#### **AFRICAN HISTORIES AND MODERNITIES**



The Second Monarch of the Zulu Kingdom

Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu

'let us arm ourselves with the fearlessness of Shaka; the vision and endurance of Moshoeshoe; the dedication and farsightedness of Sol Plaatjie; the military initiative and guerilla tactics of Maqoma..."

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#### Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu

## African Perspectives of King Dingane kaSenzangakhona

The Second Monarch of the Zulu Kingdom



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#### Preface

The Introduction discusses historiographical debates and the construction of racist perspectives on King Dingane by white settler historians and Afrikaner nationalists. This led to 16 December being declared a public holiday in South Africa. In South African historiography, perceptions of the second Zulu monarch as propagated by white South Africans have attained a certain fragile dominance. Jeff Guy opined that 'Dingane kaSenzangakhona entered the (South African) history books as a treacherous barbarian'. By turning our attention to the production of historical knowledge on King Dingane by whites in general, one reaches the conclusion that in officially commemorating 'Dingaan's Day' one can deduce that there was an ardent belief among the Voortrekkers that God sanctioned, even supported, white supremacy and that he would not abandon the whites.

Chapter 2 analyses the production by Africans of the original archive on King Dingane, the second king of amaZulu. The first part of the archive comprises mainly izibongo and oral traditions largely found in the James Stuart Archives. I examine the role of izimbongi, Magolwane kaMkhathini Jiyane and Mshongweni and the central role they played in the 1820s in creating the king's image and archive through izibongo. Many primary sources still exist, such as oral traditions and izibongo that express various African perspectives of King Dingane and impi yaseNcome. These are both negative and positive. These contrasting negative

and positive perceptions of the king also points to underlying political philosophy and survive because generally it is not easy to intervene and manipulate izibongo.

Chapter 3 looks at the contribution to King Dingane's oral traditions and archive by African public intellectuals like Tununu and Sivivi. In this chapter, I also analyse the first published collection on the oral traditions of King Dingane, published in 1858 by William Ngidi and the Rev. J.W. Colenso in the book *Izindatyana zabantu*. The most enduring image from the oral traditions articulated by public intellectuals is that of the king as weakling, easily influenced by the Regent Queen Mnkabayi—the kingmaker. These traditions also depict King Dingane as a mirror image of King Shaka and also focus on the endless succession battles within the Zulu royal house. This chapter also highlights the fact that there are a complex relationship and interplay between indigenous narratives and colonial ones and the processes of representation in which they engage. This includes the role of James Stuart and his African interlocutors.

Chapter 4 elaborates the point that by the 1920s and 1930s the archive on King Dingane was firmly established and consisted of documentary sources and archival material written by both Europeans and Africans. The established archive was reflected in isiZulu texts written by missionary educated Magema Fuze, John Dube and Rolfes Dhlomo. They were fiercely opposed to King Dingane. This archive also reflects how their negative perspectives were influenced by historical sources reflecting the 'pre-contact' or the pre-colonial history of southern Africa written by Europeans, which immortalised the pro-conquest prophecy attributed to the dying King Shaka. This chapter also highlights the fact that the anti-King Dingane images were ably challenged by Petros Lamula and Isaiah Shembe, whose perspectives adopted a nuanced, empowering image of King Dingane.

Chapter 5 discusses the construction of divergent positive perspectives of King Dingane outside the limits posed by the established archive. The African workers, led by Nkosi, achieve this feat through countercommemorations of 'Dingaan's Day' (16 December) in the late 1920s and early 1930s. There is also a focus on land issues, because a sizeable number of Africans, through their insistence on counter-commemorating 'Dingaan's Day', perceived this as a day that ushered in the loss of African independence and land. This opposition led to the murder of Nkosi and other workers by the police when they were involved in a

protest march on 16 December 1930. The African National Congress's constantly changing view of King Dingane is also discussed.

Chapter 6 also focuses on positive perspectives of King Dingane constructed by African nationalist intellectuals such as Selope Thema, Herbert Dhlomo and Jordan Ngubane. Although Thema changes his view about the king later in his life, African nationalism is the common thread that stitches these images together. Their perspectives are largely influenced by and are in opposition to the Afrikaner nationalists' negative depictions of the king, particularly during the celebration and commemoration of 'Dingaan's Day'. These African nationalists also used newspapers such as iLanga, Bantu World and Inkundla yaBantu as vehicles for articulating their views. Herbert Dhlomo, a prolific scriptwriter, also staged a play based on King Dingane. It was performed by African students at the University of Natal's Black Section.

