

*The Destruction of the
Zulu Kingdom*

The Civil War in Zululand, 1879–1884

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The Zulu Kingdom

Foundations

Early in the 1880s when Cetshwayo kaMpande, the last of the Zulu kings, was in exile he was asked what he knew of the diamond fields around Kimberley. It was believed that, when he was king, Cetshwayo had been planning a black rising in southern Africa and that he had his spies in all parts of the region, and his captors were therefore surprised to discover that the king knew little about the diamond fields. Visiting traders had spoken about the mines but Cetshwayo was not even sure where they were situated for, as he said, 'the Zulu people never went to the Diamond Fields; the Natal Zulus did'.¹

This statement tells us much about the nature of the kingdom which Cetshwayo ruled from 1872, and also suggests why it was invaded by the British in 1879. The discovery of diamonds in the southern African interior in the late 1860s had brought the first stirring of economic revolution to most communities between the Cape and the Zambezi. One of its effects was to attract to the mines Africans from all parts of the sub-continent. The Zulu, however, seem to have been an exception to this. There was as yet no need for them to labour outside their territory for cash or firearms because the expanding forces of colonialism had not penetrated the structure of the Zulu social formation. While other African communities had been forcibly driven from their land, or had lost their self-sufficiency as their surplus products and labour were drawn beyond their borders, the Zulu remained in possession of their land, and their labour was still expended within the kingdom.

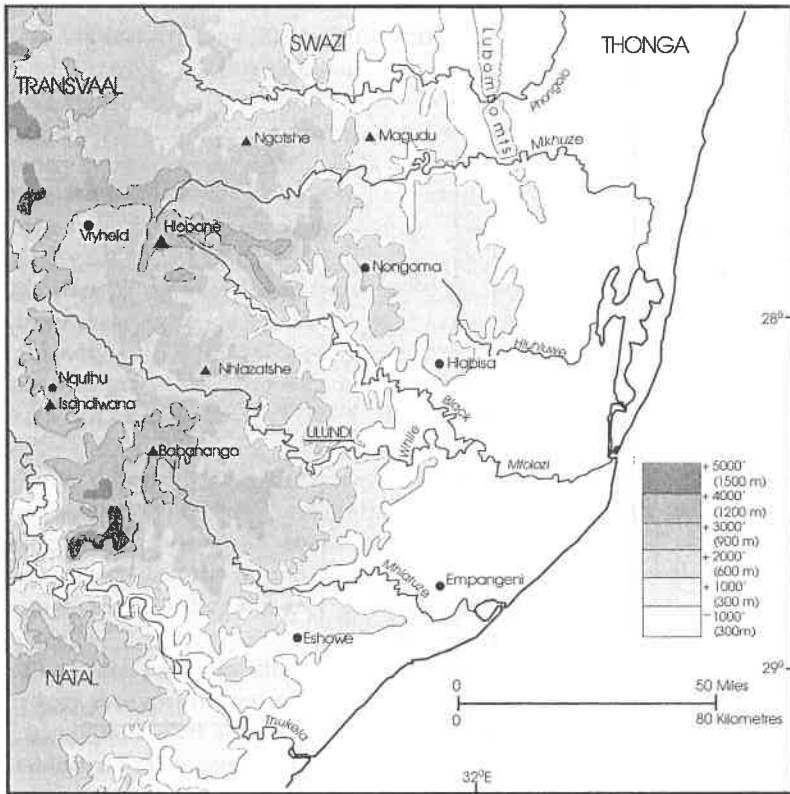
The Zulu of Cetshwayo's kingdom were very aware of these differences between their way of life and that of most of their African neighbours; they were proud of their political and economic independence and the manner in which they had resisted change, as befitted the descendants of Shaka kaSenzangakhona, the founder of the kingdom.

The social strength and resilience of the kingdom and the independence of its members had its origins in the particular qualities of the physical environment in which it had developed. Labour within this environment produced the food, the basic materials, and the instruments of production upon which the inhabitants depended. Consequently the links between man and the land were direct and intimate, and an understanding of the nature of the physical environment and its productive potential is fundamental to an understanding of the Zulu people's history.

Zululand's boundaries changed greatly during the years between the rule of its founder, Shaka (c. 1816–28), and his nephew, the last Zulu king, Cetshwayo (1872–9), but what might be called the 'core' of the kingdom lay between the Phongolo and Thukela river valleys in the north and south, and the valley of the Mzinyathi (Buffalo) river in the west. It is a region of high relief; rivers and streams have cut deep valleys as they retreated westwards leaving huge spurs of more resistant material jutting towards the sea. Thus the five major river systems – the Thukela, Mhlatauze, Mfolozi, Mkhuze and Phongolo – are separated by high-lying ground, at times 1 000 m above the adjacent river-valley floors, and the sides of the valleys are deeply incised by feeder streams creating much broken country (see Map II).

