

**THE ZULU WRITERS' PERCEPTION OF KING SHAKA**

by

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that THE ZULU WRITERS' PERCEPTION OF KING SHAKA is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

*U. Mathebeni*  
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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, in particular Sibusiso Peter who endured tremendous inconvenience when I was working on this project.



**SUMMARY**

The aim of this study is to make a critical examination of the different perceptions presented by Zulu authors on King Shaka, the most controversial and celebrated Zulu king. Chapter one is an introductory chapter which provides a short biography of Shaka and identifies the mythology surrounding his name. The chapter ends with an exposition of theoretical approaches to be used in the study.

Chapter two assesses the novelists' views and chapter three examines how the playwrights present Shaka. In both genres Shaka emerges as a hero. In chapter four, which is on poetry, various themes conveyed by Zulu poets on Shaka are discussed. In the concluding chapter, opinions by some historians on Shaka are stated and assessed. Further, general observations on the findings of this study are summarised.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Aim of this study

Shaka, who lived from 1787 to 1828, was one of Africa's most famous leaders. He is renowned for having united different Nguni tribes to form one Zulu nation. He has been the subject of many historical books, scholarly studies and literary works. Many works generally highlight only the negative side of his personality.

The aim of this study is to examine critically what Zulu writers have said about Shaka in their creative works and attempt to gain insight into their perceptions of him.

Shaka is a very controversial figure. As Ballard (1988:13) remarks:

For the mere mention of Shaka's name conjures up dire images of savagery, butchery and barbarism. Shaka stands accused of having committed a series of the most heinous crimes known to mankind.

Some people attribute this negative attitude to the fact that those who record history have questionable credentials. Bill Faure, as cited by Msimang (1990:1) says:

Black history suffers because it is mainly written by whites...it was time to rewrite Black history books...

It is generally agreed that reading a people's literature helps us to understand their history and culture. As Gérard (1983:3) puts it, literary authorities:

...regarded literature as a common expression of mankind and also a key to better understanding between human groups separated by language barriers.

Shelton (1968: 2-3) makes an illuminating comment:

African literature arises from and mirrors the African community and the historical experiences of Africa. African writing is writing based on the living heritage of the African people. It reflects African history as a background to today's events and tomorrow's crises. It is a critique of present-day society and a projection into the future.

It is my hope that this study of how the Zulu writers portray Shaka will give us additional insight which cannot be found in history textbooks.

## 1.1 Shaka the man, or mythical figure

Shaka was the son of Senzangakhona and Nandi. He was born out of wedlock. His parents were cousins, and such a marriage is taboo in Zulu culture. Nandi's great-grandfather on her mother's side, Qwabe, was a brother of Zulu, the great-grandfather of Senzangakhona.

When Nandi showed signs of pregnancy, it was announced that she had been infected by an intestinal beetle known as ishaka. The baby was consequently named Shaka. As Roberts (1974:34) remarks:

...defying the prejudice of his elders, he (Senzangakhona) unceremoniously installed Nandi at his kraal as his third wife. Precisely when these embarrassing events, the birth of Shaka and the marriage of his parents took place is uncertain.

Although Nandi was now regarded as umdlukunkulu (belonging to the king's harem), she and her son never enjoyed the comfort of their royal status. Many reasons are advanced for this: her position at the royal kraal was inferior because she was from the despised Langeni clan; she was severely criticised for her unbecoming temperament; and Shaka himself had aroused the wrath of his father. According to Bryant (1965:49):

The climax was reached when one day her little son, Shaka, while herding his father's stock,

negligently permitted one of his parent's dogs, with which herd boys were wont to be accompanied, to kill his father's pet fat-tailed sheep. The mother, naturally defending her boy, came into angry conflict with her spouse. The latter, patience at last exhausted, ordered her to be gone.

The condemnation to exile forced Nandi and her children to beg for support from her kinsmen, the Langeni clan. The unhappiness and humiliation they had experienced at Esiklebheni was nothing compared to what they went through at the Langeni kraal. Nandi, a discarded wife, was labelled a fallen woman, and Shaka an illegitimate child. He was perpetually tormented and ridiculed by the herdboys. Eventually they left Langeni and were driven in destitution from tribe to tribe until they were given refuge by King Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa tribe, and there, for the first time in his life, Shaka experienced warmth and friendship. The environment was conducive enough for Shaka to rise to prominence. Apart from having an impressive physique, he soon distinguished himself as a brave warrior exceptionally skilled in military strategy.

When the time was ripe for Shaka to ascend to the Zulu chieftainship, Dingiswayo had no reservations about his ability to rule this tribe. Dingiswayo did everything he could to help Shaka succeed Senzangakhona as king of the Zulus. The significance of the role played by Dingiswayo is summed up by Roberts (1974:37) thus:

Whatever doubts there might be about Shaka's childhood, there is little doubt about the importance of the Mthethwa or about the influence of Dingiswayo. The marrying of Shaka's warlike propensities to Dingiswayo's statesmanship gave birth to a mighty African nation.

Shaka ruled for twelve years until he was assassinated by his brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana. During that short reign, Shaka built a mighty Zulu nation. Ballard (1988:19) observes:

Within the context of his environment Shaka was an innovator and a revolutionary who possessed remarkable powers of leadership and organisation. Between 1818 and 1828 Shaka, through a series of rapid conquests, welded scores of chiefdoms and hundreds of clans into a single kingdom that stretched from the Delagoa Bay hinterland in the North to Pondoland in the South.

Before we discuss Shaka as a mythical figure let us look at what a myth is. According to Dalziel (1967:27) a myth is:

A purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions, or events and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena.

Halliday, as quoted by Dalziel (1967:28) adds an important feature that myths are:

...answers given by human imagination to the problems of how things came to be...Myth then represents the first response of the human mind to that sense of wonder which, as Aristotle tells us, is the root of philosophy. It attempts to

answer by imagination the questions which science later seeks to solve by inductive reasoning.

The attention that has been given to Shaka has actually elevated him above the level of an ordinary human being. As Burness (1976:xii) remarks:

Shaka is used by these writers as a symbol of protest against exploitation and acculturation but in fact he has become more than a symbol; he has become a mythic figure.

Burness gives a positive picture of the mythical Shaka. This is in contrast to the picture painted by Ballard (1988:13) who sees Shaka as:

...a `monster' of mythical dimensions.

But Ballard (1988:13) adds an important observation:

...remission is long overdue and an attempt should be made to separate the man from the myth.

One cannot completely remove mythicism from African literature. Creative writers have integrated it in their works, especially in poetry.

## 1.2 Historicity and Romanticism

The extensive literature on Shaka in the African languages illustrates the desire of writers to uphold the image of the

historical figure. According to the New Century Dictionary (1956:749) historicity:

Pertains to or of the nature of history sometimes as opposed to legend as fiction...dealing with history, recording the past or using as a basis...

The same dictionary (p.1336) defines romanticism as:

Romantic spirit or tendency...the romantic style or movement in literature ...

Romanticism implies a measure of artistic or imaginative addition to, or deviation from, historically verifiable facts.

In literary works based on historical facts we find a harmonious combination of historicity and romanticism.

With regard to a historical novel, Allen, as quoted by McCalmon and Moe (1965:5), has this to say:

In effect, the historical novel is simply a door through which the novelist leads his readers into times other than their own...The novelist's door is the portal of a theatre. Once the reader passes it, what he sees going on is not the actual past, but a drama arranged by the author about the past...

Commenting on historical drama McCalmon and Moe (1965:4) says:



Historical drama writing...begins with a fabric of either facts or legendary happenings currently accepted as the same, this fabric is then embroidered by the imagination and invention... When dramatising history, he (author) must generally take, out of theatrical necessity, varying degrees of licence with the facts.

Msimang (1990:6) comments as follows on this type of licence:

The poetic licence of a historical artist is basically to mould history into some literary form.

The interplay between historicity and romanticism is manifest in various ways in literary works based on Shaka. In his novel Chaka Mofolo dramatises the circumstances surrounding the birth of Shaka with great imagination.

In this study we shall assess the degree to which authors use this poetic licence as they give expression to their creative ability.

### 1.3 Literary studies on Shaka

Shaka has become a significant phenomenon in literary studies. Only a few of these will be mentioned briefly here. They will receive fuller attention in the body of this study.

Thomas Mofolo's Chaka is regarded by many as the first historical novel in modern African literature. This work is discussed in a chapter in J.M.M. Tekateka's dissertation entitled A critical literary survey of Thomas Mofolo's writings (Unisa, 1967). Among other things Tekateka highlights the fact that Mofolo revealed interesting aspects of Shaka's personality which cannot be found in history books.

In his doctoral thesis entitled Die Wêreld van Tjhaka - 'n Strukturele en Stilistiese Ondersoek (RAU, 1976), C.F. Swanepoel says about Shaka:

Hy is 'n `moeilike' karakter. Eers is hy 'n gewone mens; later 'n wreedaard en sadis, maar dit onder die direkte invloed van die magiese wêreld.

Swanepoel argues that Mofolo's delineation of Shaka is different from that presented by historians because Mofolo intended to write a historical romance and not a history book.

A. Strachan's M.A dissertation entitled Karakterisering in J.M. Ngcobo se Ohude Manikiniki (UOVS, 1980) has employed Greimas's model which is based on the assumption that human thought and action are purposive. Commenting on Shaka's military tactics Strachan (1980:78) says:

Shaka se funksie is om `vanuit die niet' te voorskyn te kom en Zwide se magtige Ndwandwe stem, te verslaan. Hy is die verteenwoordiger van slimheid en krygslis.

A.C.T. Mayekiso (UNIZUL, 1985) ) and Elliot Zondi (Natal, 1989) also wrote on Shaka in their M.A dissertations entitled respectively The Historical Novels of Jessie Joyce Gwayi and Zulu Historical Drama A Critical Analysis of Six Historical Dramas. Mayekiso concentrated on the delineation of Shaka from a female author's point of view. Zondi's study examines the portrayal of Shaka in plays like Ukufa KukaShaka, KwaBulawayo, and Nawe Mbopha KaSithayi.

In his book Shaka, King of the Zulu in African literature (1976) Donald Burness examines literatures written in English and other African languages, excluding Zulu. Few views expressed by people like J.K.Ngubane and D.P. Kunene are however, quoted.

C.T. Msimang wrote a chapter entitled "Image of Shaka" in World Views, compiled by M. Macnamara, and sums up his views as follows:

Shaka has been both defamed and idolized by authors. My own judgement, based on my analysis above is that he was neither an angel nor as satanic as some writers have chosen to paint him....

(Macnamara, 1980:90)

Interesting comments have been made on the film Shaka Zulu. Carolyn Hamilton (1988) concentrated on the reception of the film in South Africa and overseas. Msimang (1990) investigated and advanced the reaction of Africans to this film, especially the Zulus. Although comments on the reception and reaction of the public to the film may seem relevant, a lengthy discussion on the observations of these scholars is beyond the ambit of this study.

Even though the references mentioned in this section are not an exhaustive list of studies on the literary works, they adequately confirm D.P.Kunene's (1973:46) observations to the effect that:

The interest that Shaka's name has commanded and continues to command with writers, the poets, the scholars, the historians, the psychologists and the romanticists, as so amply illustrated in Burness's exposition, shows that even death could not quell him. On the contrary, the sheer panache of his adult life has made Shaka the subject of endless debate, speculation and fancy.

#### 1.4 Scope of this study

As previously stated, the aim of this study is to review the opinions of Zulu writers on Shaka. In the second chapter consideration will be given to what the novelists say about Shaka. A number of novels have been written in which Shaka features either as the main character or one of the significant personalities. Particular attention will be

given to novelists like R.R.R. Dhlomo, Moses Ngcobo and J.J. Gwayi.

The third chapter will be based on the attitudes of playwrights like Elliot Zondi, S.L. Mbatha and J. Gumbi.

The history of Zulu kings has been preserved in the collections of their praise poetry. Shaka's praise poem has formed a source of inspiration to poets. In the fourth chapter we shall look at the views of modern poets like B.W. Vilakazi, O.E.H. Nxumalo, D.B.Z. Ntuli, T.M. Masuku, M.S.S. Gcumisa, M.T. Mazibuko, E.S.Q. Zulu, L.B.Z. Buthelezi and others.

The fifth chapter will be the general conclusion in which the main observations will be summarised and important points highlighted.

### **1.5 Approach**

In most literary works the perceptions of the author are communicated by the theme and character delineation. This argument calls for further explanation of theme and character portrayal.

With regard to theme, Peck and Coyle (1984:141-142) say:

The theme is the large idea or concept dealt with in a work. In order to grasp the theme of a work we have to stand back from the text and see what sort of general experience or subject links its details together. The easiest way of doing this is to sum up the work in as few words as possible.

Beardsley et al, (1959:xxii) concur with this definition and relate the theme to the form of the work by stating that:

It might be said that it is form that extracts thematic meaning from experience, and it is the theme that breathes life into form.

It is clear that theme is pivotal in any story. This aspect of a literary work gives meaning to the story. Brooks and Warren (1979:178) contend that, where there is no theme there is no story.

These critics regard theme as an embracing term which includes meaning, thought or idea in the story. This could be accepted as a theme in a broad sense. In these works, the theme in a broad sense is historical. Apart from this each author presents a particular message about the subject. It is this message that is regarded as a theme in a narrow sense. The form of the text contributes to the conveyance of theme. Sometimes themes are complemented by motifs, especially with regard to a character's mannerism of speech or habitual action( Cohen, 1973:72).

Characterisation is the art of presenting imaginary persons in a work of art. The author is concerned with the deepest

aspects of the person created. According to Smiley (1971:79) characterisation is:

...first a matter of devising credible agents to execute the action, and second, contrasting one agent with another as fully as necessary.

The agents referred to in this excerpt are characters. A character should develop as the story unfolds. Critics emphasise the significance of creating convincing and life-like characters. Others believe that, to be convincing, a character must be functional, that is, he or she should strive towards a specific goal. There are also various types of characters and methods of presenting them. More will be said about the classification and presentation of characters in the relevant chapters.

The study will be based on a mixture of theoretical approaches. It is my belief that the modern-day literary critic cannot afford to ignore the impact of current literary approaches. It is important to make use of approaches based on the author and the text.

Where appropriate, use will be made of the historical-biographical approach. This approach looks at the author and his life as they are reflected in the text he has produced. The portrayal of his characters is, to some extent, influenced by his philosophy of life. I am aware of the

criticism of this approach especially by the Formalists and New Critics on the grounds that it does not put sufficient emphasis on the literariness of the text. I shall, however, make use of its aspects whenever relevant.

With regard to each writer's novel or play, the story, theme and character portrayal will be considered. Themes will receive more attention in the discussion of poems. It is unquestionable that assessment of the works through this method will present objective perceptions of the authors.

The text forms the main part of this study. It is for this reason that I shall incorporate elements of Russian Formalism, New Criticism and Structuralism. In prose, for example, the organisation of the various elements of the narrative will be discussed. In poetry the structure and poetic language will receive attention. After all, Gogol, as quoted by Jefferson and Robey (1982:31) says:

The dynamic principle in the construction of the tale is not in the events narrated but their manner of presentation.

Since this work includes a comparison of various writers, it is inevitable that I shall use aspects of the comparative method. Daiches (1981:25) makes this useful comment on this approach:



Evaluative criticism tends to use the comparative method as a device for establishing a degree of excellence and indeed it can be maintained that a purely normative criticism, which aims at giving so many marks to each work and placing it in a scale, cannot go very far without having brought together the work in question with other works, showing the same sort of thing better or worse done elsewhere and by showing this helping the reader to see how excellence is attained.

The introductory part of each chapter or section will often refer to works of authors of literary works other than Zulu. The merits of the works of Zulu writers will also come under scrutiny in order to decide which writer seems to excel over another in certain respects.

One cannot ignore the part played by the reader in evaluation. Jefferson and Robey (1982:1) state:

...the reader does not passively receive the impact that the literary text may make upon him, but is involved in a more active or rather a more interactive process.

Iser, quoted by Rimmon-Kenan (1983:117) puts it:

...a text can only come to life when it is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader.

It is clear that we do not intend to adhere to one specific approach since the approaches are not the main thrust of

this study. Each approach will be used wherever it is to be applicable.

### **1.6 Recapitulation**

The aim of this first chapter was merely to introduce this study. I have indicated briefly what the purpose of the investigation is. I have emphasised the importance of Shaka as a leader who inspired creative works and literary studies. Finally, I have referred to some literary aspects that I shall analyse in the books and also a number of approaches that I shall adopt, depending on the aspects being dealt with.

**CHAPTER TWO****PERSPECTIVES IN NOVELS****2.0 Historical Novels**

What is a historical novel? McCalmon and Moe (1965:5) cite H. Allen who answers this question by saying:

In effect, the historical novel is simply a door through which the novelist leads his readers into times other than their own.

Critics agree that, in creating a historical novel, fact and fiction should combine to represent a faithful picture. The author should avoid giving a chronological account of mere political and military events. He should rather provide a more general representation of the human condition, in a time and place naturally more circumscribed than that in which works of history, in the more usual sense of the word, ordinarily unfold (Manzoni 1983:63).

In this chapter I intend to analyse the novels on Shaka by applying the text-orientated approaches mentioned in the introduction. The literariness of the text will form our point of departure. Visser, in Jefferson and Robey (1982:16) cites Jakobson's definition of literariness as:

That which makes a given work a work of literature.

Since the main object of this study is to investigate the views proclaimed about Shaka, we are compelled to implement the New Critics' contention. These critics believe in the natural theory of literature, according to which the work has a total significance where content and form are inseparable (Swanepoel, 1990:13). Critical interpreting of the content in a work of art will convey the theme and meaning to the reader.

The analysis of the theme and character portrayal in the novels will give us the authors' views of Shaka. One also needs to assess the novelist's skill in manipulating the historical facts thus managing to lead the reader through the door of the past centuries. Whatever the reader's observations are, it must be remembered that a novel is fiction. It is essential at this stage to distinguish between fact and fiction. According to Scholes et al, (1978:3), it is very difficult to differentiate between the two words, especially when dealing with a historical novel. These critics say:

Fiction comes from a Latin word *fingere* - to make or shape. A fiction is a made-up story. This definition covers a lot of territory. "Fiction," is known to consort with such suspicious characters as "unreality" and "falsehood."

On the other hand fact is associated with "truth", something that really existed. Scholes et al (1978:3) define:

Fact comes from *facere*, a Latin word - to make or do. Fact has prospered. In our ordinary conversation, "fact" is associated with those pillars of verbal society, "reality" and "truth".

These definitions reveal a distinct relationship between the two concepts. During the discussion we intend to investigate how the artist opens the doors of the past to his reader by fiction. Scholars agree that at least the main character and milieu should be based on historical information for the work to qualify as a historical literary work. How then is fiction related to our field of study? Scholes et al (1978:14) say:

Fiction generates its meaning in innumerable ways, but always in terms of some movement from particular characters and events of the story to general ideas or human situations suggested by them.

Pathetic characterisation will affect the whole story as well as the intended meaning. One of the rarest gifts of a novelist is the understanding and presentation of human characters. Characters in a literary work seek to achieve a particular goal. The author should create convincing characters by assigning to them features that can be determined. The unmasking of a character's nature may also prove to be skilful characterisation. E.M. Forster, an

exponent of New Criticism propounded a theory of "round" and "flat" characters in his classification. His theory will be applied whenever necessary.

On the whole, novelists exploit various methods to present their characters' traits. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:59) calls these traits character indicators and says about the modes:

There are two basic types of textual indicators of character: direct definition and indirect presentation. The first type names the trait by an adjective etc.... The second type, on the other hand, does not mention the trait but displays and exemplifies it in various ways, leaving to the reader the task of inferring the quality they imply.

In the following novels a careful study of the factors which facilitate theme and character portrayal, as well as methods selected by the author in depicting Shaka as a life-like character, will be presented.

## 2.1 Non-Zulu novelists

For comparative purposes we shall at first, briefly examine how Shaka is viewed by non-Zulu novelists like A.E. Ritter in his novel Shaka, Mofolo in his Chaka and Sir Rider Haggard in his Nada the Lily, which was translated into Zulu by F.L. Ntuli under the title Umbuso kaShaka. For Mofolo's Chaka the English translations of F. H. Dutton and D. P. Kunene will be used.

The importance of A.E. Ritter and Mofolo's novels cannot be overestimated. Their works have formed the source of many literary and scholarly works in Africa and abroad. It is our duty to briefly elucidate whether their contribution is positive or negative.

Ritter's novel Shaka reflects factual details of the life of Shaka which are sometimes supported by cited historical information. In fact some writers and scholars quote Ritter's composition as if it is a history textbook. Zondi's M.A study of 1989 motivates most of his historical arguments by citing Ritter. However, when one reads through the novel one encounters dramatisation of some incidents which automatically assigns the work to fiction. Ritter's novel has influenced a number of writers and scholars; it has been undoubtedly an invaluable contribution.

Mofolo's Chaka has been circulated throughout the world. It has been translated into a number of other languages including German, French and Italian. It has been a source of information and inspiration to other authors and scholars, as indicated previously. The novel is a fictitious representation of Shaka's life history. D.P.Kunene (1981:xiv) supports this argument in the preface to his translation and quotes N.R. Thoahlane:

By his own testimony, Mofolo, in writing this book, did not intend to tell *the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth* about the Zulu

king; but neither did he intend to tell nothing but 'exaggerations produced by a facile pen'.

Kunene also attempts to show the events which have been fabricated by Mofolo. To present a strong argument, historical information was used to dispute or support where necessary. He concludes by quoting Mofolo's own words:

*Ke a kgolwa diphoso tsa mofuta wona di ngata haholo bukemg ya Chaka; empa ha ke a di tsotella haholo hobane ke ngole histori, ke ngola tshomo, nka re ke ngola nnete empa ee ekeditsweng haholo, ya fokotswa haholo, ha tlohelwa tse ding tse ngata.*

I believe that errors of this kind are very many in the book *Chaka*; but I am not very concerned about them because I am not writing history, I am writing a tale, or should rather say I am writing what actually happened but from which a great deal has been removed.

Mofolo distinctly states that his *Shaka* is a "tsomo" (tale) which emanates from history. It is then surprising to find scholars and writers who regard the book as a true reflection of history. Dutton (1967: preface), the first translator of *Chaka* into English in 1931, says:

But there is no doubt that in the author's own view it is a serious contribution to history. His first four pages are enough to prove this, and his intention is further shown by the fact that he made more than one journey to Natal to ascertain the dates and other details for his narrative.

Maybe it is this contention that made scholars like Tekateka (1967:44) declare:



"Tjhaka" is a true historical novel because it is based on material furnished by the past, and it includes historical events and characters.

Argument about historicity and romanticism have been discussed earlier. Here we are highlighting the contradictions which exist in the translation of Chaka. We believe that these might prejudice the portrayal of Shaka. To what extent a writer should practise poetic licence in an imaginative work, is something that will be examined in this study.