The main argument expressed in Chap. 7 is underpinned by a plethora of scholarly perspectives about King Dingane. These contending perspectives are articulated by African academics, namely Bhambatha W. Vilakazi; Sibusiso Nyembezi; Eliot Zondi; Mazisi Kunene; Themba Msimang; and Felix Okoye. This chapter also discusses the positive image of King Dingane as reflected in narrative poetry written in isiZulu. There were two reasons why African writers chose historical novels and narrative poetry as a vehicle for expressing their everyday experience. Firstly, history enjoyed a disciplinary pre-eminence in South Africa and some writers used historical novels and narrative poetry as a subversive weapon. Secondly, by using these literary forms, they were able to bypass the restrictions and censorship imposed by the then government.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, analyses the counter-commemoration of 'Dingaan's Day' by the ANC and PAC during the years of the armed struggle. The liberation movements, through their leadership, constructed political perspectives of the Zulu king. As an example, 'Dingaan's Day' or 'The Day of the Vow' assumed a new meaning because the ANC took a conscious decision to launch its military wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), on 16 December 1961. Subsequently, the liberation movement commemorated the day as 'Heroes Day'. This chapter also analyses the oppositional view adopted by the Inkatha Freedom Party, through its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who altered his views after the introduction of the new political dispensation in 1994.<sup>2</sup>

#### Notes

- 1. J. Guy, 'Dingane kaSenzangakhona: The Historical Background and Secondary Sources', in Introduction to Historical Studies, University of Natal, Durban, 1995, 5.
- 2. Earlier versions of some chapters in this book have appeared in part in the following publications: "He Did What Any Other Person in his Position Would have Done to Fight the Forces of Invasion and Disruption": Africans, the Land and Contending Images of King Dingane ("the Patriot") in the Twentieth Century, 1916-1950', South African Historical Journal, 38, May 1998, 99-143; 'Johannes Nkosi and the Communist Party in South Africa: Images of 'Blood River' and King Dingane in the late 1920s-1930', History and Theory, Theme Issue 39, December 2000, 111-132; 'Zulu Nationalist Literary Representations of King Dingane', in Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present, edited by B. Carton, J. Laband and J. Sithole (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 97-110; 'A Reassessment of Women's Power in the Zulu Kingdom', in Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present, edited by B. Carton, J. Laband and J. Sithole (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 111-121.

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At the University of the Witwatersrand, I was welcomed with open arms by Prof. Phillip Bonner, who invited Prof. Carolyn Hamilton to join the team on the perilous journey. As they say ... the rest is history. Thanks to both Phillip and Carolyn, ningadinwa nangomuso, injobo

ithungelwa ibandla and izandla ziyagezana. My message to them is: 'I have finally written the introduction. I am so happy. Also, I kept all the draft versions of Chap. 1 of the thesis (about ten of them) and I apologise for exhausting both of you. Perhaps you will use this experience the day you decide to write a manual on 'Supervision of Postgraduate (Ph.D.) Students'. To Carolyn, may I say, your tears at Milpark Hospital were not in vain, I did manage to soldier on.

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#### Introduction

This book examines the active role played by Africans in the production of historical knowledge in South Africa and will focus on their perspectives of King Dingane and impi yaseNcome. African perspectives of the second king of the Zulu empire are not homogeneous because they are multifaceted, and in some measure, constructed according to sociopolitical formations and aimed at particular audiences. To this end, I analyse the construction of African perspectives of King Dingane and impi yase Ncome located in various historical sources, archives and texts. These historical sources include oral traditions and izibongo.

King Dingane kaSenzangakhona was the second king of the Zulu Kingdom which he ruled from 1828 to 1840. He was born in the late eighteenth century and became king after the assassination of King Shaka, the founder of the Zulu Kingdom. Dingane, the son of Mpikase and Senzangakhona, built the great palace of Mgungundlovu which is now a heritage site near kwaNkosinkulu, the sacred heritage site where the majority of the Zulu kings are buried. His regiments were Dlambedu, Mtshamate and iNhlekane. Then, there were Izinyosi (formerly Ingcobinga) under King Shaka, Imvokwe, Imkhulutshane (or Indlavini), Ihlaba, Khokhothi and Insewane. After he had formed his own regiments, he devoted his time to the internal consolidation of his authority. Early in his reign, he was faced with challenges from several important factions who accused him of being responsible for the assassination of King Shaka. Based on oral traditions and testimonies, it is claimed that he killed almost all potential opponents including his

siblings whom he suspected of disloyalty. This led to the unjustified claim that King Dingane was a weakling who was easily manipulated by his powerful paternal aunt, the Queen Regent Mnkabayi.

But according to other isiZulu oral traditions and testimonies, the greatest threat to King Dingane's reign was posed by the arrival of white colonisers, settlers, missionaries and traders in great numbers compared to the period when King Shaka was in charge. Dingane was accused of being a savage barbarian and a cruel despot who killed his subjects for no apparent reason. Furthermore, it was claimed that these attributes later influenced his attitude towards white colonisers and settlers. But others maintain that until 1835, King Dingane was not hostile towards these white interlopers. Indeed, he went to great pains to court their presence and was consistent in the pursuit of this objective. It was necessary for the Zulu monarch to adopt an accommodating, diplomatic stance because he coveted the white settlers' trade goods and technology, notably their muskets, which would enable him to revolutionise the method of warfare by adding a regiment of amabutho (warriors) armed with guns.

In responding to the challenge of unravelling the complex image of King Dingane, I therefore carry out a sustained, systematic examination of the coexistence of, and interrelationship between the production of history and the sources from which these historical representations of the king have emerged. The historical sources are based on oral traditions, izibongo, religious beliefs, trade unionism, journalism, academies, political struggles, wars of resistance and socio-economic discourse. These are marked by contending viewpoints that are neither objective nor neutral and have, over the years, been determined by a variety of political concerns and been powerfully influenced by the competition scarce resources such as land.

