

THE STORY CONTINUES

During his reign, King Shaka established the Zulu people as the dominant power among the peoples of south-eastern Africa. After his death, many of his highly effective tactics were continued by his brother King Dingane and his successors. This made the Zulu a formidable force for the next fifty years, and a significant challenge to white settlers and British colonial ambitions.

When Dingane became king, he purged further threats to his rule. The executions included his brother and co-conspirator Mhlangana, proving King Shaka's alleged final words to be hauntingly prophetic.

The expansion of British control and Boer settlements gave rise to ongoing tension between the Zulu and the white newcomers, culminating in the Anglo-Zulu War, fought in 1879. The Zulu military tactics perfected by Shaka led to a humiliating rout of the British army at Isandlwana. Yet later in that year British firepower finally defeated King Cetshwayo's armies at Ulundi.

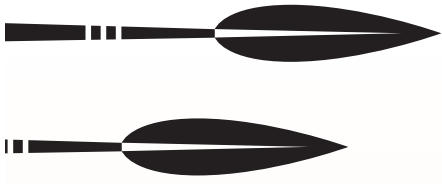


O MY BROTHERS, YOU WOULD
BE **KINGS** OF THE **EARTH**...

... BUT BEWARE
YOUR **BARGAINS** WITH
THE **SWALLOWS**, FOR
THEIR WINGS WILL
BLOCK THE SUN FROM
OUR KINGDOM...

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King Shaka's legacy lives on. He established a succession of Zulu kings which continues to this day. The current monarch is King Goodwill Zwelithini and the Zulu people number some 12 million – almost a quarter of South Africa's population – and they regard King Shaka as the founder of their nation.



HOW ACCURATE IS THIS STORY ?

King Shaka is a “historical fiction” based, as far as possible, on fact. But there are different versions of his story, and this is merely one “telling” of the story. Zulu culture had no written records at that time. It was an oral culture which transmitted its history through the telling and retelling of stories. It was only when Europeans arrived that details of Zulu culture were written down for the first time. These written records were produced mostly by European writers with their own very different “outsider” perspectives.

Oral history can be unreliable. As stories were passed down from each generation to the next, story tellers might exaggerate, select or embellish details. They might want to impress their listeners or portray a character’s actions in a favorable light. The accuracy of their memories would differ. All these could lead to very different versions.



Written records can be just as unreliable. In most cases the writers would not have spoken the local language, did not understand the customs of the people they were writing about, and had very different ideas of land ownership and property rights. Most of the documentary records of King Shaka’s time were authored by Europeans. In the past, they have been treated as historical fact. More recent research has revealed the ignorance or bias of the writers.

The diary of the Englishman Henry Francis Fynn is an example. His journal is

one of the more comprehensive written records relaying events and information about the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s and 1830s. Nonetheless, it is riddled with contradictions, exaggerations and even outright lies. This served the purpose of painting a picture of Fynn, Farewell and the other early white British settlers as explorers and pioneers. In reality, they were primarily traders and hunters with commercial obligations to merchants in the Cape, although they tried to avoid British trading regulations.



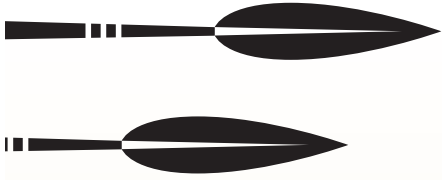
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HE IS A **STRANGE** MAN, PREOCCUPIED WITH HIS SCRAPS OF PAPER AND THEIR **SCRIBBLED SYMBOLS**. HE PERSISTS IN ASKING ME TO PUT MY **MARK** UPON THEM... BELIEVING THIS SOMEHOW BESTOWS A **KING'S AUTHORITY**.

They did their best to maintain good relations with King Shaka, and this meant serving him like subordinate chiefs, which included military obligations. Other writings from white settlers must also be read with a discerning eye, as they were recorded by people who had their own agendas.

What really happened is, therefore, often difficult to prove. The best we can do is look at all available records and come to our own conclusions about the most convincing version of the truth.

For some aspects of King Shaka's life there are very few records or none at all. In *King Shaka* some elements of the story have been fabricated for the sake of exploring "what might have been." For example, the character of Nonzama, commander of the rogue iziYendane ibutho, was based on a real person. However, little is known of the reasons for his treachery. These reasons are imagined in the comic as a catalyst for King Shaka's own self-doubt and to dramatize the dilemmas of rulership.



THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF KING SHAKA'S TIME

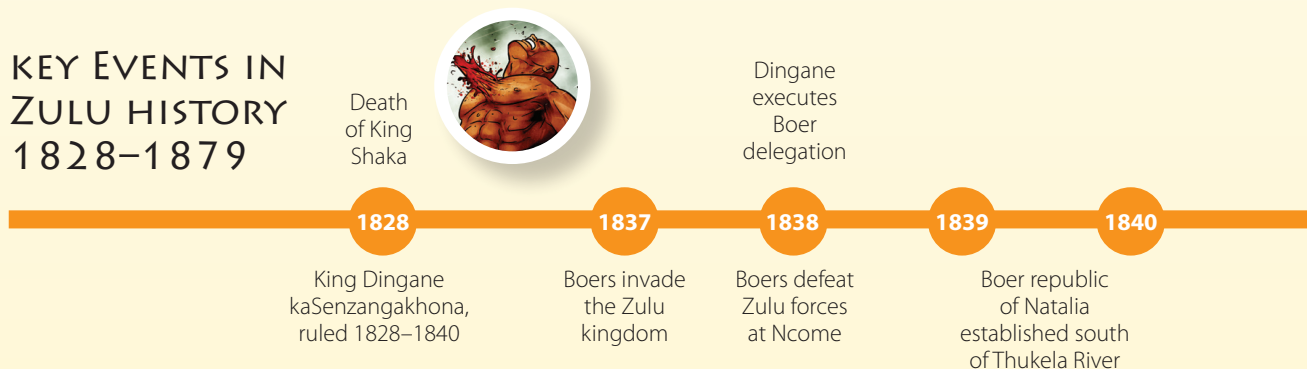
The events of *King Shaka* take place in the 1820s, soon after the story of *Shaka Rising*, and trace approximately the final eight years of the Zulu king's life.

Unreliable records notwithstanding, it seems that King Shaka was probably born in the early 1780s. To give some global context to his life, he was born shortly after America had gained independence from British Rule (1776), and before the French Revolution (1789).

When he was born, the Zulu were a small clan living approximately 200 kilometers (125 miles) north-east of the present-day port of Durban. After becoming king, he quickly elevated the Zulu to their position as one of the most dominant clans of southern Africa. He was the first Zulu leader to deal with European colonization and white settlement encroaching on his lands.

The timeline shows the succession of the three Zulu kings who held power after King Shaka's death, and the important historical events that punctuated their reigns.

KEY EVENTS IN ZULU HISTORY 1828–1879

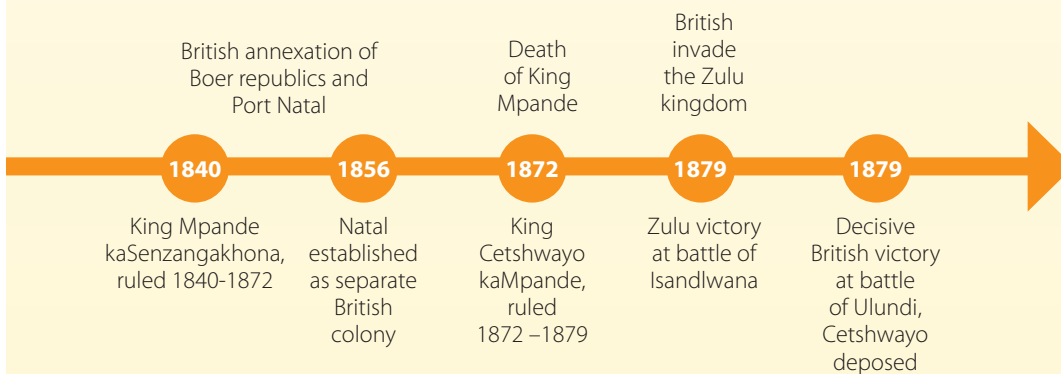


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Fynn and Farewell were among the first white arrivals to venture on to Zulu soil; but they were not the last. King Shaka's first embassies to the Cape Colony aimed to obtain military intelligence, but were also genuine attempts to open official relations between the Zulu and the British. Unfortunately, these efforts were consistently undermined by greed, misconceptions, treachery and fear on both sides.

