

The Historical Image of King Cetshwayo of Zululand: A Centennial Comment

One hundred years ago on the eighth day of February 1884 King Cetshwayo kaMpande of Zululand collapsed and died near Eshowe. The manner in which he died is still an intriguing mystery. The medical examiner at first suspected poisoning but no post-mortem was allowed by the late King's retainers. The 'official' cause of death was attributed eventually to a heart attack although Cape Town and London physicians, who had both previously examined King Cetshwayo, differed in their opinions as to whether he had suffered from a congenital heart ailment or had died of other than natural causes. Many Zulu to this day believe that the last king to rule an independent Zulu kingdom was poisoned by his enemies and died a martyr. The career of King Cetshwayo was, in life as in death, one of conflicting interpretations and raging controversy. In the past century King Cetshwayo's 'place in history' has been revised and, indeed, transformed by a succession of ideological and cultural currents flowing through the mainstream of South Africa's historical literature.¹

Cetshwayo was born about 1832. He was the eldest son of King Mpande's first wife, Ngqumbazi. At the time Cetshwayo was growing to manhood the region of south-east Africa over which his uncle, King Shaka, had once reigned supreme, was beginning to feel the political, cultural and economic impact of European penetration. During the 1820s English hunter-traders from the Cape Colony established the first permanent white settlement at Port Natal. In 1837 the Voortrekkers moved into Natal and thereby challenged Zulu sovereignty in the region. The outcome was military defeat and civil war for King Dingane and the permanent alienation of Natal from the Zulu Kingdom. In 1843 Natal was annexed by Great Britain and white colonial rule established.² During the 1840s and 1850s several thousand British settlers immigrated to Natal and introduced a completely new and vigorous cultural element to that which previously existed among the northern Nguni, particularly among the Zulu. The nineteenth century western European capitalist world, of which Britain was for so long the acknowledged master, spread its cultural tentacles across Natal and Zululand under a number of guises.

Nowhere was white culture more materially visible among the northern Nguni than in the field of trade. Numerous manufactured items ranging from blankets and hoes to guns and medicine were incorporated into the material culture of the Zulu people. White hunter-traders from Natal brought the products of western civilization into southeast Africa in exchange for local commodities such as ivory, hides and cattle.³ The expansion of European material culture into Zululand was accompanied by the equally expansionist social and religious norms of the European world. Norwegian, German and British missionary societies rapidly established a score or more of mission stations in Natal and the Zulu Kingdom in the 1850s and 1860s.⁴ The thrust of British settlement into south-east Africa had by the mid-nineteenth century introduced a further new and unsettling dimension into Zulu society.

The most disturbing and tragic feature of British imperialism and colonialism for the Zulu Kingdom was the unfortunate tendency of Europeans not only to justify, but to sanctify territorial expansion and military aggression with an elaborate racial ideology supported by pseudo-scientific social theory. Thus the earliest historical and social literature on the Zulu Kingdom, its people and culture was written largely by western European explorers, missionaries, soldiers and colonists who were much encumbered with the racial baggage that accompanied so many Victorian documentary narratives of African societies. The first historical descriptions of the northern Nguni written in the English language were neither accurate nor flattering.

White settler attitudes toward the Zulu in Natal and Zululand gave vent to the emerging racialism then currently in vogue in Britain. Many British immigrants were no doubt familiar with the 'scientific' literature then appearing on the innate superiority of the white European races over the dark-skinned peoples that inhabited Africa, Australasia and North America. The racist literature emerging from the fairly new disciplines of ethnology and social anthropology was fashionable fare among the educated classes in British society. The 'scientific' racialists were opposed by a small but influential circle of liberal intellectuals and humanitarian churchmen who believed in the inherent equality of all men before God. Many British immigrants in Natal justified their racialism by subscribing to Herbert Spencer's 'social Darwinist' school — that is those who applied Darwin's laws of evolution and natural selection to the human species and, in the process, vindicated both scientifically and morally, the Anglo-Saxon domination of the 'less advanced' darker races. Charles Barter, prominent Natal settler and author of *The Dorp and the Veld* employed his 'Spencerian' arguments to attack the liberal humanitarian view of Exeter Hall, that the black man should be accorded equality with the white man:⁵

... the two races, the white and the coloured — be it black, brown, or red — cannot exist in close contact with each other, but on one condition — that of the entire dependence of the weaker upon the will of the stronger. The notion of equality, equality of rights, or equality of treatment, is at best an amiable theory, unsupported by a single evidence drawn from sound reason or experience.