This high relief leads to great variations in rainfall and temperature over short distances. Thus the coastal area is hot and sub-tropical while in the highlands the climate is far more temperate with warm, wet summers and cold, dry winters. Rain-bearing winds come off the Indian ocean and deposit over 1 000 mm a year on the coast, but the rainfall decreases as the distance from the sea increases. However, the rainfall does not decrease uniformly, as the high ground receives far more than the major river valleys which lie in rain-shadow areas where precipitation can be less than 600 mm a year (see Map III).

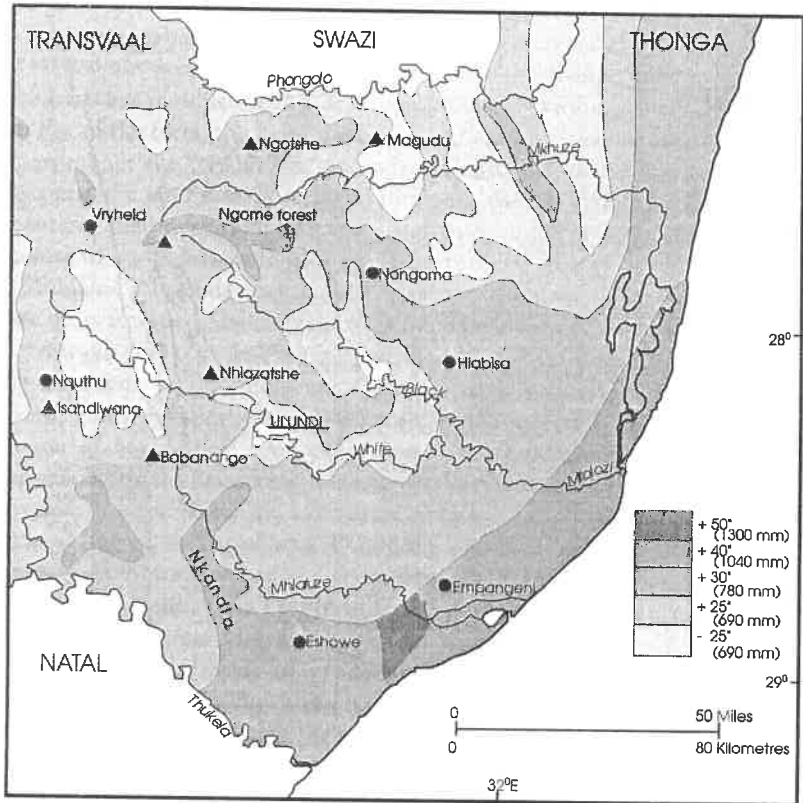
Variations in rainfall create differences in vegetation, and Zululand contains a number of different vegetation types interlacing through the country. Any description of vegetation has to take into account the fact that plant communities are never static and are constantly being altered by the effects of human activity. The vegetation of Zululand has been changed radically in the course of human history. Botanical research suggests that before the coming of the first farmers to the region it was heavily wooded.² The higher rainfall areas, like the coastal plain and much of the country over 500 m, were covered with dense bush and forest. The deep river valleys and the area in the north-east, lying in the rain-shadow of the Lubombo range, where the rainfall is low, tended to produce types of 'savanna' vegetation – that is, scattered trees with a grass understorey.



Map II Zululand: Topography

Fire, the iron hoe and the axe in the hands of man, and the grazing patterns of his stock had, over a period of perhaps 1 500 years, slowly altered these vegetational patterns. The forest was driven back to the crests of the high ridges, and the bush to the wettest slopes and along water-courses, and it was replaced by grassland. In the dry valleys burning and grazing reduced the wooded element of the savanna, opening it up and favouring the grasses. Indeed some botanists believe that this vegetation type can only be maintained by the constant activity of man and his stock.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Zulu kingdom came into being, the region contained a great variety of vegetation types. The coastal strip with its high rainfall and hot, sub-tropical climate was still covered with extensive tracts of bush. Away from the coast, as the rainfall decreased, the density of the bush was reduced and the resultant



Map III Zululand: Rainfall

grassy areas were well-suited to occupation by man, once his cattle were immune to the diseases transmitted by the ticks which thrived in the rank grasses.

The river valleys penetrate far into the interior of Zululand. The rainfall in these valleys is low, the temperature range wide, and the various types of savanna – commonly known as *iblanze*, Thornveld, Lowveld or Bushveld – follow the rivers and spread beneath the forest-crowned highlands. The grasses which form the understorey in these areas are ‘sweet’, that is they provide nutritious and palatable grazing throughout the dry winter. In most parts of Africa it is the dry winter months which makes stock-keeping so hazardous; during this time the quality of the grass deteriorates, stock loses condition, and if the spring rains are late, stock losses can be high. In sweetveld regions, however, the grass retains its nutritive qualities and cattle thrive. While there were vast

tracts of sweetveld in southern Africa in pre-colonial times they tended to be associated with tsetse-infected belts, or they were situated in regions where there was insufficient surface water to support a high density of stock. In Zululand, however, tsetse was confined to the borders of the country or the deepest river valleys and, although sweetveld only occurs where rainfall is low, the Zululand sweetveld regions were well watered by the streams and rivers rising in the surrounding hills and ranges.