After King Shaka's death, his successor King Dingane fared no better in creating relations with the British. By this



"AND SO, WITH THE CONSIDERABLE AID OF THE ZULU, THE WHITE SETTLEMENT OF **PORT NATAL** WAS ESTABLISHED AT THE HARBOR OF **ISIBUBULINGH...**"



"KING SHAKA RECEIVED HIS **TRIBUTES** FROM THE **NEW SETTLERS** ON HIS SHORES... "

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time, the Zulu were also increasingly coming into conflict with the Boers, Dutch settlers who had left the Cape Colony in the mid-1830s and sought to establish new republics of their own – one of which, the Republic of Natalia, occupied some Zulu territory. These conflicts escalated when King Dingane had an entire Boer delegation put to death, sparking a series of bloody battles between the Zulu and the Boers, culminating in The Battle of Ncome (popularly known as the “Battle of Blood River”). King Dingane’s forces suffered a heavy defeat in this clash, and Dingane ceded the Boers all Zulu territory south of the Thukela River.

Soon afterwards his brother Mpande forged an alliance with the Boers. This enabled Mpande to overthrow King Dingane and become king himself. In 1843 the British annexed the Boer Republic of Natalia (including the land Dingane had ceded the Boers) as the colony of Natal and recognized the Zulu kingdom north of the Thukela.

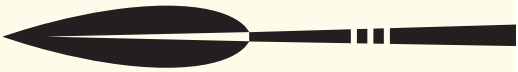
This rising tide of white colonization displaced many thousands and led to much bloody conflict over the next decades. The independence of the Zulu kingdom finally came to an end in 1879, when British forces invaded KwaZulu (Zululand) and defeated the Zulu under King Cetshwayo. But this was only after the Zulu army had inflicted a humiliating defeat on the British at Isandlwana – the worst defeat ever suffered by a British force at the hands of an indigenous people defending their territory.



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... YOU SEE THROUGH THEIR
DECEPTIONS. MISTER
FAREWELL HAS CONTINUOUSLY
SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE DRIVEN
BY A RAVENING **LUST** FOR LAND
AND **IVORY**...

THE CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP



In 1824 the Zulu encountered white people for the first time when Henry Fynn and company were shipwrecked on the coast near isiBubulungu, later known as Port Natal, where they intended to settle and trade. The whites were woefully under-prepared to survive on this unknown coast, and would have perished without the considerable aid of the Zulu. Although King Shaka was wary of the new arrivals, he provided timber and a workforce to help build the settlement that would become Port Natal.

At different stages during his reign King Shaka had many different leadership roles to play. During the events of *King Shaka* he united local chiefdoms, led his people into battle,

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helped establish the white settlers at Port Natal in exchange for tributes of ivory and firepower, and ultimately sent a Zulu embassy to the Cape Colony in an attempt to open dialogue with the British.

King Shaka had to keep these roles and many more in a delicate balance with each other – a balance that was often very difficult to maintain. King Shaka's people wanted safety and prosperity.

His brothers plotted for power. The Ndwandwe sought slaves and revenge.

The British hunter-traders wanted access to ivory and a secure settlement. The Boers wanted to establish their own little republic on Zulu soil. Inside and outside the Zulu kingdom, turbulent change was taking place, and King Shaka had to prioritize where to focus his energies and resources. To protect his people's future he needed to adapt to a shifting socio-political landscape that no Zulu leader had faced before.

These issues, and the ways in which King Shaka chose to manage them, created an unavoidable separation between the king and his people. Those friends and family closest

KEY EVENTS DURING KING SHAKA'S REIGN



1819

Shaka defeats the Ndwandwe at the Mhlatuze River

1820

New Zulu capital is established at KwaBulawayo

1821

1822

Renegade iziYendane *ibutho* ravages the southern reaches of Shaka's kingdom

1823

to him – Nomcoba, Nandi and Ndengezi – were ultimately distanced, making King Shaka a legendary figure, but also a lonely one.

King Shaka upset much of the status quo for his people with his methods of rule, and this did not please everybody. However, it is undeniable that his reign laid the groundwork for the kings who followed him, and his legacy lives on even today.