The fact that Africans should be subservient to Europeans was not incompatible with the principles attached to the settlers' 'civilizing' mission.

Blacks were thought to be in an infant stage of cultural development, and the Natal settlers considered it only 'natural' and correct that they should maintain their superiority in all spheres of human endeavour in order to guide, goad, and, if necessary, coerce their 'childlike' wards along the path to 'civilization'. That Africans far out-numbered Europeans in Natal lent an even greater sense of urgency to the 'civilizing' mission. The *Natal Witness* defined most accurately the settler community's chauvinist perceptions of Africans:

The other class of our colonial population consists of men in a state of infancy as regards civilization. They are far more numerous than the Europeans, and their numbers are likely to be increased by additions from the adjacent tribes. Scattered over large tracts of country, and unimpelled by want, they have worn their lives away up to the present time in slothful indolence, to the full development of the depravity of human nature.⁶

The fact that the Zulu Kingdom had emerged out of the warfare and social upheaval of the *Mfecane* as the most formidable African military state on the subcontinent tended to arouse a keen interest in its affairs among white settlers, soldiers, traders, missionaries and colonial administrators. King Shaka's stunning military conquests and the great slaughter of human beings that is said to have attended his empire-building campaigns left an indelible imprint in the minds of those first English traders to observe Zulu society during his rule. Nathaniel Isaacs in his 1835 edition of *Travels and Adventures in South-eastern Africa* projected the first vivid and enduring racial stereotypes of King Shaka and the Zulu people to European readers.⁷ The images painted were ones of African savagery at its most extreme and frightening. Isaac's book contains lively and, it is suspected, grossly exaggerated accounts of Shaka's unfathomable cruelty.

King Shaka's assassin and successor as King, Dingane kaSenzangakona, conveyed yet another negative historical image to the European racial stereotype of the Zulu — 'treachery'. When King Dingane had the Voortrekker leader, Piet Retief, and his thirty or so followers clubbed to death during their diplomatic mission to Zululand in February 1838, he thenceforth was singled out for particular moral condemnation by almost every white commentator on the subject. Nathaniel Isaacs labelled Dingane as a 'complete dissembler' while early historical and documentary literature on Natal and Zululand dwelt at length on the 'treachery' theme.⁸ Thus, the earliest white stereotypes of the Zulu monarchs appearing in the English language were ones which left the singular impression of a 'bloodthirsty' Shaka and a 'treacherous' Dingane. After King Cetshwayo's coronation in 1873 when Anglo-Zulu political relations were probably at their best, Natal's influential Secretary of Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone employed white mistrust and fear of the 'uncivilized' Zulu character when he rejected the Zulu government's earnest overtures for an Anglo-Zulu alliance against the Boers of the Transvaal. Shepstone stated that it was futile and dangerous to enter into 'written treaties with savage nations'.⁹

During the mid- and late 1870s Anglo-Zulu relations deteriorated rapidly as the British Colonial Office under Lord Carnarvon began to implement its confederation scheme. British imperial policy in southern Africa shifted

from one of caution and administrative economy to one of expansion and consolidation. Carnarvon envisaged the political and economic unification under British paramountcy of her colonies of Natal, the Cape as well as the Voortrekker Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Britain aimed its aggressive policy at most of the remaining independent African states including the Zulu Kingdom. The successful completion of Britain's confederation scheme called ultimately for the destruction of Zulu independence and their way of life.

The greatest obstacle to British expansion in Zululand was the Zulu King. Cetshwayo was equally determined to defend Zulu sovereignty against white intrusion and to maintain the *status quo* within the kingdom. He held a deep reverence and respect for the cultural heritage of his people. He made no serious attempt to alter the basic fabric of Zulu society in the face of European pressures on the spiritual, economic and political life of the northern Nguni state. He annually attended and presided over the important ceremony of the feast of the first-fruits, rewarded and punished his subjects for deeds and misdeeds according to Zulu law, and dedicated himself to strengthening those values on which the Zulu empire had been founded and flourished. In keeping with the wishes of his people, King Cetshwayo displayed little inclination to implement or even experiment with western European concepts of law and religion. In cross-examination before the Cape Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs, King Cetshwayo was asked whether he could alter the laws relating to the exchange of bridewealth in cattle or the system of *ilobolo*. The King replied:

. . . No, the king says he cannot alter a law like that, because it has been the custom in Zululand he supposes ever since the nation was created. Every king has agreed to the law, and so must he. The nation would say that anyone who tries to change that law was a bad king.¹⁰

Once King, Cetshwayo made no radical changes in the government of the kingdom; unlike his predecessors, the Kings Shaka and Dingane, he preserved the prevailing order as far as the political hierarchy was concerned. The King's two potential rivals and powerful section chiefs, Hamu and Zibhebhu, still retained much of their autonomy after they had professed their loyalty and obedience to the King. Cetshwayo initiated no purges of his potential rivals and sought instead to reach an accord with his powerful kinsmen.¹¹ In essence, Cetshwayo was a traditionalist.