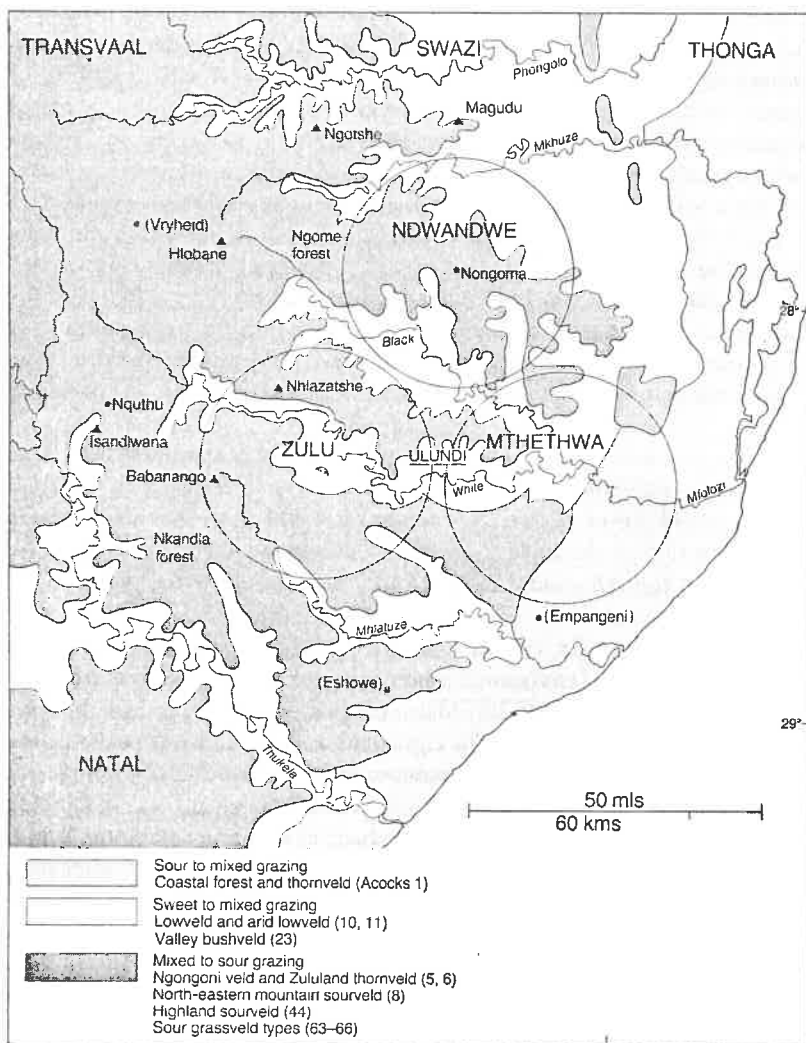
Sourveld occurs in the high rainfall regions. It is nutritious and palatable after the spring rains in the growing season, but once it has matured it loses these attributes. In Zululand it occurred on the coast and in the highlands, in areas once covered by forest and bush. And between the sour and sweet grazing regions were belts of mixed veld; the intermediate type which can be profitably grazed for about six months in the year (see Map IV)³.

These different types of grazing, occurring over a comparatively small area, made Zululand an excellent region for stock. As long as the Zulu herder could move his animals freely he could take advantage of the spring grazing in the high country and, as the summer advanced, move them down the valley sides to the sweet grasses of the valley floors in the winter.

The wide range in climate allowed the Zulu cultivator to choose between the types of environment best suited to the different requirements of sorghum, millets and maize. Maize cultivation appears to have become established in the country by the eighteenth century and was probably the most important food crop by the nineteenth century. It has a number of advantages, being comparatively high-yielding when grown in suitable areas; it requires far less labour to produce, as it is resistant to the depredations of most birds, and needs neither winnowing nor threshing. Cereals, mixed with dairy products, formed the basis of the Zulu diet.

Most of the other materials essential to the Zulu way of life were produced in the environment in which they lived. Except for the western highlands the country was well-wooded, providing fuel as well as the materials from which the homesteads were constructed. Basic items of clothing were made from the hides of slaughtered cattle, and cooking and eating receptacles were made from grass, wood and clay. Iron for weapons and agricultural implements was mined, smelted and forged within the country, at least until iron became more readily available through external trade.

Taken as a whole the physical environment of Zululand was particularly well suited to the needs of these pre-colonial farmers. Lying between the tropical and temperate regions it possessed the fertility and fecundity, but



Map IV Zululand: Grazing

not the debilitating diseases, of the tropics, and the grazing potential of its grasses was perhaps unrivalled in southern Africa under existing methods of stock-keeping.