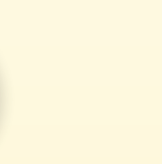


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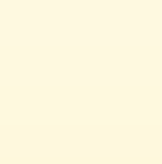
1824

Henry Fynn and company are shipwrecked on the coast near the Zulu homelands



1825

With Zulu aid, the white settlement of Port Natal is established at isiBubulungu



1826

The Ndwandwe are decisively defeated by the Zulu at the izinDolowane hills



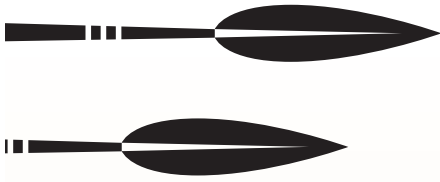
1827

Nandi dies, and Shaka sends his first embassy to the Cape Colony



1828

Death of King Shaka



ZULU POLITICAL STRUCTURES

King Shaka's rise to power and period of rule can be seen as a departure from the existing system of localized chiefdoms – each consisting of a cluster of homesteads which housed extended family groups – in favor of a more complex state. When he took leadership of the Zulu, King Shaka united many of the disparate chiefdoms into one organized kingdom under his rule. He was able to command and extract labor from these allied chiefdoms both for military service and for building projects. In return he offered protection, helped resolve disputes, and allowed the various chiefs conditional autonomy over their own lands. King Shaka's rule was an elaborate but effective balance of social, political, and economic obligations, backed by military power.

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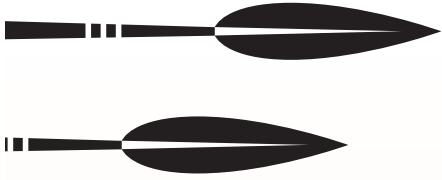


"THE ZULU RULER HAD QUICKLY REALIZED THAT EVEN DURING TIMES OF CELEBRATION, THAT DANCE OF POLITICS NEVER ENDED... AND *PETTY RIVALRIES* AND *SIMMERING DISCONTENT* COULD BRING AN *EMPIRE* TO ITS *KNEES*."

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An important aspect of King Shaka's success in building the Zulu kingdom was his extensive use of the *amabutho* (singular: *ibutho*). Roughly translated as "regiments," these were more akin to mobile, multi-purpose labor forces that could number anywhere between a few hundred and several thousand men. Their numerous roles included raiding other chiefdoms or exacting tribute from them, establishing new *amakhanda* (royal military homesteads) and enforcing King Shaka's rule in outlying areas. Each *ibutho* had its own name and distinguished itself with specific colors and regalia. The *iziYendane*, for example, were known for their red shields and dreadlocked hair.



THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Zulu society in King Shaka's time was patriarchal, like most societies throughout history, and many still today. Men held power and authority over women, children and lesser-ranked men. A man was the head of his household. Yet women had a crucial part to play, and could be very influential in the politics of Zulu society.

The day-to-day roles of women included running the household, growing the crops, and raising the children. Typically this was done communally by all the women of a homestead. Women were also used as political devices: through marriage, clans could strengthen relations and form new alliances.

In *King Shaka*, we also see the key role played by the *amakhosikazi*, or female elders. High-ranking women in the



royal house, such as King Shaka's mother Nandi and his aunt Mnkabayi, held considerable influence in society, and were often consulted for advice or guidance. Mnkabayi herself was known as "The Kingmaker," reputed by many accounts to have been instrumental in the succession of Senzangakhona, Shaka and Dingane to their positions as kings of the Zulu.

The role of the *amakhosikazi* also included overseeing marriage alliances, directing distribution of provisions and managing the products of the women's agricultural labor.

King Shaka's appointment of the *amakhosikazi* to his outlying royal homesteads (*amakhanda*) is an example of the king's unique shrewdness. While their presence as King Shaka's proxies would offset the ambitions of potentially troublesome chiefs, they could never, as women, be a direct genealogical threat.

Perhaps of understated importance was the role of elder women (such as Gogo) as storytellers. More than simple night-time tales for the children, these oral storytelling traditions formed an important generational history of the Zulu people at the time, a tradition that continues today.





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I WILL KILL
NO MORE
BROTHERS!



SIBLINGS

In this story we encounter King Shaka's sister Nomcoba, and his half-brothers Dingane, Mhlangana, and briefly, Sigujana. They shared a father but had different mothers.

If you have any siblings, you will likely be familiar with the close bonds that you form, as well as the rivalries that occur. The same was true of Shaka, Dingane, Mhlangana and Sigujana as they grew up together. Despite these bonds, there came a time when the brothers would kill each other to eliminate rivals and become king.