#### 2.1.1 A.E. Ritter - Shaka Zulu

The life history of Ritter as written in the preface to his novel, is as follows:

Ritter was born in Dundee, Natal, where his father was a magistrate. He grew up with the Zulus, playing among them as a child and making numerous friends. In fact Zulu was the first language he spoke, and like his father, he gained over the years the respect and confidence of the people. Through his personal association with such royal Zulus as Njengabantu, he learned the true story of the great leader Shaka, which had been passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. Long urged by both Zulus and Europeans to write this great story, he drew upon his own unique knowledge to do so. This novel was first published in 1955 by Longmans.

##### 2.1.1.1 The story

The main character in the story is Shaka. The story begins when Shaka is about six years old. Nothing much is said

about Shaka's first years of life beside the fact that they were overshadowed by misery which resulted in a close attachment between mother Nandi and son. When he is about six years old he becomes negligent while herding his father's sheep and one gets killed. His father becomes furious and expels Shaka along with his mother from Esiklebheni. That is the commencement of Shaka's nomadic life. At 15 he exhibits traits of perseverance, courage and bravery. Mother and son go to Elangeni. Here again Shaka encounters problems with both his peers and adults. Always the circumstances surrounding his birth seem to be the bone of contention.

Shaka moves through a number of clans and eventually ends up with the Mthethwa tribe. In all these places he repeatedly displays his courage and bravery. At the Mthethwas he meets a girl Pampata, who becomes his girlfriend.

All the other chapters show how Shaka's power steadily grows. He introduces new weapons and military skills. When his father dies he then ascends the throne. The Zulu tribe gradually increases in numbers each time another clan has been conquered. Shaka's ambition is to build a strong Zulu nation: his continuous victories make his dream possible. Eventually his brothers assassinate him before he enjoys the fruits of his labour.

Reading through the novel, one observes that the theme it

carries is the importance of his mother's love. The qualities of perseverance and courage convey the sub-theme which is that leadership is an inborn trait which can be developed to higher levels. These qualities do not come easily in the case of Shaka. The rejection by his father as a six year-old brought him nearer to his mother. According to Ritter Shaka's whole life history was shaped by his childhood experiences.

Nandi's love and support has been well motivated by the author. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:37) maintains:

The character's relations with his mother can subsequently be combined with similar generalisations about his relations with his wife, his boss, his friends to form a higher category labelled X's relation with people.

#### 2.1.1.2 Ritter's portrayal of Shaka

Henkle (1977:92) states:

It is the major characters who deserve our fullest attention; if we understand them, we presumably understand the focal experience of the novel.

Ritter made Shaka be the source of every action, conflict and episode in the story. To create a convincing character he employed both descriptive and dramatic modes. It would be difficult to depict Shaka, a historical figure by using only one method. What the reader expects is an active character who reveals a life-like Shaka.

To bring out the quality of his character, the author subjects Shaka to a number of conflicting situations. Shaka's undeveloped genitals are the source of ridicule among the boys of Elangeni. He shows his bravery by beating them although they are bigger than him. This bravery persists throughout the book. Shaka shows courage at the age of thirteen. Ritter describes the episode:

He attacked and killed a black mamba which had bitten and killed the prize bull of the cattle he was herding, a feat requiring great courage and skill.

(Ritter, 1955:29)

The fusion of concrete facts and traditional practices in the character depiction makes Shaka interesting and credible. To display Shaka's intelligence and fairness, Ritter uses the known divining episode. Shaka sets up the diviners and only kills them after their dishonest divination. When asked about his changed attitude after the unwillingness to punish Nobela he says:

`She reached and claimed sanctuary and was entitled to it according to the laws of the country, as soon as she confessed to the graver crime of witchcraft'

(Ritter, 1955:179)

Many other qualities of Shaka are described by Ritter throughout the novel. Shaka was not only courageous but also had a strong will. His greatest work as a person who believed in military perfection was the creation, organisation and training of an unconquerable army for the

sole purpose of building up a supreme Zulu nation. The apt description of the different war encounters confirms this fact.

At times Ritter's method of delineation operates at deeper levels than the purely descriptive one which touches the external appearance of Shaka. Shaka's personality traits of cruelty and humaneness are revealed together for contrasting effect. Ritter demonstrates that Shaka's cruelty goes beyond the bounds of political necessity when he kills the baby from one of his concubines. The author describes the episode:

Thereupon, in an ungovernable rage, Shaka seized the little child by the heels, and swinging it on high crushed its head by bringing it down violently against the floor.

(Ritter, 1955:339)

Shaka is certainly not a flat character 'devoid of depth and life'. To advance this quality, the author reveals the humane trait in Shaka immediately after the baby incident. In fact this episode contrasts with the previous one. A man who fails to adhere to the mourning regulations is brought to him for punishment. Shaka discloses his other side in this dialogue:

"As you are about to die what nice things do you leave behind on earth?"  
 "Great Elephant," he replied with seasonable tact, "I leave my king. And I leave as well my little child just beginning to smile and my calf beginning to frolic." Hearing which, the heart of Shaka was touched and he ordered the man's

release.

(Ritter, 1955:339)

The two episodes suggest the development of Shaka by action. Shaka demonstrates a soft spot for children in the above incident in which man's life is saved because of the baby. It seems the only children he loathes are his own because in another event Ritter reflects Shaka's kindness again:

The ex-captain, who only had one arm, was found guilty and Shaka condemned him to death, but asked him if he had anything to say before the sentence was carried out.

'Nothing, Great Elephant, except to praise my king for allowing me to the honour to lose this arm in his service, and the boon of seeing my child before I die.'

"Where is your child? Fetch it and kill it in front of me, before you are led away."

As the grief-stricken father led the child into the royal presence, Shaka's eyes streamed with tears. "Nay man, I was but testing you. You gave your arm for me and that washes away your crime. Your loyalty shall be rewarded with three cows."

(Ritter, 1955:338)

As a round character he is unpredictable. Ritter has succeeded in presenting a character that Rimmon-Kenan (1983:40) describes as follows:

Round characters are defined by contrastive implication,... Not being flat having more than one quality and developing in the course of action.

Ambitious as he is, Shaka does not want to cross paths with the Whites. This reveals his diplomacy. Ritter explains further:

On one other thing he was firmly resolved and that was never to incur the enmity of the British but, on the contrary, to weave the strongest bonds between the two nations.

(Ritter, 1955:366)

Even in death Shaka retains glory and majesty. As if to respect him, a storm breaks out when he dies. When the storm ceases even the hyenas dare not approach his body. Such supreme greatness could only be bestowed on a character of Shaka's calibre.

Although Ritter has succeeded in adapting historical information in this novel, his extensive quotations from historical sources affect his method of portrayal in some places. He relied too much on the descriptive mode of characterisation.

What emanates from this discussion is that this novelist views Shaka as a leader who merited all his achievements, a ruler who compares favourably with other rulers of his era.

### 2.1.2 Mofolo - Chaka

Mofolo was born in 1877 at Kgojane in Mafeteng. Both his parents were members of the P.E.M.S. Church. So he grew within a Christian atmosphere which had a great influence on his writings. It is said that when he worked at a Book Depot and Printing Press he read and was greatly influenced by

European writers like John Bunyan and Sir Rider Haggard. Chaka was his third book, which he wrote in 1910. This book was different from the first two because it did not underline any moral code. It thus took the missionaries by surprise. The missionaries were reluctant to publish the book and this explains the reason why Chaka was published fifteen years later, in 1925. Maybe the lack of a moral element in the story can be assigned to the latter fact.

#### 2.1.2.1 The story

Mofolo first gives a background to the birth of Shaka. Shaka is born out of wedlock and is thus regarded as an illegitimate child. The fact that Shaka is the first son of Senzangakhona makes his life and that of his mother unbearable. Shaka is tormented even by his peer group while herding. Nandi, his mother, takes Shaka to the witchdoctor, Isanusi. Senzangakhona expels Nandi and Shaka from his kraal because the other wives cannot tolerate them. Shaka moves from place to place with his mother until they settle at Dingiswayo's. The witchdoctor continues to perform an important role in Shaka's life even after he has ascended the throne. It seems as if the whole existence of Shaka depends on the witchdoctor. Shaka becomes very ambitious and kills people without provocation. Eventually he becomes insane and is killed.

Mofolo appears to be conveying a double-pronged theme which



strongly depicts Christian concepts of morality. The message is that the illegitimacy leads to unhappiness and that a child who grows up without love will be unable to give love in return when he or she grows up. Mofolo introduces magical powers to support and motivate his themes. Shaka's later personal traits are inspired by witchcraft. The moral considerations displayed by the author in this novel illustrate a strong Christian influence. According to Mofolo's contention Shaka's abilities were created by a supernatural spirit, a conviction which has Christian undertones.

Witchcraft has great influence on Shaka's life. Unfortunately this fact discredits Shaka's abilities and conceals the message observed by Swanepoel (1976:61) that:

As 'n kind of 'n jong mens, in watter kultuur-milieu hy hom ookal bevind, alleenlik met onbillikheid kennis maak, as hy in geen opsig regverdig behandel word nie, volg dit dat hy ook dieselfde sal word.

#### 2.1.2.2 Mofolo's portrayal of Shaka

Mofolo presents Shaka as a human being of many fine qualities. To portray his courage Mofolo describes Shaka as a baby who used not to cry even when he fell down or was beaten by somebody. The incessant fighting with other boys when herding hardened him. His leadership qualities began to develop during his herding days. To build a convincing

character Mofolo introduces magical spirits very early in Shaka's life. The contents of the medicine given to Nandi by the witchdoctor are responsible for Shaka's personality:

The purpose was to turn him into a fierce person, and make him long to fight; he would also have bravery in his liver, and be fearless. Among the ingredients in those medicines were the liver of a lion, the liver of a leopard and the liver of a man who had been a renowned warrior in his lifetime.

(Kunene, 1981:14)

The foregoing incident serves as the character indicator element throughout the story. Later, as a young man Shaka is depicted as a person of extraordinary dexterity, who becomes famous after killing a lion single-handed. Action and atmosphere are utilised as structuring elements of Shaka's traits. Incidents like the facing of the deep-water serpent without flinching and the rescue of a young girl from the jaws of a hyena in the middle of the night, all confirm the fearlessness of Shaka. Mofolo continues to create conflicting situations where Shaka emerges as a courageous man, a quality he displays throughout the story. Shaka becomes a great warrior, martial genius and leader who inspires fear and much admiration in his subjects.

The introduction of supernatural powers early in Shaka's life gives the impression that all his achievements are due to them. This is historically not true. Agreed Mofolo intended to write a tale, but we must not forget that people

regard this novel as reflecting true historical events. About Shaka's belief in magical powers Cohen (1962:72) says:

Shaka sincerely believed in witchcraft, but he certainly doubted the powers and the honesty of *isangoma*.

This contention is supported by some events where Shaka personally persecuted false diviners and also sentenced Ntombazi, the witch, to death because of witchcraft. This poses the question as to how far an artist can use poetic licence. McCalmon and Moe (1965:65) criticise distortion of historical facts by stating:

Today's playwright must attempt to heighten and intensify the truth about life without seeming to distort the historical record.

Mofolo reveals other facets of Shaka through the character's actions and speech. He is a man of honour, love and devotion. The respect and love he has for Dingiswayo is that given to a father figure. It inspires Shaka to avenge Dingiswayo's death by annihilating Zwide. Contrasting with these affection and devotion attributes is the brutality trait. The author dramatises Shaka's brutality. He kills Noliwe, Dingiswayo's sister and his lover. What a contradiction? Shaka who respects and loves Dingiswayo, now kills his sister so as to satisfy evil spirits. The author accuses Shaka of murdering his mother, Nandi and thereafter many other innocent people who were accused of petty crimes. The accusation that Shaka killed his mother is denied by

historians like Fynn and Bryant who lived during the times of Shaka. Bryant (1965:608) quotes Fynn saying:

Her complaint was dysentery; and I reported to Shaka that her case was hopeless and that I did not expect she would live through the day.

Mofolo argues that Shaka was very ambitious and this ambition became a weakness in him. The power of the magical spirit was so strong that he committed atrocities which could only be stopped by eliminating him. Shaka has become a victim of his self-torturing imagination. He kills mercilessly in order to gain greater power and fame. His mental as well as his physical capabilities decline. The great warrior becomes vulnerable.

The misrepresentation of some historical facts in this novel gives a picture of a Shaka who had an uncontrollable ambition to be a great a leader, and that this led to his moral destruction and inevitable punishment.

### 2.1.3 Sir Rider Haggard/N.F. Ntuli - Umbuso kaShaka

Sir Rider Haggard's dramatisation reflects the great influence of Mofolo's Chaka. Shaka is depicted as an evil monster who killed his mother and later almost wiped out the Zulu nation. Shaka kills for pleasure and is strongly influenced by evil spirits. This novel reflects the

fabricated negative traits of Shaka.

## 2.2 Zulu novelists

The main novels which will be discussed at length in this chapter are: UShaka by Dhlomo, Yekanini by Gwayi and Qhude manikiniki by Ngcobo. Other novels which depict certain qualities of Shaka will also be considered: Buzani kuMkabayi by Msimang and UNomalanga kaNdengezi by Dhlomo.

### 2.2.1 Dhlomo - UShaka

Dhlomo is a renowned Zulu historical novelist. His books UShaka, UDingane, and UMpande all appeared in 1936. Later he wrote UNomalanga kaNdengezi (1947), UCetshwayo (1952) and UDinizulu (1968). He was the first Zulu to write a novel about Shaka. His novel reproduces history truthfully only when it suits him.

#### 2.2.1.1 The story

Dhlomo commences his story before the birth of Shaka, when Senzangakhona meets Nandi. Shaka is born and later suffers rejection by his immediate family. He wanders around with his mother in destitution. He moves from Elangeni to the Qwabe's and then to Dingiswayo's place. Dingiswayo becomes the "father" Shaka never had. Shaka soon displays his

courage and war skills. He introduces new military tactics and moves up in the military hierarchy. Soon he commands a regiment named Izichwe. It is this regiment which later helps him acquire the Zulu chieftainship. Many incidents related to his reign are discussed, particularly his military conquests. Dhlomo writes four more chapters dealing with events relating to Shaka even after his death.

It is obvious that Dhlomo intended to write the history of Shaka highlighting his many known qualities. The main theme can be regarded as the life and death of the builder of the Zulu nation. C.M. Doke clearly states Dhlomo's intention in the preface to the novel. He says :

*Yena usuke wagcoba phansi indabuko yendaba kaShaka njengoba injalo, ecobelela ukwazi kwakhe kubantu nakubelungu.*

(Dhlomo, 1960:ii)

He just wrote down the origin of the story of Shaka as it is, he researched his knowledge from Zulus and Whites.

Honour and praise as sub-theme are very prominent in this novel and are supported by a repeated citing of Shaka's praise poem (izibongo). Dhlomo upholds and promotes the theme by apt descriptions of events, milieu, characters and their actions.

#### 2.2.1.2 Dhlomo's portrayal of Shaka

During Shaka's childhood most of his traits described are

related by other characters. Dhlomo creates relevant conditions to reveal Shaka's fighting ability. Shaka is playing the game of toy bull fighting. His bull is so strong that it quickly breaks those of the other youngsters. Shaka repeatedly outshines all the youngsters in this game and suffers for his success in the process. Through the interaction of Shaka and the other boys his fighting skills are displayed. It is not surprising to find him excelling in wars later in life.

Shaka is described as a person who listens and takes advice. He is able to appreciate and also acknowledge assistance wherever it is possible. The author makes Shaka disclose this quality himself:

*Mina ngokwenza noma yini othi mangikwenze, Baba.  
Ngatholwa uwe ngihluphekile. Izwe lonke  
selingifulathele, selingalile. Wangithola wena;  
engiyikho namhla nje kungenxa yakho.*

(Dhlomo, 1965:20)

I am going to do anything you suggest, Father. You received and gave me shelter when I was destitute. The whole world had turned its back on me and rejected me. You embraced me, what I am today is because of you.

Critics believe that an author should offer us a shock of recognition through which we can share their perceptions of human behaviour. Through this illustration of Shaka's inward feelings Dhlomo has succeeded in appealing to the reader's sympathy in viewing Shaka as a human being. Shaka listened to and respected the people he loved. Another person whom he

loved dearly was his mother Nandi. Nandi once saved the life of Zihlandlo from the wrath of Shaka. Because Shaka respected her, he listened to her. It appears as if the author purposely illustrates Shaka's good traits by showing his respect for the people who protected him during his youth.

We are not surprised when Shaka literally sheds tears during the death of these two characters, Dingiswayo and Nandi in the story. Describing the incident of Dingiswayo's death, Dhlomo says about Shaka's response:

*Athule lapho uShaka; babone izinyembezi ziwohloka emehlweni, isifuba sesigubhuzela okwamagagasi.*

(Dhlomo, 1965:31)

Shaka remained placid; they saw tears rolling down, the chest heaving like sea waves.

Looking deep into the whole behaviour of Shaka towards Dingiswayo, we understand why he tried so vigorously to destroy the Ndwandwe tribe. The author achieves a remarkable success when he reveals these traits of Shaka with subtlety. For instance his mother's death leads to numerous killings. The contrasting of love-hate traits seems to have a direct bearing on Shaka's traits of inhumanity. Now we see how one trait gets blended into another as this character develops.

Dhlomo reveals cruelty in Shaka by relating certain deeds which made him unpopular with his subjects. One day small



boys peeped through Shaka's kraal fence. After being noticed they ran away. Shaka then ordered the killing of all small boys around that area (just like the Bible story of what happened after the birth of Christ). The author dramatises other events, like the unprovoked killing of a certain man. Shaka looked at this man and said:

*"Kuthi angikubulale khona manje. Isimo sakho kasingigculisi neze."*

*"Mthatheni nimbulale, uyangihlekisa!"  
Kwaba ukufa kwakhe njalo lowo muntu.*

(Dhlomo, 1965:119)

"I feel like killing you just now. Your appearance does not please me."

"Take him away and kill him, he makes me laugh!"  
That is how that person died.

It seems as if Shaka's cruelty makes him believe he is a God who is empowered to take and save lives at will. The megalomaniac personality of the hero has been well depicted by the author in a number of incidents throughout the book. Shaka was a military genius. He arranged his warriors in regiments, according to their ages and abilities. Fighting skills were improved by carrying only one spear instead of many. The new tactics made him victorious in most of his battles.

In Shaka we find a man who is a preserver of Zulu culture. Dhlomo also narrates a number of incidents which highlight this facet of Shaka. It is unfortunate that the author

decided to tell us about Shaka's intelligence rather than dramatise the incident. Incidents like this undermine the readers' ability to assess on their own the calibre of the man.

Basically in this first Zulu novel on Shaka, we perceive a Shaka who is a rounded character and whose life was shaped by his traumatic childhood experiences. Shaka was a great ruler and preserver of the Zulu culture and nation. The author's imaginative ability has been greatly affected by the constant reference to the historical sources and the fact that the arrangement of the novel is episodic. The story lacks action and suspense, and has the quality of a textbook. These glaring faults in the structure of the work affect its literary worth.

### 2.2.2 Gwayi - Yekanini!

J.J. Gwayi is a nurse by profession. She befriended Zulu girls during her nursing training, who inspired her to like the Zulu language. She met and married a novelist Moses Ngcobo, who influenced her to write. She enjoyed writing historical works. Her first novel was Bafa baphela, followed by Shumpu. Her last one, Yekanini (1976), is one of the most contemporary books on Shaka. It reflects features of the earlier novels, although structurally it shows great creativeness.

### 2.2.2.1 The story

Shaka is a young boy and is at his father's kraal Esiklebheni. He experiences discomfort and rejection by almost all family members. Nearly all the wives of his father dislike him and do not conceal their feelings. Insults are thrown at him, and Nandi his mother is the only one who comforts him. The bond between mother and child becomes very strong; and when Shaka is expelled his mother leaves with him. The story continues highlighting Shaka's life at different kraals, namely, at Elangeni, the Qwabe's and the Mchunu's. At the two former places Shaka is subjected to his worst humiliations, especially from his peers.

Shaka grows up to be a strong young man who has learned to survive under terrible conditions. Bravery and his mother's love create in him a warrior of high calibre. Eventually the two wanderers find shelter with the Mthethwa tribe. Shaka's ability to fight and his courage are noticed by Ngomane, the headman of Dingiswayo. After more training in war skills Shaka is promoted to be a general of the Izichwe regiment. Dingiswayo soon learns about this brave young man and his birthplace. When Senzangakhona who is a vassal of Dingiswayo dies, Shaka is regarded by Dingiswayo as a rightful heir. The Izichwe regiment and Ngomane assist him to ascend the chieftainship of the Zulu tribe.

The message in this novel reflects how an unwanted child relies on the mother's love for survival. Gwayi manages to convey this theme convincingly by using a dramatic plot, a befitting milieu and life-like characters. Characters are repeatedly involved in conflicting situations as they develop. Imagine Nandi a wife of a chief wandering about with her son, and Shaka who survives the humiliations of inferior peers: the dramatic manner in which these aspects are handled displays creativeness on the part of the author.

The alleged illegitimacy could also be seen as the sub-theme of the story: that if one is illegitimate one can suffer whether one is from a royal family or not.

#### 2.2.2.2 Gwayi's portrayal of Shaka

Gwayi presents us with a complex character. As a hero Shaka is endowed with admirable personality traits. The novel opens with disharmony placing Shaka in a conflict position. In this conflict Shaka emerges as a child who is a bully with a violent temper. Shaka is playing with his brothers and intimidates them by saying:

*Zilahleni lezi zinkomo zenu ngoba kazilungile.  
Kungcono ukuba nibe ngamadodana ami, ningelusele  
lezi ezami.*

(Gwayi, 1976:17)

You must throw away these cattle because they are not right. It is better that you become my sons, and herd mine.

When things do not go his way Shaka becomes violent and stubborn. The author dramatises this dominating nature of his character. Shaka threatens to beat his brothers, and throws soil into their faces when they refuse to listen and move away from him. Subtly Gwayi mingles the external conflict (that is, the conflict with the brothers) with Shaka's deep feelings of insecurity. Another person can argue that this is a means of revealing the fighting and leadership qualities of Shaka which will become prominent later in life.

Shaka is a dynamic character who changes with different situations. Although he has a violent temper he, however, loves his mother and sister Nomcoba. He offers to look after her when the mother has gone on errands. He says:

*"Uzosala nami wena," kusho uShaka, ehleka sengathi uqonde ukugcona udadewabo.*

(Gwayi, 1976:39)

"You will remain with me," said Shaka, with a smile as if he was mocking his sister.

