to the Kingdom of Swaziland. King Dingane's grave in Hlathikhulu near Ingwavuma was used to buttress the claim that Ingwavuma was part of KwaZulu. In an address he delivered at the unveiling of the tombstone of king Dingane in Ngwavuma, Buthelezi said:

King Dingane acceded to the Zulu throne under circumstances which even after 155 years are as ugly as if it all happened yesterday. The murder of King Shaka is an event, which distresses every Zulu child who hears of it from adults or reads about it in his or her Zulu primer. We all feel that we would not have suffered as we have done for so long or be under the political bondage that we are under up to this day had King Shaka not died so tragically and so prematurely. We believe that this would not have happened because of the very special gifts which King Shaka the founder of this great Nation, possessed in such great abundance. It is therefore inevitable that a certain

⁶⁶ Dawn (ANC's letter) in S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History., p.233.

⁶⁷ Pheko, as cited by S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.234. and p.235.

amount of animosities (sic) has welled in the heart of the Zulu over many generations towards those who were prime actors in King Shaka's assassination who included Prince Dingane.⁶⁸

Buthelezi's remarks were unfortunate because they were pronounced on a day in which he and other Zulu leaders had intended to rehabilitate King Dingane. This illustrates, in no uncertain terms, Buthelezi's ambiguous stance towards King Dingane.

Buthelezi also laid the blame on the shoulders of King Dingane for the bad race relations between Whites and Blacks. He accused King Dingane of being the person who instigated existing animosity between Blacks and Whites in apartheid South Africa.⁶⁹ This emanated from the killing of Piet Retief and his followers. I find it strange that the 'massacre' of Piet Retief and followers is presented as if it had virtually no parallel in history – a claim that is not true. History is replete with grisly massacres of unprecedented proportions.

According to Dlamini, the year 1982 marked the beginning of Dingane's significance in the rebirth of KwaZulu and the Zulu nation.⁷⁰ It was in 1982 when the South African government sought to give Ingwavuma to Swaziland. In 1983, the Zulu political elite engaged in a cleansing ceremony where King Dingane's memorial and his tombstone were unveiled. According to Dlamini:

Buthelezi described this decision as "a public act of political and national rehabilitation of King Dingane." In this rehabilitation, Buthelezi re-emphasized the supposed

⁶⁸ Speech by M.G. Buthelezi, Ingwavuma, June 1983.

⁶⁹ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.238.

⁷⁰ For more information on this subject, see N. Dlamini's article on Re-Questioning Through Investigating 'Heritage' Production Patterns: The case of the Significance of King Shaka in KwaZulu, 1977-1992. See also chapter 6 of S.M. Ndlovu's thesis: The Changing Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History. University of Witwatersrand, 2001.

conspiracy between Swazis' and Boers. He argued that the killing of Dingane by Silevana Nyawo and Nondowana Mdluli of the Swazis were early signs of the conspiracy between the Swazis and the Boers against the Zulu nation.⁷¹

Dlamini also points out that the 'rehabilitation' of Dingane and the battle of Ncome fought on the 16 December 1838 was emphasized increasingly by KwaZulu leaders since 1982. In this rehabilitation, Boer victory was de-emphasized and replaced with an alternative representation. Led by Buthelezi, this re-interpretation asserted that the Boers in 1838 did not defeat the entire Zulu army, a view that was also espoused at a later stage by the ANC. The Zulu army, according to this re-interpretation, was 'split in 1838 and only a section of them was annihilated by the Boers in 1838'.⁷² This re-interpretation, argues Dlamini, suggested that the Boer victory during the battle of Ncome was not as decisive as claimed by 'settler' historians.⁷³ Dlamini also emphasizes the importance of this rehabilitation and the significance of the battle in Zulu resistance against colonialism as exemplified by the first official commemoration of Dingane's Day in KwaZulu on 16 December 1983. However, as pointed out by Dlamini, this was to be the only significant commemoration of the battle sanctioned by the Zulu elite in this period. Accordingly, Dlamini argues that it is clear that Dingane's heritage was only significant when KwaZulu faced prospects of losing Ingwavuma. He was not commemorated annually like King Shaka.⁷⁴ Indeed, to this day, King Dingane is still perhaps the least known and spoken about King of the Zulus.

It is interesting to note that when King Dingane's is critiqued, this is often linked to the name of King Shaka. Hence Skota's view that:

⁷¹ N. Dlamini, 'Re-Questioning Through Investigating 'Heritage' Production Patterns: The case of the Significance of King Shaka in KwaZulu', 1977-1992, p.25.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.26.

Dingane had not the military genius of Shaka, nor had he the vision of the great African empire, the Empire that his brother had eagerly fought for, even to an extent of earning for himself the name of 'Shaka the Terrible'.⁷⁵

Contrary to Skota's view, Credo Mutwa has observed that:

Shaka was an even worse chief than Dingana a madman and a tyrant who, the history books inform us, was the greatest the Zulu ever had – probably because he never once offered resistance to European encroachment.⁷⁶

It is my contention that in the eyes of the Whites King Dingane was not regarded as the greatest King because he killed Piet Retief and his followers.

There is also a claim that King Dingane was hell-bent in undoing all that King Shaka had done for the Zulu nation. This is not true. The Zulu nation, furthermore, did not disintegrate during the reign of King Dingane. Instead of obliterating everything that King Shaka had built and reducing the boundaries as set by King Shaka, Dingane rather endeavoured to make sure that the Zulu nation that King Shaka had built remained intact. For example, Nqetho kaKhondlo and a large section of the Qwabe, whose disaffection had always troubled Shaka, revolted against King Dingane's authority. Nqetho led his people south, out of the orbit of Zulu power, to the area between the Mzimkhulu and Mzimvubu rivers.⁷⁷ In the process, the Qwabe drove their great herds with them, including many royal cattle.⁷⁸ Furious at the loss of such resources of manpower and wealth, and conscious that the defection of the Qwabe might inspire others to break free of the Zulu yoke that Shaka had painstakingly built, King Dingane took stern measures by, among other things, killing Chief Magaye of the Cele clan for conniving at the Qwabe's

⁷⁵ T.D. Mveli Skota in S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.xiii.

⁷⁶ C. Mutwa: My People, p.248.

⁷⁷ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.53.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.53.

migration through his territory.⁷⁹ In short, King Dingane protected the achievements of King Shaka during his reign. Even the praises of King Shaka were left intact because King Dingane understood that Shaka had been his King before his own reign. As Chadwick informs us, it is interesting to note that, despite the fact that he had been instrumental in murdering King Shaka, King Dingane established a small settlement nearby which he also called 'Dukuza,' which was intended to be King Shaka's spiritual resting place.⁸⁰ KwaDukuza is the site of the present town of Stanger, where King Shaka was buried.

3.6. THE LEGACY OF KING DINGANE

Historians have treated King Dingane as an African figure to be judged in a colonial context. It is precisely the failure of most historians to properly contextualize King Dingane's historicity, which has relegated him to realm of forgotten heroes.

Central to this thesis is the redress of this parlous, inadequate and inaccurate interpretation of King Dingane's historical heritage. Seen purely through the lenses of literary ideology, the role that King Dingane played is attributable to the resistance of the indigenous people of South Africa to subjugation, as illustrated in African political history that culminated in the eventual liberation of the African masses. His was resistance to a potentially oppressive, racist and exploitative invader. It is by hindsight that all right-thinking historians committed to democratic values realize that, although unsuccessful, King Dingane's initial resistance spawned the germs of what became a maelstrom of resistance.

⁷⁹ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.53.

⁸⁰ G.A. Chadwick: The Makhosini and the Mfolozi Valley, p.4.

A concatenation of events signaled by King Dingane's response was set in motion resulting in the historical evolution of the historio-politico experience we call South Africa's 'history.' His contribution cannot be seen in vacuum. It is linked to struggles waged by generations that have preceded us. Historians have failed to articulate succinctly the feelings of people whose values, aspirations and, indeed, very existence is threatened. The tendency is to gloss over efforts that people resort to, to retain and maintain their identity in the face of invading, threatening and compromising forces. It is this deliberate strabismus that has been fed into the minds, culture and history of most South Africans that has nourished and nurtured a distorted perception of King Dingane and what he stood for – thereby squinting the minds of Kings, commoners, intellectuals and academics alike.

The rudiments of resistance to so-called white superior attitudes can be traced to that single event (the killing of Piet Retief and his party) which history has both highlighted as stereotypical of King Dingane and also condemned as typical of African Kings. In contextualizing this 'single event,' one needs to analyze the issues which were at stake, and which precipitated King Dingane's responses. These include, firstly, the fact that the integrity of the Zulu monarchy was at stake. The respect accorded the royal precincts had been violated by the methods of surveillance resorted to by Piet Retief and his scouts.

Secondly, the security of the Royal House, and by extension, of the Zulu nation, was potentially undermined and threatened by the presence of uninvited guests. This meant that the future livelihood of the Zulu nation as a whole, which depended on the continued security of ownership of land, was imperiled. Word had preceded the invaders of how wave after wave of Voortrekkers had acquired for themselves, either by might, design or subterfuge, pockets of land owned and occupied by the indigenes. The ultimate 87 to 13 ratio of white ownership versus African occupation has its

roots in that history. It was an incipient and subtle deprivation of land by those who came to be masters of South Africa. Vestiges of this encroachment are still palpable in the economic imbalance of power experienced even after liberation in 1994.

The third factor that influenced King Dingane's response to the impending Boer invasion was the threat to his personal leadership. The respect and honour normally due to the King and first citizen was assailed in more respects than one. It was expected of a king to take the lead in protecting his sovereignty and the lives of his people. The threatening attitude taken by Piet Retief after obliging the King (by helping to retrieve some of the latter's stolen cattle from Segonyela – after retaining for himself the fattest ones) was not only an affront to the King, but signaled potential danger to King Dingane's continued control of the situation.

In summary, as argued by Ndlovu, 'as a King, Dingane was expected to protect himself, the land, his people, their customs, traditions, social systems and values from the unscrupulous White settlers. Like his forefathers and siblings from the house of Malandela, he had to strategise and fight to protect his kingdom.'⁸¹

It is of interest to note that there is dearth of information, intellectualization and interrogation of how history would have panned out if Dingane had not assassinated King Shaka. It is this silence, deliberately embraced by both African and White historians, which is an element of the hypocrisy that I sense in our thinking. What we know, and what has been celebrated, rightly or wrongly, is the Mfecane, which was rooted in King Shaka's style of governance. It seems to be taboo to talk of the untouchable in this context.

⁸¹ S.M. Ndlovu, 'Africans, the Land and Contending Images of King Dingane', p.108.

In the foregoing context we can rightly say that King Dingane was a nationalist, a patriot, a martyr, a strategist, a diplomat, a far-sighted leader, and a lover of his people. To so describe him does not blind us to his shortcomings and imperfections as a human being – shortcomings that we are all prone to. In order to understand the legacy that he left for posterity, it is necessary to fully understand the context in which he did what he did.

3.7. CONCLUSION

According to Laband, King Dingane's apparent contradictions have baffled historians who have pointed out the contrast between his attempts at conciliation, which included the undoing of some of the more extreme aspects of Shaka's regime, with his manifest scheming and unpredictability, which went with his growing willingness to shed blood.⁸² That is why, as Laband points out, King Dingane is commemorated in his praises as:

Ford of Ndaba
That has slippery rocks;
...Ox that encircles the homestead with tears;
Mamba who when he was down he was up!
...Deep One, like pools of the sea!⁸³

Laband argues that these images of shrewdness, cruelty, resilience, implacability and fathomlessness nevertheless celebrate the necessary attributes of the successful statesman. Seeing that King Dingane was concerned above all with the preservation of his own throne and the integrity of his kingdom, he was prepared to take whatever actions he found necessary in their pursuit.⁸⁴ Indeed, 'the King did what a king had to do.' Taylor is also instructive when he points out that 'King Dingane deserves a better press than he has had. Whatever his shortcomings, he resisted vigorously the European encroachment that started undermining the kingdom

⁸² J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.58.

⁸³ Ibid., p.58.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.58.

even as it emerged from the first period of its evolution.⁸⁵ Indeed, as pointed out by Taylor, 'King Dingane was no warrior king, but nor was he the bloated and brutal coward of South African school textbooks.'⁸⁶ The enigma about King Dingane still continues, as demonstrated by the divergent viewpoints⁸⁷ among historians with regard to King Dingane.

⁸⁵ S. Taylor: The Death of Shaka, p.110.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.112.

⁸⁷ See S.M. Ndlovu's thesis: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History. University of Witwatersrand, 2001.

CHAPTER 4

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KING DINGANE AND THE BRITISH TRADERS AND SETTLERS: THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL HEGEMONY

*Think now
History has many cunning passages
Contrived corridors
And issues*

(T.S. Eliot, 1922)

4.1. INTRODUCTION

During the 19th Century, relationships between various peoples in the Zulu Kingdom had a decisive influence on the socio-economic and political development of the region and also of the country as a whole. This chapter deals specifically with the relationship between King Dingane and the British Traders, Hunters and Settlers at 'Port Natal'¹ that would play an important role in setting the tone for future dealings between the indigenous people of South Africa and Whites as a whole – including cooperation and conflict.

4.2. THE ADVANCING WHITE FRONTIER AND 19TH CENTURY POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Before addressing the relationships among the Zulus, Traders, Hunters and Settlers at 'Port Natal', it is imperative that a context be given in terms of

¹ It is worth noting that the indigenous population in South Africa, including King Shaka and King Dingane, did not acknowledge the existence of 'Port Natal' and 'Natal' as a geographical entity or separate from their kingdom.

understanding the political dynamics of the nineteenth century. Most importantly, one cannot write about the relationships between King Dingane, the British Traders, Hunters and Settlers, and the Voortrekkers without providing an insight into the events that were taking place in the Cape Colonial Eastern frontier. It should be mentioned that 'frontier' in this instance refers to an area of interaction of two different groups, and not necessarily the notion of 'empty land' that is up for grabs by any of the competing groups. This erroneous notion of 'frontier' merely reinforces the pro-colonial myth of an empty land in South Africa – an argument that has been jettisoned by African nationalists.

As observed by Ballard, the definition of the 'frontier' as a geographical region where an advancing western European settlement interacts with the indigenous inhabitants on a social, political and economic level was first offered by the American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner.² Turner saw the boundary of a frontier as being distinct from the boundary 'existing between sovereign native states.'³ According to Turner, the moving frontier of White settlement was 'the wave of civilisation advancing across the continent', its outer fringe 'the meeting-point between savagery and civilisation'.⁴ Interestingly, South African historians were to borrow heavily from the Turner school and applied its principles to situations in South Africa. For example, I.D. MacCrone defined White expansion into the Northern and Eastern Cape in the seventeenth, eighteen and nineteenth centuries as a frontier phenomenon.⁵

According to Ballard, as the Boer pastoralists trekked into regions beyond the limits of either Dutch or English imperial control, existing racial and cultural attitudes were transformed in response to new and often stressful situations

² C.C. Ballard: The Transfrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.23.

³ Ibid., p.23.

⁴ Ibid., p.23.

⁵ Ibid., p.23.

created by contact with African peoples. Out of this contact and often resultant conflict on the frontier, '...White racial and religious prejudices towards blacks intensified as a means of preserving the identity of Afrikaner and Briton.'⁶

Again, as observed by Ballard, many liberal historians have veered away from MacCrone's view that conflict between Black and White was the dominant feature of the South African frontier: 'co-operation' as well as 'conflict' occurred between White and Black in frontier areas.⁷ Like liberal historians, I am of the view that the 'frontier' had been indeed the germ from which the notion of racial exclusiveness emanated. Having sketched this historical background, Legassick is instructive when he points out that two processes were prominent in nineteenth century South Africa:

One is the erosion of the political power of non-Whites through their absorption into plural communities in a subordinate political status – in short the establishment of White supremacy. The second theme is integration of the peoples of South Africa into a market economy linked ultimately with the industrialising, capitalist economy of Europe; along with this came the diffusion of European culture.⁸

4.3. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WHITE SUPREMACY AND THE EROSION OF BLACK POWER

It is the erosion of the political power of 'non-Whites' that this chapter will be mainly concerned about. As Ballard so perceptively pointed out, it was as a result of the penetration of White Settlers into a territory clearly under the hegemony of the Zulu polity that created the political instability characteristic of a frontier zone. The introduction of the imperial factor established colonial

⁶ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1843 -1895, pp.23-24.

⁷ Ibid., p.24.

⁸ Legassick, as quoted in C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1843-1895, p.24.

'Natal' and effectively closed the frontier with British annexation.⁹ I would like to argue therefore right from

It is precisely this political instability that eventually led to the demise of Zulu hegemony in 'Natal'. Ballard encapsulates this demise by enumerating the political and economic factors that collectively contributed to it. Among these are the disparity in values and aspirations between the various factions that led to friction, and ultimately, to armed confrontation; and political divisions within Zulu society that drove enemies of the King to the British traders for protection. The latter development opened a breach between the traders and the Zulu king, and the first rift in Black-White relations. According to Ballard, the second stage in the erosion of Zulu power occurred with the arrival of Boer pastoralists who aligned themselves with the Port settlers in contesting Zulu authority. Ballard sketches the third phase in the challenge to the Zulu kingdom as efforts by the Anglo-Boer forces to wrest power and spoils from the Zulu kingdom. According to him, 'Zulu resistance to white inroads was formidable and white usurpation of power would have been difficult, if not impossible, without the support of the 'Natal' Nguni and rebellious Zulu.'¹⁰

Jeff Guy is also convincing in his argument about ecological factors having played an important role in the rise and fall of the Zulu kingdom.¹¹ He argued that an imbalance had arisen by the end of the 18th century due to the growing density of cattle competing for scarce local grazing resources that contributed to the radical social changes that took place in a region that was particularly suited to the needs of stock-keeping cultivators. According to Guy, it was within the king's powers to influence the rate of demographic increase that could give rise to new and productive communities, thereby using redistribution of human and animal resources to solve environmental

⁹ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1843-1895, p.26.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.37- 38.

¹¹ J. Guy, 'Ecological Factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom', in S. Marks and A. Atmore, eds. Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa, pp.102-119.

problems that had arisen. While he suggests that certain aspects of the physical environment may be related to developments in the social structure of the Zulu kingdom, Guy is careful not to make any definite causal connection. He writes:

We can neither assert that environmental changes “caused” the Shakan revolution, nor that Shaka necessarily realized that there was a population crisis and solved it by slaughter abroad and contraception at home...At present, [however], our ability to identify and conceptualise the most significant elements in pre-capitalistic formations is inadequate, and in the case of pre-Shakan Zululand the paucity of empirical information and our ignorance of the chronology of the development of social change before the nineteenth century makes the task all the more difficult.¹²

Whilst I agree with Guy’s analysis, I still want to argue that the demise of the Zulu hegemony was to a large extent brought about by political and economic factors. It is interesting to note that in his ‘Introductory Notes’ to volume one of the *Annals*, Bird referred to the ‘spirit of enterprise’ and the ‘pioneers of colonization,’¹³ which, I would argue, paved the way for the colonization of ‘Natal’ and, most significantly, brought about the demise of Zulu hegemony. Similarly, the settlers were acknowledged as the ‘dauntless pioneers of British trade and British influence in ‘Natal’.¹⁴ It was precisely this ‘influence’ that led to the eventual annexation of ‘Natal’.

4.4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KING DINGANE, THE BRITISH TRADERS AND THE SETTLERS: THE QUESTION OF ‘PORT NATAL’

Wright sees the advent of British traders at ‘Port Natal’ in the mid-1820s as the product of deep-seated forces rooted, in the first instance, in the

¹² J. Guy, ‘Ecological Factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom’, pp.117-118.

¹³ J. Bird: *Annals of Natal*, Vol.I, p.6.

¹⁴ R. Russel: *Natal: the Land and its Story*, p.148.

expansion of west European-based commercial capital over the previous two centuries or more. More particularly, he sees their arrival against the background of the establishment of British naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean by 1810, and against the growth of interest in the economic potential of the sub-continent to the north among merchants and investors in the Cape Colony after 1815.¹⁵

I want to argue that it was the commercial factor accompanied by greed and jealousy that eventually saw the British Cape authorities making an about turn and deciding to annex 'Natal'. The people who first made commercial contact with the Zulus were the Cape Town-based entrepreneurs Henry Fynn and Francis Farewell. Wright points out that '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.'¹⁶

As early as 1824 the British Cape officials, including Farewell, had clear intentions of colonising the land that fell under the jurisdiction of the Zulu people. I believe it is not fair for historians to broach the question of land in relation to the Voortrekkers. In all fairness to the Voortrekkers they were at least honest in spelling out right from the moment they arrived in the Zulu Kingdom that they needed land. The British, on the other hand, were evasive and cunning, and gave the impression that they were not really interested in the land of the Zulus. In 1836 'Port Natal' is described in *'Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838'* edited by D.J. Kotze, as a place where the White people are either traders or hunters because it is profitable to hunt elephant, buffalo, and hippopotamuses – all of which are numerous not far from 'Natal'. In the excruciating vernacular of the American in Africa, the situation is described as follows:

¹⁵ J.B. Wright: The Dynamics of power and conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and 19th centuries: A critical reconstruction, pp.325-326.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.329.

Most of the White men have under them Zoolahs and control them as chiefs. There are also at and about Natal some two or three thousand of Zoolahs and Caffers, some runaways from Dingaan, and some remnants of tribes destroyed by Chaka and Dingaan. They consider themselves under the protection of the Whites, who, though few in number, think themselves able with their guns to oppose many thousand Zoolahs with their assegais and shields. These natives all speak the same language as Dingaan, and missionary labor among them, so far as reducing the language to writing is concerned, would be the same as among Dingaan's people.¹⁷

Already in 1836 there were some 'two or three thousand of Zulus' in 'Port Natal', a phenomenon that would later strain the relations between King Dingane and the Whites of 'Port Natal'. However, according to Roberts, King Dingane undoubtedly intended to continue King Shaka's policy of befriending the White men at the beginning of his reign. One of his first acts had been to assure the traders that no harm would come to them.¹⁸ According to Rycroft and Ngcobo, Nathaniel Isaacs, the ivory trader, among others who met King Dingane early in his reign, found him 'avowedly desirous of cultivating peace and indulging in the sweets it afforded'. Isaacs credited him with 'many redeeming qualities' and a 'decided aversion to further spilling of blood'. However, to account for the continuing slaughter of 'Dingana's rivals and opponents,' Isaacs blamed his warriors for having 'forced his hand,' while Fynn cited 'Dingana's optimistic belief that a perfectly happy and peaceful reign would be the result'.¹⁹

In the context of the Zulu kingdom, according to July, 'Port Natal' had become 'a colony of British merchants and missionaries,' which had over some years turned out to be a 'natural rallying point for Zulu dissidents as well as a potential colony of the Cape government.'²⁰ Taylor points out that 'right from

¹⁷ D.J. Kotze (ed.): Letters of the American Missionaries, 1835-1838, p.96.

¹⁸ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.185.

¹⁹ D.K. Rycroft and A.B. Ngcobo: The Praises of Dingana, p.1.

²⁰ R.W. July: A History of the African People, p.237.

its inception, 'Port Natal' exerted a profound and malign influence on the Zulu kingdom.²¹ This influence, and, probably the cause of the breakdown of relations between the traders and King Dingane, was best captured by the John Cane incident. In wishing to assure the Cape authorities of his peaceful intentions, King Dingane sent John Cane to convey a message of friendship to the Cape government on 21 November 1830.²²

John Cane told the Cape authorities that:

He is deputed by Dingane to make known to His Excellency the Governor that the chief is disposed to live in peace and amity with the neighbouring nations; that he wishes to encourage a traffic between his people and the colony, with which view he will cause all traders who may enter his country to be protected; and that he is especially desirous a missionary should be sent to Natal for the instruction of his subjects. He also made the sensational report of the trading mission of the American Schooner 'St Michaels' which landed a quantity of muskets, cutlasses, gunpowder and salt, at the instigation of Isaacs late in the service of J.S. King. He reported that Isaacs was instructing the natives in the use of arms and that he encouraged the American vessel to return with a view to: "...forming a settlement at Natal."²³

Strangely, though, as pointed out by Cubbin, on his return, John Cane evinced no immediate desire to report the outcome of the mission to King Dingane. The question that begs for an answer is: why did he not report about his trip to the Cape? Was he afraid of something? Perhaps, Jacob Msimbithi (a Xhosa who had been imprisoned on Robben Island and had been released to act as an interpreter) provides an answer. According to Msimbithi, 'John Cane was waiting for the army said to be coming to subdue the Zulus as John had called an 'impee' (armed force) to take the cattle and invade our

²¹ S. Taylor: *Shaka's Children*, p.86.