In 1877 Sir Bartle Frere, the famous British Indian proconsul, was appointed by the Colonial Office as South African High Commissioner. Frere was an aggressive imperialist bent on crowning his distinguished public service career by subjugating the mineral-rich and strategically important independent territories of southern Africa.

Sixteen days after Frere's arrival in South Africa, Sir Theophilus Shepstone annexed the Transvaal and events in that region came to occupy much of Frere's attention. As special administrator, Shepstone attempted to win the loyalty of the Boers to the British Crown. In order to accomplish this feat, Shepstone felt that he had to convince the Boers that British policy placed the interests of Europeans above those of the African population. The Transvaal Boers previously had laid claim to extensive tracts of land just as they had appropriated African-owned lands in the Cape and elsewhere. Boer settlers had moved into Zulu territory following the Treaty

of Waaihoek in 1861; by 1873 the Blood River area was home to hundreds of Boers.¹²

Shepstone reasoned that a successful pacification of the Boers depended on a demonstration of Britain's will to recognize their claims by grabbing land belonging to the Zulu in the Blood River territory. Frere was convinced by Shepstone that an independent Zulu kingdom did not serve the interests of confederation and that only by the complete subjugation of Zululand could union be realized. The High Commissioner mounted an aggressive diplomatic and political offensive to persuade the Colonial Office that Zululand was a savage and barbaric state that threatened the stability of southern Africa. To achieve his ends Frere used a variety of moral, political and economic arguments to impress upon his superiors in London the 'barbarism' of King Cetshwayo's rule. Zululand obsessed Frere and he capitalized on every incident and intemperate action committed by the Zulu as a pretext for justifying a punitive war.

When King Cetshwayo granted permission to two Zulu regiments to seek their brides from female regiments in 1876 five unwilling young women were executed and scores fled to Natal. The Natal Government sent King Cetshwayo a stiff message reminding him of his 1873 'coronation vows' to Shepstone not to shed blood indiscriminately. The Zulu King had all along resented Shepstone's gratuitous interference in the internal affairs of his nation. Cetshwayo replied to Bulwer's reprimand with a sternly worded warning to the British not to meddle in Zulu domestic affairs:

Did I ever tell Mr Shepstone I would not kill? Did he tell the White People I made such an arrangement? Because if he did he has deceived them. I do kill: but do not consider I have done anything yet in the way of killing . . . I have yet to kill, it is the custom of our nation, and I shall not depart from it. Why does the Governor of Natal speak to me about my laws? Do I go to Natal and dictate to him about his laws? I shall not agree to any laws or rules from Natal and by doing so throw the large kraal which I govern into the water.¹³

King Cetshwayo's expression of Zulu independence was interpreted by Frere and Shepstone as a further example of Zulu 'barbarism'. Frere invoked the prevailing racial stereotypes assigned by Isaacs, Fynn, Holden and other white commentators to the 'bloodthirsty' Shaka with the vicious and calculated intention of saddling King Cetshwayo with the same negative reputation. Frere mounted a propaganda war against King Cetshwayo. He flooded the Colonial Office with correspondence that constantly compared Cetshwayo with Shaka. Frere painted the worst image possible of the Zulu King and denigrated every facet of his character:

I have not yet met in conversation or in writing with a single one who could tell me of any act of justice, mercy or good faith, or of anything approaching gratitude which had ever been related by a credible witness of the present King. The monster Chaka is his model, to emulate Chaka in shedding blood is as far as I have heard his highest aspiration.¹⁴

Frere also capitalized on missionary discontent in Zululand and used their complaints of persecution against Cetshwayo to bolster his case for British intervention. King Cetshwayo frowned upon missionary endeavour. He thought that their teachings were seditious and that they gave aid and

comfort to misfits, social outcasts and criminals. Zululand's missionaries were deeply frustrated because very few Zulu were ever converted to Christianity. In August 1877 most of the missionaries fled from Zululand at the height of an alarm on the Transvaal border. They did so on the advice of Shepstone who wanted King Cetshwayo to appear as the 'heathen' persecutor of Christian teaching.¹⁵