These important points are analysed in Chaps. 2 and 3 which specifically focus on the production of historical knowledge during pre-colonial or pre-contact times. These analyses are the work of public intellectuals such as Magolwane kaMkhathini Jiyane and Mshongweni. In order to unpack our understanding of the production of historical knowledge during pre-colonial times, Jordan Ngubane emphasises the central role of umlando (history) and umlandi (historian) involved in the enterprise. He asserts:

...I have adapted the *umlando* form of narrative as used by the ancient Zulus when they talked to themselves about themselves. *Umlando* was a

vehicle for developing the collective wisdom or strength of the family, the clan or nation; it is the form of narrative the Zulus employed to translate into principles that *inkosi yinkosi ngabantu* and *injobo ithungelwa ebandla* [the king rules by the grace of the people, and that the collective wisdom of the citizen leads to the truth] ... The narrator or *umlandi* is a witness of history. As a rule, his authority rests on the fact that he was present at the critical moment when history took a new turn. His audience expect him to *landa* [narrate] what he knows and to do that according to rules cherished down the centuries. But *umlandi* must not be confused with the European historian or reporter. Where the [European] historian and the reporter are supposedly objective and concern themselves with bare facts and where the [European] historians seek to deal with events and their causes and effects, *umlandi* is creatively subjective. He deals with idea-forms, the subjective moulds in which events are first cast...¹

This book which also prioritises the use of indigenous African languages such as isiZulu is a contribution to existing debates about South African historiography and is unapologetic in maintaining that to democratise the production of historical knowledge in post-1994 South Africa, the neglected African languages must come to the fore. On conquest, cultural domination and the role of language in the struggle for power and legitimacy in the African continent, we need to understand that language represents a people's identity, culture and history. Abiodun Goke-Pariola postulates that those who have the power to name, often have, by the very act of naming (or enacting legislation), the power to structure reality. This power increases dramatically with the degree to which that authority is considered legitimate.<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, Ngugi wa Thiong'o accentuates that to name is to express a relationship, mostly of ownership, as was seen in plantation slavery, when slaves were branded with the name of their owners. In colonised Africa, this ownership and unequal relationship were highlighted when Christian converts were obliged to abandon their indigenous names and assume European names because missionaries told them they could never be received in Christian heaven without a European name. Thus, colonisers who assumed power and authority also imposed their language and worldview on the colonised and assumed the power to structure reality. It was an assertion of power that aimed to disempower and create perpetual minors of colonised Africans.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, African languages must assume a central role in the writing of history and challenge the use of colonial place names such as 'Blood River', 'Bloed Rivier', 'Natal' and 'Port Natal'. A book on the

historiography of King Dingane is the perfect tool to validate this point. An understanding of the Zulu monarch is pivotal to comprehending the history and political economy of race, racism, prejudice and race relations in South Africa.

Since history, among other things, serves ideological purposes, it is essential to examine the asymmetrical relationship between power and knowledge, including the ways in which historical knowledge is constructed or produced and then transmitted from one generation to the next (and this includes the impact of academe). One of the principal ways in which this is done is by examining perspectives of African peoples who emerge from the history they have produced.

I explore the ways in which the earliest perspectives and historical ideas based on oral traditions about King Dingane were constructed by Africans and how these influenced contemporary views related to the second Zulu king. I focus attention on the role played by public intellectuals, workers, authors, journalists, politicians and academics in the construction of King Dingane's divergent images from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth century. Whereas the representation and history of King Shaka's multiple images have been studied by various scholars based in different parts of the world, there has been no similar exercise in relation to King Dingane. In this book, I attempt to address the existing scholarly gap by emphasising the construction of historical knowledge by Africans. This is because the 'earliest historical facts' and ideas about the king were recorded using Zulu culture, customs and traditions, by, among others, izimbongi such as Magolwane kaMkhathini Jiyane and Mshongweni. The study shows that they produced dynamic, multifaceted viewpoints and images which were adapted over time.

Mazisi Kunene elaborates this point in his *Zulu Poems* (1970) when he writes: 'the great nineteenth century poet Mshongweni says of Dingane, the king of the Zulus: "you coward who deserted your own armies". Kunene explains that 'in other parts of his heroic epic (izibongo) he (Mshongweni) condemns the king for having killed his own brothers to gain power'. In this particular example, Mshongweni, as imbongi, was openly expressing his views about internal dynamics and dynastic succession battles which afflicted the Zulu royal house. In Chap. 2 of this book, I shall discuss izibongo zika Dingane as a rich history archive and text conceptualised by Magolwane and Mshongweni.

In his book on Zulu poetry, Kunene alludes to the fact that 'the best South African poetry is epitomised by the heroic epic (izibongo)'. He argues

that the 'Zulu heroic epic has gone through different stages of development from about the early seventeenth century up to the present day'. Kunene goes on to postulate that the heroic epic (izibongo), as part of indigenous African literature:

...expresses the historical state of the community, the poet does not speculate in the abstract or indulge in his individualistic fantasies. He is a recorder of [historical] events, an evaluator of his era [the present] in relation to other eras [the past].<sup>5</sup>