At the same time it must be remembered that the productive potential of any environment is not static. The prolonged activity of man and his

stock had done much to create Zululand's qualities as an excellent region for production by stock-keeping cultivators, but human activity had also initiated a process of environmental degeneration. The grasses of Zululand are easily damaged: over-stocking leads to the destruction of the grass-cover, soil erosion and bush encroachment; sweetveld is particularly vulnerable, and even under-stocking can lead to pasture deterioration because selective grazing favours unpalatable grasses which eventually come to dominate the plant community. It seems impossible that the pre-colonial peoples of south-eastern Africa could have established a long-term ecological equilibrium with their environment; a society without scientific knowledge of plant life and nutrition, or the means to control grazing and cattle movements by fencing, or to store and pump water, could not avert pasture degeneration.

Once population density in the sub-continent made migration to new areas difficult, and when it was no longer possible to convert forest and bush to grass and arable land, then there were definite limits on the rate of increase of production and of population density, limits imposed by the changing productive capacity of the environment under existing modes of exploitation. As these limits were approached a probable outcome would have been increasing violence between social groups living in the area as they struggled for access to diminishing resources. And there is evidence which suggests that such a struggle was an important factor in the conflict which occurred in the region at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, out of which Shaka and the Zulu kingdom emerged. The geographical situation and the direction of expansion of the major groups contending for dominance, like the Mthethwa, the Ndwandwe and the Zulu, suggest that their leaders were concerned with gaining access to a wide variety of grazing types.⁴ There was a major famine in the region during the early years of the nineteenth century during which starving marauders tried to seize food-stores, and settlement patterns were changed with the object of protecting such stores more effectively.⁵ A feature of the struggles at this time was the increase in the area controlled by a single political unit. This gave members of the unit access to a wider range of grazing, enabling them to avoid the effects of local drought and shortage, and making for more effective control of the environment. And of course the rise of Shaka was characterised by a substantial reduction in the population of the region by warfare.

But perhaps the strongest indication that the struggle out of which the Zulu kingdom emerged was created in part by an imbalance between population density and existing resources can be discerned by considering

the structure of the kingdom itself. An examination of production within the kingdom, and the manner in which it was organised, does suggest that an important factor in its emergence was the need to alter social relations in order to solve problems that hitherto existing modes of exploitation and social organisation could not answer.

Production in Zululand took place in the tens of thousands of homesteads (*imizi*) which were scattered over the hills and ridges of the country.⁶ These were the homesteads of the 'common man', consisting of a circle of huts (*izindlu*) around a cattle kraal. In these huts lived the homestead-head (*umnumzana*) and perhaps two or three wives and their children. To a large degree the homestead was materially self-sufficient, its inhabitants subsisting almost entirely on the products of their own labour. There was a rigid sexual division of labour within the homestead: the men worked with livestock and the women in the production of cereals. Supporting activities, like the manufacture of the instruments of production, clothing, and handicrafts, were also allocated according to sex, but the task undertaken usually depended on an individual's particular talents, and the local availability of the necessary raw materials. It was the day-to-day labour within these homesteads, and in the lands associated with them, which, from the time of Shaka to Cetshwayo, provided the subsistence and the surplus upon which the continued existence of the kingdom depended.

But although it has been estimated that 90 per cent of the people of Zululand lived in such homesteads⁷ it must be remembered that the kingdom was highly stratified and that the king and his officials exercised authority over these homesteads, extracting surplus from them, and uniting them politically into one large centralised polity. The homesteads of men of rank within the kingdom were far larger than those of the men living under their authority but the essential principles by which they were organised, and by which production took place, were the same. And these principles can also be perceived in the manner in which the king's homesteads were organised, although in these royal homesteads there were also important differences, the most significant relating to the king's position as head of the Zulu army.

The royal homesteads - the *amakhanda* - were not only production communities, supported by the labour of the relatives and retainers of the king living within them, but they were also barracks which housed members of the Zulu army while serving the king. Under the Zulu military system all men and women in the country, on reaching the age of puberty, were gathered into age-sets, *amabutho*. Members of the female age-sets did not give direct service to the king and remained within their

fathers' homesteads, but they were not allowed to marry until the king had given his permission. As members of the regiments of the Zulu army, men served the king directly, raiding beyond Zululand's borders, acting as a coercive force within the kingdom, and, while they were living in the royal homesteads, they laboured for the king. Here the sexual division of labour did not apply and the regiments' work included crop production. The importance of the Zulu army as a raiding force declined after the death of Shaka although of course the threat posed by the army, even when it was inactive, was of the greatest importance in securing the country's independence.

Although, while in service, the regiments received a certain amount of food from the king, most of their subsistence was derived from their own labour and they were also heavily dependent on supplies brought from their fathers' homesteads. Thus the Zulu army was supported, in the main, by the homesteads from which its members originated; and its strength, upon which the king's power and the nation's independence was based, depended ultimately on the surplus labour drawn from every homestead within the country.

When the men of a regiment were well into their thirties, and the women of the age-sets associated with them perhaps ten years younger, the king gave them permission to marry and set up homesteads of their own.⁸ These restrictions on the age of marriage have led many writers on Zulu history into confusion. There has been a tendency to ascribe these features of Zulu society as innovations introduced by Shaka for reasons directly related to his own personality. Thus a well-known social anthropologist has written recently that 'the extreme development of the military system, with its long-term celibacy' was the consequence of Shaka's own 'disturbed psychosexuality'.⁹ And it is frequently supposed that the restriction on the age of marriage led to an accumulation of sexual energy which was somehow transmuted into military vigour.