²² B. Roberts: *The Zulu Kings*, p.199.

²³ J. Bird: *Annals of Natal, Vol.I.*, pp.196-197.

territories.'²⁴ As if this was not enough bad news about Cane, Jacob Msimbithi furthermore warned King Dingane that 'the white people were plotting to take his land and destroy his kingdom.'²⁵

According to Cubbin, Msimbithi had reported to King Dingane that he had met a Frontier kaffir on his way to the Colony. This man told him that he wanted to find a home with the Zulus, as there was no living so near the White people. He said that at first the white people came and took a part of their land; then they encroached and drove them farther back, repeatedly taking more land as well as cattle. The Whites then built houses (i.e. missionary establishments) among the Blacks for the purpose of subduing them by witchcraft. He said that there was an uMlungu - and a White man's house, or missionary in every tribe and that they had even got as far as the amaMpondo (St. John's Cave). Moreover, no less than four kings (paramount chiefs) had died, and their deaths were attributed to the witchcraft of the aBelungu, as all the izinyanga (doctors) or prophets had predicted. During the man's stay at Grahamstown, the soldiers frequently asked what sort of a country the Zulus had, and if the roads were good for horses. They also enquired after the indigenous people's cattle and had said 'we shall soon be after you.' He told Msimbithi that he had heard that a few white people intended to obtain a grant of land as Farewell, King and Dambuza (Isaacs) had done. They would then build a fort, when more would come, and demand land on which they would build houses and subdue the Zulus - driving them farther back, as they had driven the Frontier tribes. The man then told Msimbithi that when he left Grahamstown, John Cane had told him that Mr Collis and a number of other people were coming to settle at 'Natal' because the country was much better than their own. He also said that Colonel Somerset, who is the terror of the Frontier tribes, was about to advance with some soldiers to see King Dingane because of having

²⁴ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.57.

²⁵ A.T. Moleah: South Africa, p.179.

heard so much about the Zulus. He thought John had remained at home to guide them.²⁶

4.5. THE MAKING OF A 'TREACHEROUS AND UNPREDICTABLE' KING

As pointed out by Cubbin, the Zulus, of course, had had information coming from the Frontier for a long period of time. Msimbithi's observation would have confirmed other reports. It is also important to realise that Jacob Msimbithi's prophecy was also basically accurate – King Dingane wouldn't have to wait long for the Missionaries, Voortrekkers and British redcoats to appear in Zululand.²⁷

The fact that John Cane 'evinced no immediate desire to report the outcome of the mission' tempts one to accept Jacob Msimbithi's version of the events. Most importantly, it would also seem that the report that John Cane gave about the American schooner, which 'landed a quantity of muskets, cutlasses and gunpowder' was not further from the truth. Could it be that Cane was reluctant to report to King Dingane about his trip to the Cape because of this 'quantity of muskets, cutlasses and gunpowder?' Or, could it be the fact that John Cane was aware that he was being spied on by, among other people, Jacob Msimbithi? John Cane's failure to report about his trip to King Dingane lends credence to what Jacob Msimbithi had to say about him to the King. Indeed, the effect of this on King Dingane's mind must have been deleterious to the Traders. This act by John Cane constitutes nothing but treachery; the very same treachery that King Dingane is accused of. King Dingane felt betrayed by John Cane. Roberts points out that King Dingane had sent John Cane on a goodwill mission to the Cape, and, instead of coming to report to him, Cane had sent word that he was detained by the illness of Thomas

²⁶ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement At Port Natal, p.67.

²⁷ Ibid., p.67.

Halstead.²⁸ King Dingane doubted the veracity of Cane's explanation, and he told Isaacs that 'I am angry with John Cane; I think he might deceive you as well as me.'²⁹

In this 'atmosphere of recriminations' King Dingane sent his army to attack John Cane's kraal on 18 April 1831.³⁰ This was the first time that the Zulus had attacked 'Port Natal'. After this attack, Isaacs, an erstwhile King Dingane supporter, called him (Dingane) '...a complete dissembler,' and went on to say:

Hence we began to despair of effecting the great object of our anxious solicitude namely, to establish that free and unrestricted trade with the people, which we had fondly hoped we should have done on a safe and advantageous footing. Everything now, however, looked gloomy, and although we were fully aware that the infamous Jacob was the cause of the late havoc, yet we doubted whether we should be able, finally, to accomplish a safe footing of commerce, if the monarch were subject to be imposed on by the arts of such designing villains as the one who had influenced the late outrage on our establishment.³¹

In fairness to King Dingane though, it must be pointed out that his orders sent via the chief of the Hlomendlini impi to warn Fynn that '...neither the other (i.e. except Cane) White people, nor their property should not be molested,' had not been carried out.³² It is also worth mentioning that, according to Dr Smith, the so-called impartial observer selected by Sir Lowry Cole to investigate matters in 'Port Natal', 'king Dingane was treacherous and unpredictable and White settlers would not be safe while he reigned. It would be better for everybody if he were disposed of. His removal, claimed Smith, would not be difficult.'³³ The latter would not be difficult because according to Dr Smith,

²⁸ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.202.

²⁹ Ibid., p.202.

³⁰ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.69.

³¹ L. Herrman (ed.): Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa by Nathael Isaacs. Vol. II, p.204

³² Ibid., p.200.

³³ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.224.

If a military party were to be posted near the bay, I would engage in twelve months after its arrival to be able to dethrone Dingaan by means of the very people who are at present his support. It is impossible for men to feel attachment to such a monster; and it appears to me an act of great inhumanity to permit his murdering, torturing and destroying even hundreds of his subjects in the course of a day, when only the most trifling exertion would be required to effectually restrain him.³⁴

Roberts observes that 'granted that Smith saw all he claims to have seen at emGungundlovu, his assertion that hundreds were murdered in the course of a day is an obvious exaggeration...he was evidently relying more on what he had been told than on what he had observed.'³⁵ It was obvious that the traders had influenced Smith, and this was unfortunate, given that Sir Lowry Cole had wanted a report uninfluenced by the interests of the traders.

I would like to argue that the British, through Smith, were the first to verbalise their intention to kill King Dingane. Most importantly, I also believe that Smith's sentiments were shared by some of the 'Port Natal' settlers and traders. Roberts aptly points out that:

...the governor was asking the impossible. Smith, for all his scientific training, was no more impartial than other White men visiting Natal. He could speak no Zulu, he relied on the traders for information, and his notebooks are riddled with second-hand opinions.³⁶

Roberts furthermore argues that '...Smith's bias in favour of commercial enterprise became only too apparent on his return to the Cape Colony. His written report to the Governor, if it existed, had been lost.'³⁷

³⁴ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.224.

³⁵ Ibid., p.224.

³⁶ Ibid., p.225.

³⁷ Ibid., p.225.

4.6. KILLING THE BEARER OF BAD NEWS: JACOB MSIMBITHI'S ASSASSINATION

Indeed, relations between King Dingane and the traders had by this time reached their nadir, and it would require somebody with extraordinary qualities to improve them. Again, as fate would have it, Jacob Msimbithi was found to have stolen some of the King's cattle and King Dingane, surprisingly, given Cane's dubious character, induced the latter to kill Jacob. Much as one cannot condone the stealing of the King's cattle, when analysed critically, the issue here is not cattle theft, but rather the influence that the traders exerted on King Dingane until he relented by agreeing that Jacob was, from the Traders' point of view, a problem. It was clear to the traders that Jacob was at the root of their discomfiture in terms of their relations with King Dingane.

The killing of Jacob was unfortunate. Roberts argues that 'the stories he (Jacob) had told King Dingane were not as false as the traders made out. What he had seen and heard in Grahamstown had convinced him that soldiers were about to advance on Natal. And he was not entirely mistaken.'³⁸ Still on this matter, Roberts tells us that,

The reason why no White commando had arrived at emGungundlovu was not because Jacob had lied but because the necessary authority had been wanting. In Grahamstown the military had been willing enough to support the traders but they failed to obtain the backing of Sir Lowry Cole, the Governor of the Cape. The Governor's caution had killed Jacob as surely as Ogle's gun.³⁹

King Dingane, persuaded that no invasion had been intended, had sanctioned the killing of Jacob. However, others were not so easily convinced. Indeed, Jacob's warnings were not quickly forgotten. As Roberts points out, 'the time would come when King Dingane would have reason to regard him as a

³⁸ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.216.

³⁹ Ibid., p.216.

prophet.⁴⁰ Even though 'all the intrigues of the traders to promote a British settlement had ended in disaster,'⁴¹ it should never be forgotten that the traders and settlers used almost all sorts of treachery to achieve their objective, that of trying to convince the Cape authorities to annex 'Port Natal'. The scurrilous depiction of the two Kings, Shaka and Dingane, as recommended by Isaacs to Fynn best captures this treachery. It is surprising therefore that the British traders and settlers should ascribe treachery to King Dingane when in fact they were the ones who were treacherous.

It should not be forgotten that John Cane and his African followers mistakenly attacked and slaughtered over 200 Zulu warriors⁴² and that, contrary to the traders' expectations, King Dingane never retaliated. He understood that it was a mistake. What more was King Dingane expected to do in order to prove that he was a man who desired peace? Another king may well have sent an army to avenge the killing of these warriors. Most significantly, if King Dingane were really a treacherous tyrant, he would not have spared the 'Port Natal' traders for wrongly and unjustifiably killing his soldiers.

4.7. THE GROWING MENACE OF PORT NATAL

The malign influence that was exerted by 'Port Natal' was also exemplified by the annexationist intentions of the settlers, which became more pronounced in 1834 when the settlers petitioned the British government to annex 'Port Natal'.⁴³ Though the petition was unsuccessful, Laband correctly points out that 'it was clear that the country South of the Thukela was inexorably being pulled out of the orbit of the Zulu kingdom into that of the Cape.'⁴⁴ Thus Ndlovu maintains that,

⁴⁰ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.216.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.217.

⁴² Ibid., p.229.

⁴³ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.75.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.75.

it is suggested that during the first three years Dingane was tolerant and had a working relationship with the white traders. But after 1831 the relationship became antagonistic, as Dingane became aware that they were not official representatives of the British crown but ordinary men on the lookout for personal riches.⁴⁵

Again, Ndlovu further observes that even during the early period of his reign, the king was adamant that White traders, Missionaries and Settlers did not deserve special treatment. Due to the fact that he did not recognise 'Port Natal' as a separate territory or sovereign political region, he treated them as his subordinates. His firm convictions in this regard elicited a hostile attitude from the White settlers, whom he believed had no right to exercise both the political and economic authority over him and his sovereign kingdom. In Ndlovu's words:

King Dingane was conscious of the fact that the White settlers represented forces of change and symbolised the external forces, that is, the encroaching European world. Whenever he had the opportunity he asked White settlers "awkward" questions about their country of origin, technology [guns, literacy, wagons], their political systems, customs and religion. He tried to use effective strategies to counter their threat by sending subjects to acquire technological knowledge as well as craft and material culture from the white settlers.⁴⁶

To further fuel suspicion on the part of King Dingane, 'an alarming portent was a visit overland in 1834 to 'Port Natal' by 30 Boers from the eastern Cape under Petrus Lafras Uys, the Kommissie Trek, to investigate whether the region was suitable for establishing a farming settlement.'⁴⁷ All these factors point to the malign influence that 'Port Natal' exerted on the Zulu kingdom. Moreover, the Settlers' continued provision of political asylum, or rather, sanctuary, to the Zulu refugees (thereby harbouring enemies, in King Dingane's eyes) also heightened tensions between King Dingane and the

⁴⁵ S.M. Ndlovu, 'Africans, Land and Images of Dingane', p.108.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.109.

⁴⁷ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.75

Settlers. To King Dingane, the settlement at 'Port Natal' was a constantly growing menace to his authority because of the sanctuary given to the refugees. Furthermore, according to Stuart and Mck Malcolm, 'the European settlement, in the eyes of King Dingane, was objectionable, not only because it was an imperium in imperio but because it harboured many that confidently that have been constantly assured to have vowed everlasting vengeance against himself and as constantly plotting to bring about his downfall.'⁴⁸ Indeed, the refugees were the main bone of contention between King Dingane and the British traders and Settlers. Okoye also adds his voice when he points out that,

...[the] Zulu refugees naturally had no love for the king and were, to a large extent responsible for the worsening of relations between Dingane and the White traders, for they repeatedly and maliciously spread the rumour that the Zulu monarch was contemplating exterminating the Whites.⁴⁹

Thus, Ballard further argues that, 'the rise of a potentially subversive Zulu community under the auspices of the White traders presented king Dingane with a growing threat to the authority of the Zulu state.'⁵⁰ That having been said, it would, however, be invidious not to mention the dynamics of internal conflicts that were taking place within the Zulu states, and these were compounded by the issue of the refugees. Ballard encapsulates these dynamics when he contends that,

Political divisions within Zulu society drove enemies of the king (Dingane) to the British traders for protection. This development opened a breach between the port and Zululand and the first rift in Black –White relations began at this point.⁵¹

⁴⁸ J. Stuart and D. Mck Malcolm: The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, p.241.

⁴⁹ F.N.C. Okoye, 'Dingane: A Reappraisal', p.223.

⁵⁰ C.C.Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.39.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp.37-38.

In short, these political divisions further complicated the refugee issue. In all fairness to King Dingane though, Rycroft and Ngcobo observe that, 'whereas Shaka encountered only sporadic White traders who posed no threat, King Dingane in the late 1830s had a growing White settlement at 'Port Natal', harbouring Zulu refugees, and had armed parties of Boers to deal with.'⁵² Mazisi Kunene has remarked that: 'All these factors needed a great statesman to manipulate events to the best advantage of the country. Dingana was not such a statesman.'⁵³ The latter is a rather too harsh a critique to make about King Dingane. During the reign of King Dingane, the nature of politics in the Zulu kingdom had become extremely complex. Any statesman would have reacted the same as King Dingane did, given the advantage of guns enjoyed by his opponents. But most importantly, one gets the impression that Kunene uses today's standards, if not norms, to assess the reign of King Dingane. King Dingane's reign should be judged within the context of its time. Okoye provides a perceptive analysis of the relations between King Dingane and the traders when he argues that past commentators have failed to recognise the important role played by these runaways from Zulu justice in the disruption of relations between King Dingane and the Europeans:

They have variously ascribed the worsening of relations to the king's innate treachery, his uncontrollable caprice and his calculated premeditation. The facts, however, do not support any of these assertions. Up to 1835 what impresses us most is not Dingane's hostility towards the traders, nor his vagaries, but the pains he took to court their presence and his consistency in the pursuit of this objective. This was only to be expected, for the Zulu monarch coveted their trade-goods. He needed their greater knowledge of the outside world.⁵⁴

On the issue of the clash between King Dingane and the Settlers, Cubbin believes that it was basically '...a clash of encroaching civilisations, the

⁵² D.K. Rycroft and A.B. Ngcobo (eds.): The Praises of Dingana, p.3.

⁵³ Ibid., p.3.

⁵⁴ F.N.C. Okoye, 'Dingane: A Reappraisal', p.223.

refugees being a tertium factor causing immediate and prolonged friction.⁵⁵ Ballard further addresses the threat that was posed by these refugees when he informs us that '...the White traders and their Khoi retainers trained a number of their Nguni adherents in the use of firearms and they adapted quickly to this new European innovation.'⁵⁶ Furthermore, Gardiner also captures the danger posed by the refugees when he unwittingly commented that:

For some years many of them (Port Natal Nguni) have been entrusted with firearms for the purpose of hunting the elephant and buffalo, and in consequence out of the whole body some very tolerable marksmen can be selected.⁵⁷

Cubbin points out that the refugees were crucial to the security of the settlement and that the Whites had to consider the possibility that their Black protégés could also sell their services to the highest bidder, thus undermining the security of the settlement.⁵⁸ Cubbin adds that it is disturbing to note that the increasing lack of respect shown King Dingane by the Whites – as typified, for example, in David Steller's alleged hunting expedition in Zululand without the necessary permission, and in his assistance to escaping fugitives despite the mutual Treaty. King Dingane would simply not tolerate this sort of behaviour in his dominions and his behaviour was unpredictable. For this reason, according to Champion, King Dingane was enraged against the Whites.⁵⁹

It was against this background that King Dingane viewed the continuous flow of refugees to 'Port Natal' with great concern. Surely any king would have been alarmed by this development, on which the security of his kingdom hinged. To compound an already confounded situation, the strained relations

⁵⁵ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.93.

⁵⁶ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.34.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.34.

⁵⁸ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.109.

⁵⁹ A.R. Booth (ed.): George Champion, p.76.

between King Dingane and the traders would later be exacerbated by the latter's continued efforts to stimulate Cape interests in 'Natal'.

4.8. NATAL: AN EXCELLENT PLACE FOR COLONISATION

As early as 1828 Traders in 'Port Natal' were advocating a British settlement in Natal, and they received support from the Graham's Town Journal, which took tremendous interest in the affairs of 'Port Natal'. The editor of this journal wrote a fascinating article on his trip to Natal, which as expected, was widely read throughout Natal. He glowingly described Natal as: '...a tract of country decidedly superior to any part of the Colony, an excellent place for colonisation.'⁶⁰ According to Pridmore, the Graham's Town Journal was an excellent vehicle for promoting the economic possibilities of the 'Natal' interior to its readership of eastern Cape businessmen. Traders like Collis used this paper to emphasize the investment possibilities of the region.⁶¹

There was also the famous quotation of Dr Smith's wagon-driver, Barry: 'Almighty, I have never in my life seen such a fine place. I shall never again reside in the Colony if the English Government makes this 'Natal' a drosty.'⁶² Indeed, this was a tremendous advertisement for the neighbouring Colony and was to have a dramatic effect on the Dutch-speaking farmers who were to look for alternative farming areas away from British authority.

4.9. LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION FOR COLONISATION: THE DEMONISING OF KING DINGANE

One person who made concerted efforts to have 'Natal' colonised was Nathaniel Isaacs. Isaacs, a vital if not turbulent force in 'Natal' history, was

⁶⁰ Graham's Town Journal, 15.6.1832

⁶¹ J. Pridmore: Henry Francis Fynn: an assessment of his career and an analysis of the written and visual portrayals of his role in the History of the Natal region, p.29.

⁶² P.R. Kirby: Sir Andrew Smith, p.106.

one of those who attempted to convince the Colonial Government to annex 'Natal'. His pro-annexation views were best captured by his most widely read book of the travel genre, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*. According to Golan, Isaacs' book, published in 1836, formed an important part of his colonial campaign, while the commercial motives of the author are explicit. As pointed out by Wright, at the time of Isaacs' publication, there was a growing Cape merchant in 'Natal' and Isaacs used his paper mainly to persuade the colonial authorities to annex 'Natal'.⁶³

The book aimed at giving publicity to the interests of the merchants, and at convincing the British government of 'Natal's' potential as a colony. Describing the fertility of the area in detail, Isaacs

...advertised its promise as an agricultural colony. From time to time Isaacs reminded his readers that his motivation in writing the book was solely the "want of information" on the region, and that "however uninteresting the details seem to be, they are the truth, and nothing but the truth."⁶⁴

Isaacs' 'nothing but the truth' found expression when he wrote Fynn, another trader who was also engaged in writing a book about his experiences in Zululand. It is worth reiterating that Isaacs suggested to Fynn that, when he writes about Dingane and Shaka he must,

Make them out as blood thirsty as you can...and describe the frivolous crime people lose their lives for, introduce as many anecdotes relative to Chaka as you can, it all tends to swell up the work and make it interesting.⁶⁵

As observed by Pridmore, the colonists created an elaborate 'history' in order to portray the pre-colonial societies of the region in a state of constant conflict

⁶³ J. Wright: *The dynamics of power and conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries: a critical reconstruction*, p.67.

⁶⁴ D.Golan: *Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History*, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20.

and political 'anarchy' in order to justify their own presence in 'Natal'. By contrast, it was essential for them to portray 'civilization' in 'Natal' as indistinguishable from the arrival of the first Europeans.⁶⁶ Isaacs' negative views about King Shaka and King Dingane should be understood against this background.

Sadly, Isaacs's sensational views about King Shaka and King Dingane are still presented by some historians, even in this day and age, as historical truth. Du Buisson advances the view that the published diaries of Henry Fynn and Nathaniel Isaacs, as the only contemporaneous records from the time of King Shaka, have become the standard reference works on which White historians have based their accounts on King Shaka, and to a large extent, King Dingane.⁶⁷ Du Buisson argues that,

From them successive generations of ethnocentric white historians adopted the characterisation of King Shaka as a "savage in the truest sense of the word, a monster, a compound of vice and ferocity without one virtue to redeem his name from the infamy to which history will consign it" and KingDingane as "fat, obese, lazy, oversexed and treacherous." ⁶⁸

Du Buisson believes that, as a result, 'the inaccurate and biased reportage contained in these personal reminiscences of Black historical figures characterised South African historical discourse ever since their publication.'⁶⁹

When the history of the relations between King Dingane and the British Traders, Hunters and Settlers at 'Port Natal' is analysed critically, it would seem that King Dingane was mistaken to focus solely upon the Voortrekkers as a threat to his kingdom. With the benefit of hindsight, it now appears that these British commercial interests were also a threat, as the later colonisation

⁶⁶ J. Pridmore, 'The Production of H.F. Fynn c. 1830-1930', p.8.

⁶⁷ L. Du Buisson: Heroes or Villains of Shaka's time, pp.12-17.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.15.

⁶⁹ L. Du Buisson: An open letter to Bill Faure. *Style*, February: 92-96.

become more active in the territories bordering on the Zulu sphere of influence. Thus Wright concludes that,

The field was 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 in its history was beginning.⁷³

It was against this background that Captain Allen Francis Gardiner arrived at 'Port Natal' purporting that 'the only motive for his visit was to teach the spiritual welfare of his people.'⁷⁴ The question that begs an answer is why did Gardiner choose to come to 'Natal'? Could it be that he was also one of the agents of British colonialism? The following discussion shall attempt to provide an answer. According to Ballard, by the early part of 1835, King Dingane had decided that:

...more persuasive methods must be applied to the British traders as a coercive inducement to halt the flow of Zulu deserters to the port. The immediate cause of Dingane's aggressive posture is not certain but the defection of an entire Zulu regiment to Natal in the latter part of 1834 may have provided the impetus. By April 1835 Dingane's threats against the Port had reached such alarming proportions that 'self-interest compelled the traders to come to grips with the problem of Zulu escapees.'⁷⁵

It is interesting to note that Gardiner was handed a letter signed by eight of the principal traders - including John Cane, Henry Ogle and James Collis - asking him to establish a mission station at the Bay.⁷⁶ However, Roberts is

⁷³ J. Wright: The Dynamics of Power and Conflict in the Thugela-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and 19th centuries: A critical reconstruction, p.380.

⁷⁴ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement At Port Natal, p.83.

⁷⁵ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.40.

⁷⁶ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.244.

instructive when he points out that the traders' request to Gardiner was not only inspired by the need for spiritual uplift:

The presence of a missionary at Port Natal undoubtedly added to the status of the settlement. Pleas to the Cape authorities for protection had previously been tainted by commercialism, now their claim to be agents of Christianity and civilisation was given more substance. It might well result in the Flag following the Cross. Certainly the need for a military contingent was as strong, if not stronger, than ever.⁷⁷

I would argue that, in their desperate attempt to cajole the Cape authorities to annex 'Port Natal', the 'Port Natal' Traders felt that the Christianity route would help to make the case of annexation much stronger. However, sensing an imminent attack by the Zulus, the 'Port Natal' Traders unanimously resolved on Saturday 25 April 1835 to sign a treaty with King Dingane, and Gardiner was chosen to go and negotiate with King Dingane.⁷⁸ King Dingane promised Gardiner that 'he would never molest any of his subjects now at 'Port Natal' for past offences, and that he should keep fast his word; but that he knew the White people would be the first to break the treaty.'⁷⁹ The treaty was then concluded between King Dingane and the British Residents at 'Port Natal' on 6 May 1835 and, according to Cubbin, the treaty suited both parties because for King Dingane,

...the refugees were a standing affront to his authority and because the settlement at 'Port Natal' with this constant augmentation of population and the increased fire power made them a possible danger to the Zulu monarch; the White Traders because they needed peace and increased labour to pursue their avocations with the necessary success.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ B. Roberts: *The Zulu Kings*, p.245.