Sometimes Gwayi puts Shaka in frustrating situations to highlight particular traits. Shaka is baffled by the calves which he is herding. His aggressiveness and intelligence fail to assist him. The more he tries to herd towards one

direction the more they scatter about. His frustration becomes worse when he thinks about what awaits him from the elder boys if he does not bring back the calves. Shaka undergoes a change as the external forces expose his vulnerability. The author elaborates:

*Atshekula aye asithela kuyena ngokuphazima kweso.  
Wahlala phansi khona lapho uShaka wakhala.  
Ayese kubona manje ukuthi uma ewashiya bazofika  
bamshaye noma kanjani abafana bakaMudli.*

(Gwayi, 1976:47)

They leaped around so fast and disappeared from him. Shaka sat down and began to cry. What he imagined then was that if he left the calves, the sons of Mudli would beat him up.

Shaka who is aggressive by nature decides to face the big boys. Here, the reader is introduced to another quality of Shaka. He feels it is cowardice not to meet problems head on. The tears he is shedding are tears of frustration rather than hurt. Courage makes him challenge the leader of the boys:

*"Ungifundisa ungifundisa induku yakho bese ubuye ucabanga ukuthi usazokwazi ukungishaya futhi, lesi siphukuphuku?" Kubuza uShaka, eseyivikile induku yengqwele. Waqeda ukukhuluma wagalela.*

(Gwayi, 1976:48)

"You teach and teach me your tactics of fighting and then think that you can still manage to defeat me, you thickheaded fool?" Asked Shaka after dodging the blow of the leader. When he completed the question he landed his own blow.

The courage of the character is accompanied by arrogance. He

refuses to carry out his father's instruction, that since he has reached puberty he must wear a loin skin cover. Shaka is adamant and declines to give in to his father. It appears as if the author reflects the character's determination to humiliate the father like he did when he was young.

Many events which reveal Shaka's bravery are discussed at length by the author until Shaka becomes the king of the Zulu. The outstanding acts of bravery earn Shaka respect among his age group and later his regiment.

The author succeeds in presenting a life-like character who triumphs over his childhood experiences and emerges a victor after all. The humiliating experiences he suffered as a child reinforce his qualities rather than incapacitate him. The brilliant blending of all the elements of a novel in particular the plot structure makes this book a meritorious work of art. The historical facts harmonise perfectly with fiction; there is no glaring distortion of historical information.

This is a female writer. In her presentation of Shaka she highlights the importance of women to him. Even Mkabayi is fond of him. Most of the conflicts develop from his confrontations with women. Shaka emerges as a victor.

### 2.2.3 Ngcobo – Qhude manikiniki

Moses Ngcobo's first novel was Inkundu maZulu (1956). In 1973 he wrote a historical novel: Ukufika kosuku. The novel Qhude manikiniki was published in 1977, and it is worth noting that this is the first novel to be based on only one short period in Shaka's life.

#### 2.2.3.1 The story

The story commences after Shaka has ascended the Zulu throne. He feels the need of increasing his warriors so as to have a mighty army. He starts by introducing new fighting skills to the existing army with the help of the Izichwe regiment. The newly formed Zulu army starts invading the neighbouring clans and conquers them. Gradually Shaka's warriors increase in numbers. When Dingiswayo is killed by Zwide, Shaka takes over the Mthethwa tribe as well. He personally trains his warriors in military skills, arranges the army into regiments and discards their skin shoes.

Zwide who has been undermining the might of Shaka, soon feels threatened by the large numbers of chiefs and clans who have gone over to Shaka. He decides to stop Shaka's growing power. His army, however, is humiliated by Shaka's disciplined warriors. Shaka also uses Noluju, who is also a trusted Zwide's spy, to inform him on Zwide. Shaka learns about all of Zwide's plans and works out countermoves long



before the latter effects his plans.

Shaka's intelligence and military ingenuity help him to defeat the Ndwandwes at Gqokli. Many neighbouring kings and chiefs surrender to the Zulu king with their subjects. This results in the expansion of the Zulu army tremendously. Zwide sends another army to avenge his dead sons and also to discipline the Zulu king. Unfortunately Shaka totally annihilates the Ndwandwes and becomes the ruler of all the Ngunis.

The main purpose of this novel is to honour Shaka as a military tactician and strategist. Ngcobo chooses to build the might of Shaka just after he assumes the kingship. As the story develops Shaka's intelligence, political ability, and military ingenuity become evident. By employing the appropriate plot structure and characterisation, Ngcobo is able to leave the reader with an understanding of the story and the circumstances which prevailed during Shaka's life. Furthermore, the author should be commended for the interesting and imaginative manner of dramatising a momentous period of Shaka's life.

#### **2.2.3.2 Ngcobo's portrayal of Shaka**

The author employs both the expository and dramatic methods of character delineation in this novel. Shaka is intelligent enough to realise that a king needs a strong army to rule.

Shaka discloses his plan of reorganising the army in the discussion with Mgobhozi. In order to achieve his aim Shaka realises that he must be active. He is a ruler: one would expect him to impose his will on the warriors but we note what he says to Mgobhozi:

*"Ungakahambi nokho umsebenzi ozowenza ngowokuba unike izinduna zamabutho ami amabili lawa izinkomo ezingawahlabela zona. Uqaphele ulimi lwakho. Ungawatsheli ukuthi kungani ngikudinga ukulala kwawo lapha."*

(Ngcobo, 1977:4)

"Before you leave, I have work for you, that is to give the headmen of my two regiments beasts which they are going to slaughter for the warriors. Be careful do not say anything to them. Do not tell them why I need them to sleep here."

Shaka is aware that secrecy is important in nation building and that a diplomatic approach is necessary. Stories about previous achievements of Shaka and Izichwe are related to the warriors to raise their morale. He organises the warriors in a particular manner which guarantees success:

*...kuzoba khona azokuba yizimpondo, amanye abe yikhanda, namanye abe yisifuba. Sonke isikhathi uma elwa injongo yawo kuzoba ukusifaka phakathi isitha ukuze asiqothule.*

(Ngcobo, 1977:12)

...there will be those who will be the horns, others will be the head and the others be the chest. All the time when they fight the aim will be to encircle the enemy until they destroy it.

As a leader Shaka is audacious and is a source of inspiration to his subjects especially the army. When he

encourages the warriors to discard their sandals he himself leads them on the walk over the thorns. In all the battles with the Ndwandwes he personally commands them unlike other kings who bask in their kingship glory and never fight. However, Shaka knows his limitations. When his numbers of warriors are still small he does not attack big tribes.

The author also features incidents where Shaka reveals the trait of a real disciplinarian. The discipline he wields does not reflect cruelty but statesmanship. During the war of Gqokli some warriors pursue the Ndwandwes even after Shaka has ordered them to stop. One would expect Shaka to kill these warriors but he says:

*Nenze kahle ngokungikhombisa ukuthi niyakwazi ukulwa ningalekelelwa muntu...Ngifuna ukuba nizenelise kulokhu enikubone ukuthi kuhle. Nozobhekana nawo ninodwa. Nizothi ningawabhuqa ngamaklwa enu nibuye nizongilandisa ukuthi nizwe kulula yini noma nizwe kunzima.*

(Ngcobo, 1977:143)

You did well by demonstrating to me that you can fight without assistance.... I want you to satisfy yourself with what you thought is correct. You will face them alone. When you have finished them off with your spears, you must come back here and relate whether it was a light or laborious fight.

Ngcobo portrays Shaka as a great politician and statesman. He is endowed with high intelligence and foresight. He uses Noluju to spy for him; hence he succeeds in conquering the formidable king Zwide. When the chiefs like Gatsheni, Mpungose, Mabaso and others cede their powers, he welcomes

them. Shaka does not declare war on tribes who are prepared to become his subjects.

Finally the author presents the reader with a character who has high military skills. The dramatic conditions of war created by Ngcobo make Shaka the most intelligent military tactician of his time. First he utilises the spy network, then deprives the enemy of water supplies, and then of food, and fire, and finally devises a method whereby enemy warriors in the same battle kill one another.

Ngcobo has given us a real life-like character - a man who employed intelligence, diplomacy, military and political abilities to create the Zulu kingdom. The judicious blending of both the expository and the dramatic methods of character delineation is responsible for the high level of Ngcobo's work.

#### 2.2.4 Dhlomo - UNomalanga kaNdengezi and Msimang - Buzani kuMkabayi

C.T. Msimang is a contemporary Zulu writer. He writes novels, plays and poetry. Presently he is a Professor in the Department of African Languages at Unisa. Most of his works on Zulu history are well researched. In fact his book Buzani kuMkabayi, written in 1980, has won literary awards, a fact which confirms the high standard of his works.

To avoid repetition I have decided to combine the views expressed by these authors in their novels. Most of the qualities they reflect in their works have been highlighted previously in the discussion. What can be done here is to elaborate on those observations which were not stressed by the other novelists.

Dhlomo in his novel describes the physique of Shaka as impressive. He says:

*UShaka mude, wakhiwe kahle emzimbeni, mkhulu,  
umnyama bhuge....amahlombe aze awele phansi  
esifubeni.*

(Dhlomo, 1963:5)

Shaka is tall, has an attractive physique, is big and dark in complexion.... the shoulders seem to be falling down to the chest.

Not many of the previously discussed novelists presented us with these physical features. According to Dhlomo this appearance of Shaka instils fear in anyone who comes into close contact with him. Dhlomo uses poetic language to present descriptions of varying exactness and fullness so that his character can be visualised by the reader. Shaka's eyes look like those of a snake:

*Amehlo akhe ayelokoza umlilo.  
Ukuxokozela okukhulu kwabantu kwathuliswa  
ukubhonga kukaShaka*

(Dhlomo, 1963:15-16)

His eyes were beaming fire.

The loud noise made by the people was silenced by the roaring of Shaka.

The metaphors 'lokoza' to beam and 'ukubhonga' to roar are used to describe a fearsome snake and bull respectively. So, this author believes Shaka's physical features alone were enough to evoke respect without him having to impose it on his subject. This depiction agrees with what Rimmon-Kenan (1983:65) says about external appearance:

analysed portraits of various historical figures as well as people in order to demonstrate the necessary and direct connection between facial appearance and personality traits.

Msimang also capitalises on the appearance of Shaka. Like Dhlomo he utilises figurative language when describing Shaka. For instance, when Shaka approaches the court to try Mudli's case it is said:

*Onke amehlo aphenduke abheke kuye kodwa amfice  
esexhophela elakhe iso selifana nonyazi lwezulu.*

(Msimang, 1982:129)

All the eyes turn and look at him but they find him dazzling, his eyes were like lightning.

Lightning is dangerous and everybody is afraid of it. The picture painted by Msimang does not differ much from Dhlomo's. It appears as if Shaka's eyes were truly frightening. They were able to generate action from people even without Shaka uttering a word. Most of Shaka's

qualities in this novel are clearly refined, and he is portrayed as the finest king the Zulus have ever had.

### 2.3 Recapitulation

One cannot overemphasise the influence of Mofolo and Ritter on most of the works on Shaka. What becomes evident from the portrayals given is that Shaka was a leader of high calibre with both positive and negative characteristics. Although Mofolo views Shaka as a king whose achievements emanated from mysterious forces, the other novelists produce sufficient evidence to show the defects of Mofolo's Shaka. Their works are genuine good contributions towards the truth. This can be seen from the number of later literary works that reflect an adaptation of their works.

These novelists perceive Shaka as a most powerful ruler able to unite many clans into one Zulu kingdom. His courage and military ingenuity formed the basis of his success. The generally accepted view about Shaka reflects Mofolo's perception of Shaka which is typical of the Christian attitude. According to Ritter, Shaka is a true African ruler. The Zulu novelists perceive Shaka as a great Zulu leader able to survive childhood traumas and emerge to build the Zulu kingdom. His death is regarded as a great loss to the nation.

## CHAPTER 3

## PERSPECTIVES IN DRAMA

## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

At work or with some of our acquaintances wherever there is a considerable mixture of generations or of cultures, in an uncongenial community or in some post of responsibility we have to act in order to spare people pain, keep the peace or protect ourselves.

(Boulton, 1988:192)

Zulu playwrights felt a social need to dramatise some incidents from Shaka's life. They unconsciously subscribed to Boulton's assertion. Since we intend to investigate the perceptions evinced by these playwrights, only the aspects which are associated with those perceptions will be elaborated on.

This chapter concentrates on how the dramatists view Shaka in three plays where he is portrayed as a major character and in the other two where he appears as one of the characters. Before we analyse the Zulu plays, we shall take a brief look at the works of other playwrights on Shaka. The inclusion of plays from other languages is justified by the argument presented by Beardsley et al, (1959:XXXV) that:

The fundamental tool of the student of literature is comparison. It is comparison that enables him



to understand a work of literature, both its form and subject. The special and significant aspects of a work show up more plainly when compared with others.

A discussion on how Shaka is depicted by writers from different backgrounds will, hopefully, help in giving us a balanced view of this character.

### 3.1 Theme and characterisation

These aspects of drama are going to form the point of departure in the evaluation of the plays. We shall, however, also hint at the other elements of drama when the need arises. As previously mentioned these two elements are so intertwined that separate discussion may lead to repetition.

The New Critics such as I.A Richards, F.R. Leavis, Ransom, Wimsatt, Beardsley, Smiley, Cleanth Brooks and many others, emphasise the importance of interpreting and evaluating form and meaning in literary art. They argue that a work of art lacking in these two aspects is like a body without a soul. Rabinowitz, in Ryan and Van Zyl, (1982:33) says:

New Critical methodology assumes that 'form' and 'meaning' are made to coalesce through the force of structure; the problem is to determine the achieved effect of the thematic argument....

Another fact highlighted in the criticism of drama is the functional definition of the character. A character may have

a definite function to perform in the development of the play. He may help to convey the author's intention or be merely conventional, or ornamental. A character can also exist for its own sake (Brooks and Heilman, 1945:49). Smiley (1971:96) mentions another important feature of character portrayal:

Most sets of dramatic materials will result in a clearer play if one character is focal. Such character is a protagonist.... The term protagonist implies involvement in an extended struggle and passion of some sort.

It is unquestionable that the playwright has to adhere to at least some of the features mentioned in the above exposition in the depiction of Shaka. Shaka should be a credible, active and functional character to be convincing. This type of a character will make the contents and the theme of the play understandable. Since most of the plays touch on the death of Shaka, it is essential also to investigate whether he has been portrayed as a typical tragic character or not.

### 3.2. Non-Zulu playwrights

As part of our introductory section we shall take a brief look at only two plays written by non-Zulu playwrights namely, Shaka Zulu, by F.M. Mulikita and Shaka by Pieter Fourie. In their plays both these playwrights have highlighted certain features of Shaka, which in turn expose

the authors' perceptions. The stories created by these dramatists are almost similar to those of the novelists.

### 3.2.1 Mulikita - Shaka Zulu

F.M. Mulikita is an author from Zambia who has written a number of literary works. He started as a school teacher and ended in high government positions. He wrote Shaka Zulu in 1966 and it was published in 1967. It is said that this play has been performed a number of times in Zambia.

#### 3.2.1.1 The story

Shaka lives at Elangeni and suffers great rejection by his peers. From the beginning the playwright describes the ghastly humiliation experienced by Shaka at Elangeni. Members of his group insult him repeatedly about his expulsion and illegitimacy. Shaka reacts by beating the boys and this leads to clashes with the adults. As conflict increases so does the tension and suspense as the play develops.

Shaka moves from place to place and eventually goes back to the Zulu clan, but now as a chief. During this period various situations are created to illustrate Shaka's benevolent character and his political and military

abilities. The play ends with Shaka meeting the whites and acknowledging their intelligence. Shaka is interested in acquiring the white people's wisdom and knowledge of their form of government. Finally he is murdered by his brothers together with his most trusted charge Mbopha.

### 3.2.1.2 Mulikita's portrayal of Shaka

Mulikita manages to present us with a life-like character of Shaka. The dialogue he employs depicts a dramatic character who does not need to be described. The dramatist has attempted to portray Shaka who possesses admirable personality traits. These traits are reflected in the comments of other characters around him, and in what he says himself. This method of delineation agrees with what Conradie (1968:24) says:

...as die dramaturg nie self informasie oor sy karakters verskaf nie kan hy wel ander karakters hiervoor gebruik.

Shaka's actions are motivated throughout the play. According to Smiley (1971:84):

A playwright, therefore, most easily characterises the people in his play by choosing and assigning traits to each. Knowingly or not, writers ascribe six kinds of traits to their characters, viz. biological; physical; dispositional; motivational; deliberative and decisive.

Mulikita frequently creates an appropriate scene to show the qualities of Shaka. For instance in the first scene, in the discussion among the quarrelsome and jealous boys, Mtembu, Kumalo, Khuzwayo and Gumede, each one exposes a particular trait of the hero. The Shaka described by these youngsters is popular with girls, possesses leadership qualities, is a good sportsman and a hero. Gumede's remarks are illuminating:

We young boys hate him for his stern discipline.  
But we respect him as a hero.

(Mulikita, 1967:2)

It comes out even at this early stage that Shaka is a disciplinarian, therefore one is not surprised by his later attitudes. Time and again Shaka's physical assets contribute to interpersonal conflicts between him and other people.

Another significant aspect is Shaka's sustained compassion and profound love for his mother, Nandi. The character discloses this when he says:

...it would have been better if both my parents had been killed before I came into this world, where life for me is bitter burden. My father has been unkind to my mother, treating her like a slave. The first six years of my life were

overshadowed by the mother I adore....My mother I love and will protect with all the strength at my command.

(Mulikita, 1967:4)

However, the misery which starts from his early life does not dampen his determination to become a great man. In fact it inspires him even more. Heroic deeds include the victory over the Buthelezis and the Ndwandwes. The dramatist depicts Shaka as a king who reigns with fairness. Evidence of this is found in scene seven, where Shaka holds an open conference with his soldiers, and in scene eight, where he is a judge at Ntombazi's trial. Again it is one of the characters who reveals this commendable quality of Shaka. Mgobhozi praises Shaka by saying:

It is the pleasure of the Great Elephant that today the soldiers may speak their minds. This is the first time in the history of the land that a King has ever granted such freedom of speech. Anyone who wishes to criticise the policy of King Shaka is free to do so.

(Mulikita, 1967:38)

And indeed the discussion is straightforward although at first the soldiers hesitate. In the latter instance, Ntombazi, as well, gets a fair chance to explain why she committed such atrocities. The entire scene highlights the meticulous fairness of Shaka's justice.

After the reader has been exposed to Shaka's motivational qualities, Mulikita now repeatedly reflects Shaka's intentions of unifying all Nguni clans in order to form one Zulu nation. At first the chronicler reveals this attribute about Shaka. He contends that:

Shaka was the Great Elephant who stamped his enemies to dust.... He united the warring tribes of Nguniland to build the greatest empire Africa had ever known.

(Mulikita, 1967: 24)

From henceforth the protagonist dominates the scene. In scene nine he mentions practices which may jeopardise his dreams of forming this nation:

Ever since we united the Zulu empire the army has nothing to fight but boredom. If this continues, our efforts in creating this vast empire will have been in vain. The soldiers have become lazy.

(Mulikita, 1967: 29)

This argument is an interesting observation, which could be easily compared to what caused the fall of the great Roman empire. Some historians claim that one of the reasons which led to its fall was the boredom of the soldiers. According to Shaka it is imperative that the Zulu nation survives at all costs, even if it means killing other people. Hence he declares:

But for the lion there is always a time for killing again. What if the lion never needed to kill? He would lose his strength, his power and

his will.... I have come to see that killing is easy - it is the discipline in times of peace that makes the nation great.

(Mulikita, 1967:52)

These words depict Shaka's cruel and ambitious nature. When Nandi dies, many innocent people are killed as if they were responsible for her death.

Since this play can be regarded as a tragedy we expect the protagonist to have an impressive stature, to enact more laudable deeds than bad ones, to struggle for the sake of something more important than himself, and to suffer more dreadfully than he deserves (Smiley, 1971:45). Indeed the dramatist attempts to depict Shaka who does everything in his power to uplift the Zulu nation. Eventually Shaka is killed because of his refusal to think beyond the survival of his empire.

Mulikita's Shaka is without doubt a hero of the first degree. The dramatist perceives Shaka as a great leader, who is kind and friendly to foreigners. The dramatic scene before Shaka's assassination that introduces the whites Farewell, Fynn and King is evidence of these perceptions. In their conversation these white people express their insight into Shaka's personality that although he is cruel, he has traits of kindness and friendliness in him. Fynn even highlights his intelligence:



Fynn: And then he asked about our Parliament, local government, police. He seemed to understand what we told him as readily as if he lived in London Town.

(Mulikita, 1967:65)

Shaka could also love like any other man. But, the dramatist mentions this as something just by the way since the love of Pampata did not contribute much to the qualities stressed in this play. Emphasis is on the love shared between mother and son. Mulikita perceives the cruelty of Shaka comparable to the rulers of his era. Fynn makes this analogy to Farewell:

Yes, he can be cruel. But the other day you were telling us how Titus the Roman crucified 1,000 Jews a day when he besieged Jerusalem, and how Crassus after defeating Spartacus butchered 6,000 slaves. But the Romans weren't savages, were they?

(Mulikita, 1967:63)

When summing up Mulikita's perception of Shaka Burness (1976:60) says the playwright views Shaka as:

...the man, emphasizes the friend, the beloved, the captain and creator, rather than the tyrant and the madman.

### 3.2.2 Pieter Fourie - Shaka

Fourie says in his preface:

I first became acquainted with Shaka when I was a child. In the evenings round the campfire in the veld, grey-headed Zulu would captivate me with tales of 'the King with the liver of a lion'. Later I was confronted with school history lessons, I was in for a disappointment. Shaka, my teachers told me, was a cruel, blood-thirsty barbarian.

He continues to say when he reached university he decided to delve deeper into the history of this giant of Africa and later (1976) published this play.

#### 3.2.2.1 The story

Fourie commences his play at the time of Shaka's rule. The bone of contention is Pampata's pregnancy. Pampata informs Nandi about her condition with the hope that she will be able to persuade Shaka to accept his baby. It is generally believed Shaka's women who fell pregnant by him were killed with their babies.

The story continues as Nandi pleads with her son to allow Pampata's baby to live. The unborn child creates tension between mother and son. Shaka wants no potential menace from a son so the child has to die. Pampata will, however, not die even though she "committed a crime" that is

punishable by death.

The whole play is modelled around this love triangle. The dead child is used to haunt Shaka. Nandi dies bemoaning the murdered grandson. She uses it to warn Shaka about the impending death. Shaka is overwhelmed by his mother's death. Shaka's brothers who have always been dissatisfied with his rule take advantage of the mourning period to plot his assassination. Shaka seems to be fading away in the last scene. Shaka dies lamenting for the flock which is left without a shepherd.

It will be reasonable to presume from this, that the conceivable theme is love versus cruelty. Throughout the play, the playwright repeatedly employs certain motifs to convey this theme.