According to Kunene, 'Zulu literature, like most African literature is communal and the communal organisation in Africa evolved its own ethic, its own philosophical system, its own forms of projecting and interpreting its realities and experiences'. Furthermore, this literature, unlike European literature, propagated the view that the 'highest virtue was not justice but heroism, that is, self-sacrifice on behalf of the community'. Accordingly, African communities developed highly sophisticated heroic epics and henceforth, izimbongi, such as Magolwane or Mshongweni, who 'had to know in detail the historically significant occasions, select from them the most symbolically representative and on that evolve or affirm an ethic' that would be to the benefit of the entire community or polity.<sup>6</sup>

The African archive, sources, texts, viewpoints and perspectives are an appropriate focus because in South African historiography perceptions of the second Zulu monarch as propagated by white South Africans have attained a certain fragile dominance. Jeff Guy opined that 'Dingane kaSenzangakhona entered the [South African] history books as a treacherous barbarian'. 7 In the seminal conference paper entitled 'A Historical Mirror of Blood River', the maligned Afrikaner historian F.A. van Jaarsveld emphasised that:

...no other battle in South African history has excited as much attention or such diverse interpretations as the battle of Blood River of 16 December 1838, a day commemorated as 'Dingaan's Day' up to 1952 and as the 'Day of the Covenant' ever since. Until 1864 the covenant was not observed at all. Paul Kruger subsequently claimed that this breach brought retribution in the form of the annexation of 1877 carried out by the British. In 1865 the Transvaal government proclaimed 16 December a public holiday for the first time 'as a day of universal thanksgiving ... dedicated to the Lord ... to commemorate that by God's grace the Immigrants were freed from the voke of Dingane.8

King Dingane was the first Zulu monarch to be confronted by the destabilising threat of white settler colonialists and imperialists arriving in large numbers. According to amaZulu, this era marked the beginning of invasion and land dispossession; it had to be resisted at all costs. The king found it difficult to maintain the essentially peaceful relations which his predecessor, King Shaka, had established with white invaders and their African wards. Moreover, the arrival of the armed Voortrekkers was also perceived as a threat by the king who soon faced a belligerent united front comprising Voortrekkers and white imperialists scrambling for land belonging to the indigenous population.9 King Dingane objected vehemently to their trading, hunting and settling without his permission and of their reluctance to supply him with firearms. He understood the power and technological advantages represented by the possession of guns. As a result, there were a number of battles between the king and white colonisers. These confrontations were driven by the ideological myth postulating that land in South Africa had been 'empty' before the arrival of white settlers and colonialists. This Eurocentric myth was a key rationale for colonial domination, and it stirred the king's persistent resistance to white rule and domination.<sup>10</sup>

The reign of the Zulu king was also marked by the arrival in numbers of white missionaries from the American Board. They included, among others, Daniel Lindley, George Champion, Aldin Grout and Frederick Owen of the Church Missionary Society who lived in close proximity to UMgungundlovu and had an amicable working relationship with the king. This was because King Dingane understood all too well the meaning and power of literacy as an ideological tool used by missionaries to subjugate Africans. The missionaries had to quickly learn to speak isiZulu in order to use this language as a tool for implementing cultural imperialism. According to Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane, the supremacy of the whites, their values and civilisation, was only won when the culture and the value system of the defeated Africans were reduced to nothing and when the Africans themselves loudly admitted the cultural hegemony of their conquerors.<sup>11</sup>

This book also proves the point that indigenous African languages are central to the exercise of rewriting the history of South Africa. This is also true for the rest of the African continent and the African diaspora. Chapters 2–4 and 6 highlight this irrefutable historical argument. Ntongela Masilela writes that the debate in South Africa on whether African literature (including history) should be written in African

languages was anticipated some eight decades ago and that it is an issue that has galvanised the African continent and its scholars since the time of the infamous Kampala Conference of English Expression in 1962.<sup>12</sup>

However, Masilela asserts that the dispute began far earlier. It first arose between Elijah Makiwane and Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba during the 1880s, marking the beginning of this ranging debate in South Africa. It was then taken up between S.E.K. Mqhayi and William Wellington Gqoba in the 1910s, and then by Clement Martyn Doke who tested his views against Solomon T. Plaatje in the 1920s. Bambatha Benedict W. Vilakazi took up the cudgels against Herbert I.E Dhlomo in the 1930s, and similarly, Mazisi Kunene argued the point against the Drum writers in the 1950s. 13 To further highlight the debates on the use of indigenous languages, I point out that Herbert I.E Dhlomo's perspectives on King Dingane are solely expressed in English and that they differ significantly from those of his elder brother, Rolfes R.R. Dhlomo, who used isiZulu to produce historical knowledge about the Zulu monarch. This issue is dealt with extensively in Chaps. 4 and 6. Rolfes Dhlomo was a staunch Zulu nationalist while Herbert Dhlomo was a committed African nationalist.