⁷⁸ A.E. Cubbin: *Origins of the British Settlement At Port Natal*, pp.87-88.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.90-91.

In thanking Gardiner, King Dingane heaped praises on him saying, 'I have seen many White people, but now a great chief is come among us, to whom I can speak my heart.'⁸¹ In hindsight, King Dingane deluded himself into believing that Gardiner was an honest man. It was the very same Gardiner who would later on deviate from his missionary activities, and then clamour for the colonisation of 'Port Natal', an area that fell under the jurisdiction of King Dingane. The Rev. Dr. John Philip best addresses Gardiner's doubled-faced character and that of other British missionaries when he says:

While our Missionaries, beyond the borders of the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilisation, social order and happiness, they are, by the most unexceptionable means, extending British interests, British influence and the British Empire.⁸²

Laband also points out that 'after 1835, the presence of Christian missionaries would complicate interaction between the Zulu king and the Settlers.'⁸³

4.10. THE BREAKING OF A TREATY

As fate would have it, and, as King Dingane had confirmed, the White man would be the first to break the treaty. At the end of June 1835, two White Traders violated the treaty by encouraging Zulus, especially young women, to renounce their allegiance to King Dingane and to move to the port.⁸⁴ King Dingane retaliated against the Traders' violations by prohibiting all trade between Zululand and Port Natal. With the exception of Gardiner, he refused to permit any European from crossing the Thukela River boundary.⁸⁵ Ballard believes that King Dingane was reluctant to attack the Port because all the

⁸¹ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement At Port Natal, p.89.

⁸² Rev. Dr J. Philip, as quoted in J. G. Pretorius: The British Humanitarians and the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1834-1836, p.1.

⁸³ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.73.

⁸⁴ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontiersman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.41.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.41-42.

Traders and many of their clients possessed firearms. Secondly, faced with the threat of a Zulu invasion before Gardiner's treaty was concluded, the Traders had organised under Alexander Bigger to defend the Port against attack.⁸⁶ Although the Traders possessed firearms, they were not as destructive as the Voortrekkers had been when they fought the Battle of iNcome (Blood River). Therefore, while it may be true that King Dingane did not retaliate because 'the traders and many of their clients possessed guns,' I do not believe that that was the only factor that saw Dingane adopting a quiet diplomacy towards the traders.

I fully agree with Ballard when he says that King Dingane tolerated the traders' presence because of his 'forlorn hope of obtaining guns (from the very traders) to bolster his military power.'⁸⁷ Laband is also informative when he argues that King Dingane had little option but to treat the 'Port Natal' Traders with circumspection:

Strong-arm methods, he realised, were becoming more risky. Besides, while he mistrusted the Whites at the Port and feared growing Cape involvement, he valued the goods they brought - especially firearms - and appreciated their potential as mercenaries. Consequently, despite frequently strained relations with the Port, he did not again intervene militarily as he had in 1831. Instead, he adopted a policy of disengagement and containment.⁸⁸

Again, as Ballard points out, 'King Dingane's insatiable desire for guns was caused by a combination of two factors. Firstly, a fear of a White invasion from the Cape colony, and secondly, concern over the decline in Zulu prowess as a result of Zulu reverses at the hands of the rival Ndebele people.'⁸⁹ Indeed, the friendly relations between King Dingane and the

⁸⁶ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.42.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.45.

⁸⁸ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.76.

⁸⁹ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.42.

Traders further deteriorated, and 'a permanent breakdown with regard to these relations came about in 1837 when asylum was once again offered to escapees; and shortly, thereafter, sales of firearms were discontinued out of fear that King Dingane would use them against the Port.'⁹⁰

According to Ballard, Gardiner, convinced that the influence of the British Traders over the refugee Nguni had created a community that deviated from western Christian standards, he sought out British Authority on the settlement. In giving evidence before the Aborigines British Settlements Committee on 9 May 1836, he said that the traders at 'Port Natal' were a '...crowd of immoral trouble makers who defied King Dingane's orders, harboured deserters, lived in a degraded state, fought among themselves, and showed little sense of responsibility.'⁹¹

However, the Colonial Office rejected Gardiner's arguments for annexing Natal as a colony.⁹² It was indeed unfortunate that Gardiner got himself entangled in the affairs of 'Port Natal', something that was to become a blot on his seemingly impeccable credentials, as viewed by King Dingane. Upon realising that the Colonial Office would not annex 'Port Natal', Gardiner seems to have felt that if he could not persuade the Colonial Office to annex 'Port Natal', no one should. This view gives credence to the argument that Gardiner might have been behind the deterioration of relations between the Settlers and King Dingane.

It is worth-mentioning that on 29 May 1837, Champion, an American missionary, received a message from King Dingane via his messenger

⁹⁰ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.43.

⁹¹ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.263.

⁹² C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.43.

Lubaca, blaming Cane and Gardiner for the break in diplomatic relations.⁹³

King Dingane maintained that Gardiner told him that the Settlers were:

...all rascals and advised him (Dingane) not to let us trade or come into his Country. He also states that Captain Gardiner told him to seize our guns if we crossed the Umtogalie. Dingane said:...it was Captain Gardiner who told him to prohibit the trade: that when Captain Gardiner returned he would say it.⁹⁴

Brookes and Webb give a different viewpoint about Gardiner's evidence. They believe that Gardiner 'may have thought that [when he spoke about the Settlers] to paint the picture as black as possible would encourage such possible British intervention as might protect Missions.'⁹⁵ Whether Gardiner's advice was a set up or not, this does not do away with the fact that the Settlers were a problem to King Dingane in one way or the other. Ironically, the Settlers were also the same people who would accuse King Dingane of being treacherous, when in fact they were the ones who flagrantly violated his orders. In this regard, Laband observes that '...nor were these settlers faithful subjects, for they were clearly trying to establish the Port and surrounding region as an autonomous base for the unrestricted commercial penetration of the hinterland.'⁹⁶

4.11. CAPTAIN ALLEN FRANCIS GARDINER: THE MISSIONARY WITH THE FORKED TONGUE

It is disheartening to note that out of all people, the person that King Dingane trusted and loved so much, Gardiner, a Missionary, would be the one who would plead for the military occupation of 'Natal'. About missionaries, Ngidi, as quoted by Ndlovu had the following to say:

⁹³ A.E. Cubbin: *A Study in Objectivity: The death of Piet Retief*, p.45.

⁹⁴ D.J. Kotze (ed.): *Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838*, pp.177-178.

⁹⁵ E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb: *A History of Natal*, p.25.

⁹⁶ J. Laband: *Rope of Sand*, p.73.

[If] your government cared for us and our welfare the thing it will do would be to take all the missionaries and put them in a prison with high walls where no man can converse with them, they could do no more harm.⁹⁷

As already alluded to, the Gikuyu proverb puts it aptly when it points out that '*Gutiri mubia na muthungu*,' loosely translated to mean 'there is no difference between a missionary and a Settler,'⁹⁸ explains why Gardiner called for the colonisation of 'Natal'. According to Davenport, '...in the extension of conquest, the Missionary had a role as well as the Trader.'⁹⁹ Majeke, a Marxist, also saw the missionaries as 'promoters of a revolution in social taste for the benefit of the producers of Manchester Cotton-piece Goods.'¹⁰⁰ Most importantly, and, lest we forget, in the case of Gardiner: he was a 'retired naval officer' who had been profoundly influenced by the British naval supremacy, which easily facilitated the conquest of the areas Britain intended to subjugate. Brookes and Webb are informative when they say that Gardiner 'made mistakes during his short stay in 'Natal' (1835, and 1837 to 1838).'¹⁰¹ Entangling himself in the affairs of 'Port Natal', and becoming embroiled in the politics of this area, instead of preaching the word of God, was one of those mistakes.

Recommending that 'Port Natal' should be militarily occupied is probably the one mistake, if not the only, that the Zulus will not forgive Gardiner for. Indeed, military 'occupation' of not only 'Port Natal', but also the entire Zulu kingdom, did eventually take place. Gardiner's professed Christian beliefs were dealt a severe blow when he called for the military occupation of 'Port Natal'. With regard to Natal, Captain Allen Gardiner forgot one crucial factor. 'Natal' did not belong to the Traders and Settlers. According to Brookes and

⁹⁷ Ngidi, as quoted by S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of historical knowledge in 19th and 20th century South African History, p.54.

⁹⁸ V. Turner (ed.): Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, p.310.

⁹⁹ T.R.H. Davenport: South Africa, p.162.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.162.

¹⁰¹ E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb: A History of Natal, p.24.

Webb, 'at no stage did Shaka, Dingane or Mpande really mean to renounce their own sovereignty over the area on which they permitted White men to reside.'¹⁰² Thus, Peter Colenbrander, in his article wrote:

By far the most pressing and far-reaching, not to mention fateful, dilemma that Dingane had to face stemmed from the growing White presence in the outer reaches of his kingdom. Three distinct communities were involved, the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay, the English trading settlement at 'Port Natal', loosely associated after 1836 with the Missionaries, and, subsequent to 1837, the Voortrekker settlers to the South-West of the Thukela and Mzinyathi rivers. These communities posed King Dingane with three sets of often inter-related challenges; commercial, political and territorial.¹⁰³

It is interesting to note that after the numerous attempts of Port Natal Traders, Missionaries, and Settlers to have 'Port Natal' annexed had failed, Daniel Lindley on 2 May 1837 made a prescient observation concerning the Natal situation:

Should the English Government become of Port Natal, and adopt a human, Christian policy towards the natives of that region, Dingaen may continue king of his own country; but unless protected by British power, the year of his disinheritance is not far before him.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, as pointed out by Cubbin, the above prognostication '...was full of ominous portents for the immediate future of 'Natal' and its Zulu overlordship.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb: A History of Natal, p.19.

¹⁰³ Colenbrander, as quoted by A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds.): Natal and Zululand, p.87.

¹⁰⁴ Lindley, as quoted in D.J. Kotze (ed.): Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838, p.174.

¹⁰⁵ A.E. Cubbin: A Study in Objectivity: The death of Piet Retief, p.57.

4.12. A UNITED FRONT AGAINST KING DINGANE

As already alluded to, the British Traders and Settlers also posed a serious threat to King Dingane's reign. This threat was later compounded when the English and Boer settlers together fought the army of King Dingane. This united front (the English and the Boer Settlers) advocated a form of cooperation to meet a common enemy in the form of King Dingane. King Dingane easily defeated this united front during the 'little-known' Impi yasoThukela (Battle of Thukela).¹⁰⁶

This battle is little known because, according to Ndlovu, the official history textbooks, for ideological reasons, avoided giving prominence and never articulated the battles in which Zulus were victorious.¹⁰⁷ The following is Ngoza's version of the first battle between the two warring groups:

When the Boers went to fight Dingane, the small English regiment at Thekwini went out on an expedition. They did this on the advice of the Boers ...they found the cattle unattended, they captured many, including women and children... The Zulu army consisted about ten thousand warriors ...They felt elated after beating the Boers three times, by killing Piet Retief at uMgungundlovu, at emTyezi, and when they killed Piet Uys and his son at eTalen, including the dispersal of his followers. And now amaZulu were very angry when they heard that their cattle were stolen, and women and children were abducted at Ntunjambili (by the English)... (after defeating the Boers at impi yaso Thukela), amaZulu emerged from all directions, they destroyed the small (English) regiment, defeated and killed them...because of this victory Mpande became famous, he was now Dingane's army commander, and he used 'muti' to prepare impi.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.56.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.56.

¹⁰⁸ Izindatwana zabantu, Statement of Ngoza, pp.ixxxixiv.

Therefore, like revisionist scholars, I also totally reject the interpretation of the British intervention in South Africa as 'pro-Black' in nature. This rejection is strongly buttressed by Smith, who correctly points out that,

...it was the British, not the Boers, who were the greatest threat to the independence of African societies, and the subjugation of the most powerful of the African polities was to serve British interests.¹⁰⁹

In short, the British factor in 'Port Natal' posed a much bigger threat to the Zulu kingdom than the arrival of the Voortrekkers. In all fairness to Piet Retief, and, unlike the British, he followed what he saw as a proper method of dealing or negotiating with another power. He made contact with King Dingane. He also tried to provide in his request to retrieve King Dingane's cattle from Sekonyela, even though he did not bring Sekonyela and his horses and guns to King Dingane as instructed. He allegedly made an official contract to cover himself and his people in case of British doubt about land acquisition. Atmore and Marks also argue that,

... although British influence and control was clothed in the discourse of traditional British liberalism and humanitarianism, Blacks had been subjected by the British in the interests of capitalism according to an exploitative class-based racial capitalism.¹¹⁰

Again, and, as if to put the final nail in the coffin, Atmore and Marks point out that,

Britain's interests in South Africa rarely had very much to do with freedom and justice particularly for the Black man, though it always made useful propaganda...there is little doubt that at least until 1948 and probably even after that...Britain has found in South Africa's White governments entirely satisfactory collaborators in

¹⁰⁹ K. Smith: The Changing Past, p.176.

¹¹⁰ A. Atmore and S. Marks: The Imperial factor in South Africa in the 19th century: Towards a reassessment, pp.105-133.

safeguarding imperial interests, whether one regards these as strategic or economic.¹¹¹

4.13. TREATIES AND HIDDEN BRITISH AGENDA: CHEAP, COMPLIANT LABOUR

Thus, as Smith points out, the key to British rule in South Africa was the co-option of reliable indigenous collaborators to serve the need for a cheap, highly controlled labour force.¹¹² As a result, Black societies were 'crushed and transformed so that their labour could be more efficiently exploited.'¹¹³ It is probably against this background that the Traders in some quarters are 'no longer seen as the enterprising pioneers of civilisation; they are regarded as "greedy, scheming opportunists" who deliberately spread lies about King Shaka and the Zulu state for their own material ends.'¹¹⁴ For example, it was the likes of Fynn and Isaacs that were primarily responsible for feeding the outside world a distorted image of the Zulu kings, especially Shaka and Dingane, as bloodthirsty monsters. The greedy Traders did this by exaggerating the allegedly 'savage propensities and treachery' of the Zulu kings.

Interestingly, Theal, one of the foremost Afrikaner historians, '...saw the early 'Natal' Traders as having opened the way for the coming of the Voortrekkers rather than for the establishment of British rule.'¹¹⁵ Cubbin argues that although '...certainly impressed with the extraordinary power of the British monarch,'¹¹⁶ King Dingane maintained his independence from the Traders. As if to show who really was in power, King Dingane told the Traders that: 'You malongoes have your ideas, and we have ours and you are my people...your

¹¹¹ A. Atmore and S. Marks: The Imperial Factor in South Africa in the 19th Century: Towards a reassessment, p.132.

¹¹² K. Smith: The Changing Past, p.177.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.177.

¹¹⁴ J.B. Wright: The dynamics of power and conflict in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu region in the late 18th and 19th centuries: A critical reconstruction, p.324.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.321.

¹¹⁶ L. Herrman (ed.): Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa. Vol.II, p.105.

property is mine.'¹¹⁷ Cubbin maintains that the latter thought becomes clear when one has a look at the implications of the string of treaties produced by the Europeans: -

7.8.1824	F.G. Farewell
2.1828	J.S. King
17.9.1838	N. Isaacs
1832	James Collis
6.5.1835	Captain Allen Gardiner
21.6.1837	King of England
5.1.1838	Piet Retief
12.1.1840	Volksraad ¹¹⁸
12.1.1841	

As Cubbin points out, 'most of these treaties were basically the same - for some trifle 'Natal' from the Thukela to the Umzinvubu along the coast to the Drakensberg inland was given to the European recipient.'¹¹⁹

Cubbin believes that an examination of Farewell's document in some detail will be worthwhile in understanding the delicate nature of the treaties. We read that Shaka signed the document and according to Farewell: '...he perfectly understood the purport of the document' – all this territory as a reward for his (Farewell's) – '...kind attention to me in my illness from a wound,'¹²⁰ that incidentally, Fynn performed.' However, A.T. Bryant scolds the latter argument when he states that:

The unctuous sense of self-righteousness which invariably well up the English man's soul whenever he is engaged in annexing the property of others - and notably so when it be the land of the primitives - is, to the unbiased observer, sometimes as astounding as amusing...Of course, it goes without saying that Shaka had not the slightest intention of perpetrating any of the absurdities contained in the egregious document. No sable monarch, as astute and

¹¹⁷ L. Herrman (ed.): Nathaniel Isaacs' Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa. Vol. II, p.111.

¹¹⁸ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.125.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.125.

¹²⁰ J. Stuart and D.Mck. Malcolm: The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, p.88.

jealous as he, would have entertained the idea for one moment of delivering over his country and sacrificing his sovereign rights to a rank stranger, and least of all to a "mean White", ...Just how much Shaka understood of these Gilbertian proceedings will be apparent when we consider that ..." the same territory was given at various times to different Traders."¹²¹

I cannot agree with O. Geyser's assumption that, 'King Dingane was fully aware that he was giving Zulu land absolutely to the Whites.'¹²² Mutwa is also instructive when he observes that King Dingane was 'being tricked out of the same piece of land by both parties - Gardiner and Retief - and each came to him with European-style documents which meant nothing to him.'¹²³ To prove the insignificance of these documents, Cubbin informs us that Retief's documents (if ever they existed) 'stayed untouched for 10 months on Kwa Matiwane, silent proof of its meaninglessness to King Dingane. European concepts of treaty rights, e.g. witness, signature, etc., were irrelevant to the Chief who was custodian of Zulu tribal ground.'¹²⁴ The issue of land and other attendant aspects to it will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, especially in relation to Piet Retief and the Voortrekkers.

It is important to note that the arrival of the Retief-Maritz deputation to 'Port Natal' in October 1837 inspired the Traders to adopt measures that would release them from economic and political control of King Dingane. In June 1837 news of the impending Boer move into 'Natal' stimulated the traders to consider aligning themselves with the Boers. Not expecting any immediate establishment of British rule, the Traders announced that when the Boers arrive 'we intend to form an internal government of our own, free from false measures and wavering policy of the neighbouring Cape colony, and we have no doubt that everything will then go smoothly.'¹²⁵ Indeed, Retief found

¹²¹ A.T. Bryant: Olden Days in Natal, pp. 580-585.

¹²² O. Geyser: "Farewell – Dingane Ooreenkoms". Historia. June 1964.

¹²³ Mutwa, as quoted by A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.127.

¹²⁴ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of British Settlement at Port Natal, p.127.

¹²⁵ C.C. Ballard: The TransFrontierman: The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895, p.61.

that the Traders would welcome the emigrants, believing that their presence would increase their security.

4.14. CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the relationships between King Dingane and the British Traders, Hunters, and Settlers in 'Port Natal' during the 19th Century, and specifically between 1828 and 1838. These relationships had a decisive influence on the socio-economic and political development of the region and also of the country as a whole. It would also play an important part in setting the tone for future dealings between the indigenous people of South Africa and the Whites.

It is pointed out that the relationships between King Dingane, the British traders and Settlers, and the Voortrekkers can only be understood in the context of events that were taking place in the Cape Colonial Eastern frontier at the time. For this reason, the concept 'frontier' is dealt with as the area of interaction between the two different groups. On this 'frontier' in 'Natal', the settlers stepped in as dauntless pioneers of British trade and British influence and, together with the traders, they were also the pioneers of colonization.

CHAPTER 5

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KING DINGANE AND THE VOORTREKKERS: THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL HEGEMONY

The future historian of South Africa will probably find it difficult to decide between the claims of wickedness, weakness, and folly for dictating the political history of KwaZulu (Times of Natal: 21 November 1888).

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the relationship between King Dingane and the Voortrekkers is explored, with special emphasis on the issue of political hegemony. The accompanying assumption of superiority of one social group (the Voortrekkers) over another (the Zulus) is also taken into account and discussed.

5.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING A BACKGROUND TO HISTORICAL EVENTS

Instead of a refreshing perspective on the Voortrekkers and their relationships and interactions with the indigenous people of the Zulu Kingdom that would provide an authentic basis for historical events, a variety of glorified interpretations and perceptions about the Voortrekkers have been used to embellish many a historical text. Unfortunately, these interpretations and perceptions have led to misunderstanding. It is my contention that one cannot write about the emigrant farmers, in particular Piet Retief, without tracing their

background at the Cape Colonial Eastern frontier. It needs to be mentioned that Piet Retief, one of the foremost leaders of the Voortrekker movement, was profoundly influenced by, for example, the writings of the Grahamstown Journal, edited by Robert Godlonton. Most importantly, it would also seem that he was strongly influenced by Lord Glenelg¹, the then former British Minister of Colonies. The latter insisted that to avoid future conflicts on the Cape Eastern side of the Fish River, the conflicting parties would have to agree to a definite boundary (segregation in the real sense of the word) by formal agreement. Lord Glenelg disapproved of Benjamin D'Urban's proclamation of the Province of Queen Adelaide – and he eventually discarded it in favour of a system of treaties. I believe that this definitely influenced Piet Retief, who was a prominent field commandant during the Sixth Cape Eastern Frontier War from 1835-1836.

Retief may well have believed that he should also strive to obtain a similar formal treaty signed by King Dingane. This would allow him to show the outside world that the Voortrekkers had a right of settlement to the South of the uThukela River based on a legitimate treaty. I am sketching this background because it is generally assumed that one cannot undertake a study of a person without considering the context of time and place during which that person figured. Piet Retief and King Dingane are no exception to this line of argument. Schwantes succinctly argues that, 'a sense of perspective is a necessary requisite for the historian for the simple reason that an event is understandable only in the context of what preceded and what followed.'² Leopold von Ranke, the great German historian, is also instructive when he contends that:

History has had assigned to it the task of judging the past
of instructing the present for the benefit of the ages to

¹ For more information on Lord Glenelg and his treaty system, see J.G. Pretorius: The British Humanitarians and the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1834-1836, passim.

² S.J. Schwantes: The Biblical Meaning of History, p.5.

come. To such lofty functions this work does not aspire. Its aim is merely to show how things actually were.³

The above famous quotation, frequently used by historians, is, as observed by Litchman and French, often misinterpreted to mean that 'the historian must eschew interpretation for the passive recounting of reports about the past.' They point out that von Ranke rather meant that '...the historian should reconstruct and explain past events. What he did not want was for the historian to become a moralist, a cynic, or a system builder.'⁴ Litchman and French furthermore explain Ranke's belief that particular events must be understood individually, in their own context, and that human decisions must not be evaluated morally according to the standards of another age. As emphasized by them, 'above all, Ranke insisted on close and critical attention to primary and secondary sources, on learning about the past from the inside rather than imposing an overarching theory from the outside.'⁵

I want to argue that it is particularly the imposition of an overarching theory from outside that has led to a number of conflicting interpretations about the Voortrekkers; interpretations, as alluded to already, that lead to misunderstanding.

5.3. THE VOORTREKKERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Before addressing the reason for the departure of emigrant farmers from the Cape Colonial Frontier, it is important to highlight their views regarding the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape. This is important because it will provide insight with regard to their views about the Khoikhoi and the Hottentots, and, most importantly, reveal how they treated these people. Their treatment of

³ A.J. Lichtman and V. French: Historians and the Living Past, p.104.

⁴ Ibid., p.104.

⁵ Ibid., p.104.

other indigenous people could reflect the treatment that would later be meted out to the Zulus.

It is also interesting to note that when subjugating the so-called non-Whites, the Dutch colonists invoked the Bible to justify the subjugation of not only the indigenes, but of their lands as well. The specific verse that was quoted ad nauseum is the Old Testament curse by God for the ancient offences of Ham or Canaan.

The rationale seems to be, if the so-called non-Whites are cursed by God, then why would they (non-Whites) be spared any form of inhuman treatment because it would seem that even a person so Supreme as God had sanctioned their enslavement. After all, the Dutch Colonists, and many other people, believed that the so-called non-Whites were nothing but 'savages'. The irony is that for the harbingers of civilization to be able to communicate with those contemptuously referred to as savages they had to lower themselves to the level of these savages. It is my contention therefore that in the process of doing so, the harbingers not only also became savages, but that this was a nostalgic return to the state from which they evolved. A report that the Governor received from a local official on the treatment of Khoikhoi servants by the colonists during the Dutch rule in the Cape, stipulates that:

According to the unfortunate notion prevalent here...a heathen is not actually human, but at the same time he cannot be classed among the animals. He is therefore a sort of creature not known elsewhere. His word in no wise can be believed, and only by violent measures can he be brought to do good and shun evil.⁶

According to Fredrickson,

⁶ G.M. Fredrickson: White Supremacy, p.171.