#### 3.2.2.2 Fourie's portrayal of Shaka

Shaka is the protagonist in this play. The playwright has employed effective poetic language to depict the image of Shaka. With regard to the use of poetic language Brooks and Heilman (1945:312) hold this view:

Poetic language, with its suggestiveness and allusiveness, its taking full advantage of the richness of meanings, is almost essential to the expression of a complex conception.

Although Shaka first appears in page eight of the play, Pampata reveals that he has much love and respect for his mother Nandi. Shaka confirms this when he declares:

Mother, my warriors are your hands. Why do these things yourself?

(Fourie, 1976:8)

This quality of Shaka is evident throughout the story. His love is shown by his swift reaction when he hears about Nandi's illness, and the melancholy and humility he displays after her death.

Fourie uses Nandi to emphasise another feature of Shaka. For effective portrayal, Shaka is described by a number of metaphors. They range from the fierce animal - the crocodile, to the timid lizard and eventually to the domesticated bull (p.12). Never once did Nandi mention Shaka's name in her speech but the description befits this king. It is interesting to note that the first two animals are similar in shape although the crocodile is much bigger and stronger than the lizard. Could this be referring to Shaka and the baby? There are many other instances where Fourie has effectively utilised this type of language.

In delineating characters in drama, the dramatist may either be realistic or idealistic. Fourie as a playwright who idealises his main character places Shaka on a more

elevated level than that of real life. Shaka possesses powers to foretell certain events. In scene three Shaka discusses with Ngomane about some sinister event about to happen. Under normal circumstances a person cannot just foretell the future by reading the sun, but Shaka says:

There are dark spots before the sun. It clouds a restlessness. Something ominous is at hand.

(Fourie, 1976:25)

The dramatist has utilised a highly symbolic language. The idea implied by these dark spots is that the sun's function of providing the light and warmth is threatened. Shaka is in fact referring to some form of trouble.

Shaka is sometimes made to reveal certain qualities about himself. Serudu (1979:62) maintains that:

... character delineation is the technique whereby the writer 'gives his characters a chance of revealing themselves' through their own actions, dialogue and general behaviour.

Shaka reveals his arrogance and refusal to accept the imminent danger to his life in these words:

Shaka's own strength should cleave his path through people and gods.

(Fourie, 1976:26)

Only a person of Shaka's stature could utter such remarks when being threatened. In depicting this flaw in Shaka, the dramatist is attempting to present us with a life-like character. For example, Shaka even dismisses the prediction made by Nobela, his personal inyanga, that he will be assassinated by his brothers. This flaw costs him his life. He is also depicted as an intelligent person. He admits that the whites are knowledgeable, and is prepared to send his warriors to Fynn's kraal to learn more about 'the stick that lies motionless in the hand but can strike a lion to the ground.'

Even strangers are quick to notice King Shaka's greatness. The apt description made by Fynn in his soliloquy sums up the major qualities reflected in this play:

This is what makes him great. Amidst all his might and strength and fame one can still find a child's simplicity and naked innocence. And yet, even his whisper roars fear and power. Whether in dance or battle, thought or judgement Shaka always leads. I honour the man that treats me, a peddler, like a chief and promises me my own kraal.

(Fourie, 1976: 36-37)

The foregoing excerpt and Fourie's opening remarks show that he regards Shaka as a man who was capable of great love and respect especially for his mother. His later behaviour could be related to his childhood. Fourie perceives Shaka as a

great man, especially because of his ability to form the Zulu nation.

### 3.3 The Zulu playwrights

Under this heading I shall firstly examine how Shaka is perceived by Elliot Zondi in Ukufa kukaShaka, J.N. Gumbi in KwaBulawayo and S.B.L. in Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi. In the first two dramas Shaka is the chief character and in Mbatha's play he is just one of the characters. We shall also look at A.H. Dladla's UNTombazi and L.L.J. Mncwango's Ngenzeni in which Shaka is not the central figure.

#### 3.3.1 Elliot Zondi - Ukufa kukaShaka

Zondi was born in Greytown, Natal in 1930. He qualified as a teacher. He later worked as a lecturer in Zulu at the University of Natal. Ukufa kukaShaka was originally written as a "long essay" when Zondi was doing his Zulu Course III university studies, and it was published in 1960.

##### 3.3.1.1 The story

Zondi dramatises one event in Shaka's life, his death. The drama itself is very short and has a unique structural unity. The story begins with disharmony. Mkabayi, who is Shaka's "father" (paternal aunt) plots to forcibly remove

Shaka from the throne. The first scene describes the feelings and the attitude of Mkabayi and how she intends to dethrone Shaka.

Disharmony persists when Mkabayi challenges the manhood of Dingane and instructs him to usurp the kingship, otherwise he will be killed. Shaka insists on maintaining law and order in his kingdom at all costs. Dingane hints his dissatisfaction to Shaka. As the story progresses Shaka's death becomes more imminent. The number of conspirators increases to include Mhlangana, Dingane and even the most trusted bodyguard of Shaka, Mbopha.

Shaka, on the one side, insists that a firm discipline is necessary in the creation of a strong unified kingdom. The more the dissension continues between Shaka and Mkabayi, the nearer his death approaches. As more people become aware of conflict and the assassination plot, tension and suspense increases. The megalomaniac attitude of Shaka makes him ignore his brothers' evil intention. Finally the conspirators assassinate Shaka in the kraal while all his warriors are away in battle.

Basically the theme in this play is death. When we examine the theme in a narrow sense, many lessons loom; therefore



different themes have been suggested. Shaka's death has often been singled out by writers as the most dramatic event in his life. It is then appropriate that the reader should examine the theme in a narrow sense, so as to arrive at the meaning conveyed by the play.

When interpreting the theme of a literary work, we must not only look carefully at the work itself but also away from the work towards the world of ideas and experiences (Scholes et al, 1978:12). These ideas and experiences play an important role in the reader's determining of a theme in a narrow sense. For instance, one may suggest themes like determination and ambition, as well as honour, as dominant. However, we find some scholars who regard the central theme in this play as 'revolution' (Strachan, 1986:70). Unfortunately these critics do not elucidate further on this aspect. The Oxford Dictionary (1989:893) defines revolution as:

...complete change, turning upside down, great fundamental reconstruction, especial forcible action by the nation to substitute new ruler or system of government.

In my opinion the conflict was rather more of a family dispute than a national revolution. Therefore the theme of revolution is challengeable, because even after the death of Shaka the system of government he established did not alter.

### 3.3.1.2 Zondi's portrayal of Shaka

Scholes et al (1978:700) state that:

The most immediate way to understand a character is to examine in detail everything the character says, in order to identify the important attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of that character. Examine not only the content but also the style of such utterances.

The playwright has depicted the diverse images of Shaka. He portrays Shaka as a character who displays humanity, determination, compassion, autocracy, diplomacy, discipline and prowess in war.

At the beginning we are introduced to Shaka who can joke and laugh with his subjects. In one of his happy moods he says to Jeqe:

*He - He - He! Wakhuluma Jeqe, ngena ngizwe ukuthi ungigodleni, gwalandini.*

(Zondi, 1980:3)

He - He - He! You have spoken Jeqe, come in let me hear what you have brought me, you coward you.

By making Shaka utter these words Zondi reveals Shaka's humaneness. This places king Shaka on the same level as other people. The dramatist depicts a character who experiences pleasure and endures pain.

To advance a clear image of Shaka the writer uses dramatic dialogue. We see how human Shaka is when a wizard, Nongo, is reported to Shaka. Shaka listens and his response is:

*Ubani lona oqeda izwe lami?*

(Zondi, 1980:38)

Who is this one who is tampering with my land?

Shaka's quick action to the plea from one of his subjects reveals that he is a compassionate person when the need arises although he can be ruthless to those who interfere with his plans.

Zondi artfully reveals Shaka's statesmanship and discipline during the discussion between the king and Mkabayi. He declares:

*Mina ngihlale kakhulu noDingiswayo owazama ukwakha ibandla lokuqula amacala, kodwa kwangikhanyela ukuthi inzondo, isihe, ububhimbi, ubuciko ukuzalana nokunjalo, kwenza ukwahlulela kungahambi ngendlela. Mina ngibona izigangi zifanele ukugwinya kanye; futhi ngoba alikho icala elincane kufanele izelelesi zihambe ngandlela yinye ziyohlupha engxenye.*

(Zondi, 1980:17)

I lived a long time with Dingiswayo who attempted to form a committee to try criminal cases, but it became clear to me that hatred, mercy or pity, inability to express one's self, skill in speaking, relatives etc. result in unfair prosecution. I feel all criminals should die once; there is no small crime; all criminals should walk the same journey so that they can be far away when they cause trouble.

This justification explains why Shaka adopts uncompromising discipline. The experience with the Mthethwas forms a precedent for his present decisions. Death penalties unfortunately were passed by Shaka and capitalised on by those who were plotting to assassinate him.

Shaka displays both autocratic and diplomatic qualities when discussing war. He convincingly motivates his autocratic stance. He believes that those who do not succumb to his power must do so by force of arms. But at times he surprises people by showering praises on those who show mercy. He says to Jeje:

*Ayi-ke, niziphathise okwamaqhawe anazitika  
ngabantu bengahlomile. Kuyinto enhle kakhulu ukuba  
umusa ubuyiselwe ngomusa, njengoba neva likhishwa  
ngelinye.*

(Zondi, 1980: 26)

Oh! Yes, you behaved like heroes by not attacking people who were not armed. It is chivalrous to remember that one good deed deserves another, like the thorn extracted by another.

Throughout the play Zondi has used appropriate dignified language to portray this tragic character. According to Boulton (1971:147) a tragic character:

... is a central character, who is a person of admirable character and important position who is ruined by some one flaw of character....

Shaka conforms to this definition. He insists that everything he does is for the benefit of the nation. For instance, he says that it is important that small nations must unite to be strong:

*Ngokubambana zisingathane, izizwe ezincane ziyama;  
ngobhici nokungezwani, ezinkulu ziyawa. Baphi  
oZwide? Baphi oPhakathwayo?*

(Zondi, 1980:5)

By coming together and supporting one another the small nations stand; because of fighting and disunity, the big nations fall. Where is Zwide? Where is Phakathwayo?

Shaka's repeated attacks on the neighbouring clans could be regarded by some readers as signs of ruthlessness, but the above contention of Shaka shows his determination to build one nation. Critics agree that a skilful dramatist should encourage the readers to use their imagination. To the reader this is dramatic irony since Shaka will soon join these fallen kings. Dingane casually hints:

*Dingane: Umbango, Silo, usuka emlotheni  
Shaka: Uqinisile Dingane; kungakho phela  
ngingafuni ndodana nje.*

(Zondi, 1980:5)

Dingane: Family feud, O Great Beast, rises from the ashes..

Shaka: You speak the truth Dingane; that is why I do not want any son.

Like a typical tragic character, Shaka misses the irony and responds that not even a son will dissuade him from his commitment.

The importance of the nation to Shaka makes him ambitious. The playwright portrays Shaka declaring himself as a doctor (inyanga):

*Isizwe sami siyagula, mina ngiyinyanga yaso.  
Siyoze siphile, uma singaphili, nango mina.*

(Zondi, 1980:6)

My nation is sick, I am its doctor. It will be cured and if not, woe unto it.

At another time he says:

*Izwe lonke elikaShaka, ekhona noma engekho.  
...igama likaShaka lingenkulu intelezi,  
lingesikhulu isihlungu.*

(Zondi, 1980:42)

The whole land is Shaka's, whether he is present or not... Shaka's name is protective medicine, it is an antidote to poison.

Shaka even goes to the extent of elevating his status to that of a supernatural being. He repeatedly equates himself to God:

*Izwi likaShaka izwi likaMvelinqangi.*

(Zondi, 1980:10)

The voice of Shaka is the voice of God.

This megalomaniac conception of himself precipitates the conflict between him and members of his family. This person who now regards himself as God must be removed. Shaka feels

his strength increasing beyond any person's imagination. Zondi reflects the quality of Shaka in a very picturesque manner:

*Ngisemncane, Jeqe, nabantu bami baseyingcosana. Kodwa Ngizokhula ngibe mkhulu, ikhanda lami lize liyosithela emafini, nithi niyalibheka phezulu ningaliboni; nobuso bami bunixhophe ngokukhazimula ngoba buyokhazimulisa okwelanga, kanti nabantu bami bayokhula kanye nami bawengamele wonke umhlaba.*

(Zondi:1980:37)

I'm still small, Jeqe, and my people also are still but few. But I shall grow and be big, till my head disappears amid the clouds, and you will all look upwards trying to see it, but will not see it; and my face will blind you with its glitter since it will shine like the sun; and my people too will grow together with me and be masters of the whole world.

The rise of the Zulu nation is depicted by Zondi as almost simultaneous with Shaka's own growth. The metaphors of the shining face like that of the sun reflect the power he associates with his kingship. As he grows the nation will grow too; so whatever actions he executes are justified. Shaka believes that the end he has in mind justifies the means he is exploiting. Unfortunately, the conspirators regard these means implemented by Shaka as self-defeating, because in the end there will be no nation to build.

This superior image Shaka has of himself makes him undermine his brothers. This leads to his downfall, typical of a tragic character. Peck and Coyle (1984:95) state:

The larger awareness that permeates the tragedies is perhaps most evident in the set-piece speeches where the hero ponders on the whole nature and purpose of existence.

Zondi's high imaginative delineation of Shaka illustrates this. Although Shaka experiences fear (this is shown in his soliloquy), his arrogance and pride do not stop. Since he suspects that his brothers have bad intentions, he sends them to fight Soshangane where they can die. He regards himself as too high, in fact as one of the ancestral spirits; thus he cannot kill his own brothers. His remark to Jeje reveals that Shaka has a premonition about his death:

*Ngizothi ngingayiphaka eya eNyakatho ngisale lapha ngife. Ukufa kwami sengiwuhlanganisile umbuso kuyoba intokozo ekade.*

(Zondi, 1980:41)

After sending my army to the North I shall remain here and die. My death after I have united the kingdom will be eternal delight.

To magnify Shaka's ruthlessness Zondi creates conflicting circumstances between Shaka and Mkabayi. Through the discussions held by Mkabayi and other characters more is revealed about the hero. Scholes et al (1978:700) maintain:

A source of information is what others say about the character. Since characters, like people, are repeatedly talking about one another - to their faces and behind their backs - what they have to say often will provide valuable insights into the character.



According to Mkabayi the antagonist, Shaka appears to be a concerned person about the nation which is made to disintegrate by his own hand. This view is contrary to what Shaka believes and aspires to achieve. The counteraction to Shaka's alleged unscrupulous actions should be formulated. It is through the use of this dialogue that Zondi exposes this trait of Shaka. To counter Shaka's unscrupulous actions a strategy should be formulated. Mkabayi says to Dingane:

*Lobubunswelaboya Dingane buyashaqisa.*

(Zondi, 1980:2)

Dingane, this thuggery is appalling.

The effect of these words is made conspicuous by the fact that they are uttered during the discussion of Shaka's pending death. The reader feels for Shaka and wishes that the conspiracy will fail. But Mkabayi again capitalises on Nonkenkeza's piteous incident to show the cruelty in Shaka. She addresses Shaka and clearly states that he is a cruel judge:

*Lowo onquma icala oboshiwe enganikwanga ithuba  
lokuziphendulela, ngeke abizwe ngomahluleli  
oqotho.*

(Zondi, 1980:9)

The one, who decides on a case without giving the accused a chance to explain, cannot be regarded as an honest judge.

It is worth noting that all the people involved in the

conspiracy regard Shaka as a cruel, rigid despot whose intention is to wipe out the Zulu nation. The dramatist reveals Shaka as completely wrapped up in the belief that his success is cherished by everyone. Dingane complains and expresses his views on the actions of Shaka. Zondi uses a vivid image of destruction in the speech of Dingane:

*Uyambona umfowethu useqome ukuqotha imbokodo  
nesisekelo, usemqedile uZulu, uselufuze lonke  
ubonda ebesibande ngalo,...*

(Zondi, 1980:31)

Do you see my brother intends to kill everybody - young and old, he has finished the Zulus, he has broken down the whole wall which was our hiding place...

The imagery of the dilapidated building, the perishing of the young and old, is particularly striking, as it strongly motivates the need for the removal of the cause. Although the reader is unable to accept these accusations because they are made by people who have ulterior motives, the dramatic manner that has been employed to depict them makes them justifiable.

Jege's allegiance to Shaka is not shaken. Jege makes us pity and sympathise with Shaka as a true tragic figure who has become a victim of his image. Nobody is better qualified than Jege to sum up Shaka's character and the consequences of his death:

*Impela akusoka lingenasici; leligazi elimpompozayo  
likhomba ukugqwala kwethusi, ukubuna komthunzi,  
ukusha kwesiphethu sobuzwe bukaZulu.*

(Zondi, 1980:52)

It is true that nobody is perfect; this flowing blood indicates the rustiness of the brass, the fading of the shade and the desiccation of the spring of Zulu nationalism.

The lament becomes more meaningful coming from this character and seems to reflect the author's own perceptions of Shaka. Shaka's nobility is illustrated in Jeje's soliloquy. Certain critics say the purpose of the soliloquy is to reflect on a wider significance of the action; it raises difficult questions about the man and his role in society and the world (Peck and Coyle, 1984:92). Zondi chooses an appropriate somber atmosphere to comment on the image of Shaka, a true statesman, a military genius and a noble leader, who instilled in his people true discipline in life, characterised by submission to authority, obedience of the law, orderliness and self-restraint. These high ideals unknowingly brought him his untimely death. The soliloquy declares that:

*Nakuba inkosi ibinolaka, ingancengi,  
ingathetheleli, ikwazile ukumisa umthetho,  
inhlonipho, ukuzibamba, ubuqhawe, nokuzithanda,  
konke lokhu kuzubhuntsha.*

(Zondi, 1980:52)

Although the king had a violent temper, could not be coaxed and was unforgiving, he succeeded to

maintain law and order, and inculcate respect, restraint, gallantry, and self-esteem: all this is going to vanish.

Jeje's description of Shaka seems to state the playwright's own perception that he is a martyr who died for his beliefs, and the unification of his nation. It is not easy to agree with the argument expressed by Ngubane cited by Burness (1976:190) that:

It is difficult to see Shaka as a martyr in this presentation, for the simple reason that his desire for personal glory is projected too strongly, overpowering whatever noble principles he might have. Zondi's Shaka, then does not die for his principles, he dies for Shaka.

To Zondi Shaka had a mission of delivering the Black nation from bondage of disunity into a mighty nation. In this nation all people will be equal and must serve him as their leader.

### 3.3.2 J.N.Gumbi - KwaBulawayo

Gumbi was born in Ladysmith, Natal. He is one of the most prolific writers in Zulu. He has written novels, poems, short stories and plays. For most of his life he has been working for publishing firms. This play was published in 1984.

### 3.3.2.1 The story in KwaBulawayo

Gumbi describes diverse episodes of Shaka's life as a king, concentrating mostly on what happened in the kraal of KwaBulawayo. The play commences with the arrival of a traveller from the Cape. This man requests Shaka for protection from the Englishmen who are pursuing him. Shaka obliges and gives this man the name "Hlambamanzi" because he escaped from his pursuers by swimming away from them. Shaka regards this man as useful because he knows the language of the white people.

In one episode, the invasion of the king's kraal by bad omens introduces Shaka dealing with the diviners. These diviners are not popular with the people, so the king sees this as an opportunity to test the power they claim to possess. Another event discussed is the arrival of whites led by Fynn at KwaBulawayo. The playwright describes a few other incidents that transpire at this kraal, ending the play with the death of Shaka.

Basically the theme in this play is Shaka's generosity and statesmanship. Zondi (1989:74) in his M.A. dissertation maintains that the theme is "change". The episodic nature of the story may be part of the reason for the difficulty of arriving at a consensus of opinion with regard to the theme of this play.

### 3.3.2.2 Gumbi's portrayal of Shaka

We have referred to the episodic nature of this play. Because of the lack of coherent events, character delineation is difficult to assess. The New Critics emphasise the importance of the relation between plot and character. To portray a convincing character the play must have a story packed with action, tension and suspense. In order for a character to advance dramatic action, all his activities should be purposeful, appropriate, credible, probable and consistent (Smiley, 1971:100).

The encounter between Shaka and Hlambamanzi suggests that Shaka is kind, but this feature in the character's personality is accompanied by distrust. The dramatist adheres to the concept of a developing character who is changing inwardly. Shaka instructs Mbopha:

*Thatha uHlambamanzi umuse emuzini ongenzansi.  
Utshele izinceku zimbheke kahle, zimuphe okuya  
ngasethunjini nendawo yokulala. Uyangizwa Mbopha?*

(Gumbi, 1984:70)

Take Hlambamanzi to the kraal below. Tell the stewards to look after him properly, they must give him food and a place to sleep. Do you hear me Mbopha?

The message appears to have a double implication: hospitality and also an alert surveillance in case the man is a spy. The untrusting trait in the hero persists as Gumbi

creates the diviners' incident to illustrate this. Shaka's subjects have complained time and again about the divining of the courts' diviners, specially Nobela. Shaka feels the appropriate moment has presented itself to prove this himself. Shaka insinuates his skepticism to Nobela:

*Kodwa ubokwazi ukuthi nami ngibona lapho okungaboni khona abanye. Ubheke kahle unganuki abanganukwa.*

(Gumbi, 1984:31)

But you must know that I also see where others cannot see. Divine correctly and do not smell out those who are above suspicion.

This incident introduces the reader to another quality of Shaka. Gumbi subtly depicts Shaka regarding himself higher than the diviners. It is not surprising that these diviners are later sentenced to death. The dramatist, however, does not show how these diviners were proved wrong. The historical Shaka would not just accept the denial of Mdlaka and then sentence the diviners to death.

Shaka again illustrates his superior powers when he addresses his subjects about the arrival of whites:

*Izindlebe zami zizwa kude, amehlo ami abona kude.*

(Gumbi, 1984:45)

My ears can hear sounds from afar, my eyes see far away.

Somehow one can consider this expression as a warning directed to any subject who thinks of being disloyal to Shaka. This elevates the status of Shaka.

In some episodes Gumbi portrays Shaka as arrogant and a person who reflects negative self-exaltation traits. His ambition becomes an obsession, typical of a tragic character. Shaka declines to heed his mother's warning about the assassination instead he says:

*Ngesithunzi sami nje sodwa, ngamengamela ngaso  
uPhakathwayo wasonteka intamo wafa. Akekho umuntu  
ongake azame ukungigagamela. Jama!*

(Gumbi, 1984:75)

With just my shadow alone, I caused Phakathwayo to twist his neck and die. Nobody may attempt to come near me. By Jama!