Acknowledging the central role of the African nationalist and Black Consciousness schools of thought does not necessarily mean that the hitherto dominant orthodoxies about the king, as elucidated by settler historians and by Afrikaner nationalist, liberal, Marxist and social history schools of thought, should be jettisoned. The fact that these schools of thought are dominated by white South Africans is secondary in the light of the unreasonable call by some to reject the production of historical knowledge by white academics in South Africa out of hand. In the study of South African history, Carolyn Hamilton's Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka and the Limits of Historical Invention (1998), Dafnah Golan's Inventing Shaka: Using History in the Construction of Zulu Nationalism (1994) and Dan Wylie's Myth of Iron: Shaka in History (2006), <sup>14</sup> are a case in point and to some extent might be relevant to my study, but they focus on a different king—the first king of the Zulu empire. Their focus is also limited in the sense that Hamilton, Golan and Wylie do not unpack African representations of King Shaka which originate from outside the borders of South Africa and extend to the African diaspora. They do not analyse the role of indigenous African languages, historical novels and literature—including the role of the French and Portuguese language speakers in African countries who constructed particular images

of the first Zulu king. Bhekizizwe Peterson writes that black people in Africa and in the diaspora have retained a long and abiding interest in the history of South Africa that precedes apartheid, the Sharpeville massacre, the killing of Steven Bantu Biko, the Soweto uprisings and the Mandela phenomenon. 15 For instance, the exploits of figures such as the Zulu Kings Shaka ka Senzangakhona (circa 1816–1828) and Cetshwayo ka Mpande (1872-1879) inscribed the Zulu Nation (especially after their defeat of the British Army during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 at the Battle of Isandlwana) as seminal symbolic codes for the imagining of senses of African cultural integrity, nationalism and independence. On the other hand, they have been used to elaborate different forms of racial stereotypes ranging from African brutality or its variants, noble and heroic savages. 16 King Shaka received numerous literary treatments starting with Thomas Mofolo's Chaka (1925). On the continent, the first Zulu king was immortalised in, amongst others, Leopold Senghor's Chaka (1956); S. Badian's La Mort de Chaka (1961); Condetto Nenekhaly-Camara's Amazoulou (1970); and Djibril Niane's Chaka (1971). 17

In the field of literary studies, the interpretive and theoretical work on izibongo and performance poetry conducted by the likes of David Roycroft, Abie Ngcobo, Liz Gunner and Mafika Gwala, Karin Barber and Duncan Brown, among others, might offer useful insights but the fact of the matter is that such work was preceded by original pathbreaking publications authored by scholars such as Bhambatha Wallet Vilakazi, Herbert Dhlomo, Sibusiso Nyembezi and Mazisi Kunene, whose commendable research and fieldwork specifically focused on oral traditions and izibongo zamakhosi composed and constructed in precolonial times. Their instructive publications remain neglected, and yet, they are invaluable in South African historiography. By analysing these historiographical studies published by African academics, particularly those focusing on King Dingane, I hope to highlight the importance of African nationalist and Black Consciousness schools of thought in South African historiography. <sup>18</sup>

To set the scene and explain why this historiographical study on King Dingane is relevant, it is important to remind readers of existing dominant perspectives about the Zulu monarch that have been propagated by the various schools of thought dominated by white scholars and amateur historians. In his travel writings on King Dingane's rise to power, Nathaniel Isaacs highlights some of the themes that also permeate African oral traditions; these are analysed in various chapters of this

book, Isaacs wrote the following about the succession battles which bedevilled the Zulu royal house:

The messengers whom I had sent to the residence of Dingan to congratulate him on his elevation, returned with three head of cattle as a present from the princes ... They sent also to say, that they would be glad to see us, but recommended our stopping at home for the present, as everything had the appearance of a commotion, and indicated very strongly the approach of civil war respecting the succession of throne, as Umgaarty, a brother by the mother's side (this being singular, as Caffre kings always espouse virgins) seemed to dispute the right to the throne ... Umnanty, the mother of Chaka, was a daughter of the king of Amlanganes, who gave her in marriage to the father of Chaka, Esenzergercona; she was said to have been a masculine and savage woman. 19

Isaacs' account is riddled with historical inaccuracies, particularly about Queen Nandi, King Shaka's mother. In questioning the right to the throne of the fictional character Isaacs refers to as 'Umgaarty', he further assassinates Queen Nandi's character by peddling racial stereotypes such as the immaturity, immorality, ignorance, unreliability and hypersexuality of the African woman:

She was ever quarrelling with, and so enraging her husband that he was compelled to exercise some salutary authority, and reprimanded her for the impropriety of her conduct: finally, her husband ordered her to be driven away, when she returned to the tribe of her father, and afterwards cohabited with one of the common natives, by whom she became pregnant, and had a son, whom she named Umgaarty; this person has become an individual of means and power, and evinced a desire to dispute the right of Dingan to the crown.<sup>20</sup>

Here, Isaacs has opportunistically perpetuated disparaging views of King Shaka's mother in order to buy favours from King Dingane, who had recently ascended to the throne. He also does not explain to us why, as a white foreigner, he deserves the expensive 'three heads of cattle as a present from the princes'.

Isaacs, who represented the interests of white traders, believed that King Dingane would continue to protect European strangers, including the white traders, in the area he refers to as Natal.<sup>21</sup> In order to justify the annexation of land by the British colonisers, Isaacs wrote:

Chaka, take him altogether, was a savage in the truest sense of the word, though not a cannibal. He had an insatiable thirst for the blood of his subjects, and indulged in it with inhuman joy; nothing within the power of man could restrain him from his propensities. He was a monster, a compound of vice and ferocity, without one virtue to redeem his name from that infamy to which history will consign it: I must, however, by way of conclusion, state that if Chaka ever had one redeeming quality, it was this, that the European strangers in Natal received his protection, and were shielded by him against the impositions of his chiefs.<sup>22</sup>