[There are] ...strong indications that "Christian" and "Heathen" were functioning as ascriptive categories denoting racial types requiring different kinds of treatment and that what was being justified was not a particular institution of control but the right to apply force in an arbitrary way. It was no giant step from such beliefs to the notion that the Boers were a chosen people, analogous to the ancient Israelites, who had a special and exclusive relationship with God and a mandate to smite the Heathen.⁷

Again, as observed by Fredrickson, a Moravian Missionary who visited the Cape in 1815 listened to a Settler discoursing at length 'on the state of the Hottentots and Caffres, whom he considered as the Canaanites of this land, destined to be destroyed by the White people.'⁸ Fredrickson points out that 'by the time of the Trek discontented Emigrant farmers were presumably quite capable of viewing the humanitarian assault on their racial order as a denial of what they took to be firm Biblical sanctions for dominating non-Whites by force and formally excluding them from citizenship.'⁹ This is how the Dutch Colonists viewed the Blacks, and the descendants of these Colonists would later come to the Zulu Kingdom with the same mindset if not beliefs about Black people. Who can then blame King Dingane for having put to death people who strongly believed that they could achieve their objectives by using violent measures? Again, in their quest to subjugate non-Whites, representatives of the White race had to dispute the notion of equality between itself and that of the so-called inferior races. According to an official of the 'Natal' Department of Native Affairs:

No weight should be given to such preposterous notions as equality between Europeans and natives. Equality is a state of affairs, which at the present stage of evolution should not be dreamt of. It is an unnatural condition between people so utterly dissimilar in civilisation.¹⁰

⁷ G.M. Fredrickson: White Supremacy, p.171.

⁸ Ibid., p.171.

⁹ Ibid., p.171.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.196.

As if not to be outdone, Lord Milner, the British High Commissioner, also added his voice to the chorus on this aspect of equality. Commenting immediately after the Anglo-Boer War, Lord Milner said:

A political equality of White and Black is impossible. The White man must rule, because he is elevated by many, many steps above the Black man; steps which it will take the latter centuries to climb, and which it is quite possible that the vast bulk of the Black population may never be able to climb at all.¹¹

Still on the question of equality, in respect of the reasons why the Coloured races could not be given the franchise, an Anglophone member of the Transvaal Parliament argued that it was not possible:

... to give the Coloured races the franchise in this country unless you wish to make this country intolerable for the White man to live in... Let us keep the two races separate, and let us govern the Black races to the best of our ability, because... the negro races occupy the lowest position on the evolutionary scale.¹²

Nobody, however, addresses the question of equality more forcefully than Thomson, 'the most bigoted White Settler,' according to Rotberg's (ed.) *Africa and its Explorers*. Thomson's diatribe is given in full hereunder, as it is key to the understanding of certain attitudes that prevailed at the time:

We have made the mistake of attempting to govern the Negroes on lines utterly unsuited to their stage of development. If you can imagine what would be the result of acting with a boy of ten as if he had the same rights and privileges of an adult - as if he was quite capable of taking a position among his elders on a footing of equality - you will have an idea what sort of offensive creature our method of rule has made the West Coast Negro. And yet the illustration is weak, for the boy, though he would be spoiled and ruined body and soul and made incapable of

¹¹ G.M. Fredrickson: White Supremacy, p.195.

¹² Ibid., p.196.

all healthy development, has yet the making of the man in him in his own lifetime, while the barbarian Negro has not the power of rising to the level of the civilised man either in his own life time or in the second or third generation. Finally, the consequence of his being treated as the European's peer has been only to spoil him and retard his natural development whilst covering him with a ridiculous veneer of civilisation, which makes him the most offensive jackdaw in peacock's feathers ever seen.¹³

I want to argue, therefore, that the 'barbarism' that is ascribed to African people in general, and King Dingane in particular, can not actually be based on what he did or did not do, but that it is something that the invaders had conceptualised about non-Whites as different from the White race. To refer to Africans as 'barbaric' implies racist assumptions, which would justify African people being treated differently, and having their land usurped. In short, the 'barbarism' ascribed to King Dingane had nothing to do with his actions or world-view.

Herbert Dhlomo captures this ascription of 'barbarism' on King Dingane when he asserts that, due to the fact that the European historian was '...handicapped by preconceived ideas and existing prejudices, he could not enter the mind and the aspirations and feelings of the Black people' about whom he wrote:

...In South Africa the activities of the great African geniuses and heroes such as Dingane, Moshoeshoe, Shaka, Nongqause and many others are treated superficially and dismissed as barbaric. The social, psychological, every day life of the people is shamefully neglected or misconstrued. Therefore constant research, frequent revision, open-mindedness and industry are required if we are to keep our historical facts up to date.¹⁴

¹³ R.I. Rotberg (ed.): *Africa and Its Explorers*, pp.313-314.

¹⁴ H. Dhlomo: 'African Drama and Research', pp.129-132.

Similarly, Nobel Prize winner, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in 1983, captures this conceptualization about 'non-whites' when she spoke of Latin America as a continent of solitude:

Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friend, is the crux of our solitude. And if these difficulties, whose essence we share, hinder us, it is understandable that the rational talents on this side of the world, exalted in the contemplation of their own cultures, should have found themselves without a valid means to interpret us. It is only natural that they insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all, and that the quest of our identity is just as arduous and bloody for us as it was for them. The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary.¹⁵

5.4. COMING OF THE VOORTREKKERS IN NATAL: THE GREAT TREK IN PERSPECTIVE

Daniel Lindley, in a letter from Grahamstown dated 2 May 1837, gave news of the Great Trek

The emigrant Boers at present think they will settle not far from Natal, in order that they may trade at that port: and beside the fifty Englishmen already there, a number more in this place say they are making ready to immigrate to Natal. It is now quite evident that no very long period will elapse before a considerable white population will be settled at and around that port; and when this shall take place, we may expect that the natives in that region will be compelled to give way to the wishes and interests of the white man.¹⁶

¹⁵ B.M. Magubane: The Making of a Racist state, p.3.

¹⁶ D.J. Kotze: American Missionaries' Letters, p.173.

Again, Daniel Lindley on 2 May 1837 made a prescient observation concerning the 'Natal' situation, which, it must be pointed out, still fell under the jurisdiction of King Dingane):

Should the English Government become possessed of Port Natal, and adopt a humane, Christian policy towards the natives of that region, Dingaan may continue King of his own country, but unless protected by British power, the year of his disinheritance is not far before him.¹⁷

The sentiments expressed in the above passage demonstrate in an unequivocal terms the conditions the Zulu people would be subjected to upon the arrival of the Voortrekkers in the Zulu Kingdom. Above all, as Cubbin points out, these prognostications were full of ominous portents for the immediate future of 'Natal' and the Zulu hegemony. In the statement that Piet Retief sent to the Grahamstown Journal to explain their decision to leave on trek, he said they hoped that the British government would 'allow us to govern ourselves without its interference in future.'¹⁸ He furthermore stated: 'We are resolved, wherever we go, that we will uphold the just principles of liberty; but, whilst we will take care that no one shall be held in a state of slavery, it is our determination to maintain such regulations as may suppress crime, and preserve proper relations between master and servant.'¹⁹ According to Thompson, Retief meant to say that 'they intended to recreate the social and economic structure of the eighteenth-century Cape Colony, but to ward off British reprisals-they disclaimed the practice of overt slavery.'²⁰

In one of the most famous retrospective accounts of the Trek, one of the participants attributed the migration of the Dutch partly to the shameful and unjust proceedings with reference to the setting free of 'our slaves.'²¹ Retief's

¹⁷D.J. Kotze: American Missionaries' Letters, p.174.

¹⁸ L. Thompson: A History of South Africa, p.88.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.88.

²⁰ Ibid., p.88.

²¹ G.M. Fredrickson: White Supremacy, 171.

niece, Anna Steenkamp, made this clear in her memoirs. Referring to the emancipation of the slaves she wrote:

It is not so much their freedom that drove us to such lengths, as their being placed on an equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinctions of race and religion, so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke; wherefore we rather withdrew in order thus to preserve our doctrines in purity.²²

The freedom of the slaves that the emigrant farmers were complaining about was of course brought about by British rule, and according to Moleah:

The British brought about many changes, which put to an end the world the Afrikaners had known. Their (the emigrant farmers') discomfort, and in many instances bewilderment, turned into a deep sense of dissatisfaction with British rule and it was quite obvious that they could not successfully resist these changes, thus, the only viable option was to leave the Cape Colony and escape British rule.²³

Etherington is informative when he points out that '...the occupation of new territory by the Voortrekkers was not peculiar and uncommon. History has various migrations and scrambles for land in various parts of the world.'²⁴ He explains that, following the Napoleonic wars, population growth, booming demand for agricultural commodities and improvements in transportation and storage, there was seizure of land from its indigenous owners. The following examples are provided:

Such occurred in the Louisiana territory, Texas, Oregon, Algeria, New Zealand and Australia. The Great Trek began in the same year when the Wakefield's South Australia Company surveyed its capital. Piet Uys unfolds that he and his followers were determined to establish their settlement

²² L. Thompson: A History of South Africa, p.88.

²³ A.T. Moleah: South Africa, p.143.

²⁴ N. Etherington: 'The Great Trek in Relation to the Mfecane: Reassessment', p.19.

on the same principles of liberty as those used by the United States of America.²⁵

Cubbin supports Etherington when he makes an interesting observation that the Trekkers had trekked away from British authority to establish their own independent government. Many of the 1820 Settlers had also moved away from the Eastern Frontier to 'Port Natal' – so the English were also very much involved in the breakaway pioneer movement. As the breakaway movement clearly was not the exclusive preserve of the Voortrekkers, there is common cause between the English Traders and Voortrekkers in a frontier society.²⁶

5.5. THE GREAT TREK AND CHRISTIAN ULTRA-CALVINISM

Mkhatshwa also makes a valuable contribution to the rationale behind the Trek when he points out that the Trek was driven, among others, by a religious impetus as most, if not all of those who journeyed in this exodus, were professed advocates of the Calvinist Christian faith. Mkhatshwa explains that Calvinist theology foregrounds the theory of absolute predestination in its explication of God's dealings with human subjects. This accounts for the Afrikaners' strong belief in Providence, as the foregrounding of predestination also accounts for the Afrikaners' act of ascribing theological significance to the Great Trek.²⁷ Mkhatshwa believes that the history of the Afrikaners, as partly constituted by the Great Trek, assumed a sacred character to the extent that any opposition to the realisation of their unfolding history would be regarded as opposition to divine Will. Afrikaners compared their plight and vicissitudes with that of ancient Israel, which sought liberation from the Egyptian yoke. Given their circumstances, the Afrikaners identified themselves with the Israelites, while they saw the British as the Egyptians and the Africans as the Canaanites whose land had to be expropriated – as they

²⁵ N. Etherington, 'The Great Trek in Relation to the Mfecane: Reassessment', p.19.

²⁶ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement At Port Natal, p.136.

²⁷ E.J. Mkhatshwa: Re-inscribing the author: an approach to the pragmatics of reading and interpretation in Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa and Luke's Book of Acts, p.98.

(Afrikaners) conceived of the history of subjugation as God's will.²⁸ As de Gruchy points out:

...a defeated people needs an interpretation of their history, a mythos, which can enable them to discover what has happened to them. The continuity of the Afrikaners demanded such a world-view, which would provide coherence to their shattered hopes. Calvinism as a form of Orthodox Christianity deems the entire bible to be authoritative as it assumed to be "divinely authored." Moreover it does not condemn the politics of dominance and exclusion since the history of subjugation as depicted in the stories of ancient Israel defeating the people of Jericho and taking forcible possession of their land are sanctioned'.²⁹

Mkhatshwa furthermore argues that for the Afrikaners who were professed Calvinists, '...the bible was normative and had a 'legitimizing significance' in their own struggle for survival as a supposedly distinct racial group.' However, he provides a corrective measure with regard to what appears to be common belief about Calvinism, by pointing out that '...Calvinism in its undiluted form stresses the equality of all people before God thus rendering the notion of racial inequality untenable.'³⁰ According to Mkhatshwa, the Trekkers were therefore following a misleading ideology:

It must be said though that the Afrikaners undertaking the Great Trek were influenced by "wayward schools of Calvinist theology" advocating ultra-Calvinist theology in which elements of denigration and subjugation are not only sanctioned but also legitimated. Notably ultra-Calvinist theology is of the view that some people are born to be masters while others are born to be servants.³¹

²⁸ E.J. Mkhatshwa: Re-inscribing the author: an approach to the pragmatics of reading and interpretation in Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa and Luke's Book of Acts, pp.98-99.

²⁹ Gruchy, cited in E.J. Mkhatshwa: Re-inscribing the author: an approach to the pragmatics of reading and interpretation in Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa and Luke's Book of Acts, p.99.

³⁰ E.J. Mkhatshwa: Re-inscribing the author: an approach to the pragmatics of reading and interpretation in Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa and Luke's Book of Acts, p.99.

³¹ Ibid., p.99.

5.6. THE GREAT TREK AS A 'WAR OF AGGRESSION'

This conceptualisation of human subjects, argues Mkhathshwa, was indeed at variance with the original Dutch Calvinism at the Cape, which was affected by liberalism.³² It is interesting to note that both Afrikaner and British historians depict the Great Trek as an act of rebellion against British rule. Boer uprisings had taken place before, in 1795, 1799 and 1815, in each case unsuccessfully. In the words of Professor Thompson, in 1836 they launched 'another form of rebellion – escape to a new terrain.' The Afrikaner historian, Professor C.J. M. Muller, describes the Great Trek as 'a rebellion against the British government.' I agree with Lerumo's analysis about the trek when he argues that:

Such legalistic assessments leave out of account the principal character of the 'Trek' as a war of aggression. Far from being the relatively peaceful occupation of empty territory described by their present-day descendants and propagandists, the intrusion of the Boers into the interior was an armed invasion of lands belonging to people whose ancestors had inhabited them from time immemorial. Had the British seriously wanted to do so, they could without much difficulty have suppressed this 'rebellion' and prevented the northward movement of the trekkers. *In fact they connived at it.*³³ [my emphasis]

Fredrickson provides a fascinating rationale behind both the 'coming' of the Voortrekkers to the Zulu kingdom and the subjugation of the Zulus by the Voortrekkers. He believes that the approximately 10,000 Afrikaners who deserted the Cape Colony between 1836 and 1846 and claimed their freedom from British jurisdiction were thus expressing a world view, as they were also reacting to the practical inconvenience and social chaos associated with the new racial policies and with the failure of the British to put a decisive end to African resistance on the Eastern frontier. Fredrickson compares the

³² E.J. Mkhathshwa: Re-inscribing the Author: An Approach to the Pragmatics of reading and interpretation in Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa and Luke's Book of Acts, p.100.

³³ A. Lerumo: Fifty Fighting Years, p.10.

Voortrekkers' worldview to that of the Old South, especially in the mutual conviction that Whites had an inherent right to rule despotically over people of a darker hue. However, unlike the southern secessionists, the Voortrekkers had no commitment to slavery as the only effective means of racial control. Fredrickson believes that their experience of making serfs out of the Khoikhoi provided them with a more flexible conception of how to dominate nonwhite dependents; they preferred *de facto* power to a slave code, which to a large extent contrasts with the situation of southern slaveholders. As the Voortrekkers penetrated more deeply into the interior, their reliance on the labor of imported slaves grew lesser while they depended more and more on that of the free and proud indigenous peoples who were difficult to enslave in the literal sense. Nevertheless, they could be forced into clientage arrangements, and ultimately, into some equivalent of serfdom. Fredrickson points out that the Voortrekkers had little to gain economically by turning their workers into commodities that could be bought and sold, as they lacked a plantation system and a developed commercial economy. Instead, they required political control over their relationships with the indigenous people, and this was '...what the Philipian reforms seemed bent on preventing. Hence the aim of their secession, according to a farmer observing the migration of his neighbors in 1838, was to "trek where the authority of Dr Philip would no longer vex them."³⁴

It is against the abovementioned background that King Dingane was on the alert to protect his kingdom from outside invaders. He had adequate reason to expect invasion as the Capé had already been declared a White man's colony and the indigenous people had already been dispossessed. It is worth mentioning, as argued by Fredrickson, that the worldview of the Voortrekkers was 'akin to that of the Old South in its conviction that White men had an inherent right to rule despotically over people of a darker hue.' I want to argue that the 'Great Trek' was an overt manifestation / demonstration of the

³⁴ G.M Fredrickson: White Supremacy, pp.171-172.

Voortrekkers' worldview, which was rooted in the rejection of the native as an equal. The pillars of the now defunct Apartheid regime had their beginnings in precisely this worldview, including the support of General Smuts and his apparently Nazi-like government.

It is also important to note that when the Voortrekkers first came to the Zulu Kingdom, they could not simply impose their rule over the Zulus since the latter were a force to be reckoned with. The Voortrekkers were aware of the heroic deeds of the Zulus, particularly during King Shaka's time. It is also interesting to note that while the 'Voortrekkers had no commitment to slavery as the only effective means of racial control', this, however, does not rule out the possibility of them using slavery as a means of racial control. This simply implies that there could be other, more effective means through which racial control could be effected. The experiences of Black people during the rule of the Nationalists in South Africa best captures this argument of racial control. During the era of the National Party, racial control was effected through force, as force, so they believed, maintained power. As Mitchell put it:

Where there is no overall system of values and there are no counterbalancing cleavages [across the colour-groups], the hostilities...must be suppressed by legislation or ultimately by force if the body politic is to be maintained intact. Hence constraint rather than consensus would seem to be the basis of cohesion in plural societies.³⁵

However, in the case of the Voortrekkers, their experience with the Khoikhoi enabled them to deal with the Zulus in a more cautious way. The Khoikhoi put up to a gallant fight to protect and preserve their sovereignty, which was being threatened by the Voortrekkers. As mentioned above, what the Voortrekkers wanted was de facto power rather than a slave code. It is our contention that this de facto power could only be achieved through force, and,

³⁵ V. Turner (ed.): Colonialism in Africa, p.150.

ironically, this is exactly what was witnessed later on when the Voortrekkers came to the Zulu Kingdom.

5.7. KING DINGANE: A STRATEGIST AGAINST PATRONISING COLONIALISM AND SUBJUGATION

In short, as the Voortrekkers were penetrating the interior, they knew exactly what was likely to befall them; that is, they could meet resistance and possible defeat. King Dingane's prompt response in killing the Voortrekkers on 6 February 1838 should be seen in the light of the threat that they posed to his kingdom. The use of force and other means to subjugate non-Whites is explicitly intimated in the statement that indigenous people '... were difficult to enslave in a literal sense.'³⁶ Apart from the use of force to subjugate the non-Whites, the colonisation of the minds of the non-Whites was to prove an even more effective weapon in the arsenal of the colonists. Judicious use of this weapon explains the making of the likes of John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo who internalised the ideological assumptions of the West. The colonisation of the mind of the African was achieved through the manipulation of their history, 'and in the case of Zulu history, Golan is instructive when he argues that:

Europeans not only used their power to conquer and exploit Africans; they also used it to monopolize the Africans' history. The colonizers determined which themes in Zulu history would be stressed, and what would be forgotten. They selected the figures who would be remembered and defined the image in which the memory would be maintained.³⁷

Clarke is also instructive when he observes that:

Europeans not only colonized most of the world, they began to colonize information about the world and its

³⁶ G.M. Fredrickson: White Supremacy, p.172.

³⁷ D. Golan: Construction and Reconstruction of Zulu History, p.5.

people. In order to this, they had to forget, or pretend to forget, all they had previously known about the Africans.³⁸

According to Curtin et al, 'by 1838...the majority of the Voortrekkers had decided to settle in 'Natal' - the reason being that its coastline provided an opportunity for trade with continental Europe and the United States, in preference to the landlocked highveld, where they could only replenish their supplies of arms, ammunition, and groceries through the Cape colonial network.'³⁹ According to Mkhathshwa, the dream of the Voortrekkers to 'trade with continental Europe and the United States' would materialise (as it did) once the indigenous people had been 'dispossessed of their land which is the basic means of all production and subsistence as well as a source of power.'⁴⁰ Bundy is of the opinion that 'the demands made by the Trek community on its leaders were limited and simple enough: they called for plenty of land, for security and labour.'⁴¹ Similarly, Moleah points out that a constant complaint of Eastern frontier farmers, which was carried with them into the interior of South Africa, was their need for Black labour. Moleah clarifies this in terms of Retief's Manifesto:

Piet Retief in his Manifesto expresses this as a complaint against vagrancy and a loss of coercive control brought about by passage of Ordinance 50. To the Boers any African not in the employ of a White man was a vagrant - an un-natural phenomenon not to be allowed... The Boers felt that they had a God-given right to the labor of others and had come to despise work as not befitting a White person, were outraged by this turn of events.⁴²

For Moleah, the cumulative effect of all these measures went beyond the economic meaning of the Boers' racist perceptions of themselves in relation

³⁸ J.H. Clarke, 'Why Africana History', p.1.

³⁹ P. Curtin, et al (eds.): *African History*, p.318.

⁴⁰ E.J. Mkhathshwa: *Re-inscribing the author: an approach to the pragmatics of reading and Interpretation in Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa and Luke's Book of Acts*, pp.97-98.

⁴¹ C. Bundy: *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, p.167.

⁴² A.T. Moleah: *South Africa*, p.145.

to all Blacks.⁴³ Brookes and Webb point out that whereas the question of colour was uppermost in the minds of the Trekkers with regard to their settlement in 'Natal', they could not 'trek' away from Africa or Africans as these were always and inevitably with them.

They only exchanged one frontier for another. The Zulu Monarch was a powerful neighbour. The Trekkers were willing and anxious to live in peace with him: if they failed they would fight for their future, and with none of the compromises and withdrawals to which the British government had accustomed them on the Xhosa frontier.⁴⁴

The above quotation spells it out clearly. When the Voortrekkers came to 'Port Natal', they had already decided that they would use force if ever King Dingane were to refuse to give them land. As fate would have it, King Dingane pre-empted the 'force' of the Voortrekkers, and he struck first. King Dingane's putting to death of Piet Retief and his entourage later on should therefore be understood against this background. According to Laband, for his part, Piet Retief, who reached the Drakenberg passes in early October 1837; understood that if the emigrant were to settle securely in 'Natal', it was necessary to come to an understanding both with the 'Port Natal' Traders and with King Dingane.⁴⁵ He (Retief) was gratified to discover that the Traders were prepared to welcome the Voortrekkers as allies and neighbours. Indeed, the Traders hoped that with Boer aid they would be released both from King Dingane's economic and political control and from the Cape's wavering interference.⁴⁶ Assured of the Traders' support, Retief opened communications with King Dingane as it turned out through the Missionary Francis Owen at umGungundlovu. He sent out a letter dated 19 October 1837, telling of the Boers' wish to live in peace with the Zulu, though at the same time ominously referring to Mzilikazi's defeat at Boer hands.⁴⁷

⁴³ A.T. Moleah: South Africa, p.145.

⁴⁴ E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb: A History of Natal, p.30.

⁴⁵ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, pp.81-82.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.82.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.82.

Indeed, argues Laband, this superficial conciliatory missive set the tone for Retief's ambiguous dealings with King Dingane.⁴⁸

In October 1837, Retief went ahead with a small party to negotiate with a few British men who had been trading at 'Port Natal' to forestall British intervention – and with King Dingane, to ask for a grant of land and to prevent a Zulu attack.⁴⁹ However, King Dingane had already been made suspicious of Europeans by the erratic behaviour of a small group of British traders at 'Port Natal', who were harbouring a few thousand refugees from his kingdom. He was also well-informed about the fate of Mzilikazi. He regarded a Voortrekker settlement in 'Natal' as a threat to his kingdom and he was determined to prevent it.⁵⁰ As if playing with time, King Dingane tentatively agreed to the request by Piet Retief, provided that Retief retrieved several hundred cattle, which had been raided recently from the northwestern region of the kingdom by Segonyela, the Tlokwa chief.⁵¹

According to Laband, Retief also knew the Tlokwa to be the real cattle thieves, but was prepared to perform the labour of recovering the stolen cattle to prove the Boers' good intentions. Shortly after leaving uMgungundlovu, Retief sent a rather 'undiplomatic and paternalistic' letter to King Dingane. He could not forbear from adding some sanctimonious words of clear intimidation to remind the Zulu king that, for all his ostentatious display over the previous days, superior military power as evidenced in the defeat of Mzilikazi lay in the hands of the Boers:

What has now happened to Moselekatsi makes believe that the Almighty and all knowing God will not permit him much longer to live.⁵² The great Book of God teaches us that kings who conduct themselves as Umsilikazi does are

⁴⁸ J. Laband: *Rope of Sand*, p.82.