By refusing to be cautious Shaka is killed by the very people he considered harmless. The super image of himself creates such an exaggerated confidence in Shaka that it leads to an error of judgement and he dies. The playwright displays imaginative power in revealing this trait of Shaka.

The dramatist presents Shaka as being flexible when he meets the whites and when he learns about his son from Mbuzikazi. The fact that Nandi hid Mbuzikazi's offspring is



historically true. Shaka, however, never approved of any heir. Bryant (1965: 607) elaborates:

...Shaka never risked a wife; they bred but vermin, mischievous brats who later on might contest his very right to live.

The argument which proposes that Shaka's reaction to the news of his son was positive, is the dramatist's own creation. Gumbi says:

*Futhi angiwabulali amaqhawe njengoba likhombisa ukungesabi nje.*

(Gumbi, 1984: 84)

And I do not kill brave men since he shows that he does not panic.

According to Bryant (1965:607) Shaka became so enraged when he discovered the existence of this son, that he quickly dispatched Mbopha to go and murder the baby.

As we have already indicated in the introductory part of this section, the poor plot structure and lack of action affects characterisation negatively. The play can be regarded as having a vertical structure that is non-causal. In such plays conflict arises from tension rather than suspense and this is true of this play.

One must, however, acclaim Gumbi for the apt motivation of the generosity and leadership qualities of Shaka. This delineation illustrates the dramatist's view about Shaka.

### 3.3.3 Mbatha - Nawe Mbopha KaSithayi

Mbatha originates from Vryheid, in Natal. This play was Mbatha's first literary work and he has since published a novel entitled Insizi yezinsizi.

#### 3.3.3.1 The story

In this play Shaka is not the main character. He appears in only nine out of twenty-nine scenes. It is mostly other characters who talk about him. The exclamation Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi (And you too Mbopha, son of Sithayi!) is an expression of surprise uttered by Shaka when his trusted servant participated in the assassination.

Subjects under Shaka are dissatisfied with his rule. Unlike other authors Mbatha uses fictitious characters to articulate the discontent. Mkabayi connives to eliminate the tyrant ruler. Shaka is killed by his brothers and the trusted servant Mbopha. Mkabayi and other assassins acknowledge the greatness of Shaka during the funeral, but justify killing him as a necessary move. Later Mbopha and Mhlangana are also killed by Dingane.

The theme in this play is that the penalty of violation of position and breach of friendship is death. Shaka is killed for unsatisfactory leadership while Mbopha dies for betraying his friend.

### 3.3.3.2 Mbatha's portrayal of Shaka

The playwright has utilised Boulton's method of delineation. According to this critic, we can discover a lot and also come to particular deductions about the image of a character from what other people say about him. She, however, stresses that in real life we do not always have to believe all things said about people (1988:87).

Shaka's action in this is very minimal. It is difficult to readily accept him as the tragic character he is supposed to be. It appears as if people are closely bound to him by love, hatred, jealousy and greed elements. Mbatha attempts to depict Shaka as a dramatic person who does not exist in a vacuum and who causes the development of the plot.

In the opening scene Shaka's subjects reveal that they are petrified of him. For the description to be interesting and effective the dramatist employs an 'izulu' (heaven) metaphor:

*Malolo: Izulu nxa kungafika lokhu ezindlebeni zalo, kuzwakale ukuthi sengizijubile, ngingasheshe ngifinyelele kwagoqanyawo.*

(Mbatha, 1971:1)

*Malolo: If this can reach the `heaven's' ears, the fact that I have decided to go against him, I may quickly reach the place of death.*

It is obvious that Shaka is dreaded because he orders people to be killed without a qualm. Mbatha contradicts himself by making these subjects show no respect to this king whom they are supposed to be afraid of. Sonkolo displays disrespect to the king by refusing to sign up in the regiments. Instead he brags to his friends that he is not afraid of death:

*Into engapheli iyahlola wethu. Thina sokufa kanye ngeke siveze munwe.*

(Mbatha, 1971:2)

Everything comes to an end. We will only die once and no part of our bodies will show above the ground.

Other characters divulge that Shaka rules with an iron hand. His autocracy is accompanied by cruelty. A situation is created by the dramatist to display the cruelty trait in Shaka. He tells Mbhenguza and Mhlihlima to fight each other to death. Mhlihlima dies and Shaka's response shows inhuman feelings:

*Mthatheni nimuse kwankatha izinyoni zenkosi ziyozidelisa.*

(Mbatha, 1971:9)

Take him to the place of the dead and let the birds have a feast.

The brutality evident in the personality of Shaka is not just the writer's fabrication but a known fact. Bryant (1965:648) affirms:

He was a man reverted, not to the savage, but to the brutish stage, in which all altruistic sentiments are absent, and animal instincts reign supreme.

The dramatist portrays Shaka as a character who loves war. Each time he addresses his subjects the topic is war. It is this personality trait that is exploited to reveal Shaka's flaw. After discovering about the plot to kill him he uses the current battles to resolve his predicament. The dramatist is, however, not very convincing in portraying and motivating Shaka's alleged flaw. Shaka fails to be convincing when he announces:

*Lababantu bazongibulala. Babopha uzungu olukhulu. Ngicabanga ukuthi noma isiphumile ngithumele izwi noma ngilandele mina mathupha ngifike ngibabulale.*

(Mbatha, 1971:37)

These people are going to kill me. They have a big plot. I am thinking that even though the regiments have left, I must send a message or may be proceed myself, get there and kill them.

A real tragic hero is usually ignorant of the identity of the people who intend to harm him but Mbatha portrays Shaka as a pathetic character who knowingly allows his brothers to kill him. He procrastinates reacting to the threat of death. This criticism of an ineffective depiction of Shaka emanates from the fact that anybody, let alone Shaka, who feels as threatened as it is illustrated in the above excerpt will not behave like this character. The playwright emphasises this flaw in Act 3, scene III, where Shaka actually wishes to be drugged, even though he feels unsafe. Sadly Shaka says:

*Angizethembi izinduna zami ukuthi intando yami zizoyenza. Ake ubize yena uNkomankoma nodosi lwempisi.*

(Mbatha, 1971:45)

I do not trust that my indunas will execute my desire. Call Nkomankoma with the jackal's sleeping drug.

This depiction definitely does not reflect the true historical Shaka. In fact Shaka fails to arouse the emotional effect of a tragic character that is, "pity and fear." Shaka was not the coward who would want to die in his sleep. Bryant (1965:633) maintains:

Shaka was in no wise a normal Zulu,... He was himself the supreme being, and responsible to none. He feared none, obeyed none, considered none, respected none.

Mbatha attempts to correct his earlier misconception about Shaka's character by introducing Mkabayi's speech at his funeral. An interesting observation is that Mkabayi, the notable antagonist of Shaka, begins by highlighting Shaka's flaws and then praises him as an undeniable hero and king. Mkabayi bemoans the loss:

*...kepha silahlekelwe. Silahlekelwe iqhawe  
lamaqhawe, inkosi yamakhosi. Ubelithanda iqhawe  
elizonda igwala kodwa igazi? Ubelithanda iqiniso  
ezonda amanga kodwa unya.?*

(Mbatha, 1971:57)

... but we have lost. We have lost a warrior of warriors, a king of kings. He liked heroes and despised cowards, but the blood? He believed in the truth and loathed lies, but cruelty?

Paradoxical as this speech may be, it furnishes an apt delineation of Shaka as seen by other authors.

From the above observation Mbatha perceives Shaka as a cruel and unkind man who had to die because if he did not the nation would have perished.

#### 3.3.4. Mncwango - Ngenzeni and Dladla - UNTombazi

In these plays Shaka does not feature as the main character. In fact Ngenzeni is a social drama, which reflects Shaka as an intelligent powerful statesman. Shaka gives amnesty to two lovers, Hilwayo and Zenzile, who are running away from

their egotistical chief Menziwa. The chief wanted to marry Zenzile and kill her lover Hilwayo. It is through the action of Shaka's spies and what happens to the two lovers that the playwright presents Shaka's image.

The views become more convincing when they are presented in dialogue than by the author's description. Hilwayo comments that Shaka is famous for his intelligence:

*Sisuswa ludumo lobuhlakani benkosi uShaka lapho sisuka khona.*

(Mncwango, 1982:98)

We were allured by the celebrated intelligence of king Shaka away from our place.

The spies cannot arrest or disarm Hilwayo because this will be regarded as a sign of cowardice.

The statesmanship and kindness is illustrated by Shaka himself on the arrival of the prisoners. Mncwango dramatises the whole episode. To illustrate that Shaka is a capable king, he welcomes the prisoners with open arms and he responds favourably to them:

*Basuseni lapha phambi kwami niyobanika izinkomo zokukleza, nibabhekele nenxiwa lokwakha, bahlale, bazinze, bangizalele amabutho.*

(Mncwango, 1982:121)



Remove them from here, go and give them cattle for milking, and also allocate them a place to live, let them live comfortably, so that they can bear warriors for my regiments.

Mncwango presents us with a convincing character who is sure of his authority, by utilising an appropriate situation, namely, desperation. A legitimate leader as described by the spies will not take pride in persecuting desperate people. The initial doubt planted by the spies makes the reader feel for the prisoners since they may be killed, but Shaka does the opposite. This portrayal depicts the unpredictable Shaka as he was generally known in history.

On the other hand Dladla, in UNTombazi introduces Shaka as an important character who will play a major role in the stoppage of Ntombazi's wicked witchcraft practices. Dladla reveals the king's bravery, love, fair justice and ability in politics.

Shaka displays his bravery by conquering Zwide in many battles preceding the Gqokli war, the war which finally destroyed Zwide. He personally led the regiments against Zwide and Phakathwayo. Shaka divulges that his main wish is to build a mighty Zulu nation:

*Amadlozi angiqophela umsebenzi onzima wokubumba isizwe sikaZulu, oyohlala njalo uqophekile ubonwa noma ubani ezizukulwaneni ezizayo.*

(Dladla, 1984:78)

The ancestors chose me for a difficult duty of building a Zulu nation, that will remain in existence even in the future generation.

It is during this conversation that Shaka also says that he does not want a son because it will interfere with his duty. Dladla repeatedly points out that Shaka is capable of love. He loved Dingiswayo so much that he is devastated by his death. He vows that he will get even with Ntombazi. The execution of Ntombazi halts witchcraft and even the people are warned against such practices. Shaka has a number of concubines he refers to as "sisters". The deep love he possesses for some of them is seen in his conversation. He utters his romantic mood in highly poetical language:

*Inkulumo ingumfula, kanti ukucabanga kuyisiphethu.  
Manje mbali yami, ngabe kanginigculisi yini  
ngothando?*

(Dladla, 1984:77)

The conversation is a river, whereas thinking is a spring. Now my flower, do I not satisfy you with love.

Dladla uses the love scene to show that Shaka does not tolerate jealousy and greed. Shaka reveals his political capabilities by using Noluju to spy for him. The knowledge he acquires from the source helps him to defeat Zwide's strong and large armies. The playwright depicts Shaka as a fair and just ruler. Although Ntombazi is known for practising witchcraft, he, however, gives her a chance to

account for her evil behaviour. Ntombazi praises Shaka and recognises his greatness even as she dies:

*Yize bengimzonda uShaka kodwa ngiyabubonga  
ubuhlakani bakhe. Ukuba uZwide wabe enguShaka...  
ngabe angizange ngisebenzise ubuthi ekuzuzeni  
ubukhulu. Isihlonti sobuqhawe siqakamba okwedlula  
isihlonti sobumnyama, ubuthi. Ize ime njalo inkosi  
yenu uShaka....*

(Dladla, 1984:92)

Though I hated Shaka but I appreciate his intelligence. If Zwide was Shaka...I would not have resorted to witchcraft to achieve greatness. The torch of heroism shines more than the torch of darkness and witchcraft. Long live your king Shaka.

Shaka is thrown into conflicting circumstances and thus initiates action in the play. The presentation gives a life-like character who is interesting and convincing.

This playwright, just like Mbatha, uses Shaka's greatest enemy to paint the final image of Shaka. Dladla honours the greatness of Shaka as he endows him with intelligence, fairness and heroic qualities.

#### **3.4. Recapitulation**

This chapter highlighted the views of various dramatists on Shaka. The assessment of the plays disclosed more favourable qualities of Shaka. Shaka is considered a hero, whose intention is to build a mighty nation. All other actions were means to an end. In comparing the views of the

dramatists who write in English and those of the Zulu writers we discovered that the former dramatise Shaka's lack of love as a youth more than the latter.

On the whole Mulikita's play presents a character who is a sensitive, kind, highly emotional and objective leader. We are given a Shaka who is dedicated to the welfare of his people. These qualities of Shaka have been convincingly expressed in the text. In the writer's view Shaka was otherwise a capable leader who unfortunately was influenced by his traumatic childhood.

Fourie uses impressive poetic language to depict a Shaka who experienced rejection and humiliation from his peers, hence the unbecoming adult behaviour. Shaka is, however, capable of loving and extending a hand of friendship as shown by Fynn. Shaka dies because of loving his nation more than himself.

These dramatists admit that Shaka committed some atrocities, but their concluding remarks distinctly show that his behaviour was no exception to the rule of the day. Mulikita compares him to the Roman Caesars.

It is worth noting that women do not feature much in the Zulu plays. Is this a reflection of the comparatively low status of the women during the days of Shaka? Nandi did play a role in Shaka's life by nurturing him and Mkabayi on the

other hand played the opposite. These are historical verities. But more than that, women did not participate in the governing of the kingdom. Shaka declined even to consider marriage.

In his play Zondi depicts a brave Shaka who died for his beliefs, while Gumbi and Mbatha reflect other qualities which are important in a king.

An interesting observation in the works of some playwrights is the manner in which they employ the poetic language in portraying Shaka. In Zondi and Fourie the symbolic language appears to be a predominant, communicative device. The utilisation of such devices contributes towards the elevation of the literary standard of these plays.

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**CHAPTER FOUR****PERSPECTIVES IN POETRY****4.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Zulus, like many other peoples of the world, have evolved different genres in which they cast words to convey ideas, and pass on information and entertain. Poetry is regarded by literary scholars as one of the main vehicles used to communicate social ideas, to record historical events, to interpret life, to console and to sustain a people. Indeed without poetry our science would appear incomplete. Maxwell-Mahon and Titlestad, (1980:102), substantiate this argument by quoting Wordsworth's views that:

Poetry is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science; and what is a countenance without its expression ... further calls poetry 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge.'

Zulu poets, as well as poets of other African nations, have attempted to communicate their views about life through poetry. This chapter thus aims at critically assessing and

comparing the views as presented by some of these poets. Gérard (1983:80) affirms the closeness and the relationship between African literatures by stating:

That various trends in South African literature are more closely knit together than is usually assumed, and that a promising case can be made for viewing them in their relationships and parallels rather than in their separation and contrasts.

In this chapter we shall examine closely the views presented by some African poets who write in languages other than Zulu. We shall also examine the influence of Shaka's praise poem (izibongo) on modern poets. A critical evaluation will be given of some poems selected from the list of Zulu poetry.

The extensive catalogue of poems on Shaka displays the popularity and the undying spirit of this Zulu king. Mazisi Kunene, (1979:440) elaborates:

The great leader Shaka has occupied in the minds of Africans the place that Caesar occupies in the minds of the Europeans.

This view is also confirmed by Burness, (1976:xii) who states:

the undying spirit of Shaka cannot be denied or ignored....that the persisting existence of Shaka's spirit is due to mythicism surrounding his (Shaka's) name. Myth, we know, is communal and

serves to explain the origin and destiny of a people. The return to a glorious past of heroic deeds and strength, in unity, constitutes a continuation and developments of the celebrations of Shaka in oral literature of South Africa.

#### 4.1. Shaka in English poetry

Mazisi Kunene has composed a long epic of 440 pages on Shaka. This epic gives details of Shaka's life history, namely, his birth, reign and his untimely death. Shaka has been viewed by a Zulu, from the Zulu perspective even though the epic is published in English. More will be said about Kunene's view in the discussion later.

Burness, (1976:xii) explains that the first long poem, "Chaka" by Prince and Campbell was written in 1934 and revised in 1935-39. These authors' poetry reflects a European perspective. Shaka is described as a Zulu despot and a fading heroic symbol. The following choice of words and imagery is a clear depiction of the foregoing view:

Like a dark cloud, clashing a ghostly spear,  
The shade of Tchaka strides across the gloom.

(Burness, 1976:34)

In his poem "Chaka," Prince concentrates on the creation of a youthful Shaka. To Prince, this hero's later life was shaped by the rejection and the bitter experiences of childhood. According to this poet, it was during lonely



moments that Shaka meditated about the future. This is exemplified by this excerpt from Prince's poem:

I have wandered out in the thin tang of white  
stars  
While my friends were asleep below the hills.  
Depending only on rumours of my starry meals  
It was not for them to know how far my gaze was  
set.

(Burness, 1976:116)

Senghor's poem on Shaka reflects how one African leader regards another. It depicts Shaka as a man who was the representative of all Black people, a man who had a vision of hope for mankind. Burness (1976:30-31) highlights these features and elaborates:

Senghor's Shaka becomes a symbol of Negritude and also a Black Christ... His deep faith and optimism manifest themselves most strongly in "Chaka" where the theme of a renascent purity and goodness is maintained throughout the poem. Shaka's death at the conclusion of the poem signals a resurrection of a new world. Towards the end of the work and his dying words echo the theme of a new day in which man will live in harmony with his fellow man.

It is worth noting that a number of other African poets also share the views that Shaka is a Black Christ, a symbol of unity, a military genius, etc., as will be demonstrated in the forthcoming discussion. What we observe in Senghor's poem is, to some extent, an extension of Mofolo's influence, especially regarding Shaka's love life. The poet should, however, be commended for not allowing the stereotypes to

influence his literary presentation. All in all this poem concentrates more on Shaka's death, especially the impact it had on the whole of Africa.

Mtshali, Lesoro and Jolobe's poems reflect both positive and negative impressions about Shaka. They refer, for instance, to his birth, reign, political influences on the nation, and his social and military ventures. More shall be said about the views expressed by these poets later, when we discuss individual themes. The poems and ideas will be analysed mainly for comparative purposes.

#### **4.2 Shaka in Zulu poetry**

Most Zulu poets seem to have been inspired by the praises of Shaka. The introductory part of this section will deal with the influence of King Shaka's praises (izibongo) on the modern Zulu poets. In the assessment of the poems a thematic approach will be adopted. In the extensive list of poems about Shaka we have chosen only a few. The poets who wrote from 1935 to the 1950s include names like Vilakazi, A.S. and Kunene. The other poets like Myeni, Masuku, Mazibuko, Nxumalo, Ntuli, Gcumisa, Buthelezi, Msimang and Zulu composed their poems between 1960 and 1990. It is worth noting that although Shaka did not go to school (in the

modern sense) the majority of these poets are university graduates.

#### 4.2.1 The influence of Shaka's praise poem (Izibongo)

The praise poem gives a detailed record of Shaka's life history. The first person to compose and recite them was the renowned Zulu bard Magolwane kaJiyane, who lived during Shaka's era to the time of Mpande. These praises were later collected and recorded by James Stuart, from individuals who spent their lives with Jiyane. The Zulu writer Sibusiso Nyembezi and Trevor Cope later arranged these praises according to the accepted literary format.

The praise poem is generally viewed by critics as an authentic life history record of a chief or king, because it is composed during that particular character's lifetime. Nyembezi (1948:111) explains:

The praises were a reservoir for historical events which took place from time to time. It must not be forgotten that the Bantu had no system of recording on paper, etc., the events as they came to pass, so that the handing down of history from generation to generation had to be necessarily oral.

A similar view is maintained by Cook (1931:184) in his article on Swazi praise poems. He states that praise poetry (izibongo) forms invaluable historical evidence. It gives in highly picturesque language a concept of the person's ideals

and actions. It is therefore of high literary, historical and philosophical significance. Mazisi Kunene (1979:xxxiv) confirms this:

Zulu heroic poetry, like most African poetry operates as a vehicle of history and philosophical thought. The eulogistic style aims at popularizing the social and intellectual experiences of the members of society.

Zulu praise poetry cannot be described as simple, or lacking in linguistic artificiality. The poetic features found in praises definitely have a great influence on our modern poetry. Cope (1968:23) elaborates on literary features of the praise poem by stating that a praise composition is consciously an art, which depicts a conscious striving towards literary effect, and a conscious effort to attain a richer, a more evocative, a more emotive and a more memorable use of language. He concludes by saying that a praise poem exhibits all the characteristics of poetry.

The extensive poetry composed and written on Shaka reflects the remarkable influence of Shaka's praise poem. Ntuli (1984:15) concurs with this view and says about the influences:

It is common knowledge that an artist cannot work in a vacuum. For him to introduce anything a number of influences work on him... these influences are his experiences which he expresses in the medium of his choice... he is influenced by

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models of expression found in his cultural and artistic environment.

A number of Zulu poets display the influence of Shaka's praise poem in their compositions. It is without doubt that these praise poems are very important and relevant to modern Zulu poetry. This is illustrated by the adoption of some lines, or sometimes the adaptation of words from the traditional praise themes. Generally, the poems deliberate upon Shaka's youth, courage and his physique. They praise him for his military skills, his intelligence and inspirational influences. They comment on his diplomatic and political ability, his conquests and his ability to build a nation. He is regarded as a uniting force of the Black people. His death is regarded by many as a great loss not only to Zulus but to other Black nations as well. This reflects a totally different view to the one depicted by European historians.

In content modern poems, as already illustrated above, do not differ much from what Cope, (1968:33), observed with regard to Shaka's praise poem which:

... records his actions in far greater details, not only because there was so much to record, but because of the change from an insignificant Zulu clan to the dominant Zulu nation.

The only noticeable difference lies in the mode of

expression. These poets emphasise the expression of individual feelings and emotions rather than external events or attitudes. These poems are lyrical because they somehow depict the poet's personal feelings.

With regard to the adoption and adaptation of the praise poem we shall refer to a few examples. For instance, Vilakazi in "*UShaka kaSenzangakhona*" commences the poem with a kind of an address to Shaka, by employing these lines from the praises:

*"Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabi  
Betekula behlezi emlovini  
Beth'uShaka kakubusa, kakubaNkosi  
Kant'ilapha ezakunethezeka"*

(Vilakazi, 1982:40)

The joke of the women of Nomgabhi  
Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot  
Saying that Shaka would not rule, he would not  
become chief.  
Whereas it was the year in which Shaka was to  
prosper.

The poet actually shows the fact that this is an excerpt by using inverted commas. One could regard the quotation as an appropriate introduction and salutation to the great king.

A.S. Kunene, similarly begins his poem "*Izibongo zikaShaka*" with this line from the praises:

*Lemb'eleqa amanye amalemba*

(Kunene, 1952:96)

(Axe that surpasses other axes)

The poet employs this line to highlight Shaka's intelligence and diplomacy. The elision of the initial vowel `i' existing in the original version has been purposely effected, thus indicating that the poet is addressing Shaka directly. Elision of vowels seems to be a common practice among these poets.