These misconceptions are based on a crude Freudian approach which is frequently overlaid by transpositions of bourgeois concepts of marriage to Zulu society. In fact marriage in Zulu society did not signal the onset of sexual relations; these had been taking place long before, although they were of a kind which did not lead to conception. Moreover marriage in the Zulu kingdom meant far more than 'taking a wife' for when a man married he also left his father's homestead and established a new production community, served by tracts of arable and grazing land, supported by its own cattle, and which was soon augmented by more wives and their offspring. Thus by controlling marriage in the kingdom through the military system the king in fact controlled the rate and the direction of the

fundamental social processes within the kingdom – those of production and reproduction.

In the case of women the delay in marriage reduced their fertile span, which necessarily reduced the potential rate of population increase.¹⁰ When men are subjected to delays of this kind it does not have a marked effect on population increase; however, in Zulu society, where marriage was linked with the creation of new production communities, the king's authority to hold back marriage gave him a significant degree of control over the rate at which production communities were formed and therefore over the intensity with which the environment was exploited.

Thus a study of the physical environment of Zululand indicates that there were definite limits to the productive capacity of the region, and there are suggestions that these limits were being approached in the eighteenth century. Furthermore the structure of the Zulu kingdom founded in the early nineteenth century was such that it gave the king the power to control, to a significant degree, the rate of population increase and the rate at which the basic production processes of the kingdom expanded. While it would be an over-simplification to argue that the environmental crisis of the late eighteenth century led to the creation of the nineteenth-century kingdom which solved this problem, the evidence does suggest that we should study the early history of the kingdom within the context of the effect of existing production techniques on the physical environment and the problems caused in such an environment by the pressure of population on existing resources.

However, whatever the exact causes of Shaka's rise to power were, we do know that he left a form of social organisation which survived for half a century after his death, in the face of continual threats from the expanding forces of colonialism. There were of course many changes; nonetheless the fundamental structure of Zulu society remained substantially unaltered, maintaining a continuity between the kingdom Shaka founded and that ruled by Cetshwayo sixty years later.

Zulu independence and the Zulu kings

Shaka was assassinated in 1828 by his brother Dingane. It was Dingane's misfortune to have to deal with the arrival of the Voortrekkers in the region in 1837. He attempted to overcome the threat they posed by a surprise attack. This was only partially successful and the Voortrekkers had their revenge at Blood River in 1838 when they demonstrated the effect of concentrated fire-power from a defensive position on the massed charge

of the Zulu army by killing three thousand Zulu without loss to themselves. Dingane's power was weakened by this defeat and another brother, Mpande, took the opportunity to ally himself with the Boers and overthrow Dingane in 1840.

The Zulu avoided paying the full price of this alliance when in 1842 the British terminated the existence of the Boer Republic of Natalia and in the following year recognised Mpande as the independent ruler of the territory to the north of the Thukela and east of the Mzinyathi rivers. In 1845 the Colony of Natal was founded. Its history and that of the neighbouring Zulu kingdom were to be closely connected.

Mpande ruled the kingdom for thirty-two years, that is for more than half the time it was in existence, and he was the only Zulu king to die peacefully in old age. By adopting a mask of lethargic stupidity he had escaped the attentions of his brothers, Shaka and Dingane, and he continued to use the same device to mislead his contemporaries. He did so with such effect that even today he is generally regarded as an indolent incompetent, a judgement belied by any serious attempt to assess his achievements in securing both his own power, and the independence of the kingdom.

Unlike Shaka and Dingane, Mpande married and allowed his children to survive. Two of the oldest were Mbulazi and Cetshwayo who were born in the early 1830s¹¹ Cetshwayo was the son of Ngqumbazi, a daughter of the dominant lineage of the Zungu' clan, and Mbulazi was the son of Monase, a favourite wife of Mpande. The two princes were recruited into the Thulwana regiment and received their first military experience against the Swazi in the early 1850s in the last of the great Zulu raids. By this time factions had begun to gather around the young men: Mbulazi's followers were known as the Gqoza; Cetshwayo's were the Usuthu, a name derived from a drinking boast among the young men associated with him at the Ekubazeni homestead and which referred to the prodigious capacity of the huge 'Suthu' cattle raided from the Pedi.¹²

Rivalry began to develop between the two factions and in 1856 the Gqoza tried to cross into Natal. The Usuthu intercepted them on the banks of the Thukela river and defeated them at the battle of Ndongakusuka. Six of Mpande's sons were killed and others sought refuge among the colonists in Natal and the Boers of the Transvaal. Zulu tradition has it that Mpande had brought on the fight between the most powerful of his sons, and that he had a third, more malleable, candidate for succession to the Zulu throne in mind.¹³

However, Cetshwayo, by his victory over Mbulazi, had taken the first steps towards the Zulu throne. But his position was still far from secure.