⁴⁹ L. Thompson: *A History of South Africa*, p.90.

⁵⁰ P. Curtin, et al: *African History*, p.318.

⁵¹ A. Duminy and B. Guest: *Natal and Zululand*, p.91.

⁵² T. Cameron (ed.): *An Illustrated History of South Africa*, p.134.

severely punished, and that it is not granted to them to live or reign long; and if you desire at greater length how God deals with such bad kings, you must enquire concerning it from the Missionaries in your country.⁵³

This was indeed 'a gratuitous threat and insult' to King Dingane, and as Laband puts it, 'King Dingane could hardly have relished such harsh and threatening words from Retief, whose frank, open manners and mildness of demeanour clearly belied his true sentiments.'⁵⁴ Indeed, Roberts is informative when he points out that what is clear from the letter is Retief's idea of 'understanding the Kaffir.' His tone, therefore, is pious, cajoling, and unmistakably patronizing. Roberts points out that, like many others of his time, he made the great mistake of believing that Africans, regardless of their position, should be treated as children, kindly but firmly:

Unfortunately he was dealing with the wrong man. Dingane, whatever else he might have been, was no child. He could recognise a threat when he saw one. And by linking the threat with the teaching of the missionaries, Retief added fuel to a longstanding suspicion. Jacob's prophecy must indeed have appeared to be coming true. Had Dingane and the indunas needed further proof of the danger posed by this "White army," Retief's letter undoubtedly provided it.⁵⁵

According to Laband, King Dingane allowed Retief to leave uMgungundlovu in mid-November, but there is evidence that he ordered his death on the way back to 'Port Natal'. According to Chief Sigwebana, who fled to 'Port Natal' with the remnants of his people after being 'eaten up' for disobeying his commission, King Dingane instructed him to invite Retief and his party to his homestead and, while entertaining him with dance and food, put them to death.⁵⁶ According to Laband, Retief was not blind to simmering Zulu animosity and the dangers it held for his people, but he thought that straight and firm handling of King Dingane could still produce the fruits the emigrants

⁵³ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.83.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.83.

⁵⁵ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.279.

⁵⁶ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.83.

desired. So while he returned to 'Port Natal' to confer with his new allies the Traders, he sent word to the laager at Kerkenberg of his unsuccessful negotiations. The emigrants thereupon brought their wagons down the Drakensberg passes.⁵⁷ It is very strange that the Voortrekkers brought their wagons down the Drakensberg passes even after they had been told of the unsuccessful negotiations. This indeed constituted an act of invasion. As Moleah puts it,

The Voortrekkers had begun across the Drakenberg Mountains and occupying land before King Dingane had responded to their request for land grants. This was most serious, and it confirmed his suspicions and worst fears. They had asked, but then proceeded to give themselves. By asking, they acknowledged King Dingane's overlordship; by giving themselves, they nullified this acknowledgement, and, in fact, made a mockery of it. This was a gross and insulting affront in Zulu eyes.⁵⁸

5.8. THE SACREDNESS OF LAND TO THE ZULU

It is important to note that the initial encounter between the Voortrekkers and the Zulus was amicable. I want to argue that this amicability was a strategy on the part of the Voortrekkers to procure land. The issue of land is one of the most contentious aspects, especially between Africans and Europeans. No one said it better than Lord Hailey when describing the importance of land to African people:

It is not easy for those who know only the industrialized countries of the Western world to realise the significance of the position occupied by the land in the eyes of most of the peoples of Africa. Anthropologists have described the mystic bond, which unites the African to the home of those ancestral spirits who continue, as he believes, to play an active part in his daily life. Jurists point out that the tribal Chief derives his authority largely from the fact that he is in

⁵⁷ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.84.

⁵⁸ A.T. Moleah: South Africa, p.181.

war the traditional defender of the lands of the tribe and in peace the arbiter of the differences, which arise regarding their use.⁵⁹

Davenport is also informative when he points out that:

In traditional society the African chief normally held the land on behalf of his people. He had the power to allocate arable land for use but never outright ownership, though a son could normally expect to obtain the use of his father's holding. Grazing land was held in common, but the chief could control access to it by the villagers' livestock.⁶⁰

Thompson is also instructive when he points out that 'there was no concept of individual land ownership...land belonged to the community, not to individuals.'⁶¹ According to Colson, 'European and African conceptions of the essential relationship between people and land were fundamentally different in the nineteenth century even if the comparison is made between Europe and the most economically developed areas of Africa.'⁶² Bohanan queries the propriety of the use of the term 'land tenure' in speaking of African systems of land use. He does this on the grounds that the term is based on the European idea that land is something that can be measured, plotted, and subdivided into units, which become 'things' in themselves and subject to rights assigned to holders.⁶³

Perhaps the most famous, and certainly the most quoted statement in the literature on African land tenure is that attributed to a Nigerian chief in the early twentieth century. The chief put it eloquently when he said: 'I conceive that land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless members are still unborn.'⁶⁴ Thus, according to Colson, 'the chief's

⁵⁹ V.B. Khapoya: The African Experience, p.136.

⁶⁰ T.R.H. Davenport: South Africa, p.164.

⁶¹ L. Thompson: A History of South Africa, p.23.

⁶² V. Turner (ed.): Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, p.198.

⁶³ Ibid., p.198.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.203.

statement has influenced the development of African land law since it has been used to justify the recognition of communal non-transferable rights.⁶⁵ According to Congolese native law, individual land ownership does not exist; there is only collective ownership. The land belongs to the clan, a community made up of family groups consisting of all the descendants - living and dead- of a common ancestor, and in theory, all the generations to come.⁶⁶ Mazrui is also informative when he argues that:

The mystique of land reverence in Africa is partly a compact between the living, the dead and the unborn. Where the ancestors are buried, there the generation should be sought. Land was quite fundamental to both stateless African societies and to empires and city-states.⁶⁷

Mazrui is also instructive when he says that in Africa 'power was land bound.'⁶⁸ Aime Cesaire's lines are relevant to demonstrate land reverence. The pre-colonial African state carried the legacy of land reverence, as witnessed by the following excerpt:

...My negritude is neither a tower nor a cathedral;
It plunges into the red flesh of the earth...⁶⁹

With regard to the Zulu people, Bryant tells us that the Zulu land system was communal. There were no privately owned estates, no land titles, no land sharks, no fences, no rents in this utopia of liberty, fraternity and equality. The whole country belonged to the clan, and no individual thereof, be he commoner or king, was justified in usurping any portion of the common inheritance as his own personal property for all time. The Bantu idea was that all elements of the world were for the common weal and a natural inheritance of all... With them, a man is no more justified in arrogating to himself earth or

⁶⁵ V. Turner (ed.): Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, p.204.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.207.

⁶⁷ A.A. Mazrui: The Africans, p.271.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.272.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.272.

water, than he would be were he to claim their air and light as his private property. Forest, therefore, and veld, grass and wood, mineral and water, were the common and rightful possession of allsoever as cared to draw from them.⁷⁰ In developing the Zulu concept of land, Krige says substantially the same, namely that in true Zulu thought there is no such thing as property in the nation as a whole. While the King has vested in him the power of allotting land to his subjects, the indunas or direct heads under the King, in turn have the right to:

...sell or negotiate with it. All he is given is the right to use the land so granted for his kraal and his gardens; but while he is cultivating or occupying it, it cannot be taken from him except for misdemeanour. All land that has not been allotted for village and garden purposes is free for public grazing. Since land cannot be owned, Zulu property consists only of cattle, goats and sheep, and other livestock, on the one hand, and dwellings, utensils and intimate personal possessions, such as clothes, on the other. Wealth and prestige are measured by the amount of cattle a man possesses.⁷¹

Thus, according to Cubbin, 'the concept of the permanent alienation of land through a treaty is entirely foreign to the Zulu. Europeans placing any faith on a piece of paper did not understand the working of their host's mind and, as guardian of Tribal land; this understanding was cardinal in negotiations with the Zulus. The arrangement which included responsibilities was a royal prerogative which could be terminated, extended or transferred.'⁷²

5.9 THE CONTROVERSIAL KING DINGANE / PIETRETIEF LAND TREATY

Shortly after the defeat of the Zulus in 1838, the Boers claimed to have found the document by which the Zulu king had apparently signed over territory 'as far as the land may be useful and in my possession which I did by this and

⁷⁰ A.T. Bryant: The Zulu People, pp.464-465.

⁷¹ E.T. Krige: The Social System of the Zulus, pp.176-177.

⁷² A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.123.

give unto them their everlasting property.'⁷³ However, according to Guy, 'whether or not this treaty was genuine has been debated ever since: but this controversy is irrelevant....What is relevant is the fact that a debate about the right to land is predicated on a controversy over the existence or non-existence of a document.'⁷⁴ In bolstering his argument, Guy argues that the written word was part of conquest in South Africa. As it was the medium through which the conquerors communicated and organised their resources, policies and tactics, the written treaty was used to confirm the right of the conqueror to the land, thereby 'giving the act of conquest permanency over time and in space.'⁷⁵ According to him, the history of South Africa is replete with accounts of the efforts of the literate invaders to persuade, cajole or demand that the oral, traditional rulers 'touch the pen' and thereby collude in the invaders' plot to acquire land:

The document justified conquest, the published proclamation established the right to rule, and the codification of native law created the written precedent, removing customary law from its African custodians and handing over the practice and the execution of the law to an ever-growing body of literate professionals and state officials.⁷⁶

Naidoo is informative when he points out that no record was ever made of what was said or what happened during the meeting that Retief had with King Dingane on 4 February 1838:

The assertion by the two Trekkers that was going to give them or (as Owen recorded it) 'assign' to them the land between the Thukela and the Mzimvubu Rivers is puzzling. Dingane indicated on more than one occasion that he wished the Trekkers to settle the territory they had conquered from Mzilikazi.⁷⁷

⁷³ J. Guy: 'Making Words Visible: Aspects of Orality, Literacy and History in Southern Africa', p.11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁷⁷ J. Naidoo: Tracking Down Historical Myths, p.114.

According to Naidoo, the area between the Thukela and Mzimvubu Rivers was, more than once, put under the charge of White authorities; and these appointments were confirmed in written documents in so-called 'treaties'. But in the mind of King Dingane (and in Shaka's, before him) these 'treaties' were no more than 'written records or attestations of authority granted to different persons to rule over the designated area: they were, in sum, written but revocable appointments.'⁷⁸

Thus, Naidoo argues that 'if the assertion of the Trekkers was credible; that is, that King Dingane did promise to give them the land, then King Dingane was, on this occasion, willfully deceiving and misleading them.'⁷⁹ But most importantly, as pointed out by Naidoo, 'it is difficult to credit the idea that the recovery of some stolen cattle; the loss of 300 hundred or so cattle was, after all, "a fleabite" to King Dingane by way of payment in kind for a sizeable parcel of real estate.'⁸⁰ Disputing that King Dingane granted land to the Voortrekkers in the form of a treaty, the French travel writer, Adulphe Delagorgue, remarked that:

They [Africans] simply laughed, unable to take the matter seriously; they laughed at the foolishness of the Europeans. They laugh as we would laugh if a Chinese junk arrived to take possession of France in the name of the Celestial Empire, we could consider it a matter of great mirth, and this is just what the natives did. The situation here was exactly similar. The [Zulu] land was not virgin; it was inhabited by a numerous population ...⁸¹

Pheko argues that the Retief-Dingane 'agreement' is extremely puzzling in that it is supposedly signed by King Dingane in agreeing to give or sell land to

⁷⁸ J. Naidoo: Tracking Down Historical Myths, p.114.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.107.

⁸¹ Delagorgue as quoted by S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 29th Century South African history, p.xiv.

the Trekkers represented by Retief, yet the latter did not sign the 'agreement' (someone else did on his behalf). Pheko points out another likelihood:

It is more likely the alleged agreement (the so-called Retief – Dingane Treaty) was made out after Piet Retief's death to make a case against the British colonial government, which had its eyes on Natal. There can be no proof that the alleged X mark found on this document is that of King Dingane and it is most unlikely that Dingane would have been party to such an agreement as traditionally land is not sold in African society....⁸²

Cubbin makes mention of another interesting factor, namely that 'a second major point in connection with Zulu land is that Shaka and Dingane deliberately created an empty region, a cordon sanitaire, between themselves and their neighbours.'⁸³ Henry Fynn explains that '...had Retief been acquainted with the history of the Zulu nation; he would have known that one of the principal objects of Shaka... was totally to depopulate the surrounding country as far as his soldiers could penetrate. This was done so that his followers over whom he held such despotic sway might have no asylum or refuge if they attempted to escape his murderous power.'⁸⁴ This 'scorched earth' policy was the Zulu security system. Thus, according to Cubbin, 'there is no reason to think that King Dingane would have let so powerful a neighbour settle in this area. The Traders at 'Port Natal' although they provided irritating problems e.g. the harbouring of Zulu deserters, provided a lot of pleasure and interest and held no immediate danger to King Dingane's future equanimity and existence.'⁸⁵

⁸² S. M. Pheko in S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.234.

⁸³ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.123.

⁸⁴ J. Stuart and D. Mck. Malcolm: The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, p.314.

⁸⁵ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlements at Port Natal, 124.

5.10. PIET RETIEF'S MISSION IN QUEST OF LAND

Meanwhile, Retief, having accomplished the mission to retrieve the cattle from Sigonyela, returned to Umgungundlovu in February 1838 to claim his part of the bargain.⁸⁶ According to Laband, Dingane was incensed that Retief was not handing Sigonyela over to him for punishment, and indignant that the captured guns and horses were not being sent to him either:

For as Owen realised, he [Dingane] coveted the dreaded muskets and had in mind the formation of a force of mounted gunmen along the same lines as a Boer commando. Dingane could have been nothing but deeply affronted, moreover, at Retief's response to his messengers when they demanded the guns and horses. Pointing to his grey hairs, Retief scathingly told them to remind their master that he was not dealing with a child.⁸⁷

The tone of the language of Retief said it all. Not only did he disrespect King Dingane, but he also undermined his orders. It is also worth mentioning that Naidoo accuses Retief and his party for chicanery in relation to the Sigonyela episode. Naidoo observes that, 'Chief Sigonyela was ransomed for cattle well in excess of the numbers claimed by the Zulu – seven hundred instead of three hundred.'⁸⁸ Kenney maintains that 'if Sigonyela was a thief because he took cattle belonging to Dingaan⁸⁹, then by the same token Retief was a thief when he took cattle that belonged to Sigonyela.'⁹⁰ It is interesting to note that Zulu accounts on the Sigonyela affair present a different perspective.

According to Ndlovu, from testimonies recorded by people like Stuart from Zulu people, we learn that the relationship and trust between King Dingane and the Voortrekkers depended on the success or failure of the Sigonyela expedition and, interestingly, these testimonies were silent about the

⁸⁶ A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds.): Natal and Zululand, p.91.

⁸⁷ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.85.

⁸⁸ J. Naidoo: Tracking Down Historical Myths, p.109.

⁸⁹ Zulu names are often spelt differently by different authors. For example: 'Dingane' is the Afrikaans form of 'Dingane;' and 'Sikonyela' is often rendered as 'Sekonyela' or 'Sigonyela.'

⁹⁰ J. Naidoo: Tracking Down Historical Myths, p.109.

existence of the signed land agreement.⁹¹ The Zulu accounts also contend that the cattle issue involving the baTlokwa and their king was cunningly used by King Dingane to test the Boers' integrity. According to the King's intelligence officers, the Voortrekkers did not return all the cattle belonging to the King when they were sent to recapture them from Sigonyela. This was one of the major reasons advanced to explain the king's confrontational stance towards the Voortrekkers. Piet Retief's behaviour, from the Zulu accounts' perspective, was tantamount to high treason and any person, army general or induna accountable to the Zulu kingdom knew that capital punishment might be exacted for such a deed.⁹² It is important to mention, as pointed out by Cubbin, that a change in King Dingane's approach is found after he received a letter from the Trekkers on 22 January 1838, informing him that the Trekkers had accomplished their purpose with Dingane's difficult vassal, Sigonyela at no cost to lives whatever. It is almost as if Dingane is dumbfounded; now he must deal with the Trekker problem face to face.⁹³

I want to argue that King Dingane never thought the Trekkers would succeed in capturing Sigonyela. His capture not only alarmed King Dingane, but it demonstrated the superiority of the Trekkers, and this, from King Dingane's point of view, did not augur well for his kingdom. There was no doubt in King Dingane's mind that the Voortrekkers posed a serious threat which had to be dealt with decisively if ever there were any hopes of protecting his sovereignty.

5.11. THE PRICE OF ARROGANCE

It is worth mentioning that on his way back to uMgungundlovu, Retief was warned by a number of people 'to be careful of King Dingane and not to

⁹¹ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of historical knowledge in 19th and 20th century South African History, p.44.

⁹² Ibid., p.44.

⁹³ A.E. Cubbin: Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, p.147.

return to uMgungundlovu without a sizeable escort. But Retief would have none of it. He told Mr George Champion, the American Missionary, to be under no fear on his account, for it took a Boer not an Englishman, to understand a Kaffir. Mr Champion reminded Mr Retief that he was an American. Retief was amused: the difference was so small that it was not worth talking about.⁹⁴ When the Boers arrived at uMgungundlovu led by Retief; they 'heralded their coming with an unsettling feu de joie, and riding provocatively right into the ikhanda with their guns in their hands. ...they charged each other on horseback in sham combat, making the air resound with their firing and filling uMgungundlovu with the unfamiliar smell of exploded gunpowder.'⁹⁵ Indeed, this had never happened before in the Royal palace, and it is clear that the Boers violated the protocol of the palace.

Naidoo also observes that when Retief and his party reached Umgungundlovu on Saturday morning 3 February 1838, they 'immediately put on an ostentatious display of power. Without waiting for the Chief's solicitation or permission, they made "the air resound with their guns and the earth reverberate with their horses." It was a forewarning: the menace was formidable, for it was not only the presence of an experienced and hardened cavalry come in considerable numbers, but also the twin defeats of Mzilikazi and Sigonyela that loomed as a threat and fluttered as an invisible banner.'⁹⁶ Again, Laband is informative when he points out that the Boers had been seen (by the guards at the top of the ikhanda) moving around the outside of uMgungundlovu with the apparently sinister intention of surrounding the ikhanda:

Hoofmarks and horse-droppings discovered in the morning proved their point. The Boers insisted that they had simply been in search of their horses, which had broken loose and strayed in search of grazing. But they were not believed, and in Zulu tradition their supposedly hostile

⁹⁴ B. Roberts: The Zulu Kings, p.278.

⁹⁵ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.86.

⁹⁶ J. Naidoo: Tracking Down Historical Myths, pp.110-111.

attempt to encircle uMgungundlovu has been taken as sufficient justification for their subsequent execution.⁹⁷

Naidoo correctly observes that 'Retief and the Trekkers may have overestimated the intimidation of their menace or misjudged its consequence by underestimating the Chief's resolve to save his kingdom, but they had a clear appreciation of the stakes: they knew they were going to the Zulu capital not as a solicitous embassy, but as a potential and cocksure war party.'⁹⁸

Thus, Laband argues that 'it seems clear that the Boers' behaviour while at uMgungundlovu finally decided King Dingane that he must kill them, and in this he was strongly urged on by Ndlela, who mistrusted their intentions entirely.'⁹⁹ To further worsen the Boers' situation, Laband tells us that:

On the day of their departure the Boers antagonised Dingane further by peremptorily demanding the return of those livestock which the Zulu had brought back from their last campaign against Mzilikazi, and which the Boers claimed had originally belonged to them. The proud Zulu reply was that "no cattle ever left Zululand after once getting here." The Boers then added to Dingane's resentment and suspicions by declaring that they wished to fire a parting salute with blank cartridges, as they had done on their arrival. This was also construed as a plot to kill Dingane, and was confirmed afterwards to the Zulus' satisfaction when their muskets were found to be loaded with shot.¹⁰⁰

It was in these circumstances that King Dingane finally put to death Piet Retief and his party. Indeed, King Dingane 'did what any other person in his position would have done to fight the forces of invasion and disruption.' What King Dingane did was not unique and unjustifiable. To judge him against the norms of hospitality and perceptions of the 'benign savages' would indeed be

⁹⁷ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.87.

⁹⁸ J.Naidoo: Tracking Down Historical Myths, p.111.

⁹⁹ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.87.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.87.

naïve and non-contextual. The death of Piet Retief and his entourage can be blamed squarely on their failure to respect the royal protocol. They were given a particular place to stay and they were then seen loitering around the royal kraal (palace) at night. Traditionally, no one was allowed to do that. The King and his subjects knew that the royal kraal was beyond limits at night. This was the time when the king was free to do anything, because he knew that the royal kraal (palace) was closed to the public scrutiny. The Voortrekkers' circling, if not spying, of the royal homestead was interpreted as their trying to find out where the king settled for the night. That was something that was kept a top secret in the royal household. The act of spying was taken as punishable by death. When Piet Retief and his men were caught doing this, their fate was sealed. To the Zulu nation they were spies, and therefore deserved to die. According to Mdletshe, the Zulu nation interpreted their action of moving around the palace as checking how they were going to attack the royal palace on their next visit.¹⁰¹

As pointed out by Mdletshe, it is important to note that the execution of Piet Retief and his entourage was in line with Zulu customary treatment of loiterers around the palace, especially at night. For example, this also happened during King Cetshwayo's reign when Masiphula's son had to be killed. Masiphula was King Cetshwayo's Chief Induna in charge of Nodwengu Palace. According to Mdletshe, Masiphula's son was found loitering in King Cetshwayo's palace. King Cetshwayo tried to intervene on the boy's behalf, pleading that his life be spared. Masiphula himself killed his son because this particular offence was punishable only by death.¹⁰² Similarly Piet Retief and his men had committed actions that were punishable by death alone.

¹⁰¹ Interview with B.M. Mdletshe, 05/12/2003.

¹⁰² Ibid.

As Okoye puts it, by his killing of the Boers, King Dingane incurred 'the seemingly undying hatred of historians,'¹⁰³ especially Afrikaner historians. These historians were in agreement that King Dingane was a 'man with hardly redeeming quality: blood-thirsty, capricious, treacherous, self-indulgent, an absolute despot, an ingrate and an inveterate liar.' What is remarkable about this consensus among historians is that King Dingane lacked all these unflattering attributes. Okoye points out that many reasons could be given for this grievous error on the part of scholars. Among these might be included their failure to resolve the glaring contradictions between the promises and actions of King Dingane and, most importantly, their inability to understand the dynamics of an African societies.¹⁰⁴

5.12. THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH IN THE DEATH OF PIET RETIEF AND HIS PARTY

I would now like to address an aspect that has proved to be a contentious issue with regard to the fate that befell Piet Retief and his party. According to Brookes and Webb, 'attempts have been made to excuse Retief by laying the blame on calumnies made against the Trekkers by one or other of the Englishmen in 'Natal'. Such an explanation, for which no title of proof has ever been adduced, is not necessary.'¹⁰⁵ I disagree with Brookes and Webb's assertions. There is a general agreement among historians that some of the Englishmen did have a hand in contributing to the events that culminated in the putting to death of Piet Retief and his party, and that this was motivated by greed and jealousy. According to Okoye, 'on the shoulders of the ivory traders must rest a part of the blame for the murder of Piet Retief and his followers, for it cannot be doubted that the Zulu Monarch was, to some extent, impelled to the act by his desire for guns.'¹⁰⁶ Gustav Preller maintains

¹⁰³ F.N.C. Okoye, 'Dingane: A Reappraisal', p.221.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.221.

¹⁰⁵ E.H. Brookes and C.de B. Webb: *A History of Natal*, p.32.