The elision is also found in Ntuli's opening stanza, which clearly illustrates a form of an address to Shaka. In the poem "*Yelekelela Dlungwane*", he writes:

*Dlungwane kaNdaba!  
Odlunge emanxulumeni,  
Kwaze kwasa amanxuluma esibikelana!*

(Ntuli, 1986:80)

Dlungwane son of Ndaba!  
Who raged among the large kraals,  
That until dawn the kraals were being turned  
upside-down!

Both Kunene and Ntuli do not indicate that these lines have been taken from the praise poem, because some letters, words and lines have been adapted.

E.S.Q. Zulu, on the other hand borrows the whole praise poem stanza in his poem, "*INkosi UShaka KaSenzangakhona*". This stanza is found in the middle of this composition. The poet describes Shaka's prowess and military conquests. Shaka's

life history is divided into three stages, childhood, his life as a king and his death. So the utilisation of this stanza in the middle befits the purpose. Again we observe that Zulu, just like Vilakazi, has used the inverted commas to highlight the adoption:

*"Umxoshi womunt'amxoshele futhi,  
Ngimthand'exosh'uZwide ezalwa nguLanga,  
Emthabatha lapha liphuma ngakhona,  
Emsingisa lapha lishona ngakhona;  
Zwide wampheq'amahlonjan'omabili..."*

(Zulu et al, 1989:84 )

Pursuer of a person who pursues him unceasingly,  
I like him when he pursued Zwide son of Langa,  
Taking him from where the sun rises  
And sending him to where the sun sets;  
As for Zwide he folded his two little shoulders  
together..."

Gcumisa follows in the footsteps of the other poets by also borrowing from this king's praise poem. He, however, utilises the lines in the conclusion of his poem "*Nodumehlezi KaMenzi*". The excerpt highlights the middle period of Shaka's life.

*"Inkonyan'ekhal'emthonjaneni;  
Izizwe zonke ziyizwil'ukulila.  
Izwiwe nguDunjwa waseLuyengweni;  
Yezwiwa nguMangcengeza wakwaKali"*

(Gcumisa, 1983:19)

The calf that lowed at Mthonjaneni;  
And all the tribes heard its wailing.  
It was heard by Dunjwa of the Yengweni kraal;  
It was heard by Mangcengeza of Khali's kraal.



The above observations illustrate that some modern Zulu poets use parts of the praise poem to reinforce the ideas expressed in their own compositions. On close examination then one would assume that Shaka's praise poetry cannot be ignored when analysing the views of Zulu poets. It forms an important basis for modern poetry and must be consulted if one wants to create an appropriate mood and atmosphere for developing and conveying the themes on Shaka.

#### 4.2.2 Themes in poems

To facilitate the analysis of the poets' points of view, a thematic framework seems the most suitable in this case. The examination of the contents of each poem will serve this purpose better. This approach inevitably includes the critical analysis of the poetic ideas, diction and imagery utilised in the conveyance of the theme. The paradigm to be followed includes the identification of the theme, its assessment and where necessary the comparison of the poets' presentations. The comparison will be extremely helpful in this study. Searching for similarities or differences between poems compels us to consider the various aspects and dimensions of a particular character in the poem (Reaske, 1966:56). The comparative approach helps to furnish global perspectives with the intention:

to overcome national prejudices and provincialisms  
but at the same time does not ignore or minimise

the existence and vitality of the different national traditions.

(Nichols and Vowles, 1968:22)

Effective theme conveyance exists only if there is that interrelationship between diction and form. The appropriate language usually establishes the apt tone, mood and atmosphere, which in turn reflects the attitude of the poet. Brooks and Warren (1960:342) elaborate:

... we can remember that a mood implies an idea as an idea implies a mood. Or conversely, the slightest shift in our ideas implies some new stance of feeling, however minimal.

Reaske, (1966:37), concurs with these critics and asserts:

Mood is the creation of an atmosphere through the proliferation of certain common emotions.... Mood is thus the prevailing tone in a poem and this tone established by accumulation of a set of emotions.

Since a poem is like a many-sided crystal, we can observe its properties from language, content, form, tone and mood, and all these unite to promote theme.

What is theme in poetry? Because there are many different definitions that have been proposed on theme, I shall choose one which seems to represent a more comprehensive view. According to Reaske, (1966:42), theme is:

...the basic idea which the poet is trying to convey and which, accordingly, he allows to direct his imagery. Most of the images, in other words are designed to present the central theme, or main idea of the poem... in another light, it is the poet's reason for writing the poem in the first place. It is usually an abstract concept which becomes concrete through the idiom and imagery.

The focus of this treatise will fall on the following prominent themes in poems on Shaka: praise; bravery and military prowess; protest; nostalgia; a unifying force and nation building; prayer and his death.

#### 4.2.2.1 Praise

A praise is meant to give honour and glory to the one praised. With regard to praises Vilakazi (1938:105) says this:

A Zulu man, who is considered to have a natural gift for seeing and feeling most in the wake and experience of life, will look at his king, survey him in the light of his ancestors, and then turn over in his mind the heroic deeds of his king even his weakness.

A large number of African authors write extensively on this theme. Some poets express their great admiration of the hero's character from his youth to his ascension of the Zulu throne. For instance, his remarkable childhood, with its hostile and mortifying circumstances: many poets agree

that the courage, strength and perseverance displayed by Shaka, even as a young boy, contributed much to his impressive character. Other poets concentrate on his later life, namely, his reign, victorious events, military prowess and diplomacy, and lament the great loss brought about by his death.

In discussing the theme of praise we shall commence with the character's childhood. As already indicated the introductory part (where applicable) will be a brief discussion of the views of other African poets followed by those of poets who write in Zulu. This is for comparative purposes.

Mtshali is a Zulu poet who writes in English. He wrote a poem "The birth of Shaka". Barnett questions how African writers reconcile the expression of African ideals and values with the use of English, a Western language. Asked about his impeccable use of English, as though it was his first language, Mtshali replied firmly: 'English is not my language. My home language is Zulu' (Barnett, 1983:36). Since the main objective of this study is to evaluate the perceptions of the Zulu authors and their Zulu works, one feels justified to include this poet's view along with the others.

Mtshali's opening stanza in this poem clearly displays the praise of Shaka's magnificent strength and courage, even as a toddler.

His baby cry  
Was of a cub  
Tearing the neck  
Of the lioness  
Because he was fatherless.

(Mtshali, 1971:12)

The poet compares Shaka's baby cry to the snarling of a cub, a fierce beast of prey. Shaka is likened to the ferocious animal to enhance his status in our minds. As a rule, the poet uses metaphors to transfer the qualities and associations of one object to another in order to make the latter more vivid in our mind. Mtshali's analogy is an appropriate praise of Shaka's personality as the events in the king's life later confirmed the poet's predictions. If, for instance, the poet had used a feeble calf as a metaphor, this would have created a totally wrong impression about this hero.

Mtshali further dramatises the rage and strength transmitted in the boy's cry, by creating an image of an enraged cub, "tearing the neck of the lioness because he was fatherless". Although the wrath is directed at the father, it is, however, executed on the mother who is nearby. Shaka indeed grew up without a father. The ferocity conveyed by this stanza, reflects the underlying tone of frustration Shaka

experienced even as a child. The poetic language and the subtleness employed by this poet in introducing the praise theme creates an appropriate basis, atmosphere and environment for the latent personality traits of Shaka.

In the poem "*UShaka kaSenzangakhona*", Vilakazi chants praises of Shaka's courageous infancy. The first stanza goes:

*Mina wemlisa wansondo!  
Ngaze ngonda ngamicondo  
Ungilibazise ngeze.  
Ngiboshw'ukuba ngifeze  
Inkondlo yethole lika-  
Phunga noXab'elafika  
Ngokubelethwa yilanga,  
Lanceliswa inyanga,*

*Khona liyofun'umkhondo  
KaZulu liye kwaMpondo.*

(Vilakazi, 1982:40)

Hey you fellow!  
I'm now scraggy and have calfless legs  
You, who deceive me with nihilism.  
I'm constrained to complete  
The poesy of the calf of  
Phunga and Xaba, which arrived by  
Being given birth to by the sun,  
Which suckled from the moon,

So that it must trace the trail  
Of the Zulus until the place of Mpondo.

Zulus, as a hunting and pastoral society, relish employing animal images in their poetry. Cattle are a very important commodity among the Zulu nation. It is thus not uncommon to find many poets utilising cattle-related images. Vilakazi,

an accomplished Zulu author, can be viewed as one of the experts in the utilisation of this metaphor.

In lines four, six and seven of the above excerpt, the image used is "the calf", which obviously relates to the young bovine animal. Other scholars would regard it as a symbol of youth and freshness. The poet's preference for a calf is understandable. A calf, unlike a human baby, becomes independent immediately after birth. It kicks, attempts to stand up and instantly seeks the cow's udder for survival. On the other hand a human baby struggles for many years before it becomes independent. This metaphor befits the description of Shaka, who from birth had to struggle for survival even though he was a prince.

This calf image becomes more lofty as the metaphor is further extended. The status of this calf has been elevated to an even higher greatness, since it was given birth to by the sun. To enhance this greatness further, the poet, makes the calf suckle from the moon. These are two great natural phenomena, which are observed with the naked eye from our planet. The sun symbolises life, prosperity and brightness. Heese and Lawton (1978:64) comment on these symbols:

One example of symbol which is widely known is the use of the sun as a symbol of deity.

The moon, on the other hand, although it shines and "chases away" the shadows of the night is also regarded as the ruler of the celestial bodies at night.

Cirlot (1971:317) elaborates further about the sun symbol, and states that :

On occasion, the sun appears as the direct son and heir to the God of heaven. The sun is associated with the hero, as opposed to the father who connotes the heavens.

The sun image appears regularly in Zulu poetry especially when discussing Shaka. For instance, A.S. Kunene, in the poem "UShaka nehlambo", praises the king's impressive childhood by saying:

*Umvemve wemvelo kaNandi  
Odlalisela esibayeni samadoda  
Kwafa nkomazi kwaphela maduna,  
Emzini omdala kaSenzangakhona.*

*Owancela imvula njengebele  
Wotha ilanga njengomlilo  
Wabeba umuthi njengonyoko  
Wagonwa yisikhotha njengegijima.*

(Kunene, 1952:92)

The nature calf of Nandi  
Who played around the men's kraal  
Resulting in the death of cows and bulls  
In the old homestead of Senzangakhona.

Who suckled the rain as if it's the breast  
Basked in the sun as if it was fire  
Clung onto a tree as if it's a mother's back  
Was embraced by long grass like a wild animal.



Kunene, like Vilakazi and Mtshali, also employs the calf metaphor to depict Shaka's greatness even as a youngster. Kunene dramatises the status of Shaka by employing highly poetic language, stating that he suckled from the rain and basked in the heat of the sun. With regard to the traumatic growing-up experiences and the humiliating nomadic life the hero suffered as a youth. Kunene, like the preceding poets, uses the image of a calf that was cradled by long grass. Noticeable from the poet's ideas is that, even though Shaka suffered, he was still able to receive the warmth of the sun.

It is worth noting that these supernatural images, especially the sun, are employed by other non-Zulu poets as well. In his poem "Chaka" Prince reflects this poetic feature:

We have dreamed  
 Of an adorable authority and the brooks  
 Sobbing absurdly in the bright morning,  
 The brooks glitter.  
 There is so often news,  
 Yet we listen for news  
 Of the Men of the Sun,  
 And of the Mist,

(Burness, 1976:120)

The most interesting observation made from the above compositions is the remarkable agreement among the poets with regard to Shaka's youth. It has been distinctly shown

that Shaka was shaped by his experiences as a youth. Fortunately, the traumatic experiences energised rather than weakened him. To reflect on the alleged dubious and eccentric later life of the hero, the poets repeatedly use contrasting images. For instance, the sun and moon; the sun and rain; the sun and mist; a baby's cry and the snarling of a cub. M12

These poets use contrasting images as a deliberate means of reflecting the contradiction in the life of the hero. Some of these images echo true historical facts. However, the poetic language employed by these poets paints an acceptable image of King Shaka whom we regard as neither a saint nor a devil. The contrasting of inanimate objects like the sun and rain clearly supports this argument. The sun and rain (water) are phenomena of life without which all living things could easily perish, but any superabundance of these elements could also be dangerous. Ntuli (1984:165) elaborates on the use of the sun image: M13

Shaka is appropriately compared to the sun because he was reigning supreme among the tribes in the Zululand of his days. His effect was felt because other tribes simply 'dried up' when he attacked them.

All in all, the poetic language employed by these poets in portraying Shaka illustrates the power of associative images. These in turn evoke the appropriate mood and emotion that gives the praise theme the great intensity it deserves.

With regard to the use of the poetic language in the above examples, we note that Mtshali's choice of words reflects a high standard of imagination. It gives a clearer and more dramatic effect. For example, a cub is more ferocious than a calf. Vilakazi's contrast of the sun and moon is more impressive than the rain and sun analogy made by Kunene.

In our evaluation of poetry as literature we appreciate the figurative meaning of each word or phrase. From the foregoing analysis we get a slightly different picture of the Shaka usually depicted in the history books. Commenting on the aestheticism, Wellek and Warren (1982:96) argue:

The literary work has a special type of knowledge that cannot be compared with the rational knowledge contained in the textbooks on history...

Various poets praise Shaka during the different stages of his life. They praise him for his bravery, intelligence, war skills and many other qualities which will be discussed later on under the relevant themes. For instance, Vilakazi refers to Shaka's intelligence and diplomacy and says:

*Wena Shaka obufana  
Nezazi zanamhlanje*

(Vilakazi, 1982:41)

You Shaka were like  
The intellectuals of the modern day.

This poet compares Shaka's intelligence to that of the present scientists and intellectuals. Mazibuko concurs with Vilakazi by employing brilliant and interesting images to highlight the character's intelligence:

*Ubuhlakani bobuwena ebunganeni,  
Bungikhumbuza obeThongo elikhulu  
Elashumayez'abalisa kwaJuda  
Eminyakeni elishumi nambili.*

(Mazibuko, 1969:37)

The intelligence you displayed in your childhood  
Reminds of the Great Ancestor  
Who addressed the intellectuals  
Of Judea at the age of twelve.

The poet uses a biblical allusion to underline the point he wants to make. Mazibuko reflects his own traditional religion by referring to Christ as the Great Ancestor. The hero's intelligence is compared to that displayed by Christ who addressed with confidence the Judean intellectuals at the tender age of twelve. According to historical sources, Shaka built and reigned the Zulu nation for twelve years, from 1816-1828. The analogy of twelve years utilised by Mazibuko certainly elevates the status of Shaka to that of Christ. It is worth noting that the use of biblical allusions is not uncommon in the poetry on Shaka. Other scholars also observe this feature in the poetry from North Africa. Burness (1976:30) states this after analysing Senghor's "*Chaka*":

From the beginning,... the identification with Christ is apparent.... Senghor's Shaka becomes a symbol of Negritude and also a Black Christ figure.

Poets make highly favourable comments on this king. Other virtues referred to will be examined below.

#### 4.2.2.2 Bravery and military prowess

A great number of poets deliberate at length on the valorous deeds of Shaka. Some poets concentrate on the hero's youthful experiences, which are dominated by courageous perseverance and gallantry, while others highlight Shaka's immense ingenuity with regard to military innovations, conquests and subjugation of the neighbouring clans and tribes. Mazisi Kunene (1986:xvi) contends that:

Although there have been generals and political leaders who have made larger territorial gains, few can claim the range of political influence and military organisation which swept a great part of the African continent under Shaka's initiative.

Shaka's bravery is also highlighted in the poetry of the South Sotho and Xhosa poetry. Lesoro, a renowned Sotho poet uses highly imaginative language to illustrate how Shaka displaced his stepbrother Mfokazana. The poet states that the deed was performed with the brutality of killing a wild beast:

*O fentse Mfokazana habonolo,  
 A ba a mmolaya sephoofolo;  
 Inkosi ya eba yena, Tjhaka!  
 A lwantsha ditjhaba, a di qaka,  
 .....  
 Le fase lohle, a di hasanya.*

(Lesoro, 1982:39)

He conquered Mfokazana with ease,  
 And killed him like an animal;  
 He became the King Shaka!  
 He fought with tribes and dispersed them,  
 .....  
 Throughout the country, he scattered them.

The poet does not only delineate the negative side of Shaka, that is, the callous deeds of this hero, he continues to highlight Shaka's might which enabled him to conquer other tribes and nations, resulting in the creation of new tribes throughout the country. Among these tribes were the Transvaal Ndebeles and the Ndebeles of Zimbabwe.

Jolobe, a prolific Xhosa writer, depicts Shaka's bravery in his poem "*Ubugorha bezigalo*." Although the poem has an introductory line which bemoans the untimely death of this hero, the rest of the poem is based on the valorous deeds of Shaka.

*Liwile, liwile igorha  
 .....  
 Lihlangabezana nesilo.  
 Laxhashwa sibindi lemisa,  
 Imbalarha yelakwaZulu!*

(Jolobe, 1985:34)

Fallen, fallen is the warrior

.....  
 He was approaching the beast.  
 Prompted by valorous spirit,  
 The mighty one of the Zulu nation.

The observation noted in this poem is the emphasis on one aspect of Shaka's greatness, physical prowess. The poet discusses Shaka's organised expeditions and the skilful military training the king introduced in the Zulu army. This point is also discussed at length by the Zulu poets.

In his poem, Mtshali also highlights the gallant qualities of Shaka. The poet elevates the status of this character even higher than the other authors do. The dramatic use of poetic images is displayed in these lines:

The gods boiled his blood  
 In a clay pot of passion  
 To course in his veins.  
 .....  
 His heart was shaped into an ox shield  
 .....  
 To foil every foe.  
 .....  
 Ancestors forged his muscles into  
 Thongs as tough as wattle bark  
 And nerves as sharp as syringa thorns.

(Mtshali, 1971:12)

Gallantry, according to Mtshali's contention, is something which Shaka not only inherited from his ancestors, but also earned. His experiences as a youth consolidated the already existing physical qualities. The continual frustrations during his young life provided him with the driving force of

his overwhelming and charismatic personality. Even as a young recruit in the Mthethwa army, he quickly exhibited his prowess.

In the explication of the Zulu poet's views on Shaka's bravery we observe that it is expressed in various ways. Mhlongo, in the poem "UShaka", claims that the fearless perseverance of the young Shaka and his rare qualities, displayed especially in war tactics, automatically made him a qualifying candidate for the Zulu throne after Senzangakhona's death. He writes:

*Waphangalal'okaJama yavulek'imbobo,  
ODingane noMhlangana bayibhek'imbobo,  
ILembe layiqqolozela ngobuhlakani,  
OweZulu wayenela yavalek'imbobo.*

(Msimang, 1980:53)

He died the child Jama, the aperture opened-up  
Dingane and Mhlangana looked at the aperture,  
The iLembe scrutinized it with discernment,  
The one of Heaven fitted into it and it was  
enclosed.

(My own underlining)

This extract is consistent with the qualities illustrated above in that it dramatically reflects the poet's contention. The poet prepares us for what to expect, by employing antithesis, i.e. `yavuleka' in the opening line and `yavaleka' in the closing line. Mhlongo is consciously working to produce an effect of tension as caused by polar opposites. This tension signifies the essence of a man who



is a series of contradictions. Reaske (1966:27) states that in antithesis there is usually grammatical balance as well as contrast in meaning.

Mhlongo repeats the word `imbobo' (hole) three times in the four lines. One may argue that the poet has repeated this word for emphasis. However, Heese and Lawton (1978:47) say that repetition is particularly useful to the poets of blank and free verse because it creates pleasing echoes similar to rhyme, without restrictions. Generally African poetry is regarded as having a free verse structure.

Myeni on the other hand highlights the hero's power and skills in retaliating:

*Amadoda eLangeni aphuma alakanyana  
Nabafazi bamakhosi nabafokazana;  
Ababethi ngamakhosi kwaw'ibheshu nesinene  
Bebon'eduze kwabo kuwububenyebenye,  
Emil'okaNdaba engasadle nkobe zamuntu.  
Esh'ukuthi ozenzil'akakhalelwa muntu.*

(Myeni, 1969:15)

At Langeni the man ran out with speed  
And the wives of chiefs and ordinary men  
And those who were chiefs dropped their buttock  
  covering and loin skins.  
When they saw next to them the glitter  
The son of Ndaba standing, reflecting anger.  
Showing no sympathy for the troublemakers.

Although this poet presents his ideas in a prosaic manner in some stanzas he displays poetic imagination. The people of

Langeni shivered when they saw "glittering" Shaka. The poet elevates the character's might to the glitter of the stars.

Myeni further says:

*Wabheka kuZwide ezalwa nguLanga,  
Wamxosh'ekuseni laze layoshon'ilanga.*

(Myeni, 1969:15)

He gazed at Zwide the son of Langa,  
He pursued him from dawn till dusk.

In the above extract Myeni refers to the war of Zwide and Shaka. The meaning carried in the line *Wamxosh'ekuseni laze layoshon'ilanga* dramatises Shaka's valour and determination during this war.

Out of all the wars that Shaka fought with the neighbouring clans, the most significant encounter is the one between the Zulus and the Ndwandwes. The war is predominant in the literature on Shaka. This is rightly so because the defeat of Zwide by Shaka had a tremendous impact on the creation of the Zulu nation. It was in this war that Shaka clearly showed his military ingenuity and gallantry.

In the poem *"UShaka kaSenzangakhona"* Vilakazi succeeds in dramatising the encounters by using impressive constructions, like these linkages in the following lines:

*Ovimb'endlelen'akhwezwe  
Phezu kweklwa namawisa.  
Waw'uZwide eziwisa.  
Ngokuziqhalisa phezu kwakho.  
Wawa izingcezu...*

(Vilakazi, 1982:41)

The one who blocked the path was killed  
By the spear and the knobkerrie.  
Zwide fell on his own  
By playing on top of you.  
He fell and broke into small pieces...

(My own underlining)

The poet has repeatedly employed the stem `wa' (fall) in the above extract to dramatise the defeat of Zwide during the last war. The final destruction of Zwide is illustrated by the metaphoric assertion in the last line: `wawa izingcezu....' It is common knowledge that a claypot which has broken into pieces cannot be repaired. To employ such a metaphor to refer to the defeat of Zwide is most effective since Shaka annihilated the Ndwandwe tribe.