There was still opposition to him within the kingdom, and both the neighbouring settler communities had possible successors to the kingship living among them and Cetshwayo feared an attack on the kingdom in the name of one of these exiled sons of Mpande. These fears were increased by the steadily increasing pressure of the Transvaal Boers on the north-eastern boundaries of the kingdom. Cetshwayo began to develop an external policy whereby he tried to gain the support of the Colony of Natal both for his claim to the Zulu throne, and against the threat posed by the Transvaal. As a result of this, the Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, Theophilus Shepstone, came to Zululand in 1861 and, during a tense meeting, recognised Cetshwayo as successor to Mpande.

During the 1860s the Boer encroachments intensified and the Zulu made a number of appeals to Natal for support. They even suggested that Natal occupy a buffer zone between the two parties. The matter was still unresolved when, in October 1872, Mpande died. In the following year Shepstone was invited to Zululand again and this time he formally recognised Cetshwayo as successor to Mpande, and king of the Zulu.

These diplomatic links established by Cetshwayo and Shepstone between the Zulu kingdom and Natal must not obscure the kingdom's essential independence. The spread of colonialism in southern Africa in the nineteenth century had of course affected the Zulu. They had suffered a major defeat at the hands of the Boers in 1838, and although Mpande had managed to retrieve the situation and retain the core of the kingdom, the outlying regions once traversed by the Zulu army were now under white rule. Missionaries and traders had been active in the kingdom from its earliest years and the Zulu sought the assistance of their white neighbours in both internal and external disputes. Nonetheless, these factors had caused only marginal changes within the kingdom: while other African societies in the region had lost their independence by direct conquest, or had been transformed by the adaptations they had to make to the new situation, it does not appear as if the changes the Zulu had to make caused any fundamental alteration to social relations within the kingdom. At the same time, however, the changes which were occurring did gain significance later, eventually providing the lines of cleavage used by external forces to gain access to the kingdom's resources.

Living in a fertile, well-watered region, ideal for cattle-raising, largely free of debilitating tropical diseases and protected by a formidable military organisation, the population of perhaps a quarter of a million Zulu seems to have prospered during Mpande's long reign. There had been severe internal dissension but, when Mpande died, Cetshwayo succeeded him without dividing the kingdom. Like most pre-industrial

societies without forms of storeable wealth, the people of Zululand were especially vulnerable to adverse climatic conditions; but it is noteworthy that Zulu people have said that the great famine of Mpande's reign was neither as severe nor as widespread as the famine which occurred in the early years of the century.¹⁴

Exotic diseases had entered the kingdom, but in spite of human and animal losses, the Zulu had overcome the worst of their effects. Lung-sickness (bovine pleuro-pneumonia) was introduced to the Cape in 1854 and had infected Zulu herds by the end of the decade; although it was always a problem in the kingdom a degree of immunity was developed by Zulu cattle. The Zulu had suffered from smallpox in Shaka's time but the serious epidemic of 1863 was 'stamped out by means of vaccination, which was introduced by Europeans and carried out by the people themselves'.¹⁵

Missionary enterprise in Zululand was intense but conspicuous for its lack of success. The Africans living on the mission stations were usually brought into the kingdom from other communities by the missionaries who found it extremely difficult to prise the Zulu from their way of life.¹⁶

The activities of traders from neighbouring territories seem to have had only a superficial effect on the way of life of the people of Zululand. In view of the fact that traders had operated energetically in the kingdom for a long period of time this point needs further explanation.

Traders from Delagoa Bay appear in the earliest documentary records of the kingdom, and the 'Zululand trader' was a feature of colonial life from Natal's earliest years. These traders carried blankets, hoes, picks, knives, metal cooking utensils, cloth, beads and trinkets into the country to exchange for hides and the small, hardy Sanga cattle of Zululand which were highly prized in neighbouring territories.

While these commodities imported into Zululand were extremely useful, or at least decorative, they were not unique, being, with the exception of firearms, for the most part industrially manufactured versions of products which were made by the Zulu craftsman or artisan. They were exchanged for cattle or hides, procured by the trader who travelled from homestead to homestead within the kingdom. The general impression one gains is that the Zulu were well aware of the advantages of acquiring some of the commodities in the visiting trader's waggon, and that many possessed the useful blanket, lengths of cloth, and an assortment of metal utensils and tools. At the same time the impact of colonial trade of this kind was slight, for the trader in Zululand was not able to introduce any product which came to be seen as essential to the Zulu way of life and which could not be manufactured within the country. Moreover, because

he acquired cattle, the trader gained possession of the surplus commodity already produced in the country and thus demanded no alteration to the process of production.

At the same time there were white traders living in the Zulu kingdom, and some Zulu had themselves made contact with the colonial world and adopted certain of its ways, including trading. They were few in number, and perhaps, because their ways of life were so different from that of the average Zulu, they stand out misleadingly in the records. Nonetheless they were often men of note and figured prominently in the events with which this book is primarily concerned.