¹⁰⁶ F.N.C. Okoye, 'Dingane: A Reappraisal', p.234.

that 'Gardiner is to be held responsible for the murder of Retief and his followers, and of the women and children afterwards.'¹⁰⁷ The other person involved is John Cane. Edward Parker in a letter from 'Port Natal' dated 20.7.1838 addressed to Major Charters, Secretary to the Governor, Major General Sir G.T. Napier, said that it had been clearly ascertained that the war on King Dingane was caused by the treachery of Cane:

It appears that Cane, afraid after Dingaan's favourable reception of Retief on his first visit lest the farmers should settle at Port Natal, sent a message to Dingaan after Retief had left his kraal, telling the Zulu king that the Boers had run away from the Colony against the wishes of the English Government and that they (the Boers) intended to drive him from his country... Toohey now asserts that Cane told him he did send such a message.¹⁰⁸

According to Cubbin, Cane was rather apprehensive of the possibility that the Voortrekkers might be given a grant of land and he therefore wrote a letter to King Dingane on 13.1.1838. According to Cubbin, Cane made the following recommendations:

In allusion to the emigrant Boers, Mr Cane recommended Dingane to draw a line from the source of the Eloffe (Illovo) or rivers Umkomaz, 20 or 30 miles South of Port Natal, to the Tugala, parallel to the sea, about 20 miles from it, and regularly convey the country on the sea-side of the line to the Settlers of Port Natal, leaving all the country on the other side to the Dutch.¹⁰⁹

I want to argue that both Gardiner and Cane were double-faced men. Worse with Gardiner; he masqueraded as a man of God yet his activities in 'Port Natal' projected him as an agent of British imperialism. It was the very same Gardiner, who, when realizing that he had fallen out of favour with both the Settlers and King Dingane, recommended military occupation of 'Port Natal'. It was probably out of jealousy that Gardiner badmouthed the Voortrekkers to

¹⁰⁷ A.E. Cubbin: A Study in Objectivity: The Death of Piet Retief, p.61.

¹⁰⁸ C.J. Uys: The Outspan. 18.12.1942.p15.

¹⁰⁹ A.E. Cubbin: A Study in Objectivity: The Death of Piet Retief, p.64.

King Dingane. It should be remembered that his request to have 'Port Natal' 'militarily occupied' was rejected by the British government. Therefore, when he saw the Voortrekkers about to achieve what he had been calling for, that is, the occupation of 'Port Natal', he sabotaged the Voortrekkers' plan by betraying them to King Dingane. He did this on the grounds that he knew that King Dingane not only listened to what he had to say, but that he trusted him as well.

As further proof of his treachery, when King Dingane sent Hulley to Gardiner to request him to be present at the occasion when land was to be given to the Voortrekkers, Gardiner declined to attend the meeting, telling Hulley that he did not think it would be safe to do so.¹¹⁰ Cubbin poses the question whether Gardiner knew that something was going to happen to the Trekkers. My argument is that he knew. Otherwise he would have attended the meeting to which King Dingane had invited him. As far as the treacherous Cane is concerned – he is the man whom Dingane had sent to the Cape on a peace mission and who never returned to report about his trip to the King. According to Cubbin,

Another British Settler who had reservations about the Voortrekkers was the redoubtable John Cane, one of the original settlers. We know that he joined Halstead on his journey with the Voortrekkers to Umgungundlovu and that he passed Ginani alone: "...after having had a little difference with the Boers." Obviously Cane was not going to simply hand over his claim of 13 years unless he was prepared to do so and "Cane was a fighter."¹¹¹

Fighter he was, and he took his fight to the Voortrekkers. If he could not have 'Port Natal', nobody should, hence the fate that befell the Voortrekkers. I therefore want to argue that available evidence, such as provided above, points directly to Cane as having had a hand in the events that led to the killing

¹¹⁰ A.E. Cubbin: A Study in Objectivity: The Death of Piet Retief, p.65.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.146.

of Piet Retief and his followers. As for Owen, I want to contend that there is at least one incident that tarnished his integrity. On 3.10.1837, after dismissing his Indunas, King Dingane asked Owen to write a letter to Gardiner, requesting him to come and advise him concerning the settlement of the Dutch. On 4.11.1837 Dingane received his second letter from the Trekkers written in Dutch, which Owen couldn't read.¹¹² Cubbin wonders why Owen didn't consult Mrs Hulley, who was Dutch-speaking¹¹³ Most importantly, we may never know what precisely was written in that letter, and this prompts the question: What would have happened should the content of the letter have changed the relations between Dingane and Voortrekkers for the better? Indeed, this is a matter of conjecture. It is interesting, however, to note that, when interviewed by Stuart, Tununu claimed that King Dingane was tipped off by Reverend Owen of the possible threat of the Voortrekkers who had Captain Gardiner's interpreter (Thomas Halstead) in their midst.¹¹⁴ According to Ndlovu, this then suggested to King Dingane that both the Boers and English Settlers were acting in tandem, conniving to set up a united front against the king's authority.¹¹⁵ However, this tends to cloud Owen's seemingly impeccable credentials.

I want to argue that the Missionary factor played a meaningful role but it also brought with it philanthropic ideas, and people like Rev. Owen may be regarded as rather naïve in their dealings with foreign people. It would also seem that the Traders and Settlers in 'Port Natal' most probably misjudged the economic benefit of the Voortrekkers in their vicinity and may have viewed them as opponents, especially with regard to the position of land. However, the British Government's policies for 'Natal' were dominated by self-interest. They (the British) wanted to gain a great deal, without spending too much. That is why the Cape Governor and certain British Officials were hesitant to

¹¹² A.E. Cubbin: A Study in Objectivity: The Death of Piet Retief, p.96.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.96.

¹¹⁴ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th century South African History, p.46.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.46.

officially annex and take responsibility for the 'Natal' region. Eventually, the new Cape Governor, George Napier, as well as Judge Henry Cloete was convinced that British rule over 'Natal' was essential for broader British interests in Southern Africa, especially with regard to control of the coast for British naval interests. Fage is informative when he argues that:

The Boers certainly could not be allowed to set up a regime independent of the British interest controlling Port Natal (the future Durban), where there was a harbour to rival those of the Cape, and where, moreover, a few British merchants, trading with the Zulu, and Missionaries had settled. Imperial strategy necessitated that Britain must be paramount here, and accordingly in 1843 a new British colony of Natal was proclaimed.¹¹⁶

In short, the British government represented by the Cape Colony, regarded the Voortrekker Republic of Natalia as unacceptable.

2.13. A TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIP

The position of King Dingane before the Battle of eNcome (Blood River) must be viewed in the context of a triangular relationship with the British and the Boers. On the one hand, we have King Dingane with the interests of his subjects at stake, while trying to advance the tradition that King Shaka had started. On the other hand, we find Voortrekker interests, with Piet Retief trying to procure land for permanent settlement, independent of the British and the Zulu, but with the intention of retaining good relations with both the Zulus and the British. Thirdly, there is the British factor, which included both local and imperial interests. I want to argue that the British policies were just as negative with regard to the Voortrekkers as with the Zulu.

After all has been said and done, I would like to point out that some consideration should be given to King Dingane's position and the way in

¹¹⁶ J.D. Fage: A History of Africa, p.359.

which he saw the events of the day. In order to understand King Dingane and his actions, I believe it is necessary to view his relations with the Voortrekkers in the context of his time and environment. This means that one cannot apply the norms of the 21st century ipso facto to that of the 19th century when analyzing King Dingane's actions. Umgungundlovu was not equal to London or the Cape Colony. At Umgungundlovu totally different cultural and traditional ways of life applied.

Piet Retief and his party revealed their ignorance of the Zulu codes of behaviour by surrounding another nation's fortress, and even worse, the King's palace. Although ignorance could be seen as a mitigating factor, their conduct cannot in all seriousness be defended. Such a maneuver was not only taboo, but fraught with danger, and could only be undertaken at great risk. It may be easy to absolve Piet Retief on grounds of his ignorance of extant royal protocol, but that would not derogate from the subsequent justifiable reaction by King Dingane.

With regard to the alleged treaty in which King Dingane supposedly ceded land to the Voortrekkers, if it is true that the treaty was duly signed between the two parties, it is possible that Dingane did not understand the Western legal aspects of such a treaty. If he did, he probably only understood it in a simplistic way. However, it is very unlikely that he understood the intricate underlying aspects of a formal treaty. Lest it be forgotten, King Dingane could neither read nor write. This also applied to his advisers, Dambuza and Ndlela. Denoon and Nyeko argue that King Dingane's military limitations were such that he could devise no sensible plan to deal with the Trekkers.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ D. Denoon and B. Nyeko: Southern Africa Since 1800, p.36.

5.14. KING DINGANE'S DEALINGS WITH WHITES

I want to argue that King Dingane devised many plans to deal with the Trekkers. Putting to death Piet Retief and his followers was one of these plans. Moreover, it needs to be pointed out that King Dingane was a strategist, and this is exemplified by the manner in which he dealt with the Voortrekkers and the whites in general. It was during the reign of King Dingane that the Zulu people militarily upstaged the Whites as they won most of the battles. Out of the six battles [eMgungundlovu, eMtshezi, eThaleni, Othukela, eNcome and emaGabheni] King Dingane's army was involved in, they won all except at the battle of eNcome. What is remarkable about the rest of these battles was that in some instances there was no physical contact. King Dingane used tricks to defeat the whites. The only time when there was serious physical contact was during the battle of eNcome. Even in this battle, Ngoza questioned the way in which it was presented. According to Ndlovu, the first stereotype that Ngoza challenges concerns impi yaseNcome as a defeat of the Zulu forces. The second is the viewpoint that the battle was strictly on racial lines, between Whites and Blacks.¹¹⁸ As observed by Ndlovu, Ngoza (a member impi yaseNcome during the actual battle) did not see impi yaseNcome as a total defeat of the Zulu regiments, because, immediately after this battle, these regiments inflicted defeat on the Boers at emaGabeni. Ngoza explained how some of amabutho, including himself, faked death by remaining underneath the water at iNcome, as the Boers pursued other escapees. Afterwards:

These regiments resurfaced, escaped and re-organized themselves. Whilst this was taking place, Bongoza, one of Dingane's intelligence officers, was captured by the marauding Boers. As they were unaware of the location of the Zulu army, he led them to a trap where they were ambushed at emaGabeni (oPate). Thus Ngoza referred to this event as the battle of emaGabeni. After impi

¹¹⁸ S.M Ndlovu: *The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th century South African History*, 57.

yaseNcome, King Dingane remained in power and simply moved his headquarters from the destroyed uMgungundlovu. He withdrew the royal homestead to the north at 'Magekwini', built it to a large size, and there ruled only to abdicate after his defeat by his brother Mpande in 1840.¹¹⁹

Another factor which put the Voortrekkers in a disadvantageous position is best summed up by King Dingane himself when he sent his people to Owen to tell him that he did not mind having White people coming to his country, provided they came as visitors and not as settlers. He did not want them setting up houses in Zululand and admitted that he did not mind the missionaries who came by 'fews and fews.' However, he could not suffer the Trekkers who came like 'an army'...¹²⁰

It goes without saying that the Voortrekkers, given their great numbers, were indeed a threat to King Dingane. This fact notwithstanding, King Dingane 'managed to hold the kingdom together until he was confronted by Europeans with firearms.'¹²¹ King Dingane was the first Zulu king to fight an enemy that had firearms. I want to argue that it was against this background that King Dingane disposed of Piet Retief and his followers. As Brookes and Webb put it, Dingane's desire to defend his people against these mounted and armed strangers was a natural part of his kingly office. Moreover, King Dingane's own fears were aroused by seeing the number of Retief's followers and their prowess with firearms. He had certainly heard by this time how the Trekkers had, by the use of horses and firearms, decisively beaten Mzilikazi.¹²² Cubbin is instructive when he argues that 'Retief's greatest shortcoming was his lack of respect for and empathy with and understanding of the Zulu sovereign.'¹²³ Naidoo poses a question: Was Retief an innocent

¹¹⁹ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.58.

¹²⁰ G.E. Cory: The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen, p.111.

¹²¹ P. Curtin, et al: African History, p.306.

¹²² E.H. Brookes and C. de. B. Webb: A History of Natal, p.32.

¹²³ A.E. Cubbin, 'Retief's Negotiations with Dingana: An Assessment', p.3.

victim? According to Naidoo, '...certainly not.' While it would be rash to claim that he got what he deserved, it is, nevertheless, true that his end, if dishonourable, was only as dishonourable as his intent."¹²⁴

5.15. IN DEFENSE OF KING DINGANE

According to Okoye, King Dingane was neither bloodthirsty, capricious, self-indulgent nor treacherous. The murders that are attributed to him were committed by reasons of state. Evidence that he was not a despot is provided by the fact that his two principal indunas had to be consulted on all important matters. As stated by Okoye:

He was neither an ingrate nor an unadulterated liar...He was a nationalist. He continually attempted to revolutionise the Zulu method of warfare. He did all he could to retain the Black wards of the European-escapees from Zulu justice - industriously propagated' rumours that were "doubtless without foundation." The Traders, however, deserve some blame, partly because they failed to have a greater confidence in Dingane and partly because they embarked on measures, which could only be interpreted as inimical to the king's interests.¹²⁵

Credo Mutwa also points out that the recent history of South Africa is to a large extent the history of two races failing to understand each other's customs, and of tragedy resulting from this. History books that are prescribed in schools often provide incorrect interpretations of such events, while children are already familiar with the truth from their tribal history. has been put down in the history books – Bantu children have to learn such "facts" in school, even when they already know the truth from their tribal history. Mutwa believes that this is the case in the killing of Piet Retief. In recounting the history textbook version of this episode, Mutwa states that only explanation for King Dingane's action

¹²⁴ J. Naidoo: Tracking Down Historical Myths, pp.118-119.

¹²⁵ F.N.C. Okoye: Dingane: A Reappraisal, p.234.

was that he was a '...lazy, sneaky, treacherous, cowardly, bloodthirsty savage.'¹²⁶

No history book, according to Mutwa, has ever suggested that King Dingane might have had some good reason – however misguided, for what he did. Mutwa points out that the Afrikaners celebrate this day (the 16th of December) by making bitter and provocative speeches against the Bantu. These speeches inflame irresponsible young white men and cause them to commit acts of violence that cause the Bantu to stay locked in their huts all day for fear of being beaten up. According to Mutwa:

The Bantu fear this day more than any other in the year, and if the celebrations continue to be salted and peppered with inflammatory speeches of this kind, sooner or later they are going to lead to bloodshed... His (King Dingane's) dealings with Piet Retief, on the other hand, were entirely straightforward, and the murder, shameful as it was, could not be called an act of treachery.¹²⁷

It is against this background that I want to argue that everything King Dingane did was inspired by a sense of nationalism, and him being a nationalist, had no option but to defend his kingdom from being usurped by the colonial invaders. Again, as already alluded to, King Dingane did what any other person in his position would have done to fight the forces of invasion and disruption. According to Cobbing, '...the Zulus were largely innocent and the root cause of the disruptions and dislocations was European activity.'¹²⁸ Max Gluckman concurs and goes on to explain that the social cohesion of the Zulu state, in all particulars, revolved around the king. His rule was sanctioned by the forces that backed him, while he was expected to use it to defend the national interests. Tyrants who abused their power were ultimately deposed. Gluckman explains that the unity of the

¹²⁶ C. Mutwa: *My People*, p.247.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.247-249.

¹²⁸ Cobbing, as quoted in M.Z. Malaba, "In A Mirror Dimly": An analysis of Peter Becker's Biographies of Mzilikazi, Moshesh and Dingane', p.156.

system was derived from more than force but also from the central figure of the King, who was a symbol of national unity and health, and was treated with magic during the first fruits ceremonies so that the nation might prosper and conquer its enemies home and abroad. With reference to the King, Gluckman says:

He stood as final judge who was bound ...to defend legal rules, which helped control Zulu social and ecological relations. For Zulu moral values stood the king, not only the symbol of social cohesion but also its artificer.¹²⁹

Gluckman's perceptive analysis best captures the essence of the actions that King Dingane took against the Voortrekkers. All that he did, he did to defend the national interests of the Zulu nation. Thus, according to Laband, '...as king, Dingane was concerned above all with the preservation of his own throne and the integrity of his kingdom, and was prepared to take whatever actions necessary in their pursuit.'¹³⁰ King Dingane did what any sovereign, responsible and patriotic king would have done.

5.16. CONCLUSION

This chapter views the advent of the arrival of White Settlers in the Zulu Kingdom as synonymous with the struggle for control over people, political power and land. As Ndlovu points out, 'the Voortrekkers had sought the very independence and freedom from the British in the Cape Colony, which they were out to destroy among Africans in the Zulu Kingdom.'¹³¹ It is within this context that King Dingane's attack on Piet Retief and Voortrekkers should be understood.

¹²⁹ M. Gluckman: Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand, p.34.

¹³⁰ J. Laband: Rope of Sand, p.58.

¹³¹ S.M. Ndlovu: The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A case study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History, p.xiii.

King Dingane's decision to fight certain wars, to retain the sovereignty of the Zulu Kingdom and to ward off enemy attack, is seen as the mark of a national leader. The concept of nationhood is expressed in the Zulu peoples' name for themselves, 'abantu' – people living on this earth. King Dingane's defence of the people over whom he ruled, the people of the earth of the Zulu Kingdom, therefore, qualifies him as a true nationalist and a patriot.

It is emphasised that the Zulu nation might still have existed as a great and respected kingdom had it not been for the initial intervention of the Trekkers. King Dingane, like any great leader, was capable of good and bad, and also of heroic deeds and ignoble crimes. He was concerned with the political question whether his kingdom stood to gain or lose by getting rid of the intruders who had been found guilty of violating matters of privacy, courtesy and protocol. As power comes with jurisdiction and heavy responsibilities, King Dingane did 'what the king has to do,' in spite of the private convictions and possible consequences.

As a true nationalist, King Dingane could not be bought or sold. Although nationalism is flexible, it cannot abide dishonesty and the lack of freedom. Therefore, together with many Zulu citizens, he must have been disgusted by the arrogant and terrifying behaviour of the Boers upon their entry to the royal court. This was a disastrous error in judgment on their part as it served as a forewarning to King Dingane and other nationalist thinkers in his kingdom that the Boers posed a threat not only to the Zulu heritage, but also to their very livelihood. This led to King Dingane's decision to put Retief and people to death.

It is stressed in this chapter that the orthodoxy of one age is not necessarily the orthodoxy of another; neither is defence of one's possessions a crime. Although both King Dingane and King Shaka accommodated Whites during

their reigns, they never underestimated the power of the Whites, even though the Zulu were in the majority. As a result of this, the Zulu nation could not help but wonder how long the uneasy relationship would last between the owners of the land and the invaders (Voortrekkers).

Although it is no easy task to assume a defensive viewpoint with regard to a King whose actions elicit stern criticism from influential indigenous Africans, it is believed that a peoples' history must not be hidden or falsified. The picture that emerges from the conservative viewpoints, namely that King Dingane claimed more lives and committed more unforgivable atrocities than any other great leader in the world, must therefore be rejected.

What should be of issue is that the end justifies the means; the Zulu nation, like other nations on the African continent, had an abundance of precious land that the Boers wanted for their settlement, at any cost. King Dingane was faced with a threat to his kingdom, or at the very least, an impending threatening situation that would bring constant uncertainty and fear to his people. He was challenged by the question of whether or not to act decisively in order to nip the problem in the bud and thereby resolve an issue that promised to escalate. Those who are given the measure of power that Dingane enjoyed are not unaware of their grave responsibilities to their followers or of the element of risk when decisions are taken urgently. Ideally, their actions should be guided by due consideration to truth, honesty, jurisdiction and freedom – yet it is a well-known fact that any leader always stands accused – whatever his actions. King Dingane must therefore be viewed in the same light as his brother, King Shaka. He ruled a great nation that required a clever, powerful leader who was not afraid to take action. In other words, Dingane was a king who did what the king had to do at the time – uninhibited by fears about posterity's possible judgements. As in the case of Napoleon, King Shaka's many questionable actions do not preclude him from

being considered a great leader. Nor should King Dingane's actions, taken in good faith, be held against him.

CHAPTER 6

PUBLIC HISTORY AND KING DINGANE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: MUSEUMS AND THE COMMEMORATION OF IMPI YASE NCOME/BATTLE OF 'BLOOD RIVER' ON 16 DECEMBER

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the abiding legacy of King Dingane and the pivotal role that it continues to play in shaping the collective psyche of the Afrikaners. In the sense of its continuing divisiveness in an age that is striving towards reconciliation and the healing of wounds left gaping by the history of the struggle for freedom, equality and democracy, it is a sad legacy.

It is regrettable that the past should remain with us in so many unpleasant ways – yet its demands need to be accommodated if we are to find lasting peace. It may therefore be profitable to examine an area in KwaZulu-Natal that is noted for its commemorative value to both the Black and White population groups and where the past places in sharp relief perceptions still harboured and nurtured by the successive generations of those who fought a war inspired by both nationalistic sentiments and hegemonic designs.

Lying just outside Nquthu on the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal are two museums that capture the events and characters of days gone by. Straddling the Ncome (which is also referred to as Blood River) these museums are separated and yet ostensibly bound by the same historical event that invokes contrasting responses. The contrast is heightened by glaring disparities between the two museums, namely with regard to surrounding landscape, artifacts, formation, access and the reasons for establishment.

6.2. PUBLIC HISTORY

My understanding of the concept 'public history' is that it is used to denote the kind of history that consists of different versions that are blended together in order to arrive at a publicly acknowledged record of events. 'Publicly acknowledged' does not mean that it entails the views of individuals or authors who have made discoveries or who have conducted investigations that led to their own articulation, but a history that is regarded as the official record of what has happened. The notion 'public history' is born of the realization that history told by groups as sectional accounts is not a unifying factor and that one therefore needs a balanced account that acknowledges achievements and shortcomings regardless of whom they are associated with in order for us to come to terms with our past and acknowledge the challenges we have ahead of us.

While the traditional typology of history includes military, institutional, social and economic aspects, the notion of public history is a rather new concept that is consistent with the idea of revising history and telling it from the point of view of nation building. Although not intended as a romantic flight of imagination, it is based on the idea of telling the story in a colourful, attractive and acceptable way in an attempt to adopt an approach that enables people to tell and promote the understanding of their history as a record of the interaction between different kinds of people, communities and so on. This acknowledges the fact that all the people in a given country, including the workers, peasants, farmers, politicians, youth, and religious leaders, are the makers of history in the sense that it is the collective effort and achievement of all these interactive people that results in a public record. Such a record cannot be attributed to a certain group or government or individuals (from Jan van Riebeeck to F.W. de Klerk) but to human beings acting in their different capacities to make things happen. While I believe that this is what goes into the making of public history, I acknowledge that such a history must also be understood to be a record that is publicly adopted as

the official account of events. In this way, the understanding of what could have happened at Ncome or Isandlwana comes to be taught at school and is recorded in textbooks – thus qualifying as public history. The negative side of such an approach is that one will be providing an edited version of what may have been recorded in the past – perhaps as a politically approved version of history which might try to justify, condone or defend some of the follies that have taken place and which would be presented somewhat differently by other people. History, however, tends to be perspectival and the selection of evidence might be equally biased. Even if it is not biased, there may be missing evidence that historians tend to cover by providing questionable links. So, in order to arrive at a better understanding of historical events, one has to look at issues from all sides as a single view may contain questionable elements. Likewise, a historical account from a researcher's point of view might also have questionable elements because events of the past cannot be re-enacted. The only option is to attempt to provide an account of things, as it is impossible to bring back the actors onto the stage so that they can be observed and described in the way that events would describe themselves. This in itself is a weakness in history writing.

6.3. MUSEUM

The *International Council of Museums* defines a museum as a 'non-profit making institution in the service of society and its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.'¹ In this context, Boylan argues that museums have a responsibility 'to take seriously the needs of the disadvantaged sectors of their population, whether that disadvantage is the result of poverty, ethnicity, disability, age or social disaffection.'² Thus, according to Katriel, museums 'have, indeed, become major participants in contemporary efforts to construct culturally shared,

¹ As cited by D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, in 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.18.