Once in the colony the missionaries aligned themselves with Sir Bartle Frere's drive to annex Zululand — a measure he considered vital to the successful completion of South African federation. Capitalizing on missionary discontent the High Commissioner appealed for the overthrow of King Cetshwayo's regime so that the missionaries' 'civilizing work' could continue unmolested. The most militant and uncompromising of the missionaries were the Reverend Robert Robertson of the Anglican Church and the Reverend Ommund Oftebro of the Norwegians. With unabashed cultural imperialism these men called for the abolition of those Zulu social customs that conflicted with Christianity. Robertson wrote anonymous letters to the Natal press giving alarmist reports on the persecution of Zulu Christians and gave exaggerated accounts of the indiscriminate slaughter of innocent Zulu by the King's soldiers. Robertson was particularly vehement in his criticism of King Cetshwayo and the Zulu ruling class. He penned a number of reports to Natal officials condemning Cetshwayo for not honouring the so-called 'coronation vows' extracted by Shepstone in 1873. Once again the king was made to appear 'treacherous'.

The Coronation, in my opinion, well illustrates the character of Cetshwayo — it may be summed up in two words, cowardice and cunning It has always been my opinion, and of other Zulu missionaries as well, that the King and his *izinduna* ought to be bound to keep the Treaty of 1873 — because it was proclaimed as I described above — with them as with us. 'Silence gives consent' and I cannot help thinking that his having rent the treaty in pieces before Sir T. Shepstone was well out of the country ought to have been considered an insult to the English Government demanding instant satisfaction.¹⁶

When the Anglo-Zulu War broke out on 11 January 1879, there were certain individuals in Britain and the Colonies who believed that Frere's invasion of Zululand was a blatant contradiction of the British 'civilizing mission' in Africa, and therefore, morally indefensible. They were representatives of the growing humanitarian movement in nineteenth century Britain. The 'humanitarians' injected the idea of collective moral responsibility into a British society that was largely influenced by an ideology of rugged individual capitalism, and with it, a creed that justified economic exploitation and glorified the military and political aggression that was felt necessary to secure and extend Britain's imperial system. Britain's humanitarian movement emerged out of the religious ferment of the Great Awakening in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain. This gave rise to Wilberforce and the great Anti-Slavery movement. In Southern Africa, missionaries and agents of the Church Missionary Society and the Aborigines Protection Society had long been active in reprimanding both the British government and white settlers and officials for having forsaken their

moral Christian duty to Britain's civilizing mission when they advanced policies that dispossessed the Africans of their land and cattle and forced them to become perpetual servants.¹⁷

The humanitarians acted in the very controversial capacity as the 'moral watchdogs' over white settler communities and their relations with the local African populace. The development of mid- and late nineteenth century British imperialism and its 'scientific' racialist ideology alongside the humanitarian movement with its emphasis on the closer equality of all men, regardless of race or creed, before God, and the application of Christian moral principles as an implicit feature of the British civilizing mission — reflected several basic social and ideological divisions between the Conservative and Liberal sections of British society. The Anglo-Zulu War brought about a head-on collision between the imperialist advocates of the war and their Liberal humanitarian opponents over the moral justification for the war and over the conduct of Frere and Shepstone in fomenting it. The extension of the ideological and political divisions of British society into the affairs of the Zulu Kingdom led to a dramatic rehabilitation of King Cetshwayo's historical image.

The individual responsible for the debunking of the negative stereotypes of the Zulu King was the leading humanitarian and most formidable intellectual and literary figure of colonial Natal, Bishop John W. Colenso. He was an uncompromising defender of what he believed to be 'truth and justice' according to the noblest principles embodied in the 'civilizing mission'. Bishop Colenso was a social evolutionist who, unlike the hardened imperialists who employed this philosophical approach to expound on the savagery and backwardness of African societies, believed that men of all races no matter where they appeared on the evolutionary ladder, were part of the 'human family'. Compassion, sympathy, sensitivity and gradual evolutionary approach were Colenso's priorities in his dealings with the Zulu people.¹⁸