Dabulamanzi, son of Mpande, the best shot in the country and an aggressive, rowdy man, was one of these. He was feared by the Zulu and disliked by most of the whites who knew him.¹⁷ Sihayo, chief of the Qungebe, and an especial favourite of Cetshwayo, ate at table with local missionaries, dressed in European clothes and was considered by the Bishop of Zululand to be perhaps the most 'advanced' man in the country. His territory was on the Natal border and a waggon track passed through it. He was involved in trade through Swaziland to Delagoa Bay, used oxen as draught animals and ploughed his fields.¹⁸ Hamu, genealogically the son of Nzibe, Mpande's deceased brother, although biologically the son of Mpande himself, allowed a white, Herbert Nunn, to take up residence with him in the early 1860s. Nunn married Zulu wives, set himself up as a trader, and exploited the timber resources in the nearby Ngome forest.¹⁹ Hamu was an alcoholic, addicted to European spirits,²⁰ and was the only Zulu of note to defect to the British at the time of the 1879 invasion.

The best known of the white traders living in Zululand was John Dunn.²¹ As a young man he had hunted and traded in Zululand and had attracted Cetshwayo's attention in 1856 when he had fought as a mercenary for Mbulazi in the civil war. Needing a literate and bilingual adviser and secretary, Cetshwayo invited Dunn to live in Zululand. Dunn adopted the way of life of a Zulu chief, married Zulu women, and set up homesteads along the southern coastal strip between the Thukela and Mhlatuze, through which passed the waggon track to the northern districts. He collected a large following, employed African hunters, traded stock with settlers in Natal and entertained members of the British aristocracy, guiding their hunting parties into the Zululand coastal belt. Working in conjunction with Natal merchant houses, he imported thousands of obsolete muzzle-loaders into Zululand through Delagoa Bay, paying the Natal firms with livestock driven south across the Thukela.²² In 1873 Dunn was appointed by the Natal authorities to recruit Thonga labourers living to the north-east of Zululand and to arrange for their safe passage

through the kingdom to the colony. On occasion the king himself assisted in recruiting labour for Natal and was paid well for it.²³

Dunn's trading route had to pass through the territory under the control of Zibhebhu. He was chief of the Mandlakazi lineage of the Zulu clan and appears to have been the most active Zulu trader in the country. The Mandlakazi chiefs were said to have special responsibility over the Thonga people living to the east of the Lubombo mountains,²⁴ as well as the people of the Lubombo range itself, whose allegiance was often ambiguous as a result of their proximity to the centre of Swazi power. The high-lying country of the Lubombo range rose above the fever-ridden, tsetse-fly infested country around it, and formed a bridge between Zululand and the northern parts of south-eastern Africa. Zibhebhu is said to have sent

his agents through Swaziland, the Eastern Transvaal and even Portuguese East Africa, with merchandise such as beads, blankets, Salampore cloth and brass-wire to be exchanged for leopard, civet cat and nsimango monkey-skins which were greatly in demand among the Zulus. Zibhebhu paid for his trading goods in cattle. . . .²⁵

The fact that there was a huge demand for wild animal skins in the Zulu kingdom is confirmed in traders' inventories and hunters' journals,²⁶ and in a lengthy statement made by a member of Cetshwayo's tribute-collecting parties who travelled to Thongaland, the 'great supplying country for Zululand'.²⁷ Genet skins were needed for the ceremonial dancing dress, samango monkey pelts for the warriors' headdress, leopard and otter skins formed part of the chief's attire and were greatly valued, as were lion claws, rhino horn for snuff boxes, and crane, secretary bird and ostrich feathers. The spread of settler communities and the resultant destruction of African wild life had made it necessary for the Zulu to look to the north for items they considered necessary for their rituals, ceremonies and the martial display which was still an essential part of their way of life. And it is surely significant that the Zulu most deeply involved in trading, Zibhebhu, used cattle to obtain manufactured goods of exotic origin, which were then used to obtain the articles of African origin which were so much in demand in the kingdom. The importance of imported European trade goods for the Zulu seems to have been matched, if not surpassed, by the importance of articles indigenous to Africa.

Further evidence of the economic independence of the Zulu kingdom lies in the fact that members of the Zulu kingdom were not considered as wage-labourers by nearby settlers. The demand for labourers was intense, and workers were obtained from territories adjoining and beyond the

kingdom, and from overseas; but the Zulu, on Natal's borders, were 'too strongly attached to their military organisation for the planters of Natal to hope for a direct supply of labour from the unemployed population of Zululand'.²⁸ Although individuals crossed the boundary to work in Natal²⁹ and the Transvaal, and the price Zulu paid for political asylum in Natal was a period of forced labour, the vast majority of Zulu grew up, worked and died within the kingdom. They held in contempt their African neighbours who sold their labour to the whites, calling them *amakhafula*, a name derived from 'kaffir', a derogatory term as used by whites, but which gained added meaning among the Zulu because of its similarity to 'khafula', meaning to eject or spit out.