² Patrick Boylan, as cited by D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, in 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.18.

historically anchored representations of 'self' and 'other.' In this regard, according to the National Civil Rights Museum curator in Memphis, Tennessee, Juanita Moore, 'museums play a major role in...having people understand what is significant about history and the way people perceive it.'³

In describing museums as 'truly unique institutions whose functions include collecting, preserving, documenting, and interpreting material culture,' Fleming asked, 'how do museum professionals determine what lessons from history the museum visitor should learn?'⁴ Bunch answered the question by pointing out that museums should embrace the controversies that 'seek to stretch the interpretive parameters of our exhibitions and expand the dialogue between museums and their audiences.'⁵ According to Bennett, the 'discourse of reform' of museums is based on two principles: (a) the principle of 'public rights,' such as that museums should be accessible to everyone, and (b) the principle of 'representational adequacy,' sustaining the demand that museums should adequately represent the cultures and values of different sections of the public. This is a mammoth task indeed, especially when it is considered that different groups have different perceptions of the past, as exemplified by the Blood River Monument and the Ncome Museum where the volatile subject of race is foregrounded.

It is important to mention the subject of race and its role in the public forum of the two museums (Blood River Monument and the Ncome Museum) because the relationships among public or collective memory, public space, and race in the history of the two nations in question (the Afrikaners and the Zulus) are both implicit and profound. Confino defines collective memory as 'an exploration of a

³ Juanita Moore, as cited by D.F. Herndon, in 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.16.

⁴ Fleming, as cited by D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, in 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.19.

⁵ Bunch, as cited by D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, in 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.19

shared identity that unites a social group, be it a family or a nation, whose members nonetheless have different interests and motivations.⁶

It is against this background that this chapter attempts to explore the role of museums, in the words of Atwater and Herndon, as 'creating spaces for multiple, often competing, interpretations of collective memory, history, and meaning.'⁷ It is also worth noting Gallagher's conclusion that it 'is not a monument that allows competing metanarratives to be embraced; instead, they continue to clash discordantly.'⁸ This is exactly what obtains with the Blood River Monument and Ncome Museum. Both museums occupy the same physical landscape, and they deal with the same historical event and epoch, namely, the Battle of 'Blood River'/Impi yase Ncome that took place on 16 December 1838. According to events taking place at this historical site for the past four years, the Afrikaners and the Zulu people have been holding separate commemorations – something that falls short of promoting reconciliation and nation-building as was intended by the aims of the post-apartheid 1994 state. I want to argue that these two museums, in the words of Atwater and Herndon, 'exemplify sites of both contested as well as universal collective memory and meaning' and that the communicative role of the museum as public space is 'significant in fostering the development of this cultural memory.'⁹

Many writers have asked questions about the role of public memory in relation to museums. According to Atwater and Herndon, the origins of public memory can be divided into two cultures – the official and the vernacular. As observed by Atwater and Herndon and, according to Bodnar, official culture is communicated by and on behalf of the nation-state and seeks through its sponsorship to retain

⁶ Confino, as cited by D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, in 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.16.

⁷ D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.16.

⁸ Gallagher, cited by D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, in 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.16.

⁹ D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.16.

loyalty, to keep itself perpetual, and to stress the virtue of unity. Its language of commemoration emphasizes the idealistic and the abstract while promoting patriotism as the highest realization of duty. Its realm is sacred and timeless.¹⁰ According to Atwater and Herndon, vernacular culture is situated locally; it is given material and symbolic expression by the individual and community. It seeks its end in change and is much more ambivalent about the meaning of its past. Vernacular culture speaks of rights, the secular, the here and now.¹¹ Atwater and Herndon point out that at the intersection of these cultures lie the symbolics of public memory and the fundamental issues concerning the very existence of a society – the meaning of past, present organization, and the structure of power. They also argue that in a real sense, public memory has the potential to create a shared sense of the past, fashioned from symbolic resources of community, and subject to its particular history, hierarchies, and aspirations.¹² Asmal et al are instructive when they argue that ‘as South Africa faces its past, we must faithfully record the pain of the past so that a united nation can call upon that past as a galvanizing force in the large tasks of reconstruction.’¹³ Again, according to Asmal et al., memory is significant:

This talk of shared memory must not be misunderstood or mystified. It is not the creation of a post-apartheid, or a stifling homogeneous nationhood, nor a new Fatherland. The process of forging a collective memory is a flaring up of debate; it is the creation of a public atmosphere in which the seemingly unimportant memories and annals of the past achieve a new public importance. Private reminiscence achieves public currency and manifest worth.¹⁴

¹⁰ D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, ‘Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica’, p.17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹³ Asmal *et al*, cited in D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, in ‘Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica’, p.18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.18.

Thus, as observed by Atwater and Herndon, 'in any culture, museums are significant arbiters of public memory and the spaces in which that memory is interpreted.'¹⁵ It is against this background that the present government decided to balance the equation by repositioning museums so that they can reflect the collective memory and history of all people, not the partisan history that museums came to be associated with. I want to argue that it is through this repositioning that museums are set to become significant agents of nation building and reconciliation, a cumbersome task indeed, given South Africa's painful past.

6.4. MUSEUMS: AN OVERVIEW

Dr Amareswar Galla, Director of the Australian Centre for Cultural Diversity Research and Development at the University of Canberra and founder of a national programme for interdisciplinary and holistic studies in heritage management, in his celebrated article, '*Transformation in South Africa: a legacy challenged*,' captures the catalytic role that museums have played in ushering in the new political dispensation in South Africa:

Rarely has any country made such radical changes in all aspects of its life as post-apartheid South Africa. The museum and heritage community was seen as a principal actor in bringing about a new democratic society based on a truthful, unflinching examination of the past and a creative, participatory approach to the future.¹⁶

The sentiments flowing from Galla's observation contrast sharply with the divisiveness which museums came to be associated with in early times, especially by African people. This is attested by Nelson Mandela who, when launching in 1997 South Africa's first major new heritage institution, the Robben Island Museum, said that 'South Africa's museums and monuments had reflected the experiences and political ideals of a minority to the exclusion of others during

¹⁵ D.F. Atwater and S.L. Herndon, 'Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and MuseumAfrica', p.18.

¹⁶ A. Galla, 'Transformation in South Africa: A legacy challenged', p.38.

the colonialist and apartheid era.¹⁷ Ngubane, as minister of arts, culture, science and technology argued that South Africa's museums had 'in the past negated and distorted the history and culture of the majority of South Africans, [but] all now agree that they have to change and must play a role in the process of nation-building'.¹⁸ Crampton also feels that in South Africa, museum displays have historically supported colonial and apartheid ideologies. However, like Ngubane, he believes that 'with the transition to a post-apartheid society museums have reassessed their divisive roles and repositioned themselves within South Africa's contemporary nation-building project, organized around building unity from diversity'.¹⁹ This positioning of museums in the nation-building project, as pointed out by Crampton, emerged from a series of debates in South Africa's museological community and opposition movements, and under the post-apartheid political dispensation there have been a number of exhibitions challenging the institutional complicity of museums under apartheid.²⁰

The main goal in transforming the South African museums is for them to reflect in every way the collective heritage, the new identity, and the ethos of a multicultural, democratic South Africa. This has been necessitated, as pointed out by Galla, by the fact that 'South Africa is a country with deep historical, racial, ethnic, class, linguistic, regional, cultural and gender divisions characterized by centuries of colonialism and decades of fascism'.²¹ The post-apartheid challenge, Galla argues, 'is to create an integrated, holistic and interactive mechanism for transforming heritage management on the democratic pillars of community and nation-building'.²² These are lofty and noble ideals indeed, but as indicated in this chapter at a later stage when the Blood River Monument and the Ncome

¹⁷ A. Galla, 'Transformation in South Africa: A Legacy challenged', p.38.

¹⁸ B.S. Ngubane, 'Welcome address to the Southern Flagship Museum Council, Cape Town', 30 March 1999, p.2.

¹⁹ A. Crampton, 'The Art of Nation-building: (re) presenting political transition at the South African National Gallery', p.218.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.219.

²¹ A. Galla, 'Transformation in South Africa: A Legacy challenged', p. 39.

²² *Ibid.*, p.39.

Museum are juxtaposed, it is asking too much of museums to participate in a properly inclusive nation-building exercise.

The problems of race relations in South Africa run very deep, and they operate at a psychological level. When looking at the reconciliation process I sometimes agree with Teal that 'the damage to South African society is too deep to repair, the evils perpetrated too great and the resultant poverty, inequality and lack of commitment to one another as one nation too firmly entrenched for change to be felt in real terms'.²³ The major challenge facing South Africa is that of affecting a paradigm shift in terms of the way different races perceive one another, a challenge that museums would fall short of effectively addressing. The main reason for this is that South African museums have traditionally supported colonial ideologies and were, as pointed out by Webb, 'a mirror of how the settlers perceived themselves'.²⁴ Having said this, I still want to argue that, generally, all is not lost. The spirit of despondency, as exemplified by the snail's pace that South African race groups follow towards genuine reconciliation, is countered by the spirit of 'Ubuntu'.

According to Sparks, the term 'ubuntu' means that 'each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his relationship with others and theirs in turn through recognition of his humanity'.²⁵ Crampton observes that the spirit of 'ubuntu' is prevalent in South African political discourse, particularly in relation to national reconciliation and nation building, and that it signifies a tradition of reconciliation and community spirit that needs to be re-enacted to build a new South Africa.²⁶ This supports my argument that all is not lost. I want to argue that it is within the context of 'ubuntu' that museums could carve themselves a niche in terms of participating in the process of nation building. The role of museums in the post-apartheid South Africa is best summed up by Till when argues that:

²³ J. Teal, 'The Art of the State', *Weekly Mail and Guardian* (7 February 1997), p.32.

²⁴ D.A. Webb, 'Winds of Change', p.20.

²⁵ A. Sparks: The Mind of South Africa: the story of the rise and fall of apartheid, p.14.

²⁶ A. Crampton, 'The Art of Nation-building: (re) presenting political transition at the South African National Gallery', p.229.

The recognition of the fact that museums have an important part to play in the present turbulent history of our country, and the acknowledgement of the need to adjust our thinking and approach to accommodate past neglects and present expectations, must, through necessity, be tempered by the practicalities of achieving the ideal we seek – that it, to be seen to be relevant and indispensable within the fabric of society.²⁷

Crampton observes that according to the South African Museum Association's bulletin (SAMAB), the potential role for museums is located in two related areas: first, in their ability to engage in nation-building, and secondly, in their usefulness as sites of education and governance. In the case of the former, museums are represented variously as instruments of 'reconciliation...[and] social cohesion,' 'community building', and as spaces 'to promote greater understanding among the different groups in southern Africa, while furthering peace and harmony by demonstrating the very real similarities in experience rather than the differences'.²⁸ Crampton further points out that 'in these formulations the political rationality of the museum remains similar to their historical applications as state technologies'.²⁹ The nation-building project, however, argues Crampton, demands new identities for the splintered identities of apartheid – a challenge that museums appear to be equal to, given that according to the pages of the South African Museum Association museums have been reconstituted as relevant institutions precisely because of their ability to produce and display a new unified South African identity.³⁰ Indeed, as Crampton points out, nation building and the production of a new, democratic, inclusive and diverse South African identity became an operational principle for museums and other cultural institutions in post-apartheid South Africa. The White Paper on 'Arts and Culture: all our legacies, our common future,' puts it aptly when it states that:

²⁷ C.M. Till, 'Museion: temple of the muses or the masses?', p.215.

²⁸ A. Crampton, 'The Art of nation building: (re) presenting political transition at the South African National Gallery', p.226.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.226.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.226.

Nation Building: Shall foster a sense of pride and knowledge in all aspects of South African culture, heritage and the arts. Shall further encourage mutual respect and tolerance and intercultural exchange between the various cultures and forms of art to facilitate the emergence of a shared cultural identity constituted by diversity.³¹

However, as the discussion of the two museums, Blood River Monument and Ncome Museum, will show, the ideal of achieving nation building and the production of a new democratic, inclusive and diverse South African identity, is far from being fully and genuinely achieved. The two museums are poles apart with regard to the concept of nation building as exemplified by their commemorating December 16 separately and showing no sign of possible future collaboration towards the process of nation-building. Indeed, as already argued, King Dingane is still pivotal in terms of race relations between the Zulus and the Afrikaners, because, in actual fact, the two museums are about King Dingane and his role in the history of these two races. In spite of this reality, the South African public, by and large, needs to be applauded for the commendable work that has been done in terms of nation building and reconciliation in South Africa.

6.5. 'BLOOD RIVER' MONUMENT AND THE NCOME MUSEUM: A JUXTAPOSITION

'BLOOD RIVER' MONUMENT: THE LANDSCAPE AND EXHIBITIONS

The 'Blood River' Monument, which, at its inception in 1948, was called, and continues to be called, Blood River Monument, contrasts sharply with the Ncome Museum although both are rooted in objective reality. It lies just about three kilometers across the Ncome River and on the opposite side of the Ncome Museum. What arrests one's attention on setting eyes on the Blood River Monument is the contrasting architectural structure depicted. The laager formation is displayed to mark the museum. According to the Blood River Monument curator, Mr D.W. Viljoen, the laager was built in 1971. The laager has

³¹ Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, White paper on arts and culture: all our legacies, our common future, p.18.

been linked historically with the battle formation adopted by the Voortrekker families in their quest for 'freedom' from the British colonialists. It is a theme running through all encounters that the Voortrekkers had with the indigenous peoples of South Africa. With time, the laager came to be associated with a mind-set that is closed to reasoning, exclusive and conservative.

Inside the Blood River Monument the exhibits direct a visitor to exhibitions about the Voortrekkers and their history. A visitor is also directed to Voortrekker material culture in the form of teaspoons, cups, glasses, pocketknives, and pottery. Videocassettes about Blood River, as well as the history of the Voortrekkers are displayed. There are also videocassettes about the Anglo-Boer War. There is a display about the clothes and weapons of both the Voortrekkers and the Zulus. The Blood River Monument also has a video room where videos about the Voortrekkers are shown.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE 'BLOOD RIVER' MONUMENT

In my opinion, the Blood River Monument seeks to perpetuate and promote a mind-set trapped in divisiveness, bitterness and resentment. Generally, the Monument is viewed as presenting a one-dimensional view of what happened during the battle of "Blood" River, which was fought by the Zulus and the Voortrekkers. It is also viewed as Eurocentric. It is interesting to note that, in South Africa, the Blood River Monument is mainly visited by Afrikaners. As far as international tourists are concerned, people from the Netherlands also visit the monument. This is to be expected, given that the Afrikaners' predecessors mainly originate from Netherlands. Generally, the comments of those who visit the Blood River Monument are good. However, the Blood River Monument has been accused by some people, including visitors and tourists, of focusing almost exclusively on the Voortrekkers' side of the story. In short, it is biased against the Zulus. It presents a one-sided view of the Battle of Ncome River.

In responses elicited from those running the museums, the following sentiments are abundantly echoed. Accessibility to the Blood River Monument is effectively restricted to those who have the means to pay an entrance fee. The net results of this device are to exclude the surrounding communities, especially the Africans from identifying with the Monument. The same cannot be said of the Ncome Museum where access is open to all, irrespective of their means. The Ncome museum only asks for donations. Those running the Blood River museum justify the charging of an entrance fee on the fact that they receive only R60 000 Rands from the government whilst Ncome Museum gets R1.600 000. In the same vein exclusivity at the Blood River Monument is encouraged by raising fears of vandalism by the local populace if access were open-ended.

But more disturbing and verging on ingrained bitterness and prejudice is the argument that the monument is sacrosanct – a sanctuary set aside for the Voortrekker descendants. Interestingly enough, celebrations of December 16 are far removed from attempts at the re-building and reconstructing of a new South Africa. The event is still observed exclusively by the descendants of the Voortrekkers and their sympathizers, which is not the case in celebrations observed at the Ncome Museum, which are predominantly reconciliatory.

The question of reconciliation (if it surfaces at all) is overshadowed by the past, which is celebrated as though it were a thing contributing to emergence from a sad past to a brighter, prosperous and peaceful new day. The memory of King Dingane the nationalist continues to shape and influence in ways unparalleled among the Kings of Africa the national psyche of descendants of the Voortrekkers who set out to conquer Africa.

It is unfortunate that attempts at reconciliation remain unrealizable and that they are even scuppered at a psychological level by the retention of certain symbols, especially the Blood River Monument. If we continue to perpetuate the idea of making shrines of places and symbols that portray our sad history, real unity and

integration remain a bridge too far. Symbols of the past should only be retained to the extent that they become positive contributors to a greater ideal of a South Africa characterized by equality, freedom and democracy.

NCOME MUSEUM

The iNcome museum, which is sited on the southern side of Ncome River, is a latecomer. It was established in 1998 as one of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology's legacy projects. The Legacy Project was established in 1997 to promote a fuller representation of the nation's heritage, through new monuments, heritage sites and institutions, infrastructure and capacity, with a focus on historically disadvantaged areas. In short, the legacy project is directed at aspects of a common heritage that had been neglected in the past and to present a balanced picture depicting the contribution of previously marginalized people.

With regard to the erection of the new monument (Ncome Museum), Mtshali, the then Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, pointed out that in line with our objective, the need was identified to correct the current imbalances as far as the portrayal of the events at Blood River/Ncome is concerned. He also said that research was commissioned to investigate ways of addressing these imbalances. The end result, posited Mtshali, would be a monument to commemorate the events of 16 December 1838 in a meaningful and balanced way.³² Mtshali said the process was not intended to address the controversial issues surrounding the battle but to concentrate on reconciliation and nation building. He furthermore said that for the Afrikaners the monument erected by them became a cornerstone of Afrikaner nationalism but for those who could not identify with it, it became a symbol of Afrikaner domination.³³ Thus, argued Mtshali, It is important for us to move away from this type of one-sided representation of events to an interpretation that recognizes that both the Zulu

³² L.P.H. M. Mtshali, as cited in the Dispatch Online, December 16, 1998.

³³ Ibid.

and Afrikaner perceptions of the events were valid within the context of their interests at the time.³⁴

At the inauguration ceremony on 16 December 1998 attended by thousands of people were also present His Majesty the King of the Zulu Nation, Deputy President, Mr Thabo Mbeki, Inkosi M.G. Buthelezi, traditional Prime Minister of the Zulu Nation, Minister of Arts, Science and Technology, Mr LPHM Mtshali, Freedom Front leader General Constand Viljoen and executive director of the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies) Hennie de Wet, among others. In his address, Mtshali said that 'the 160th commemoration of the Battle of Ncome River provides a golden opportunity for reconciliation to the descendants of Retief, Pretorius and Maritz and those of King Dingane, the warrior Sihayo Ngobese and the amabutho whom he valiantly led into battle.'³⁵ Mtshali was of the opinion that: 'two monuments at the site of the battle, commemorating the participation of both sides will complete the symbolism. They will unite the protagonists of 160 years ago. In so doing, they will hopefully help reconcile conflicting historical interpretations. Today's event marks freedom from the yoke of many years of the divisive symbolism and dangerous stereotyping.'³⁶

In a conciliatory tone, the traditional Prime Minister of the Zulu Nation, Inkosi M.G. Buthelezi, captured the significance of this event when he said:

When our blood merged on this soil our peoples merged in an inextricably joint destiny on this land and together begun a long conflict-ridden journey destined to reach today's new beginning. The blood, which once imbued this sacred soil, created the germs of a new nation, which only after its long journey of pain can celebrate the dream of those who have died and the efforts of those who survived on both sides of the battlefield. We have come here because, as the blood of our nations once merged into the

³⁴ L.P.H.M. Mtshali, as cited in the Dispatch Online, December 16, 1998.

³⁵ L.P.H. M.Mtshali, as cited in the Natal Witness, 17.12.1998.

³⁶ L.P.H. M.Mtshali, as cited by Anton Ehlers in his article, 'Desegregating History in South Africa: The case of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River/Ncome', p.11.

waters of this river, today we can announce that the dreams, which once stood in armed conflict on this battlefield, can now finally merge in the creation of a new nation under a new covenant of harmony in diversity.³⁷

Referring to the sufferings of the past as occasioned by the Battle of Ncome River, Buthelezi said:

All these sufferings of the past are not going to have been in vain if out of them a future of harmony may stem. These sufferings may give us and our posterity the strength of forging a new nation conceived in diversity and dedicated to the proposition that within a framework of equality and mutual respect, diverse people can strive together towards the common goal of economic prosperity and social stability. We must dedicate this battlefield and the monument we are privileged to erect here, to the memory of the long journey, which from here we began one hundred and fifty years ago. However, we should also dedicate this battlefield and its monument to a new covenant, which henceforth may bind those who were once divided to pursuing our common goal in a framework of unity in diversity.

I have always believed that God is on every side of every conflict. That is why in any modern war, you have chaplains on each side all praying for people on their side for God to be with them. This is the time for us to move from the idea of a one-sided covenant to a new covenant in which all of us together as South Africans are on one side. Let us put behind us the horrors and monsters of the past so as to create a new covenant which projects the pain, which in the past we had to endure, into the promise that together we can fight the monsters and the horrors, which are bedeviling our present and our immediate future.³⁸

In his address, Mbeki stressed the conciliatory character and potential of the occasion and the monument. He, however, said that December 16 should involve only one commemoration.³⁹ It needs to be mentioned, as pointed out by Ehlers, that the speakers at the ceremony lamented the fact that the occasion's potential

³⁷ Speech delivered by Inkosi M.G. Buthelezi at the inauguration of the Ncome / Blood River Monument – 16 December 1998, p.1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

³⁹ T.M. Mbeki, as cited by Natal Witness, 17.12.1998.

for reconciliation was not fully realized because of the sparse Afrikaner attendance and the existence of a separate ceremony by Afrikaners at the Voortrekker laager monument a kilometer away.⁴⁰ I want to argue that the situation expressed by the speakers still look the same. Very little has changed in terms of the Afrikaners attending the Ncome Museum's annual ceremony and the Zulus attending the Blood River Monument annual event, or most significantly, attitudinal change that would pave the way for the holding of one ceremony by both the Afrikaners and the Zulus.

It is worth reiterating that the history of King Dingane is still pivotal in terms of race relations between the two races. Vicki Robinson of the Mail and Guardian reported that during the commemoration of the Day of Reconciliation, December 16, in 2003, four cars filled with black families followed 40 horses carrying beefy riders who called each other kommandant (commander) and carried the 19th century South African flags. They came down the gravel road that led into the commemoration site. 'We are inquisitive,' said the driver of one car as he drove past guffawing. 'Wat doen hierdie swart bobbejane hier? Hulle is kaffirs. Daar is geen ander woord vir hulle nie [What are these black baboons doing here? They are kaffirs there is no other word for them],'" said one woman with a look of persecuted astonishment.⁴¹ Robinson also reported that during the Blood River Monument ceremony, 'prayers paying tribute to the Divine Will were punctuated with periodic references to "kaffirs".'⁴² I agree with Robinson who argued that the Day of Reconciliation has a long way to go before the whole nation interprets it the same way.⁴³

⁴⁰ A. Ehlers, 'Desegregating history in South Africa: The case of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome', p.11.

⁴¹ V. Robinson, 'Blood feud on the banks of the river', Mail and Guardian, December 19 to 31 2003, p.3.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

NCOME MUSEUM: LANDSCAPE AND EXHIBITIONS

Architecturally, iNcome Museum takes its shape from the Zulu War Horn Formation Strategy, i.e. the buffalo horn formation. The formation was introduced as a military strategy by the Zulu King Shaka ka Senzangakhona. On the Museum ground the isivivane – a cairn and a reed garden can be found. The latter is used to explain the symbolic importance of reeds to the Zulu people and has a historical significance to Ncome. During good seasons the garden is home to a variety of bird-life.

The Ncome museum houses a curio shop and an information centre providing insight into Zulu cultural history. The Ncome Museum showcases the rich heritage of both Boer and Zulu, side by side. It is envisaged that a Cultural Village will be added to the site to further display the heritage of the region. According to the Ncome Museum curator, Mr Bongani Ndhlovu, they will also add a Living Heritage in the form of events where Zulu food, Sotho food, hymns, traditional dances and traditional dresses of both Zulu and Sotho will form part of this Living Heritage. Sotho is mentioned because Sotho-speaking people also inhabit the area around the museum.

Generally, the Ncome Museum focuses on living heritage, exhibitions, conservation, collections, research and public communications. In particular, inside the Ncome Museum, a visitor is guided to exhibits or displays of the causes of the battle of Ncome; chronology of Zulu kings; isiZulu material culture; religion – the traditional belief system in comparison to Christianity; and the display of reconciliation. It is interesting to note that one of the displays is a picture of all the Zulu kings, while another consists of pictures of the reigning monarch, His Majesty King Zwelithini Goodwill Ka Bhekuzulu and the current president of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki. My reading of these displays is that the first one shows that in the past Zulu Kings ruled all by

themselves, while the second shows fusion or coexistence of monarchy and modern democracy.