The Bishop lost faith in the British government as he examined Frere's correspondence with the Colonial Office. The Bishop concluded that the war was a 'mistake, a sad mistake'.¹⁹ The banishment of King Cetshwayo into lonely exile in the Cape and the terms of Sir Garnet Wolseley's Ulundi Settlement for Zululand (1 September 1879) was to Colenso 'the crowning act of infamy to this iniquitous war'.²⁰ The Bishop extended great sympathy toward Cetshwayo and lamented his exile. 'While the King, who, if the war was unjust and unnecessary, is assuredly a most innocent and injured man, is a prisoner, cut off from all friends, all help, without being allowed to speak a word in his defence'.²¹ The humanitarianism of Bishop Colenso and his daughters Harriette and Frances produced a much more humane image of a man they believed to have been grievously wronged by British imperial policy in Zululand. They looked upon the Ulundi settlement as a cruel mockery of 'British justice' and devoted their formidable political and literary talents to King Cetshwayo's restoration and the dismantling of Wolseley's settlement.

The move for Cetshwayo's reinstatement as King of Zululand developed from three quarters. First, there was Cetshwayo himself, an unhappy exile anxious to return to his former kingdom; second, there were the King's

brothers — Ndabuko, Dabulamanzi and Ziwedu-Mnyamana, the former prime minister, and the loyal Usuthu faction, who saw a restoration as a means of regaining political and economic power from the appointed chiefs; last, there was the humanitarian lobby comprising the Colensos, Lady Florence Dixie and prominent members of the Society for the Propagation of Gospel, the Aborigines Protection Society, and Liberal Party parliamentarians. The King, the Usuthu and the humanitarians operated as a political lobby in the context of metropolitan and colonial politics. This pressure-group instituted a campaign to discredit several of the most powerful appointed chiefs and thus the Ulundi Settlement.²²

King Cetshwayo and his Usuthu had little difficulty in publicising their case with the Colensos feeding reams of scathing commentary on the 'iniquitous' activities of Frere and the appointed chiefs to British philanthropists and churchmen. Bishop Colenso and his daughters Frances and Harriette singled out the Chiefs Hamu, Zibhebhu and John Dunn for particular damnation and abuse. Without reservation or qualification the Colensos accepted every accusation made by the Usuthu against the Ulundi Settlement as true. Many of the allegations were indeed substantiated: others were blatant distortions. The Bishop published *Cetshwayo's Dutchman*, the account of white trader Cornelius Vijn's experiences in Zululand, to support Cetshwayo's defensive actions during the war and to condemn the Imperial government and the appointed chiefs.²³

The Colenso family wrote and published a number of substantial and detailed books which laid the full blame for the Anglo-Zulu War and its aftermath squarely on the shoulders of the imperialists, Sir Bartle Frere, Sir Theophilus Shepstone and Sir Garnet Wolseley. King Cetshwayo's historical image underwent a complete overhaul from Frere's 'savage descendant of Shaka' to Colenso's 'noble martyr'. The Colenso publications that most effectively transmitted King Cetshwayo's rehabilitated historical image were Frances Ellen Colenso's two works: *The History of the Zulu War and its Origin*, co-authored by Colonel Anthony Durnford's brother, Edward and published in 1880; and *The Ruin of Zululand: an account of British doings in Zululand since the invasion of 1879* which was published in London in two volumes in 1884 and 1885. Harriette Colenso shared her father's inflexible moral convictions that King Cetshwayo and his only son and heir-apparent, Dinuzulu, were the victims of British imperial policy and the avarice and greed of Natal's colonial officials and the white settler community at large. Harriette Colenso inherited her father's zealous spirit and much of his literary skill. She wrote several notable works which contributed to the humanitarian revision of the history of Anglo-Zulu relations between 1879 and the early twentieth century. Harriette published three works which all appeared around 1890, or shortly after the exile of King Dinuzulu to St. Helena by the British authorities in Natal; they were *England and the Zulus*, *Zululand Past and Present* and *The Story of Dinuzulu* co-authored by H.R. Fox Bourne.²⁴

The prodigious literary campaign of the Colensos and other British humanitarians to secure King Cetshwayo's release and restoration began to bear fruit. Lord Kimberley, the Colonial Secretary, found the Zulu King's imprisonment an increasing embarrassment to Mr Gladstone's Liberal