Other poets concentrate on the courageous deeds which Shaka displayed during his reign. In the poem `Izibongo ZikaShaka' A.S. Kunene says:

*Mbelebele kade wawubelesele  
Kuzizwana ngezizwana zikuzungezile  
Wadlalisa umkhonto ekhaya njengoswazi  
Weswela umkhuzi, nokubonayo waveva.  
Kungekho onjengawe obalisa ngembemba;  
Wazila ngamanzi waphuza igazi  
KungelakwaNdwandwe nezinkomo zakhe...*

(Kunene, 1952:62)

Mbelebele long have you pestered  
 The clans and tribes that surrounded you  
 You played with the spear at home like a whip  
 No one admonished you, those who saw you trembled.  
 No one brooded with the battle-axe like you;  
 You abstained from water and drank blood  
 Of Ndwandwe and his cattle....

According to Kunene, the behaviour of Shaka around his subjects instilled unwavering respect and fear in the nation. His presence made the onlookers shiver. No one could challenge Shaka's military genius.

The same poet in the poem entitled "*UShaka KwaBulawayo*" sings praises to the magnanimous status of the hero by saying:

*Wafika eMhlathuze amanzi akuthobela  
 Izingwenya noxamu kwasosobala  
 Kwagoma ngezinkumbi nasemavungwini  
 Izimamba zewusa amahlathi zinyobozelela  
 Zesaba nokukubheka ....*

(Kunene, 1952:94)

You who arrived at Mhlathuze and water respected  
 you  
 The crocodiles and the monitors huddled up  
 And blocked themselves by the banks and tall  
 grass;  
 The mambas meekly left the forest trees  
 Frightened even to glance at you.

It is interesting to note that the metaphor of the fierce wild animals keep appearing in the poems about Shaka, especially when poets refer to his bravery. In the above extract, it is said that even deadly mambas were frightened

of him. This idea is also expressed by Zulu in his poem, "*INKosi UShaka KaSenzangakhona*":

*Wayeseqalil'okaSenzangakhon'ukudlondlobala,  
Edlondlobalis'okwemamb'eluhlaza yehlozi,  
Yon'eth'ukudlondlobala yalane nesithunzi,  
Igadle ngokuphazima njengonyazi!  
Wayesegadle wamthel'othulin'uPhungashe,  
UPhungash'ebeyinkos'emkhulu kwaButhelezi;  
Esegadle wamthel'othulin'uMacingwane.  
UMacingwan'ebemkhul'eyinkosi yamaChunu.*

(Zulu et al, 1989:82)

Senzangakhona's son had started to tower with  
rage,  
The rage similar to that of a thicket green mamba,  
When it raves with anger it hates even shadows,  
It strikes as fast as lightning!  
He had struck and flattened Phungashe,  
Phungashe, being a great chief of the Buthelezi;  
He had struck and humiliated Macingwane  
Macingwane, the distinguished chief of the Chunu.

Zulu has used harsh-sounding consonants `dl' and `hl' to reinstate the idea of Shaka's harshness in his actions. The sounds are used in the fearful and deadly mamba image. The choice of words, sounds and imagery creates the appropriate atmosphere for this theme and links artistically to the later conquest of the Buthelezis and the Chunu.

In the poem "*UShaka nohlanya*" Masuku reflects on how Shaka distinguished himself as a young warrior by killing the notorious maniac single-handed. The poet adopted a rather prosaic style in conveying his idea in this poem. He, however, adorned his poem by introducing alternate linking and rhyme in all three stanzas given:

*Nanguya ey'entabeni*  
*Umfo kaSenzangakhona;*  
*"Ngolugwaz'ocabangweni-*  
*Jama, ngolujuqa khona!"*

*Mamo, waphepha uShaka*  
*Ngokweqela eceleni!*  
*Habo, walugwaz'uShaka!*  
*Lwafela khon'entabeni.*

*Nabo ubuqhawe, wethu,*  
*Nguban'ongalwa noShaka?*  
*Naw'uyabona, mnewethu-*  
*UyiNgonyama uShaka!*

(Masuku, 1973:76)

There he is at the mountain  
 The son of Senzangakhona;  
 "I'll stab it in the sternum-  
 By Jama, I'll kill it outright!

Alas, Shaka evaded the blow  
 By leaping to the side!  
 Alas, Shaka stabbed it!  
 It died at the mountain.

There is gallantry, my fellow man,  
 Who can really fight with Shaka?  
 Even you, my fellow man can see-  
 Shaka, is a lion!

(My own underlining)

According to Cohen, (1973:55-56), the repetition can add to the music and meaning of any poem in which it is used. He further states that most poetry depends heavily on patterns of sound or musical qualities. Masuku's poem is saved by the presence of repetitive patterns and the swinging regular rhythm which elevates the presentation of extra-ordinary prosaic narration.

In this discussion I have attempted to illustrate a few ways in which Shaka's bravery is conceived by poets. It is

worth noting, that very few poets perceive Shaka's gallantry and military conquests as heinous deeds. This is a king who had to struggle against difficult circumstances to forge his way to the throne. Deeds of valour seemed the only means for survival. Military ventures were the order of day during his times. His contemporaries, for instance, Zwibe of the Ndwandwes, Moshweshwe of the Basotho, Dingiswayo of the Mthethwas were continuously at war with their neighbouring tribes. In fact Shaka acquired his military training and practical experience in the art of warfare under Dingiswayo. Roberts (1974:44) confirms this:

Dingiswayo continued his drive for supremacy; conquering some chieftains, frightening others into submission. Shaka played a major part in all the Mthethwa campaigns. As his renown as a regimental commander blossomed, so too did his reputation as a military tactician.

Even in Europe countries were engaged in power struggles. Leaders like Napoleon of France were involved in offensive wars attempting to increase their countries' boundaries and consolidating power. Shaka was in the process of uniting the Zulus, consolidating his position and building his nation which had until then been a small insignificant tribe. His military ventures were as justified as those of other leaders of his era, hence the challenge to the argument by Roberts (1974:56) that Shaka was :

despot who saw no further than immediate threats to supremacy, real or imaginary.... Basing his rule on fear, that he tyrannised his subjects as ruthlessly as he fought his enemies.

Bryant (1965:648) sums up Shaka' bravery and military achievements appropriately by saying:

He proved himself on the field a past-master in the art of strategy and science of tactics, a general who, whether leading an attack or conducting a retreat, invariably emerged triumphant.

#### 4.2.2.3 Protest

When we seek to explore the relationship between literature and society, we are faced again and again with the question basic to our inquiry: in what way does literature affect the ongoing process of social change? Literature often serves as a medium of protest against the abandonment or desecration of the ideal (Glicksberg, 1972:142).

Milubi (1988:59) on the other hand says that protest poetry:

...is an art that speaks to people in terms of their feelings and ideas about the world, an art that validates the positive aspects of their life-style. In other words, one may say that a protest poet is a being who finds himself immersed in an oppressive situation together with the oppressed. Within his protest lies a vision of a new future.... He discovers for his people a new world within the old world.



Controversial as Shaka is, his life history has inspired many poets to explore the protest theme in their compositions: hence the existence of the protest theme in some about Shaka. Burness (1976:xii) is of the same opinion, and affirms that Shaka is used by writers as a symbol of protest against exploitation and acculturation as he has become a mythical figure. Besides, many poets want to keep their history alive and also ascribe to the argument that a writer has a duty to society. Elaborating on this feature of writers, Shelton (1968:3) says:

African writing...intimately identifies itself with the people of Africa. It reflects African history as a background to today's events and tomorrow's crises. It is a critique of present-day society and projection into the future.

The poets point out the injustices in social, economic and political situations. Sometimes they even plead with the spirit of Shaka to change intolerable circumstances. In his poem "*Nodumehlezi KaMenzi*" Gcumisa, writes:

*Siyakhal'imihla namalanga  
Sibon'izizw'ezinye zizibopha ngexhama kubonakale,  
Kodw'okwethu kubhek'eceleni okwesithupha sonwabu.  
Nodumehlezi kwabakaMenzi: "Bayethe!"*

(Gcumisa, 1983:21)

We lament day in and day out,  
As we witness the prosperity of the other nations,

While all our endeavours go astray like the thumb  
of a chameleon.  
Nodumehlezi of the Menzi family: " Hail your  
majesty!"

Gcumisa protests the inability of Blacks to achieve anything whilst other nations prosper with ease. He pleads with Shaka to intervene and change the situation.

Masuku, in the poem entitled "*Kuphelile*", uses highly imaginative language to express his dissatisfaction with the unfair treatment the nation experiences under the rule of the foreigners. Traditional lifestyle has been shattered to pieces like a broken beer-pot. In fact, to him this beer-pot broke "yesterday". One may be justified to assume that the "yesterday" here reflects Shaka's days. He says:

*Lafa, laphela elikaZulu!  
Laphela, Zulu kaMalandela!  
Impilo yami ifahlakile,  
Isiyizingebhezi zokhamba-  
Ukhamb'olufahlake izolo:  
Lukhahlelwa ngabafokazana.*

(Masuku, 1973:21)

It is dead, it is finished the land of the Zulus!  
It is finished, Zulu of Malandela!  
My life is shattered,  
It is pieces of a claypot -  
The claypot which was smashed yesterday:  
Kicked by insignificant strangers.

In his poem "*Yelekelela Dlungwane*" Ntuli highlights the following:

*Awukazizwa yini izintandane zakho  
 Zibubula phansi kwezimpiko zezinkonjane,  
 Okuthi noma zethuke zahlabana,  
 Zixoshiswe ngezinkonyana ezingogondo,  
 Kuthi noma zithi ziyagquma,  
 Umlomo ngci, ulimi juqu, kwelazo?  
 Ndabezitha vuka! Vuka uzelekelele!*

(Ntuli, 1986:80)

Have you not heard your orphans  
 Moaning under the wings of the swallows,  
 Who even after achievements,  
 Are rewarded by miserable-looking cattle,  
 Even if they voice their dissatisfaction,  
 The mouth is shut, the tongue is cut off, in their  
 place of birth?  
 Ndabezitha wake up! Wake up and assist then!

This poet implores Shaka to alleviate the oppression experienced by the nation. The nation is referred to as 'izintandane' (orphans), an appropriate word for poor and suffering people. The poet employs impressive poetic language. Other nations are referred to as swallows, the metaphor used by Shaka when referring to the white settlers. Ntuli emphasises the idea of the irredeemable circumstances of the nation by using powerful ideophones, 'ngci' (shut) and 'juqu' (cut). The use of these ideophones gives a dramatic and evocative feeling, thus creating the apt atmosphere for protest. Commenting on the effectiveness of ideophones Finnegan (1976:132) says:

The use of ideophones and interjections in ... poetry is another way in which its poetic quality can be enhanced. They are frequently used to convey emotions...can add to the descriptive quality with vivid conciseness.

Repetition of '-vuka' with exclamation marks in the last line of the extract suggests the urgency in the request which requires an immediate response.

In the poem "*Induku KaShaka*," Nxumalo laments the unfair appropriation of land and the unjust laws. He writes:

*Amasim'asaphenduk'amafusi,  
Sekwaba kwamachanca kwampunzi  
Edl'emini yilowo  
Uzenzel'umathanda, enakeni?  
Umthetho sewaqoshwa phansi  
Uhunyushwa usike ndawo zombili,  
Namanga sakwaba yinsakavukela.*

(Nxumalo, 1975:25)

The fields have turned into fallow land  
It is now a land where  
Everybody does as he pleases,  
What does he care?  
The law is now written down  
When interpreted it cuts both sides,  
Even lies are a matter of everyday occurrence.

It is interesting to observe that this poem is used as a vehicle of protest and is also an address to Shaka, even though he is viewed by some historians and fiction writers as the most destructive monster that ever lived. Most of the protestations furnished in this discussion describe real present-day suffering, and a hope that this ancestor may alter the situation. This view is supported by Milubi's (1988:57) argument that:

Protest poetry is a creative process and also an end, which is conditioned by historical and social

forces and pressures. Seen in this light, the product of a protest both reflects reality and also attempts to take a certain attitude towards that reality. The persuasion can be direct appeal on behalf of a protest poet's open doctrine or it can be indirect appeal through influencing imagination, feelings,....

#### 4.2.2.4 Nostalgia

The poets also romanticise the past. They lament the lost African land. The poets are nostalgic over the beautiful discarded culture and traditional lifestyle of the Zulu. Since Shaka was regarded as the preserver of these values, it is not surprising to find poets expressing the feeling of nostalgia in poetry written about him. Commenting on nostalgia in Vilakazi's poetry Nyembezi (1961:70) makes this remark:

Vilakazi was gravely concerned that the Zulu heritage would be lost to the young generations. He refers over and over to the need for preserving those things which are sacred and precious.

Looking at these poems about Shaka, we notice the expression of sorrowful longing for the glorious past. Buthelezi bemoans the loss of the past traditions and pleads for its restoration. Buthelezi, in his poem "*Nodumehlezi KaMenzi*" cannot avoid using military-related expressions because he is addressing Shaka a military tactician.

*Nodumehlezi kaMenzi  
Sikela uZulu kaMalandela  
Uphawu lwenkomo kaZulu  
Engasoze yayandawo akleze ayetshise.  
Noma ngenkomo kayiphumuli  
KwezeNkomo ekhale eMthonjaneni.  
Asike amahawu, kwephuke uphondo  
Lwempi igqibuke, adle ngoludala.*

(Buthelezi et al, 1987:56)

Nodumehlezi of Menzi  
Carve for the Zulus of Malandela  
An emblem of the Zulu cow  
Which is immovable, to milk to satisfaction  
Or of the special beast from the herd  
Of the Beast which bellowed at Mthonjaneni.  
He must carve shields, and let the war horn  
Break up, and old life be enjoyed..

Masuku, on the other hand, longs for the times of yesteryear when the Zulus were not servants to any of the nations present today. To establish and consolidate nostalgic emotions the poet uses repetition as a poetic device in three of the given four lines. In this poem "*Kuphelile*"

Ngikhumbul'inkathi yayizolo,  
Ngikhumbul'inkathi yakuthangi,  
Ngikhumbul'inkathi yeNdabuko  
KaZul'engesona isigqili.

(Masuku, 1973:23)

I recall the times of yesterday  
I recall the times of yesteryear  
I recall the times of the Beginning  
Of Zulu who was not a slave.

Vilakazi directly addresses Shaka as he laments the past. In the poem "*Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka*" he writes:

*Zining'izinto ezidonsa*

*Zikhumbuza wena njalo.  
Ma sivakasha kwaZulu  
Sibon'okuhl'okuningi:  
Laph'amathol'ezikhalela  
Nonina beza bekhali  
.....*

(Vilakazi, 1982:61)

There are many things which attract and  
Remind us of you always.  
When we visit Zululand  
We observe many things of beauty:  
Where the calves low  
And the cows come mooing  
.....

Although this poet is known for using highly poetic language, the above lines have no striking expressions. Vilakazi feels the presence of Shaka's spirit every time he visits Zululand. The beauty of the past still exists, especially in the rural areas, where one can still hear the calves lowing and the cows mooing.

Shaka is the source of the nostalgic feelings among the Zulu poets. Even though a lot in the past is irretrievable, the poets believe that, since Shaka was part of it, he can help retain some of the culture that remains.

#### 4.2.2.5 Inspiration

An interesting feature in the poetry on Shaka is the quest for security and inspiration especially in regard to the cultural and educational upliftment of the people. Shaka is

regarded as possessing the powers of a Supreme Being, who is able to inspire great writers to preserve the Zulu language, and who can also influence the upliftment of the nation's education. Bryant (1965:649) says about Shaka's spirit of progress:

Shaka's was a distinctly progressive type of mind, favouring every possible means for the acquirement of useful knowledge. As such he was a strong and early advocate of vivisection.... No opportunity was lost by him of gaining wisdom and enlightenment by Socratic method of asking questions whenever his white friends chanced to be available.

Vilakazi, in the poem "*Phezu Kwethuna likaShaka*" appeals to Shaka directly to remove the nation's ignorance:

*Lola silol'amapeni*  
*Singene ngaw'emgidweni*  
*Yiwona amahaw'ethu*  
*Okwakh'izibongo, wethu*  
*Masihlangan'emini,*  
*Sihlangan'emkhathini*  
*Yokwahlukana nenyanga*  
*Nobumnyama sebudlanga*  
*Sibuke ngokungenqeni*  
*Phakathi ebumnyameni.*

(Vilakazi, 1982:81)

Let us sharpen the pens  
 And use them in the celebration  
 They are our shields,  
 That we enlist to compose praises, my brother  
 Let us meet during the day,  
 Let us meet in the horizon,  
 Of parting with the moon  
 And the darkness becomes stronger  
 We perceive things with pride  
 Through darkness.

(My own underlining)



The poet pleads with Shaka to sharpen the pens, which are now used as a means to acquire education. It is interesting to note that the poet uses the shield as a metaphor and not the spear. The spear is nearer to the pen in shape than the shield. Again the poet states that things will be perceived clearer through something which has unreal qualities. The utilisation of these contrasting images can be interpreted as the poet's means to elevate the literal meaning of the two views of experience, as we know them, to a higher level of symbolic significance. The 'pen' (education) is now a symbol of enlightenment and protection.

There is also an interesting rhyme scheme, as indicated in the excerpt. We appreciate the poet's ability to employ final rhyming at the end of all the lines of this stanza. This adornment brings about an aesthetic echo effect.

Elsewhere Vilakazi again aligns Shaka with education and progress. He introduces this idea with an effective simile.

*Ikhwezi lifana noShaka  
Yen'obikezel'ukusa  
Nokusa kwaleth'ukufunda,  
Imfundo yaleth'inkanyiso  
Evez'isikhumbuzo setshe.*

(Vilakazi, 1982:66)

The morning star is like Shaka  
Who foretold of dawn  
And the dawn brought education,  
The education brought light  
Which brought forth the memorial stone.

(My own underlining)

In the simile 'ikhwezi' the morning star is likened to Shaka, not the other way round. This elevates the status of Shaka above that of the star. According to Vilakazi, Shaka's achievements introduced a chain of actions. Dawn is a symbol of prosperity. The acceptance of education implies the acceptance of success and progress. The memorial stone will be a source of inspiration to the nation. Again the poet employs the structural device of linking to advance his ideas.

Zulu also regards Shaka as the inspiring force of Zulu writers. The poet's words clearly praise the spiritual power of Shaka which did not stop with building the nation, but which continues to flow in the veins of the Zulu poets.

*'Ze le ndinyana yeLemb'ikhihlize izikhwebu  
Dlodlobala nawe dlozi lenkondlo kaZulu!  
Wen'ozinz'ezilimini zezimbongi zikaZulu,  
Ezilimini zawoMagolwana nawoMshongweni  
Ezilimini zawoBhambatha nawoBulima Ngiyeke  
Ntongela ungcobebelele 'ze nami ngintongele  
Ngintongelelel'ukukhong'amandl'ezinyandezulu  
Nidlodlobale nani madlozi esizwe sonkana!*

(Zulu et al, 1989:82)

So that these lines about the Lembe produce mealie  
cobs  
Stand erect, you ancestral spirit of Zulu poetry!  
You who reside in the tongues of the Zulus,  
In the tongues of Magolwana and Mshongweni  
In the tongues of Bhambatha and Bulima Ngiyeke  
Take some snuff and give me some to take too  
I'll take it to invoke the power of the spirits  
Rise in power, you spirits of the nation!

According to Zulu, Shaka has been the source of inspiration to all the poets mentioned in the stanza above. Their poems in turn inspired the poet and his contemporaries. The message implied in the stanza is that the language will always live within the nation, thanks to Shaka.

#### 4.2.2.6. The unifying force and nation builder

Burness (1976:145) asserts:

While the Zulus are proud of Shaka's genius as a military leader, they insist that his most enduring contribution to human history was his success in creating the Greater Zulu nation.

This assessment is also shared by some historians. Hence Bryant (1965:639) states:

Strange but true, this Shaka was as sublime a moral teacher as martial genius. Submission to authority, obedience to the law, respect for superiors, order and self-reliance, fearlessness and sacrifice, constant work and civic duty are foundation stones upon which he built his nation.

It is clear from the foregoing extract that Shaka produced a concept of nationhood and a political loyalty which united people because it had provided them with common values and purpose. Various Zulu poets deliberate at length on the theme of unity and nation-building.

Buthelezi uses praises to illustrate Shaka's power in unifying the nation. Although the poet criticises the excessive use of the spear by Shaka, he also justifies it. He argues that it was the only available means of building the nation during that era. This argument has been suggested previously. He thus states in the following lines:

*Ikhonya njengoMalunda eggebhula  
Iziduli bemthele izibonkolo!  
Kanti ucaba indlela ngomkhonto  
Umkhonto wobunye.*

(Buthelezi et al, 1987:56)

Bellowing like a bull breaking antheaps  
After being sprinkled with fierce brown ants  
Whereas that he is clearing up the way  
With the spear of unity.

Mazibuko says the following :

*Abuthan'amabutho khaya linye  
Azidelile aphuza khamba lunye  
Anokukukhumbula wena weSilo.*

(Mazibuko, 1969:37)

The regiments congregated in one homestead  
And drank from one beer-pot  
And thought about you Great One.

The poet uses simple poetic language enhanced by rhyming to imply the unity brought about by Shaka. He sees mortal enemies coming together and sharing beer from one pot, as a symbol of oneness.

Ntuli pleads with Shaka to unite the slowly disintegrating Zulu nation, but now not by force of arms. It appears as if the poet has accepted that the sword does not build a lasting nation especially in modern times. This is illustrated in these lines from the poet's poem:

*Wena owakha isizwe sabanomhlandla  
Awuphinde futhi, manje hhayi ngomkhonto.*

(Ntuli, 1986:80)

You who built a strong-spined nation  
Repeat again, but now not with the spear.

Nxumalo presents this theme by metaphors, which are regarded as important devices for the aesthetic presentation of views. The ideas expressed through poetic language give a vivid description of the deeds of Shaka. For instance he states:

*Inkonyane likaSenzangakhona elaba  
Sandla side laqoqa  
Izizwe lazifukamela ngawawo  
Amaphiko .....*

(Nxumalo, 1975:21)

The calf of Senzangakhona whose  
Hand was long enough to amass  
The nations and give them sanctuary  
With his wings.....

The poet refers to Shaka as a calf which has hands and performs human actions of collecting clans and tribes together to build a nation. The human being also changes to perform the actions of a hen, giving shelter to chickens

with its wings. This extended metaphor, which encompasses personification before it reverts to a metaphor again, is highly effective. It reveals Nxumalo's imaginative power. The combination of images "a calf, a hand, a hen" reflects the different ways in which people conceive Shaka.

Nxumalo, in the following lines, further highlights another facet of Shaka, namely, that he had no favourites, but only envisaged one strong Zulu nation.

*Kungabibikho osala phansi  
Nongena emlonyeni wezingwenya  
Abanye sebephulukundlele; yingakho  
Ayemqogela ndawonye ngesandla  
Esiqinile wonke uZulu.*

(Nxumalo, 1975:24)

So that none remains unworthy  
Nor remains in the jaws of the crocodiles  
While others have escaped; that is why  
He amassed Zulu together under his  
Iron hand.