The image is an apposite one. The majority of the Zulu were still held firmly in the different production communities of the kingdom, moving from one type to another as they grew older and their status altered. The boys worked in their fathers' homesteads, the young men in the military homesteads before establishing homesteads of their own, while the girls worked in their fathers' homesteads before establishing their own production units within their husbands' homesteads. Of course external forces had affected the Zulu increasingly as settler communities became established on the borders of the kingdom. Nevertheless throughout the reigns of the kings Zulu labour expended within the commoners' homesteads continued to support the bulk of the population, and the surplus which was drawn from them by the king through the military system created the basis for his material power and authority, together with that of the officials with and through whom he ruled. Despite this extraction of surplus the autonomy of the commoner's homestead was considerable; here the Zulu men and women consumed the products of their own labour, which provided the means of subsistence and reproduction of the homestead. To the Zulu men and their wives in the homesteads of the kingdom their way of life contrasted strongly with that of the African in colonial Natal across the border who, as he became increasingly free and alienated from the means of production, indeed seemed to be a man 'spat out'.

Notes

- 1 Reply to question 285, Supplementary Minutes of Evidence, *Cape Native Laws and Customs Commission*, Cape Town, 1883, p. 529. There are many references to 'Zulus' at the diamond fields in the 1870s but as the king asserts here they seem to refer to Africans from Natal. See also the statement, based on information supplied by Cetshwayo, that 'No Zulus (proper) work there. There are no Zulus in Zululand who have ever been there', on p. 723 of

- 'Cetshwayo's story of the Zulu nation and the war', reprinted from *Macmillan's Magazine*, Feb. 1880, in Colenso, series 1 (Bishopstowe papers).
- 2 For a much more detailed discussion of the nature of the changing physical environment of Zululand see my paper, 'Ecological factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu kingdom', presented to the Conference on Southern African history at the National University of Lesotho, Aug. 1977.
 - 3 Map IV gives a rough idea of the possible distribution of these grazing types, according to the reconstruction of veld types in J. P. H. Acocks, *Veld Types of South Africa*, Pretoria, 1953, and his map *Veld Types of South Africa*, Pretoria, 1951.
 - 4 See J. B. McI. Daniel, 'A Geographical Study of pre-Shakan Zululand', *South African Geographical Journal*, LV, 1 (1973).
 - 5 C. de B. Webb and J. B. Wright (eds), *The James Stuart Archive*, Pietermaritzburg and Durban, 1976, i, Evidence of Jantshi, p. 201; D. McK. Malcolm, 'The Bantu', transcripts of broadcast talks (KC); A. T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, London, 1929, pp. 63 and 88.
 - 6 This section is based on my paper, 'Production and Exchange in the Zulu kingdom', *Mohlomi: Journal of Southern African Studies*, ii, 1978.
 - 7 A. T. Bryant, *The Zulu People, as they were before the white man came*, Pietermaritzburg, 1967, p. 438.
 - 8 The age of the Zulu at marriage no doubt differed at various points in Zulu history. The very rough estimates given here are based on Bryant, *The Zulu People*, p. 188; Bryant, *Olden Times*, p. 645; E. J. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, Pietermaritzburg, 1957, p. 38; O. H. Spohr (ed.), *The Natal Diaries of Dr W. H. I. Bleek, 1855-1856*, Cape Town, 1965, p. 67; BPP, C.1137: I, enc. 1, T. Shepstone, Report of the expedition to install Cetshwayo, p. 21; among other sources.
 - 9 M. Gluckman, 'The Individual in a Social Framework: the rise of King Shaka of Zululand', *Journal of African Studies*, i, 2, 1974.
 - 10 E. A. Wrigley, *Population and History*, London, 1969, p. 116.
 - 11 It is frequently stated that Cetshwayo was born in 1826; however this date appears to be derived from an incorrect assumption made by R. C. A. Samuelson in *Long, Long Ago*, Durban, 1929, p. 213. Cetshwayo was probably born towards the end of 1832.
 - 12 Colenso, series 2, pp. 525-6.
 - 13 KC, Stuart papers: Evidence of Makuza, 5 March 1921, and Evidence of Mangati; Colenso, series 1, p. 783.
 - 14 Webb and Wright (eds), *James Stuart Archive*, 1, p. 201.
 - 15 J. Y. Gibson, *The Story of the Zulus*, London, 1911, p. 108.
 - 16 N. A. Etherington, 'The Rise of the Kholwa in Southeastern Africa: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand, 1835-1880', (PhD thesis, Yale University, 1971), pp. 181-200.
 - 17 For some white opinions of Dabulamanzi see F. B. Fynney, *The Zulu Army, and Zulu Headmen*, Pietermaritzburg, 1879, and B. Mitford, *Through the Zulu country, its battlefields and its people*, London, 1883, pp. 178-84. For Zulu attitudes to his 'quarrelsome habits' see Colenso, series 1, p. 740.
 - 18 Etherington, 'The Rise of the Kholwa', p. 190, n. 52; and SNA 1/1/26, two statements dated 19 Jan. 1875 and 25 March 1875.
 - 19 Colenso, series 2, p. 45 and p. 864.