King Cetshwayo kaMpande

(Photograph: Cape Archives, C683)

government. The Ulundi Settlement was showing itself to be unworkable amidst ever-increasing factional strife and bloodshed. In September 1881 Kimberley granted permission for Cetshwayo to visit England and plead his case.²⁵ The King took every opportunity in his correspondence with Kimberley to present the anti-Usuthu alliance as inimical to the wishes of the majority of the Zulu who wanted him reinstated. Cetshwayo made an eloquent appeal to British Liberal sentiment: 'I have great hopes of obtaining what the English people value — justice . . . the Zulu nation would rejoice to see me back. I hope that I am not going to England for nothing'.²⁶

The King and his party arrived in England on 3 August 1882. King Cetshwayo was dignity and charm itself on his historic mission to the nation that had desposed and banished him from his homeland. He was well-versed in white manners and customs and his genuinely courteous manner in full view of the British public and Press went further in dissolving the hysterical racial images of savagery and barbarism that had been attached to his name than all the rehabilitative correspondence and publications of the humanitarian lobby. Most crucial of all, the Zulu King made a favourable impression on the politicians and ministers of the British Establishment who would largely decide his fate. As a political mission and as a public relations exercise, King Cetshwayo's one and only visit to the United Kingdom was a huge success.

King Cetshwayo did not allow the glamour of London to divert his energies from the single-minded task of returning to Zululand as King. After a series of interviews with Lord Kimberley, it was agreed that he was to be restored as King of Zululand though he would be under the supervision of a British Resident. But, under protest, Cetshwayo reluctantly accepted Kimberley's conditions that Chief Zibhebhu of the Mandlakazi, his most deadly rival, be given a separate autonomous district in the north and that a Reserve Territory be carved out of the southern part of Zululand for Chiefs who did not wish to live under Cetshwayo and the Usuthu.²⁷ The humanitarian campaign to have Cetshwayo released from exile and restored to Zululand was indisputably their greatest triumph. The revision of the King's historical image along more humane and compassionate lines contributed in large measure to Cetshwayo's favourable, even enthusiastic, reception in England.

The humanitarian promoters of King Cetshwayo had scored an early victory with his restoration, but the political forces arrayed against the king and his followers prevented Cetshwayo from ruling either effectively or in peace. Several months after his return to Zululand in January 1883, King Cetshwayo and the Usuthu became inevitably locked in a life or death struggle with their deadliest enemies, Chief Hamu of the Ngenetsheni section and the Mandlakazi section under the leadership of Chief Zibhebhu. This full-scale civil war was ruinous for King Cetshwayo. On 30 March 1883, Zibhebhu's Mandlakazi inflicted a severe defeat on the Usuthu in the Msebe Valley. The King returned to Ulundi where on the morning of the 21 July 1883, Zibhebhu launched a surprise attack on the Usuthu Kraals and decimated the ranks of the Usuthu leadership. King Cetshwayo received two assegai wounds in his thigh during his flight after the battle.²⁸ He was forced

to seek refuge with the British Resident in the Reserve and it was here that he died on 8 February 1884.

Nearly eight months before King Cetshwayo's death, Bishop Colenso had taken ill and died. The indefatigable champion of King Cetshwayo's cause had become discouraged and, indeed, physically exhausted when he could not muster the political support necessary to influence Whitehall to intervene decisively in Zululand and restore Cetshwayo to a united Kingdom. Thus died 'Sobantu', the Father of the People, as he was hailed by King Cetshwayo and the Zulu people.²⁹ It is fitting that Bishop Colenso's significant historical contributions are being commemorated in the centenary observances being held throughout Natal and Zululand in 1983.

In the past one hundred years, the popular and more serious historical literature on King Cetshwayo and the Zulu people has been influenced, in varying degrees, by the two divergent stereotypes which emerged out of pseudo-scientific racial theory on the one hand and liberal humanitarianism on the other. Thus, the racial stereotypes spawned by Frere and Shepstone came to influence H. Rider Haggard's historical and fictional literature on Cetshwayo and the Zulu. The author of Zulu romances elevated the Zulu to a heroic stature comparable to the heroic primitives of Homeric Greece or the Norsemen of Scandinavia. To Haggard, the Zulu and their 'noble but savage' King represented a stage of European civilization that had long since passed. Haggard used his Zulu romances such as *Nada the Lily* and his historical narrative *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours* to identify the 'European past with the African present'. Out of such literature emerged vivid and enduring images which reinforced the popular white stereotype of the Zulu.³⁰

To serve their Country in arms, to die for it and for the King; such was their primitive ideal. If they were fierce they were loyal, and feared neither wounds nor doom; if they listened to the dark reds of the witch-doctor, the trumpet call of duty sounded still louder in their ears.³¹