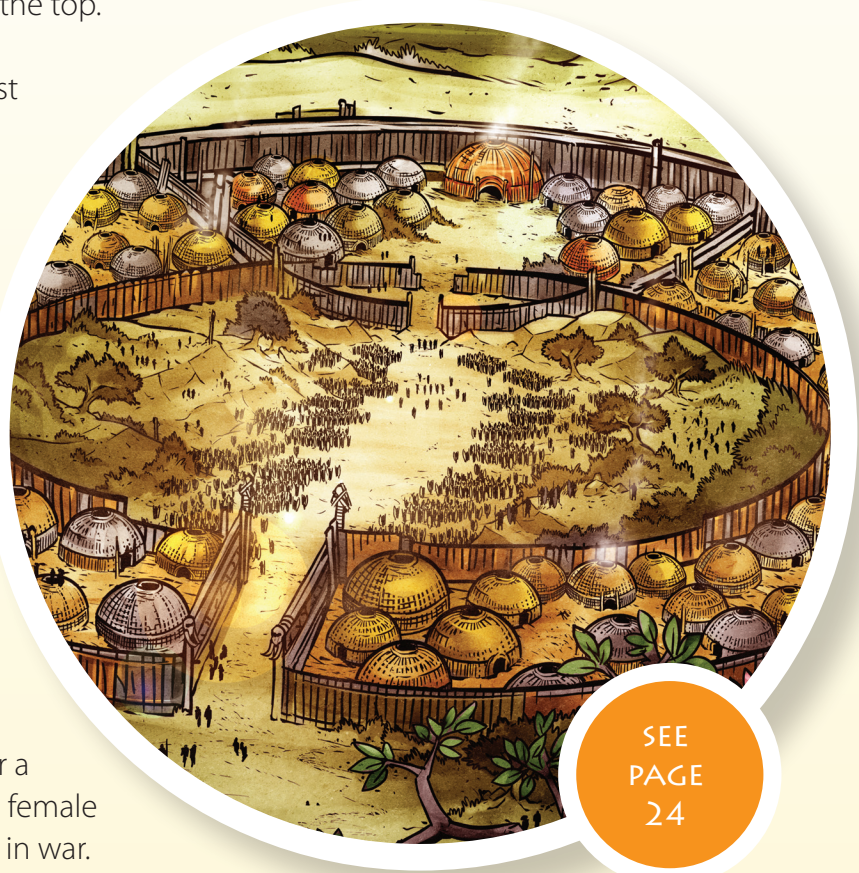
Compare this with the relationship King Shaka had with Nomcoba. The two trusted and cared for each other, and she saw King Shaka's reluctance to kill another brother – even though King Shaka probably suspected Dingane of conspiring against him.

THE ROYAL HOMESTEAD



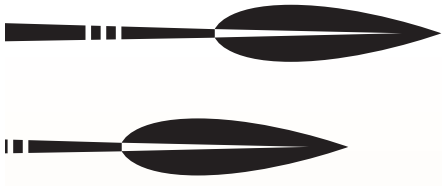
The Zulu capital of KwaBulawayo, arguably King Shaka's most famous homestead (*ikhanda*), was situated some twenty kilometers (12½ miles) north-east of present-day Eshowe. While Henry Fynn's exaggerated records attest that it was between two and three miles in circumference, the reality is probably closer to about 350 meters (1150 feet) from the lowest gate to the royal enclosure, or *isigodlo*, at the top.

The *isigodlo* was the most tightly guarded area of a large Zulu homestead, furthest from the main gate. This is where the king would stay. The other inhabitants of the *isigodlo* were elderly female relations or widows of his predecessor, the king's wives (if he had any), maidens given in tribute to serve as the king's concubines and to marry out in return for a bride-price (*ilobolo*), and female servants, often captured in war.



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Certain ceremonies would also take place within this royal enclosure. The operations of the *isigodlo* and its women were typically the responsibility of the *amakhosikazi*.



ZULU CULTURE AND BELIEFS

In Zulu culture, belief in the supernatural was an important aspect of their understanding of life and death. The spirits of the ancestors (*amadlozi*) were believed to influence health and human relations – for good or for bad.

Herbalists, known as *izinyanga*, could diagnose and treat physical ailments using medicines prepared from various plants. *Izangoma* were diviners believed to have direct contact with the *amadlozi* (ancestors) from whom they sought help to discern the future, grant favorable conditions, wish ill upon another person, and solve or create conflict within relationships. They also used medicines (*imithi*) in their treatments, prepared from plants and animal parts.