It is important to point out that in the five years since its inception the Museum has established a mutual relationship with its surrounding communities and partners. In partnership with local communities the Museum has successfully launched a number of living heritage projects, including the Dance and Dress festivals. Young children from the surrounding areas are also taught crafting and the making of pottery, which is showcased in the curio shop.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE NCOME MUSEUM

The Ncome Museum is forward looking although portraying realistically happenings of the past. It is intended to capture a progressively dynamic culture and is not trapped in the past. It attempts to present a balanced, although not necessarily objective, viewpoint. The Ncome Museum is also viewed as being traditional.

Among the views that appear in the visitors' book at the Ncome Museum is one expressed by Foe of Norway, who remarks that the Ncome museum presents a really interesting view on history. Robert Evander said that it is good to get the other side of history. Mark Gillier hailed the Ncome museum for presenting a good, balanced view of the Battle of Ncome River. Morren F. Mark recorded in the visitors' book that the Ncome Museum gives a great alternative view to the other museum, which is the Blood River Monument. Paul Kelly of Scotland wrote that it is interesting to hear the Zulu side of events. The latter point vindicates the generally held perception that the Blood River Monument focuses exclusively on the Voortrekkers' side of the story. Irma and Mancel of the Netherlands wrote that it is good to hear both sides. D. Fraser from Newcastle, England, wrote that Ncome museum is a great place for facts. In short, the Ncome museum is commended for a balanced view of events, as well as presenting both sides of

the story. Thus, I would like to argue that Ncome museum is objective in terms of opening the minds of people and promoting nation building and reconciliation.

6.6. 'BLOOD RIVER' MONUMENT AND THE NCOME MUSEUM: THE QUESTION OF RECONCILIATION AND NATION BUILDING: IS IT REALIZABLE?

History is about what has happened, irrespective of whether it is painful or pleasant. And if there are any tensions that one perceives with regard to historical events and symbolism representing those events – that is the reality, which one has to confront. If the concern is about reconciliation or change of mindset, that concern cannot justifiably be imposed on the historical reality. What is important about the symbolism of King Dingane at Ncome or any other historical site that one can associate with the battle of “Blood” River, is that one is dealing with a case where tensions have subsisted and that should be part of the description of events.

Many people are concerned about the Laager formation at the Blood River Monument and the symbolism it represents. But this is what the Afrikaners think about history. In other words this battle was the culmination of antagonism that seems to have developed and this antagonism is perpetuated by symbolism. In an investigation of this reality, I believe that one should not be concerned about whether or not people want to change. It is, in my opinion, more important to explain the practicability or lack of practicability of change, or perhaps attempt to state what these symbols represent in historical terms. In my opinion, these symbols represent chasm – the dichotomy that is associable with the battle of Ncome or Blood River. I want to argue that when people refer to this battle as the battle of Blood River, it is assumed that blood was spilled and that it flowed down the river. This presupposes that there was a lot of blood-letting, something that is to be doubted because the story may be told from one angle. The fact of the

matter is that the battle could have been waged on a hill or on the plain but not in the river. The river is not an appropriate site for fighting a battle, especially during the times of King Dingane. One can cross the river but cannot fight on the river basin. That is unhistorical. The story was told from one side and this side is still being represented by the symbolism of the laager formation.

This chapter also intends to reveal the historical reality of division between the Zulus and the Afrikaners and the sentiments associated with the Blood River Monument and the Ncome Museum. It also looks at the possibility of reconciliation represented by these two sites. As already alluded to, the two sites are essentially about King Dingane and it is therefore interesting to note that King Dingane would necessarily have been viewed from two perspectives – thus giving rise to the establishment of the two sites that are typical of the Zulu and the Afrikaner perspectives. With its shift of mindset, the Zulu perspective is attempting to create a conciliatory spirit based on inherent symbols in the interests of democracy. But as we know, there are people who experienced a sense of loss at the establishment of the new democracy – giving rise to a view of the Blood River Monument as a wailing wall of the Afrikaners' history, which must be acknowledged if people still feel that they are part of that struggle. It is history relived in the present. I strongly believe that my efforts to capture this story should underline this dichotomy and acknowledge that it exists. It is also necessary to indicate that the change of name from the Day of the Vow to Reconciliation Day provides a false sense of shift in meaning, because in the past there was no talk about reconciliation on December 16. There was only the memory of the Afrikaners' prayer to their God to give them power to defeat the Zulus – for which they promised to build a house of worship to God in return. It is interesting to note that the National Party government changed the official name of December 16 as public holiday from Dingaan's Day to the Day of the Vow in 1952 in an attempt to make the day less offensive to South African blacks. According to Ehlers, this name change was, however, not accompanied by an attitudinal change or in the way that Afrikaners in general celebrated the day. The

public debate on the character of the celebration of the Day of the Vow only started in earnest in the mid-1970s and coincided with the academic debate on the demythologizing of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome.⁴⁴ As pointed out by Ehlers, 'with the introduction of the new political dispensation in 1994, December 16 was retained as a national public holiday, but the name was changed to the Day of Reconciliation to symbolize the spirit in which the government expected the day to be celebrated in future.'⁴⁵

Another thing that must also be linked to this Wailing Wall and where it came from is the concept of the *Exodus* and that of *chosenness*, which is traced to the Afrikaners and the pronouncements they made just before the battle, which for a long time was called the *Covenant*. This is a biblical concept, such as the covenant that Moses made with God, and which was based on deliverance from the land of bondage in Egypt to the land of milk and honey in Canaan. This symbolism was adopted by the Afrikaners to give them a sense of being chosen as a people of God who were delivered from the rule of the British people in the Cape, which they had to flee in order to move away to establish their kingdom in the interior. The symbolism traceable to that claim is better understood in terms of a people who had suffered defeat like the Jews of old, who were captured by the Babylonians and then sent into Diaspora. It is interesting to note that in 1938

⁴⁴ For more information on the academic debate on the demythologizing of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome, see Professor F.A. van Jaarsveld's essay on "*The Covenant in the Bounds of Time*" in which he indicated that the Sabbath stipulation was not applicable to the Day of the Vow. Also see his paper entitled "*Historical mirror of Blood River*", which he delivered at the 1979 Unisa Conference on the *Problems in the Interpretation of History with Possible Reference to Examples from South African History such as the Battle of Blood River*. In this paper he questioned and rejected the reliability of Sarel Cilliers's account of the Covenant with reference to both its content and form, and also indicated that the addition of the Sabbath stipulation to the Day of the Vow in 1952 was done on the strength of Cilliers's unreliable account. It was this conference that Professor van Jaarsveld was tarred and feathered by the AWB (Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging / Afrikaner Resistance Movement) members under the leadership of Eugene Terreblanche. Also see Professor van Jaarsveld's essay on "*The demythologizing of Afrikaner historical consciousness*". See Professor B.J. Liebenberg's article in the *South African Historical Journal* of November 1980 entitled "*Blood River and God's Hand*", as well as his paper entitled "*Myths on Blood River and the Covenant*". Also see Thompson's *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (1985) and De Jongh's *Sarel Cilliers* (1987). Also see Anton Ehlers' article "Desegregating History in South Africa: The case of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome".

⁴⁵ A Ehlers, 'Desegregating History in South Africa: The case of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome', p.8.

Reverend JD Vorster declared: 'In answer to prayer and covenant God Almighty confirmed on 16 December 1838 that it is His will that the Afrikaner volk shall live...And on December 16 the Almighty gave His approval to the volk's direction and our fathers bound us with a holy, unimpeachable covenant never to be untrue to the Volk and God. For the Afrikaner Dingaan's Day is therefore a holy day of covenant.'⁴⁶ On 22 September 1938 Dirk Mostert declared at Pearston: 'We are a chosen nation. We did not choose ourselves. God chose us. We were given a commission.'⁴⁷

One must also understand that some Afrikaners are nowadays trying to put forward their story as an approximation of what happened to the Jews after they had established their own kingdom. In the Afrikaners' case, this kingdom is the Republic of South Africa. They believe that they were then taken into captivity because of the actions of former President F.W. de Klerk and others who 'sold them out,' and as a result they find themselves in captivity in the democracy. If one links this modern-day view of certain conservative Afrikaners to that of the Zionist Movement and the re-establishment of the State of Israel, one is able to understand the longing of these Afrikaners for a restoration of the former Apartheid State, as the Israelis use their Wailing Wall, which is a remainder of David's temple, to commemorate the destruction of King David's kingdom and to cry out for the restoration of the land of Zion.

The history of the Afrikaners is almost similar to that of the Jews in terms of their historical experiences. However, the sentiments of the Afrikaners may not be very strong today because many of them have since realized that the Africans are not animals; they are not going to butcher them. However, there are still people who feel that they have lost the battle for Afrikanerdom and whatever memories they have of their past are retained as mementoes of that victory

⁴⁶ Reverend JD Vorster, in A. Ehlers, 'Desegregating History in South Africa: The case of the covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome', p.5.

⁴⁷ Dirk Mostert, in A. Ehlers, 'Desegregating History in South Africa: The case of the covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome', p.5.

which they scored after leaving the Cape and establishing their Boer Republics which were 'destroyed' later on. Even their beloved Republic of South Africa has recently been destroyed and replaced by a democratic dispensation.

From the observations that have been made with regard to perspectives on the memory of King Dingane, the symbol of the horseshoe formation of the Royal kraal plays an important role. Dingane, as one of the Kings of the Zulus, had an historical association with Ncome and the battle because it was his regiments that fought against the Voortrekkers, using the horseshoe formation of the Royal Kraal. The Ncome Museum that represents that encounter has been recast as a symbol of reconciliation because the establishment of the new democracy believes in the political imperative that the people of South Africa must come together and be reconciled with their history in order to establish a new order that reflects unity in diversity. However, this concept of reconciliation and what it means for all the people of South Africa is challenged by the memory associated with 'Blood River.' The latter became a symbol for the Afrikaners to remind them that they had intentionally fought against the Zulus and that they had won after they had committed themselves to build a house of worship to the honour of God and in acknowledgement of the power that they had been given to defeat the Zulus.

Today, we would like to believe that this memory has been overtaken by history in that South Africa has changed from what it was after the Ncome Battle and all that went with the Voortrekkers' success story. South Africa has now established itself as part of the global community and the historical experiences that elevated the Afrikaners to the position of rulers in South Africa should now be translated to symbols that are more apt in the light of the changes that have taken place. The glory of the Afrikaners' historic past can no longer be represented by symbols, which are associated with Afrikaner victory, rulership, power and pride. It would seem that whatever changes have occurred in the mindset of some, there are still those people who attribute significance to what 'Blood River' represented in

the past. On the Zulu side, things have changed, as expressed in the meaning that they as well as others attach to Ncome and the symbols associated with it. Unfortunately, much has remained the same, emotionally, on the Afrikaners' side – or at least on the side of those Afrikaners who retain the former meanings of their symbols.

Here we are dealing with two perspectives; two sets of symbols, which are not reconcilable because they represent two different perspectives; two different kinds of historical consciousness. I want to argue that history is mostly about differing perceptions, about hatred, war and conquest. It is about oppression that has to be recorded, told and narrated as such. One should not be moved by this new change that has taken place and feel that everything should change. If it is one party's meat to have gained freedom, you can be sure that it is the other's poison. That is the reality, and that is history.

Symbols also remind us that if change has taken place, it should still be monitored. People should not be allowed to completely forget because they might not be able to control the indices of regression should they re-occur. People can relapse. They can fall ill and recover and relapse again. In the new democracy there are built-in safeguards to preserve the tools that people have used in demolishing the apartheid edifice. These include popular action, including industrial action. The new democracy should acknowledge the tools that had brought it about. They cannot be thrown away just because they have achieved their purpose. These tools may be needed again when people begin to regress to the old ways. Reaction has to be shown by way of using those tools, which were responsible for establishing the same democracy. Orwell's *Animal Farm* epitomizes the oppressive ways of those who are in power. This is illustrated by Mr Jones' oppressive ways. That is why even today strikes action has been legalized. It was used as a tool to bring down the Apartheid edifice. In *Animal Farm* the author's underlying argument is that when ultimate power is vested in one person, the kind of rule that obtains is dictatorship. This situation is best

seen in chapter 6 where it is alleged that 'Napoleon alone could decide on a new policy.'⁴⁸ The dictatorship that prevails in chapter 6 is, I would argue, a culmination of Napoleon's quest to monopolize power. In chapter 5, just immediately after the banishment of Snowball from Animal Farm, it was resolved that:

In future all questions relating to the working of the farm would be settled by a special committee of pigs, presided over by himself (Napoleon). These would meet in private and afterwards communicate their decisions to the others. The animals would assemble on Sunday mornings to salute the flag, sing 'Beasts of England', and receive their orders for the week; but there would be no more debates.

In comparative terms a dictatorship stands opposed to the spirit and purport of democracy, which is a form of government organized in accordance with the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultations, and majority rule.⁴⁹ As observed by Ranny, popular sovereignty 'requires that the ultimate power to make political decisions is vested in all the people rather than in some of them or one of them.'⁵⁰ In *Animal Farm* Napoleon originates, amends, and adopts all laws. In chapter 8, for example, the commandment to the effect that 'no animal shall kill any other animal' becomes modified to read: 'no animal shall kill any other animal without cause.'⁵¹ Again, the commandment that 'no animal shall drink alcohol' is amended to read: 'no animal shall drink alcohol to excess.'⁵² Napoleon necessarily monopolizes the making of public policy that governs all the animals. Napoleon's rule therefore is to all intents and purposes authoritarian and as such resorts to the use of extortionate methods to secure political attachments and loyalties from among the subjects. As defined by Ranney authoritarianism is a form of government in which the ruling authority imposes its values and policies on society regardless of the people's wishes.⁵³

⁴⁸ G. Orwell: *Animal Farm*, p.39.

⁴⁹ cf. A. Ranny: *Governing*.

⁵⁰ A. Ranny: *Governing*, p.94.

⁵¹ G. Orwell: *Animal Farm*, p.56.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.68.

⁵³ A. Ranny: *Governing*, p.105.

Moreover, 'its basic principles are sovereignty concentrated in one person or a small group, political inequality, no popular consultation, and minority rule.'⁵⁴

I am citing the story of *Animal Farm* to show that even though in South Africa we are moving in the direction of reconciliation, we must know that we should always guard against any diversion from that course, which is possible because there is so much that is still fresh in peoples' minds. Democracy was established ten years ago and we have many people who still remember what happened before the advent of a democratic South Africa and might who might hunger to go back to things that are morally reprehensible, but which were fashionable before the establishment of the new democracy. The Afrikaners who are very honest about their antagonism might be seen to be a more understandable problem than those who are camouflaged as reconciled. Indeed, as the argument presented in this chapter would show, the history of King Dingane still plays a pivotal role in the history of South African race relations as exemplified by the separate commemorations by both the Afrikaners and the Zulus to commemorate the Battle of 'Blood River' / Impi yaseNcome on December 16. It is interesting to note that last year P.W. Botha, the former State President, made a new attempt to help Afrikaners to come to terms with their dark past. Botha was the chief guest at the Day of Reconciliation commemoration at the site of the Battle of 'Blood River.' In a symbolic and groundbreaking gesture, Botha also took time off to meet with King Goodwill Zwelithini, the Zulu Monarch, and Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Prime Minister of the Zulu Nation, at a parallel commemoration.⁵⁵ King Zwelithini urged both communities to hold one commemoration function in future.⁵⁶ My argument therefore is that if, as late as 2003, the Battle of 'Blood River' / Impi yaseNcome was commemorated separately, then we still have a long way to go in terms of nation building and reconciliation. It could be argued that the failure to commemorate this battle jointly is attributable to the fact that the present government did not allow sufficient time for dialogue to take place

⁵⁴ A. Ranny: *Governing*, p.105.

⁵⁵ 'Afrikaners remember their heroes', SABCnews.com, 16.12.2003

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

between the Zulus and the Afrikaners so that they could bury the hatchet, if there is any, with regard to this battle. It may also be that King Dingane still plays a pivotal role in the history of South African race relations, especially between the Afrikaners and the Zulus. If both the English and the Zulus could commemorate together the fallen at iSandlwana, why is it difficult or almost impossible for both Afrikaners and the Zulus to commemorate the fallen at the historical site of Ncome? This is a question that future historians and researchers will have to grapple with. Ehlers is instructive when he argues that 'an integrated history of the Battle of Blood River / Ncome seems to include both the negative and the positive elements of the historical experience. It must not be a history to enable people to "to forget many things". It must rather be a history to enable people to "make sure that they (you) know what they (you) are forgetting". Only with such an approach can an integrated South African history reflect the kaleidoscopic South African past and, in the words of Frank Ankersmith, can "we (you) become what we (you) are no longer."⁵⁷ If this approach, as eloquently expounded by Ehlers, could be applied in respect to the way the Afrikaners and the Zulus should commemorate the Battle of Blood River/Ncome, maybe it will be possible that one day we could see the two races opting for one commemoration.

6.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with the abiding role that King Dingane and the public history that surrounds his rule continues to play in South Africa – particularly in its impact on the collective psyche of conservative Afrikaners. The dichotomous nature of this history as interpreted by the Zulus and the Afrikaners is aptly mirrored in the two monuments on the east and west banks of a river that is also known by two different names: the *Income* and Blood River. It is argued that the lofty goals of transforming South Africa's approaches to public history will largely be unsuccessful unless the conservative Afrikaners, especially, can undergo an inward paradigm shift that will allow them to join hands with their black brothers

⁵⁷ A. Ehlers, 'Desegregating History in South Africa: The case of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River / Ncome', p.13.

in creating an integrated, holistic and interactive view of the public history that had initially inspired the creation of the two monuments and what they stand for. In order for this to take place ways must be found for transforming heritage management so that it conforms to the democratic principles that bring about community and nation-building while reflecting the new identity and ethos of a multicultural, democratic South Africa. Until then, the deep historical, racial, ethnic, class, linguistic, regional, cultural and gender divisions characterized by centuries of colonialism and decades of fascism are likely to prevail.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters I have attempted to debunk what I believe to be gross Eurocentric misrepresentations of King Dingane in the historiography of the early years of the 19th century. I believe that misrepresentation amounts to deliberately distorted representation. According to de Kock, 'representation plays a role in forming and re-forming social subjects as conscious agents.'¹ He argues that 'representations of the mind in written discourse are engaged in constructing the world, in shaping the modalities of social reality, and in accommodating their writers, performers, readers, and audiences to multiple and shifting subject positions within the world they both constitute and inhabit.'²

Eurocentric misrepresentations of King Dingane were to all intents and purposes aimed at portraying him as a tyrant with neither nationalistic proclivities nor stately qualities. It is therefore of crucial importance that those who write, read and study history should be aware of the representations involved in the shaping of a particular historical narrative and of the source of such representations, as they are easily transformed into misrepresentations, as in the case of a Eurocentric approach to African history.

In this study I have argued that the popularity of this historiographic perspective is symptomatic of a hegemonic praxis that privileges the principles of selection, preference and bias in the use of the vast archive of sources available to the historian. This principle of selection, preference and bias which is manifest in the historiography of the early years of the nineteenth century is to be understood against the background of eighteenth century thinking in which, as argued by de Kock 'there was never much doubt that Europeans were at the top of the natural scale of being.'³ This is evident in Voltaire and Rousseau's alleged suggestion that black people were naturally inferior to Europeans in mental ability and in

¹ L. de Kock: *Civilising Barbarians*, p.37.

² *Ibid.*, p.37.

³ *Ibid.*, p.39.

David Hume's alleged argument, as early as 1742, that 'there never was a civilised nation of any other complexion than white.'⁴

As observed by de Kock, Edward Long, a resident of Jamaica, 'provides an example of what was in all likelihood a very common view of Africans as he wrote in 1774 that Africans were brutish, ignorant, idle, crafty, treacherous, bloody, thievish, mistrustful, superstitious people and that they were also inferior in faculties of mind.'⁵ Again, according to de Kock, in eighteenth century thinking 'there was a common assumption...that non-Western civilisations represented earlier stages in human progress, frozen into immobility while the European world advanced.'⁶ Hence 'the ostensible thrust of the civilising mission was to remake Africans in the European image.'⁷ The civilising mission as conceptualised by the Europeans is best enunciated by de Kock's asseveration to the effect that 'just as Western people conquer nature in an effort to conquer their own self-division, so they cannot desist from enslaving other human beings who necessarily confront them as that Other, alien and forever threatening.'⁸

Eighteenth century thinking was, according to de Kock, also characterised by 'the traditional humanist conception of subjectivity in which a belief in transhistorical truth made it possible to think of culturally determined categories such as "civilized" and "savage" as unmediated and literally God-ordained.'⁹ Moreover, 'colonial forms of knowledge depended precisely on a notion of the masterful Western subject as a repository of truth and immutability.'¹⁰

It is against this background that Charles Pacalt Brownlee's declaration in 1876, namely that [Western people have] '...a higher mission to discharge towards the barbarous tribes on our borders than to govern them simply from disinterested

⁴ P.D. Curtin: *Image of Africa*, p.42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁶ L.de Kock: *Civilising Barbarians*, p. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.10.

motives,¹¹ is rendered more intelligible. For Brownlee, as observed by de Kock, the mission of civil society was 'to elevate *them* and enlighten *them*, and raise *them* (*them* referring to the Africans at the time) in the scale of civilisation.'¹² It is against this background therefore that Philip, a missionary, is alleged to have 'shrewdly detected how the missionary's rupture of autochthonous communities in the Cape opened the way for total acculturation.'¹³ This state of affairs is succinctly enunciated by Philip's assertion to the effect that,

Wherever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudice against the colonial government gives way; their dependence upon the colony is increased by the creation of artificial wants; confidence is restored; intercourse with the colony is established; industry, trade, and agriculture spring up; and every genuine convert becomes the friend and ally of the colonial government.¹⁴

This study is therefore heavily indebted to post-colonial literary-critical positions where, as observed by de Kock, 'there is a critique of the self-privileging Western subject (author) who pre-constitutes his or her "object" of writing in terms which seek to foreclose the play of difference.'¹⁵ In this study I have argued in de Kock's terms that 'neither the observer (the subject) nor the observed (the object) are autonomous entities; rather, they are culturally constituted, culturally interpreted, and mutually referential.'¹⁶ As argued by de Kock 'the revolution of knowledge in the twentieth century culminating in the "post" theories overturned the idea that subjectivity could exist outside of historical, ideological, cultural, psychological and linguistic determination.'¹⁷

¹¹ quoted in L.de Kock: Civilising Barbarians, p.33.

¹² L. de Kock: Civilising Barbarians, p.33.

¹³ Ibid., p.40.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.40.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.11.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.11.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.10.

Thus the notion of 'discourse' in this study is derived from the broad notion that human subjects are embedded in greater contexts of signification, which they help to create but which are also constitutive of their subjectivity.¹⁸ According to de Kock

In approaches based on the idea of discourse in such terms, there can be no original sources of truth or universal categories, which purport to be derived from such "truth." What is taken to be "truth" in such transcendental terms will be seen variously as the ideological "interpellation" of the subject, or a "logocentric" device of closure to be deconstructed, or the discursive expression of particular interests masquerading as general wisdom.¹⁹

The underlying argument in this study is that the history of Black South Africans has largely been a product of an intellectual tradition and method of thinking fashioned by European colonial subjection of non-Europeans in general, and Africans in particular. It needs to be reiterated that the activities of traders and settlers were executed within the context of a general colonising spirit, most characteristically expressed in the phrase 'the white man's burden.' Europe regarded itself as the measure of all things. Europe was the 'Self' and Africa was the 'Other.' This binary conception of the relationship between Europe and Africa generated a set of tropes for describing Africa and Africans in their oppositional relationship with Europe. It is within this historiographic perspective characterised by a hegemonic praxis that privileges the principle of selection, preference and bias, that King Dingane's demeanour was read and interpreted and was found wanting in many respects as he did not live up to expectations as an acculturated Other. Thus it is concluded emphatically that, read and interpreted within the context of his time, King Dingane was an African nationalist rather than a treacherous tyrant.

¹⁸ L. de Kock: Civilising Barbarians, p.11.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.11.

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6. INTERVIEWS

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– 20 June 2004