Much of the recent history on King Cetshwayo and the Zulu Kingdom is contained in popular accounts of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 — a war that has continually appealed to the imagination of the European world because of its 'colourful', 'romantic' and 'heroic' dimensions. These largely military histories vary from the substantial and well-written *The Washing of the Spears* by Donald Morris to the weak and sensational 'story-telling' in *The Glamour and the Tragedy of the Zulu War* by Clements.³² By focusing on the Anglo-Zulu War, greater emphasis is given to analysing and describing the formidable 'Zulu military machine'; in the process, the more persistent Victorian racial stereotypes of a Zulu society absorbed in 'militarism' were transferred to succeeding generations in the present day. Morris, who is fairly sympathetic to King Cetshwayo, still reminds us in *The Washing of the Spears* that 'Cetshwayo made no effort to change the usages of his people. . . . the social fabric of the Zulus was still woven on the warp of cattle . . . and the woof of the military system'.³³

The principal modern works on the history of the Zulu Kingdom and King Cetshwayo reflect the intellectual trends in contemporary South African historiography. *A History of Natal*, written by Edgar Brookes and Colin Webb, was very much influenced by the humanitarian ethos of Bishop

Colenso and the modern eurocentric 'liberalism' of South African academe and clergy. Thus, King Cetshwayo receives a more sympathetic historical treatment: 'Certainly the most attractive of the line of Zulu Kings, Cetshwayo had great qualities of character. He was a powerful monarch and his methods were sometimes harsh, but he never seems to have had the sadistic pleasure in cruelty of his three predecessors'.³⁴

More recently, King Cetshwayo's career has been incorporated into a totally different ideological perspective. A rigorous material analysis rooted in European Marxist philosophy has been applied to the Zulu Kingdom. At the heart of this analysis is an explicit focus on the productive and reproductive processes upon which a materially self-sufficient, pre-colonial Zulu society was based. This approach is embodied in Jeff Guy's well-written and richly documented studies of the Zulu Civil War of 1883-84. In his historical portrait of King Cetshwayo, Guy emphasizes that:

Cetshwayo's Kingdom was in many ways unique in southern Africa. . . . While most African societies in southern Africa had lost their independence through military conquest, or their economies had been undermined by colonial expansion, the Zulu Kingdom had retained much of its political independence and economic self-sufficiency. The Kingdom's economy was still based on the production of grain, and the breeding and exchange of cattle.³⁵

In his substantial history, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, Guy identifies the aggressive and expansionist forces of nineteenth century British colonialism and capitalism as the destroyer of King Cetshwayo and the pre-colonial Zulu Kingdom.

In essence the struggle which took place in Zululand between 1879 and 1884 was between representatives of the pre-capitalist and the capitalist social formations; between representatives of the old Zulu order working for the revival of the Kingdom, and those trying to insure political division as a prerequisite for subordination to capitalist production.³⁶

In the final analysis, King Cetshwayo's historical image is of particular significance to the Zulu people of the present and succeeding generations. The observations of Magema Fuze, Bishop Colenso's printer, on Cetshwayo's qualities as a monarch were recorded in his *Abantu Abamnyama: (The Black People and Whence They Came)*. This was the first major work to be written in the Zulu language by a Zulu author. Fuze's favourable impressions of King Cetshwayo are most likely the sentiments expressed by the majority of Zulu.

Cetshwayo was a pleasant person with a good presence, handsome, concerned for all his people, and extremely kind in his speech . . . when cases were brought before him of quarrels among his subjects. He tried them justly, and in the majority of cases reconciled the disputants, not wanting them to quarrel, and brought them together by directing that each should produce a goat to be slaughtered and that each should come to the same homestead and eat it together.³⁷

In the twentieth century King Cetshwayo's memory is still revered by the Zulu people. King Cetshwayo is perhaps the most beloved of the Zulu monarchs. His entire life was devoted to maintaining the sovereignty and social system of the Zulu Kingdom. His valiant stand against the British

during the Anglo-Zulu War and his subsequent exile and successful campaign to be restored as King bespeak the nobler human qualities of tolerance, statesmanship and considerable courage. The great personal sacrifices which King Cetshwayo endured for the sake of his country and his people have not been forgotten by succeeding generations. A truer reflection of King Cetshwayo's place in history can nowhere be found than in the continuity of Zulu leadership over the past one hundred years. The present Chief Minister of KwaZulu, and President of the Inkatha ye Nkululeko ye Sizwe (National Cultural Liberation Movement), Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, is a greatgrandson of King Cetshwayo and grandson of King Dinuzulu. Just as King Cetshwayo fought to preserve Zulu freedom and nationality one hundred years ago, his descendants today carry on a struggle for lost liberty, and in so doing, invoke the name of King Cetshwayo as a symbol of inspiration and Zulu national feeling.