Gcumisa, on the other hand, feels that Shaka was sent by God himself to lead the Zulu nation, otherwise Shaka would not have achieved so much in such a short period. He writes:

*Mvelingqangi uShaka wamletha  
Emhlabeni wakho;  
Wamphonsela intambo  
Yokuba asihole ngayo thina.*

(Gcumisa, 1983:19)

God, you brought Shaka  
In this world of Yours;

You supplied him with a rope  
So that he can pull us by it.

Vilakazi, like Buthelezi, justifies Shaka's use of the spear as the only effective method employed during that period to unite a nation. The poet argues that for any state to be strong and united during that period an iron hand had to be used. Hence he writes:

*Ulwa noqhekeko lwezwe  
Ovimb'endleleni akhwezwe  
Phezu kweklwa newisa*

(Vilakazi, 1982:44 )

You fought division in the nation  
Anyone who stood in the way was removed  
By the spear and the knobkerrie.

He further comments on the unity which resulted from the rule of Shaka by saying:

*Nant'izwe selibuyelana,  
Selizibonel'imiloyo  
Ayikhuluma mhla esefa*

(Vilakazi, 1982:49)

There the nation is united  
It now realises the curse  
He uttered when he was dying

In the above discussion we have attempted to present some views maintained by Zulu poets about the nation-building and unifying aspect in Shaka's life. In fact, Ngubane as quoted

by Burness (1976:159) argues that the struggle of today dates back to Shaka's era. Ngubane states:

In the twelve years from 1816, when Shaka became lord of the Zulu, Shaka developed the ideal into a concept of nationhood which the Natal Nguni accepted as a viable alternative to the traditional clan-state. Today, the alternative inspires the African people's revolt against apartheid.

#### 4.2.2.7 Biblical allusions

Wellek and Warren (1982:193) state the following about religion and poetry :

For many writers, myth is the common denominator between poetry and religion. There exists a modern view, of course (represented by Matthew Anorld and the early I.A. Richards), that poetry will more and more take the place of the supernatural religion in which modern intellectuals can no longer believe.... Religious myth is the large-scale authorisation of poetic metaphor.

It is worth noting that the majority of works on Shaka incorporate words and images which display some religiosity, especially in the Christian sense. Burness (1976:39) observed this feature in the French poem by Senghor. He elaborates by saying that Senghor's poem reinforces several themes, one being that Shaka is the Black Christ who lives and dies for his people.



Burness further remarks about another African poet, F.T. Prince, in his poem 'Chaka', who uses a series of images relating to Jesus Christ. The following stanzas exemplify the feature:

They were Italians who knew war's sorrow and  
disgrace
And showed the thing suspended, stripped: a theme  
Born out of the experience of war's horrible  
extreme
Beneath a sky where even their air flows  
With lacrimae Christi. For that rage, that  
bitterness, That hatred of the slain, what could  
it be
But indirectly or directly a commentary  
On the Crucifixion? And the picture burns  
With indignation and pity and despair by turns,  
Because it is the obverse of the scene  
Where Christ hangs murdered, stripped, upon the  
cross,

(Burness, 1976:49)

The above extract, especially the second part touches on the rage and bitterness of Shaka. And it continues to explain the effects of his military conquests on neighbouring clans. The horrors of war can be compared to the crucifixion of Christ.

Similar works are found in other South African languages. For instance, Jolobe (Xhosa) employs this allusion in the following extracts:

*Liwile, liwile igorha  
Lilani zintombi zasentla.  
Ithole lerhamncw'intliziyo  
Umntwana wegazi uTshaka  
Imbalarha yelwakaZulu.*

(Jolobe, 1985:31)

Fallen, fallen is the warrior  
 Moan daughters of the North;  
 The one who is the calf of the beast with respect  
 The calf of the royal blood, Shaka  
 The mighty one of the Zulu nation.

In this stanza we find biblical allusions such as, 'Lilani zintombi zasantla' and 'Umntwana wegazi uTshaka,' which have direct reference to Christ. Note that this biblical allusion, namely, the women who followed Jesus around and bemoaned his crucifixion, is found in the book of Luke 23:27. It reads:

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Nowhere in the life of Shaka are we told about women taking care of Shaka's body. In fact no women took care of Shaka's needs during his lifetime. Jolobe, however, compares the hero's death to that of Christ, by demanding that the women should moan the great loss.

Some biblical allusions in the Zulu poems do not have direct equivalents in the biblical text. We do, however, observe a number of words and images which remind us of biblical expressions and stories. Gcumisa in the following stanza, states:

*AmaJuda aphila impilo yobukhosi*  
 .....  
*Ngokubhubhis'inkosi yakub'eJuda*  
*Yona-ke yafa yavuka njengosiko lwakubo.*  
*Nawe-ke vuka Sigodo sikaZulu,*  
*Noma singenakukubona ngamehl'enyama*  
*Kodwa sikubone baba wethu wasemhlabeni*  
*Siyokwaneliswa ngezenzo.*

(Gcumisa, 1983:19)

The Jews who lived the life of kings  
 .....  
 By annihilating their Jewish king  
 He died and arose according to their custom  
 And you too, pillar of the Zulu nation, arise  
 Even though we may not see you physically  
 But let us see you our father of this earth  
 We shall be satisfied just by your deeds.

Here the poet appeals direct to Shaka to arise like Jesus,  
 because to the Zulu Shaka is the father of the nation.  
 Gcumisa accepts the fact that we may not see Shaka but his  
 deeds will be revered like those of Jesus Christ.

Mazibuko, too, adopts words which are always connected with  
 the death and crucifixion of Christ.

*Ukulahlekelwa kwezwe kwagobhoza*  
*ENcome, agcwaliseka lawo mazwi*  
*Eminjunju yesinkemba lesa,*  
*Esabhoboza umzimba wakho.*

(Mazibuko, 1969:38)

The lost land flowed away  
 At Blood river, as your last words were fulfilled  
 Which you uttered in pain when that spear  
 Penetrated your body.

He uses verbs like `gobhoza' to flow, `bhoboza' to pierce and the phrase `eminjunju yesinkemba' the pains caused by the spear. The poem abounds in well chosen words. The poet uses personification as a vehicle to project his thoughts, such as the river which has blood that flows, like that which flowed from Shaka in the kraal as well as from Jesus Christ on the cross.

Mhlongo brings the old biblical allusion of the trumpet which shall sound to raise all the dead on the last day. To him the trumpet blown by Shaka will always sound in Zulu's ears until this nation is liberated. The lines read:

*Icilingo lohlala linkentez'endlebeni,  
Size siphinde sidle ngoludala.*

(Msimang, 1980:55)

The trumpet will always blow in the ear,  
Until we again eat (live) like in the past.

It seems interesting to observe how African poets use biblical allusions to depict Shaka. What is most surprising is their choice of comparison. Especially since in European literature Shaka is often depicted as the direct opposite of Christ, but to African writers the two are somehow similar in the sense that they both had visions and missions to accomplish, and there is similarity even in the way in which both met their deaths.

#### 4.2.2.8 Prayer to Shaka

The undying spirit of Shaka cannot be denied. This is illustrated by the poets' address directed at Shaka as if he were still alive. To them Shaka is definitely not dead, he has assumed qualities that are almost equivalent to those of Mvelinqangi (God). The poets pray to Shaka to act as a mediator between the Zulu nation and God, so that he may relieve the nation of its misery. Others plead for his strength to imbue the leaders of the nation as a whole. An interesting facet contained in these prayers is the elevated status bestowed on Shaka.

Gcumisa prays for the spirit of Shaka to abide with his people. He addresses Shaka as if he is the son of God. The poet further says the nation will now express its appreciation even more than before. He writes:

*Shaka yiba nathi Nkonyane yamaKhosi  
Uma wenze njalo uyobe ucolile,  
Sesiyokubonga-ke njengoba besenza,  
Kepha lokhu-ke sekuyodlulela,  
Ngoba seziyoqephuz'izinsizwa zigiye.  
Mina sithunywa ngiyosho  
Koze kome nelaka.*

(Gcumisa, 1983:22)

Shaka, be with us, Calf of the Kings  
By doing this, you would have honoured us,  
We shall still praise you like we have been doing,  
But now we shall praise you more than before  
For the young men will praise and dance fluently  
I, the messenger shall praise  
Until my saliva dries up from my mouth.

Masuku appeals to the hero to remove the oppression, starvation and ignorance from the nation and, instead, to give the people a sense of belonging and wisdom.

*Shaka Nkos'enkulu yamakhosi,  
Lembe eleg'amany'amalembe  
Ngilambile, Nkosi. Ngiphe ukudla  
Ngomile Dlozi. Ngicela utshwala  
Bempilo ende yobuhlakani.  
UZulu ufile, Nkosi Yami:  
Ngiphe iseluleko.....  
Ngikhanyisele ngobhaqa....  
Nangengqondo yakh'emangazayo  
Ngisiqoqe kanjani isizwe  
Ukuze siqine okwayizolo?*

(Masuku, 1973:24)

Shaka, Great king of kings  
Axe that surpasses other axes  
I am hungry, King. Give me food  
I am thirsty Guardian spirit. Please give me beer  
For the long life of prudence.  
The Zulu nation is dead, my King:  
Advise me.....  
Kindle a light for me by using a lantern  
Even with your astonishing intelligence.  
How can I unite the nation  
So that it becomes as strong as yesterday?

The last three lines of the foregoing extract sum up the most important features of Shaka, namely, his intelligence, unifying power and the strength with which he ruled the nation. The poet prays for all these characteristics of Shaka. Words like 'food and beer' go beyond literal interpretation. They may symbolise the other important aspects of life, intelligence, strength and understanding, necessary to unite a nation.

Ntuli concludes his poem with these words:

*Abantu bandedlulwe zinkomo,  
 Okuthi zimibala zidle ndawonye,  
 Ngoba zizwa zonke zingezakwaNkomo.  
 Kungebebikho yini ukungabovulani,  
 Imibalabala iboshwe ngantambonye,  
 Izizwe iyisithungu sikantu  
 Bonk'abahlabanayo banikw'izithole  
 Abaphuma inqina bahlonyulelwe ngokufana  
 Kudliwe kuhlekwa gqokweni lunye amatebhe  
 Alenkabi eyagingqwa uMvelinqangi?*

(Ntuli, 1986:80-81)

Your people cannot be outshone by cattle  
 Which differ in colour but eat together,  
 Because they feel the oneness of the cattle family  
 Can we not live without strife,  
 With all different colours tied together,  
 Feeling they are a bundle of humanity  
 All achievers should receive heifers  
 Those who go hunting should share equally  
 They must eat, laughing from the same wooden-tray  
 The fat meat of this beast slaughtered by God?

The poet pleads with Shaka to bring about peace within the nation, that they may live peacefully together. To illustrate his point, Ntuli employs the image of the beasts who, unlike human beings, have a strong bond of togetherness despite their differences in colour. Shaka is implored to unite the different races so that they may all have an equal share in the wealth of their country. The poet aptly states that the times when differences were solved by the spear are over, so, even as he prays to Shaka, he denounces the use of violence.

#### 4.2.2.9 Shaka's death

Writing on the theme of death, Lenake (1984:60) says:

Death has plagued man throughout the ages and ever since man pursued the subject relentlessly. Poets of all nations have also reflected on the mystery of this phenomenon.

It is not coincidental that the death of Shaka forms an important motif in Zulu poetry. His death was a great loss to the Zulu nation. We come across poets who glorify his death and some who mourn it. The latter, who are in the majority, accuse and blame his brothers for murdering the only person who could be regarded as the South African Black Moses. Be that as it may, Shaka's deeds are honoured by many African nations. In fact in African culture death gives the living an opportunity to compose praises about a particular dead person. In these elegies poets usually record some physical features, the personality, and the deeds of that person. Elaborating on this phenomenon, Finnegan (1976:142) asserts:

... after death the poems would remain as an ornament to his life, an inspiration and glory to his friends and followers, and a worthy commemoration to keep his name alive as one of the ancestors. 'People will die and their praises will remain. It is these that will be left to mourn for them in their deserted homes.'



In his poem Mtshali highlights the intelligence and foresight displayed by Shaka even as he was dying. He says:

His eyes were lanterns  
That shone from the dark valleys of Zululand  
To see white swallows  
Coming across the sea  
His cry to two assassin brothers:  
"Lo! You can kill me  
But you'll never rule this land!"

(Mtshali, 1971:12)

The poet has employed the metaphor of the 'lanterns' when referring to Shaka's eyes. These lanterns were able to shine so brightly that Shaka could see beyond the seas. The "invaders" are referred to as "white swallows". It is generally accepted that Shaka's dying prophesy was indeed fulfilled and the Zulus were later on ruled by the "white swallows" in their own land. Mtshali highlights the supernatural powers Shaka possessed even as he died.

In his poem "*Ubugorha bezigalo*" Jolobe praises Shaka's greatness. In these stanzas he dwells on the tragic death of Shaka at the hands of his brothers and regards Shaka's death as an atonement for the clans and tribes whose blood he shed.

*Liwile, liwele igorha  
Labona ukuza kwekrele  
Ngezandla zabendlu kayise  
Latyhutyh'intliziyo.  
Imbalarha yelakwaZulu.*

.....  
*Lacamagushela ngegazi*

*Usiko lamawaka ngagazi  
Ezizwe zaphanza zadaka  
.....*

(Jolobe, 1985:31)

Fallen, fallen is the warrior  
He saw the sword approach  
By the hands of his own brothers

It pierced the heart while keeping quiet.  
The mighty one of the Zulu nation.

.....  
His blood atoned for  
The thousands of  
Nations that perished.  
.....

Writing about Shaka's death Lesoro says:

*Lefu le soto, lefu la marumo  
Le fihletse Tjhaka a lebetse molomo  
.....  
Mhlangana a hlaba, Dingane a phehlela  
Bohloko ba otlala pelong, ba thophothela!*

(Lesoro, 1982:41)

Death is cruel, the death of spears,  
It found Shaka sitting quietly,  
.....  
Mhlangana stabbed, Dingane pierced,  
The pain was great, it was severe!

In the above stanza the poet expresses his feelings about death. He states that death as a rule is pitiless. Death by the spear, as in Shaka's case, is most ruthless. It appears as if, just before his death, Shaka was experiencing peace within himself. He seemed to be appreciating the beautiful countryside for the first time. Death through the hands of one's own brothers is regarded as a most tragic experience according to the poet.

Mhlongo regards jealousy as the motive for Shaka's assassination. He does not dwell much on the assassination itself, but reflects on the consequences of Shaka's untimely death. He writes:

*Beqhutshwa ngumona bamakhel'ugibe  
 Sukulumbe bamgubuzela ngefu elimnyama  
 Kwazamazama isisekelo senqanawe  
 Amagwala aphumelel'ukuwisa'insika.  
 .....  
 Kwasenel'ukuhlupheka thina bohlanga  
 Phansi phezulu sigijima asikhawuli  
 Izinkomo zingenamholi zaba yimilalandle.*

(Msimang, 1980:54)

Driven by envy they conspired assassination  
 Some day they shrouded him by a dark cloud  
 The mighty foundation shook  
 The cowards succeeded to fell the pillar.  
 .....  
 That started the grief of us the black nation  
 Up and down we race without rest  
 The cattle without a leader became wild animals.

Shaka's death is viewed by this poet as the collapse of the "pillars" of the Zulu nation. The poet employs appropriate metaphors: the destruction of the foundation (isisekelo) and the pillar (insika) which leave the Zulus desperate. There is no building which can remain erect without a solid foundation and strong pillars. Here the poet likens the Zulu nation to a building. Shaka's death left the nation leaderless, hence the poet's view that compares the leaderless black nation to the cattle which have become wild.



Those words of yours Ngonyama  
 With which you bid your nation farewell  
 When they had contrived and were killing you  
 They who are of your blood:  
 "Though you kill me like this  
 You- you will not rule it  
 It will be ruled by the- the swallows of the  
 heavens.

Although the poet has used the same ideas as expressed by the other poets, he succeeded in creating the appropriate atmosphere and mood relevant to the situation by utilising the negative-positive parallels that is, 'a-aniyikulibusa' and 'liyobuswa' respectively. The hesitation implied by the repeated syllables in the two last lines undoubtedly depicts the painful last gasp of Shaka. This makes Shaka's utterance more dramatic.

An interesting observation from the above discussion is that the other poets, like Jolobe the Xhosa poet, view Shaka's death as a necessary incident. To Jolobe, Shaka had to shed blood to make expiation for all the people he killed. On the other hand the Zulu poets regard Shaka's death as a great loss to Black South Africans. Although Shaka died so long ago, his spirit still dominates Zulu writings. Senghor attributes a deeper philosophical value to the death of this hero. As Burness (1976:39) puts it:

Just as Christ was reborn, Shaka's world will be born anew. A new sun, a new dawn, will greet future generations. The dying hero has not sacrificed his life in vain.

#### 4.12 Recapitulation

In the preceding discussion I have endeavoured to present a critical dissection of the Zulu poets' point of view about their king Shaka. Other African poets' compositions on Shaka were referred to where it was necessary. It is clear that Shaka has been and still is an invaluable source of inspiration for many literary artists.

The themes analysed reveal that Shaka was neither an angel nor a devil. This perspective is slightly different to the distorted image generally painted of him, especially in history books. In their works the poets express feelings of destitution experienced by Black nations since the death of Shaka. Although he is dead, he remains a living monument of hope, freedom and dignity to the Zulu. As indicated, some poets even compare his actions, life and death to that of Christ.

Many historians, fiction writers and scholars have failed to compare Shaka to his contemporaries. He is always taken out of his context and criticised according to the present standards of that individual critic. If one reviews the history of the other leaders from both local and foreign environments during Shaka's era, one finds that Shaka's was essentially no different. The stereotypes which brand Shaka

as a bloodthirsty tyrant do not present an objective assessment.

**CHAPTER FIVE****GENERAL CONCLUSION****5.0 Introduction**

The objective of this study has been to present and analyse the perceptions of Zulu writers with regard to Shaka. The study required an analysis of the points of view of novelists, playwrights and poets. The historical-biographical and other approaches aimed at scrutinising the text were employed. An attempt was made to advance a global perspective by including what other African writers have said about Shaka.

**5.1 Main observations**

The historical information compiled by Europeans who lived with Shaka had a tremendous influence on contemporary historians and creative writers. The delineation of Shaka by historians such as Henry Fynn reflects to a large extent the European cultural background.

According to the picture painted by European historians, the name of Shaka conjures up an image of a ferocious, barbaric, cruel and heartless brute in the minds of most people. Shaka was a king who ruled with an iron fist. He has been depicted



as a man without a conscience; a man who, without as much as the blink of an eye, would order his men to slash open the belly of a pregnant woman in order to satisfy his curiosity about the anatomy of the foetus. It is said that he ordered the execution of any warrior returning from battle without his spear or with wounds on his back, which were indications that the warrior had either thrown his spear at the enemy or run away from him.

There are those who feel strongly that he was a madman. As proof of his insanity they cite the incidents that are said to have occurred after the death of his mother Nandi. It is alleged he killed over seven thousand people during this period. The witchhunt is said to be another favourite pastime through which Shaka's sadism was brought to full expression. Even his death has been portrayed by some of these historians as a redemptive act to save the Zulu nation rather than a loss.

This negative image reflects a one-sided picture of Shaka drawn by people who use Eurocentric criteria to evaluate African events and cultural achievements. Such perceptions are invariably biased as they evaluate African lifestyles against the European background. While they display notions of white superiority on the one hand, they result in perjorative stereotyping of the African personality on the other. A noticeable irregularity is that Shaka is not

compared to European tyrants like Alexander the Great, the Roman Caesars and Napoleon I. The latter ruler was actually his contemporary.

The African writers question these Eurocentric standards of assessing the African communities, hence the emergence of the historical fiction with Afrocentric undertones. This is an attempt to redress the Eurocentric imbalances in literature by focusing on African processes, initiatives and perceptions.

The study has revealed that the feelings of novelists and playwrights towards Shaka are complex. The writers condemn the obviously barbaric actions but also justify some of them as being no worse than atrocities and injustices of the more sophisticated Europeans. Bryant (1965:649), who is one of the few European historians who attempt to present an objective view about Shaka says about the injustices of the Westerners:

Everyone with a knowledge of ancient history, of Egypt, of Assyria, of China, of Europe, must concede that our own Caucasian race has produced tyrants and peoples equally brutal and brutish, if not indeed even more so.

Although authors like Mofolo explain some of Shaka's achievements as works of magic power, this view is not embraced by most authors who perceive Shaka as the greatest African leader in the history of the continent. Perhaps the

European or Christian influence on Mofolo has a lot to do with his perception of Shaka. However, the study has shown that the majority of the writers perceive Shaka as the greatest diplomat, politician and military genius. Taken out of context some of the atrocities mentioned above do reveal an evil person, but when viewed from the Zulu point of view, Shaka was displaying his intelligence. Bryant (1965:649) maintains:

Shaka's was a distinctly progressive type mind, favouring every possible means for the acquirement of useful knowledge. As such he was a strong and early advocate of vivisection.

His military tactics and practices were a cornerstone of the mighty Zulu nation. The Shaka presented by both non-Zulu and Zulu creative writers has more positive qualities than negative ones. Burness (1976:xi) confirms the notable abilities of Shaka:

When, in 1816, this brave and clever soldier became chief of the Zulus, the territory of his people covered about one hundred square miles. By the time of his death, Shaka ruled over 200,000 square miles. A brilliant military tactician and a successful political organiser, Shaka made the name Zulu feared and respected throughout Africa.

It is noteworthy that the poets have a high regard for Shaka. The study has demonstrated that Shaka's celebrated feats serve as invaluable sources of inspiration to many poets. His might is compared to that of the lion and his

intelligence to that of great scholars of the past. An interesting observation in poetry is the Black Christ symbol attached to the image of Shaka. The themes employed by the poets reveal that Shaka is regarded as a saviour.

Although Shaka remains a controversial figure to many people, to Zulu writers he is a king of kings. He is showered with praise, and his "brutal" actions are regarded as a means to an end. In fact these authors hero-worship Shaka. Although he never went to a formal school, he has a special appeal even to great Zulu scholars. The extensive catalogue of poems, composed by both university graduates and other poets, is evidence of the great impact his personality has had on Africans. The poets who repeatedly use the images of the sun and moon allude to Shaka's power to liberate the nation from darkness (the moon) for the dawn or freedom (the sun).

It cannot be denied that Shaka was neither a saint nor a devil. Unfortunately it is the unfavourable side of his personality which is perpetuated in the minds of many people. As Mark Antony said during his famous oration at the funeral of Julius Caesar:

The evil that men do lives after them,  
The good is oft interred with their bones.

(Craig, 1962:834)

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