#### About 'Dingan' Isaacs noted that:

Dingan had already abolished most of Chaka's ferocious customs, and abrogated all his unnatural laws. He permitted the warriors to marry, a measure before prohibited; and any violation of it would have been punished with instant death. This and other salutary measures had been adopted, which had made Dingan already exceedingly popular, and as he evinced an anxious desire to render his subjects comfortable, this popularity increased daily...This event [the defeat of 'Umgaarty'] placed Dingan in quiet possession of his throne, and he set about establishing such regulations for the future government of his people as seemed best calculated to render them happy, and likely raise to raise his country to a high state of prosperity, which the conduct of his predecessor could never be affected.<sup>23</sup>

This depiction of King Dingane as a mirror image of King Shaka, like the endless succession battles within the Zulu royal house, is also a constant theme in African oral traditions. I will discuss these ever-present themes in various chapters of the book. Carolyn Hamilton warns us not to write off as mere propaganda or invention the documentary sources written by Europeans on the pre-colonial history of southern Africa. She maintains that there is a complex relationship and interplay between indigenous narratives and colonial ones and the processes of representation in which they engage.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Spear sharply states:

...the case for colonial invention has often overstated colonial power and ability to manipulate African institutions to establish hegemony ... none of these (indigenous) institutions were easily fabricated or manipulated, and colonial dependence on them often limited colonial power as much as facilitating it.<sup>25</sup>

This, he continues, has in turn led to a neglect of the 'historical development and complexity of the interpretative processes involved'. 26 I discuss this complex issue in Chaps. 2-4 and relate it to the construction of conflicting images about King Dingane. The intricate relationship between the coloniser and the colonised highlights an important point (which the reader would do well to remember) that is emphasised by Jabulani 'Mzala' Nxumalo. He argues that the time has come for both liberal and neo-Marxist writers (including the exponents of theories on cosmopolitanism) to acknowledge the importance of African ethnic identity, not as a fiction of the 'civilising mission' or the product of imperial 'divide and rule' policies, but rather as a 'lived' historical experience with indigenous linguistic, cultural and customary norms that pre-dated the advent of European colonialism.<sup>27</sup>

In his illuminating study about the Transvaal Ndebele, Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi also focuses on the complex and dynamic relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, an ongoing production of historical knowledge. He argues that during the early twentieth century, the perspectives of African researchers and organic intellectuals profoundly shaped the writings of government ethnologist Nicholas Jacobus van Warmelo and this has not received adequate scholarly attention. Van Warmelo not only collected accounts from local African subjects for his publications but also relied on African researchers who wrote manuscripts, in the vernaculars, which would later constitute part of what is today known in academic circles in South Africa as the Van Warmelo archive. Lekgoathi's study explores the intricate process of knowledge production, providing an analysis of these indigenous manuscripts on what Van Warmelo called the 'Transvaal Ndebele'. By studying the role of these local interlocutors, Lekgoathi makes a case for African agency in shaping the 'colonial' expert's (Van Warmelo's) conceptions of Ndebele identity. Hence, Lekgoathi's study is fundamentally an account of the coproduction of historical and cultural knowledge. Van Warmelo was employed by the Native Affairs Department to identify African 'tribes' a highly political and ideological enterprise. Later, his work was as much appropriated by the apartheid state in social engineering as by Ndebele interlocutors involved in contemporary struggles over chieftainship.<sup>28</sup> The role of James Stuart, who collected African oral traditions in the area now referred to as KwaZulu-Natal, has similar connotations.<sup>29</sup> This point is further analysed in Chaps. 3 and 4 of this book which discuss the role of James Stuart and Bishop Colenso in the production of particular perspectives on the Zulu king.

By turning our attention to the production of historical knowledge on King Dingane by whites in general, one reaches the conclusion that

in officially commemorating 'Dingaan's Day', one can deduce that there was an ardent belief among the Voortrekkers that God sanctioned, even supported, white supremacy and that he would not abandon the whites. It is very difficult to separate the portrayal of the second monarch of the Zulu kingdom from such a claim. All these issues are at the core of Afrikaner Nationalist historiography and conventional South African history. This is exemplified by the so-called Dingane-Retief Treaty, the Battle of 'Blood River' and the 'Day of the Vow/Covenant' celebrations on 16 December each year that honour the Voortrekkers and the emigration they called the 'Great Trek'. According to Afrikaner Nationalist historiography, there are only two nations in the history of the world to have made a covenant with God, namely the people of Israel and the Afrikaner people of South Africa. For this reason, they argued that there was something unique about the battle of 'Blood River'. The covenant was partly derived from the Voortrekkers' identification with the people of Israel in the Old Testament, from which they took precedents for their actions. Floors A. van Jaarsveld argued that this idea of the Afrikaners as a 'chosen people' also stemmed from the situation they faced in Natal:

an unprovoked war with the mighty Zulu chieftain in Dingane, one that posed a threat to their very survival that it became a matter of do or die, on which hinged the success or failure of the whole of the Great Trek.<sup>30</sup>

Van Jaarsveld names as a crucial factor leading to the commemoration of 'Dingaan's Day', the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the Transvaal, a movement with a powerful sense of history and historical self-understanding. This was a consequence, he claims, of British imperialism that culminated in 'the First War of Independence in the Transvaal in 1880-1881'. Hence:

In 1880 the covenant was 'renewed' at Paardekraal by piling a cairn of stones, symbolising both past and future; the past because the covenant freed them from Black domination, and the future because they saw it as a sign that they would continue fighting until they regained their independence from the British imperialists. This cairn therefore had a dual significance: after 1881 both Majuba - which led to the restoration of the Transvaal independence - and Dingaan's Day, were observed jointly as an official five-yearly event. From 1886 Dingaan's Day activities became progressively decentralised and were celebrated locally and regionally each year. In 1894 the Free State government proclaimed Dingaan's Day a public holiday.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of Eurocentric historiography, in 1847 U.G. Lauts of the Netherlands was the first white scholar to publish a book on the Voortrekkers. He ascribed the victory at 'Blood River' to the superior weapons possessed by white emigrants. He was also firmly convinced that 'God in His almighty wisdom had destined and elected them to bring Civilisation and implant it among ignorant pagans [Africans]'. According to van Jaarsveld, in 1852/53 H. Cloethe regarded Piet Retief, the leader of the Voortrekkers at the time, as a 'martyr at Golgotha', while S.J. du Toit described the battle at 'Blood River as just revenge for the murders carried out by savages'. 32 For his part, John Noble maintained that the Great Trek had helped build [white] independent states, thereby contributing to 'the advancement and European domination in South Africa'. 33 The Rev. Catchet, of the Dutch Reformed Church, regarded the battle at 'Blood River' as the answer to a prayer. G. McCall Theal, representing the early settler school of thought, also used the fervent belief that 'God is on our side' when he described what he believed was a punitive expedition against the Zulu as 'an itinerant prayer-meeting ... imbued with the same spirit as the ironsides of Cromwell'. He believed the 'Blood River' commando had freed white South Africa from the devastating power of the Zulu. George Cory's view of 'Blood River' was framed in moralistic terms as representing 'some of the punishment he [Dingane] so richly deserved' for his 'savage character' and 'atrocities'. 34 The defeat of the British forces by the Zulu at Isandhlwana in 1879 led to British writers sympathising with the Boers.<sup>35</sup> As a result, van Jaarsveld notes that few historical personalities have been depicted in terms as derogatory as those used to describe the Zulu king:

In 1839 A. Carstens called him a villain, tyrant, barbarian and bloodhound. Contemporaries inveighed endlessly against blood-thirsty savagery, ghastly and cold blooded slaughter, inhuman cruelties, abominations that defy heaven and cruel barbarians. Elsewhere Dingane was called a Nero, and an African Attila. Hence it is not surprising that the Trekker's traumatic experiences led them to call the Boer-Zulu battle of 16 December 1838 by the name Dingaan's Day. That was when Dingane had his day [het sy dag gehad], a typical Boer proverb implying a day of reckoning.<sup>36</sup>

During the same period, Thomas Arbousset, the French Missionary based in Lesotho, collected oral traditions from refugees who left the Zulu kingdom and settled in the kingdom of Basotho—including a very long French version of izibongo zika Dingane. Arbousset's izibongo zika Dingane read as follows:

#### NOTICE SUR LES ZOULAS

Les louanges de Dingan

- 1. Un oiseau se trémousse,
- 2. Il se trémousse au-dessus de Boloako.
- 3. Cet oiseau mange les autres oiseaux;
- 4. Il a mangé le rusé Boloako.
- 5. Les eaux lustrales ont été bues dans le silence;
- 6. Elles ont été bues par Mama e Makhabaï.
- 7. L'oiseau s'est posé à Nobampa, sur la bergerie.
- 8. Il s'est repu d'Opoucaché, fils de Botélézé.
- 9. Il s'set repu d'Omocoquané, fils de Poko.
- 10. Il a mangé Sethlépouna, de Babanako.
- 11. Il a déchiré les Massoumpas.
- 12. Il a dévoré Matouané.
- 13. Les eaux de purification ont éte bues par Nomapéla.
- 14. Libérateur! tu t'es montré à ce peuple-ci.<sup>37</sup>

Contemporary sources and subsequent Afrikaner opinion and historical archives ascribed the victory at 'Blood River' to God, while English sources cited the battle strategy, the protective laager formation and the possession of firearms as crucial to the Boer victory. F.A. van Jaarsveld cites James Bryce, who, in 1899, considered 'Blood River' the most important military feat in the history of South Africa. In Bryce's view 'like the soldiers of Cortes in Mexico, they owed this, as other victories, not merely to their steady valour, but to their guns'. 38 In 1936, Eric Walker, representing the white liberal school of thought, wrote that the Voortrekkers had 'guns and horses [that] gave them an advantage over Bantu tribesmen, who, with hardly any exception at that time, had no missile weapons other than their assegais'. Walker went on to define Boer military tactics as 'waggon-laager warfare and shooting from the saddle style' and those of the Zulu as surprise attacks and enticing the enemy into an ambush, usually on uneven terrain. Another liberal scholar, L.M. Thompson, drew the conclusion that 'Blood River ... was a classic example of the devastating superiority of controlled gun fire, by resolute men from a defensive position, over Africans armed with assegais and spears, however numerous and however brave'. 39 Justifying the invasion and subsequent land grab by whites and noting that the power of the Zulu Kingdom was not broken with the Boer victory, Walker wrote:

Pretorius marched into Zululand and, in 1838, overthrew many of Dingaan's impis at the three hour battle of Blood River. Pressing on, Pretorius occupied the smouldering ruins of UMgungundlovu and found the deed of cession in Retief's wallet beside his bones on the Hill of Execution hard by. Though some three thousand Zulus were slain at the cost of three Boers slightly wounded, the victory of Blood River by no means broke the Zulu power. It did, however, clear the way for the organisation of the most elaborate trekker republic yet attempted around the church which Natalians built at Pietermaritzburg as a thanks offering for their deliverance.40

On 16 December 1903, the following poem by J van Rhijn, translated from the Dutch, was published in *De Volksstem*:

We remember, we remember

The hour of victory

When Dingaan's savage pagan horde

Broke up before our fathers' fire

When Umzingati's sombre stream

Reflecting morning light

Disgorged its water in the oceans

Tinged red with Kaffir blood.41

It is important for us to note that Africans were not passive in terms of producing contending images of the Zulu monarch. Many primary sources still exist, such as oral traditions and izibongo that express various African perspectives of King Dingane and impi yaseNcome. These are both negative and positive. The negative images expressed by the likes of Magema Fuze and John Dube are similar to the images articulated by Carstens who depicts the king as a villain, tyrant, barbarian and bloodhound and will be discussed in Chap. 4 of this book. The most enduring image is that of the king as weakling, easily influenced by the Regent Queen Mnkabayi—the kingmaker. These primary sources predated the arrival of white colonisers in great numbers. Therefore, a discussion about African perspectives of King Dingane would be incomplete without reference to Mnkabayi. It is important to discuss her character because she looms large over the multiple images of the Zulu monarch and features in all the chapters of this book. Her izibongo serve as a tacit or explicit counterpoint to those of King Dingane during his entire reign. 42 The isiZulu historical novels analysed in various chapters of this book also dwell on her influential role, and the various authors' perspectives are, in important respects, grounded in oral traditions and izibongo zikaDingane. The following lines from izibongo zikaMnkabayi possibly composed by Magolwane kaMkhathini Jiyane provide us with historical evidence concerning her life history.<sup>43</sup>

#### uSoqili!

Iqili lakwaHoshozaElidl' umuntu limyenga ngendaba;

Lidl' uBhedu ngasezinyangeni,

Ladl' uMkhongoviyiyana ngaseMangadini,

Ladl' uBheje ngasezanusini.

Ubhuku lukaMenzi.

Olubamb' abantu lwabanela;

Ngibone ngoNohela kaMlilo, umlil' ovuth' inaba zonke,

Ngoba lumbambe wanyamalala.

Inkomo ekhal'eSangoyana,

Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz' izulu,

Iye yezwiwa nguGwabalanda,

Ezalwa nguMndaba kwaKhumalo.

Intomb' ethombe yom' umlomo,

Zase ziyihlab' imithanti ezawonina.

Umthobela-bantu izinyoni,

Bayazibamba usezibuka ngamehlo.

uVula bangene ngawo onk' amasango,

Abanikazimuzi bangene ngezintuba.

Umncindela kaNobiya,

Umhlathuz' uzawugcwal' emini.

Imbibizan' eyaqamba imigqa kwaMalandela,

Yathi ngabakwaMalandela,

Ithi yokhona bezoqanana ngazo zonk' izindlela.44

Regent Mnkabayi is credited with being attentive to detail, able to listen attentively and to solve people's problems, including those afflicting commoners (uVula bangene ngawo wonke amasango ...). Izibongo describe the regent's actions in actively dealing with problems posed by corrupt chiefs and diviners like Bhedu and Bheje, among others, indicating that she was offering solutions to existing political problems. Furthermore, izibongo depict Regent Mnkabayi as a male figure, 'uSoqili'—the sly one, because the prefix (so) depicts a male figure instead of (no), which refers to a female. 45 Other women objected to her 'manly' behaviour which included the powerful role of a kingmaker and also her lifelong spinster status, leading to the line in izibongo, 'Zaye ziyihlab'imithanti ezawonina'. Destructive powers are also attributed to Regent Mnkabayi for she was 'uBhuku lukaMenzi. It is alleged that she was involved in the events that led to the assassination of King Shaka and the installation of Dingane as king. As Jantshi noted, 'Dingane was made king by Mnkabayi'. 46 The last line of her izibongo (Ithi yokhona) refers to the plots she hatched to determine the future trajectory of the polity. She assumed the Zulu throne for the young Prince Senzangakhona (her brother)<sup>47</sup> and controlled the ebaQulusini region during the reigns of King Shaka and King Dingane. This area today constitutes the Vryheid, Ladysmith and Newcastle regions. In his testimony, Socwatsha elaborated on the suggestion that she was responsible for appointing King Dingane as king:

The question of [King Dingane's] succession was referred to Mnkabayi ... She dressed as a man, had an isidwaba [traditional leather skirt] not buqelwa'd ngomsizi, like other [women] ... She also had imxezo i.e. amatshoba. When dressed, her identity could not be detected ... She had a white shield with a black spot, an assegai, also inhlendhla with which she dondoloza.<sup>48</sup>

Regent Mnkabayi was the doyenne of the royal house and was responsible for the continuity of the Zulu royal family as well as for its success in social and political organisation—thus the praise names 'Imbibizan'