NOTES:

- ¹ For an authoritative and well-written account of the history of King Cetshwayo and the Zulu Kingdom during the Anglo-Zulu War and civil war periods, one must read the following: Jeff Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (London, 1979); and Jeff Guy, 'Cetshwayo kaMpande c.1832-84' in Christopher Saunders (ed.), *Black Leaders in Southern African History* (London, 1979).
- ² E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, *A History of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1965), Chapters III, IV and V.
- ³ C. Ballard, 'The Role of Trade and Hunter Traders in the Political Economy of Colonial Natal and Zululand 1824-1880', *African Economic History*, no. 10, 1981, pp. 1-21.
- ⁴ The historical dimensions of early missionary endeavour in the Zulu Kingdom are admirably documented in Norman Etherington, *Preachers Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand* (London, 1978).
- ⁵ For a lucid analysis of 19th century British racial theory, it is essential to read Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London & Toronto, 1971). The quote is taken from Charles Barter, *The Dorp and the Veld; or Six Months in Natal* (London, 1852), pp. 172-173.
- ⁶ *Natal Witness*, 15 January, 1847.
- ⁷ Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in eastern Africa*, 2 vols. (Cape Town, 1936 and 1937).
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 200-204.
- ⁹ *British Parliamentary Papers* (BPP), C.-1137, Aug. 1873, 'Report of the Expedition to Install Cetshwayo', paragraph 4.
- ¹⁰ Quoted in C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright (eds.), *A Zulu King Speaks: statements made by Cetshwayo kaMpande on the history and customs of his people* (Pietermaritzburg and Durban 1978), p. 67.
- ¹¹ Brookes and Webb, *A History of Natal*, pp. 98-100.
- ¹² Donald Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, (London, 1966), pp. 202-206.
- ¹³ C.T. Binns, *The Last Zulu King: the Life and Death of Cetshwayo*, (London, 1963), p. 87.
- ¹⁴ BPP, C.-2222 of 1879, no. 58, p. 266.
- ¹⁵ Brookes and Webb, *A History of Natal*, p. 133.
- ¹⁶ Natal Archives, Colonial Secretary's Office, vol. 1925, No. 19, 'Special Border Agent's Reports', Robertson to Bulwer, 28 October 1878.
- ¹⁷ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, pp. 83-139.
- ¹⁸ Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, pp. 89-91.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*

- ²² Charles Ballard, 'The Transfrontiersman: the Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1980), p. 314-318.
- ²³ Cornelius Vijn, *Cetshwayo's Dutchman: being the private journal of a white trader in Zululand during the British Invasion*, translated, edited and annotated by J.W. Colenso (London, 1880).
- ²⁴ Bishop Colenso's most analytically critical publication of British imperial policy and Frere's role is contained in his *Commentary on Frere's Policy*, (Bishopstowe, 1882-83).
- ²⁵ Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, pp. 133-135.
- ²⁶ BPP, C.-3247 of 1881, Enclosure in No. 14, p. 12. Cetshwayo to Kimberley, 10 November 1881.
- ²⁷ Colonial Office Confidential Prints, C.O. 879/19/248, pp. 1-2. Restoration of Cetewayo; Terms of, 1882.
- ²⁸ Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, pp. 192-204.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.
- ³⁰ An able summary of Zulu literary stereotypes is contained in Russell Martin, 'British Images of the Zulu, c.1820-85: Some approaches to a research topic', unpublished paper delivered to the Southern African Seminar, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1980.
- ³¹ H.R. Haggard, *Child of Storm* (London, 1913), preface.
- ³² W.H. Clements, *The Glamour and Tragedy of the Zulu War* (London, 1936).
- ³³ Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, p. 282.
- ³⁴ Brookes and Webb, *A History of Natal*, p. 95.
- ³⁵ Guy, 'Cetshwayo kaMpande c.1832-84', p. 78.
- ³⁶ Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, p. 243.
- ³⁷ Magema M. Fuze, *The Black People and whence they came*, translated by H.C. Lugg and edited by Trevor Cope, (Pietermaritzburg and Durban, 1979), p. 109.

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