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In the Zulu belief system, the realms of the living and the dead were inextricably linked. The *amadlozi* watched and communicated through signs and symbolism. Snakes in particular were a common vessel for *amadlozi* who wished to revisit the world of the living.

Ritual and ceremony were important parts of Zulu culture, and the *umKhosi*, or First Fruits Ceremony, was the grandest example of this. The *umKhosi* was typically an exuberant and impressive display of rain-dancing, ritual medicines, prayers to the ancestors, and cattle sacrifices to honor them. The king, as the great rain-maker, was ritually “strengthened” against his enemies and the allegiance of his subjects was reaffirmed.

LANGUAGE AND NAMING



The Zulu language, *isiZulu*, makes use of many idioms and metaphors. For example, instead of King Shaka saying, "You have stabbed me," he says to his brothers: "You have reddened your spears in my flesh."

Another example is the metaphor used to refer to the white settlers as swallows. Ndengezi asks King Shaka: "Is it wise to allow the white swallows to fly so freely?"

A popular custom was that of praise poetry, or *izibongo*, which made extensive use of idioms. The praise poet (*imbongi*) would sing the praises of a particular chief or warrior as a form of entertainment, as well as a chronicle of the person's deeds. Often praises were also co-opted from conquered chiefs and added to those of the victor.

King Shaka's praises were numerous and elaborate, often recognizing his royal lineage and exalting his heroic military prowess:


*"He who beats but is not beaten
The voracious one of Senzangakhona
Whose spear is red, even on the handle."*

*"He whose fame spreads
Even as he sits."*

Even some of the white settlers began to amass their own *izibongo*, as they became increasingly involved in Zulu campaigns. The lines below are from the praises of Henry Fynn, and describe specific aspects of the man himself:



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HLAMBAMANZI... YOUR NAME MEANS "TO SWIM THE SEAS." PERHAPS IT IS TRUE TO YOUR NATURE, FOR THE JOURNEY HERE IS LONG AND **ARDUOUS**. BUT WHAT CAN A **LONE RABBIT** FLEEING ITS SNARE, OFFER TO A KING?

"Feathers, now growing, now falling out..."

(A reference to Henry Fynn's bushy sideburns.)

"Tamer of the evil-tempered elephant..."

(Fynn's skill with firearms in hunting.)

"Who was pregnant with many young ones..."

(Fynn acquired several wives and fathered an unknown number of children during his time with the Zulu.)

Names of people and places were also often complex, themselves involving idiomatic descriptions. Two of the larger Zulu capitals during King Shaka's reign were KwaBulawayo and KwaDukuza, translated respectively (and somewhat ominously) as "The Place of Murder" and "The Place of Lost People."

King Shaka's own name has variations in the histories, depending on regional dialects. In the coastal lands south of the Thukela River, his name was pronounced "Tshaka." This would also explain why the early Port Natal settlers

who were living in that area wrote “Chaka” in their written accounts, since that spelling indicates the “Tsh” sound. Those born upcountry in the lands of the Zulu usually spoke the king’s name with the most commonly used pronunciation, “Shaka,” which is the spelling we have chosen for this retelling of his legend.

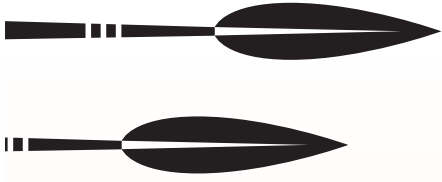
The possible meanings of King Shaka’s name reflect differing perceptions of the Zulu king. We cannot be certain of the true meaning – there are a number of versions of how he got his name, some less flattering than others. In Zulu territory there was a beetle known as “*itshaka*,” which was believed to cause a bloated stomach symptomatic of intestinal distress. One story goes that, when Nandi became pregnant by Senzangakhona, she was said to be afflicted with this ailment, and King Shaka was given the name when he was born.

“*Itshaka*” also has another meaning, used to describe a girl who became pregnant out of wedlock, hence suggesting that King Shaka was illegitimate. This is quite possibly a convenient fabrication by later successors to vilify King Shaka and enhance their own reputations.

Another, somewhat more complimentary, version suggests that “Shaka” was not his birth name at all, but was actually bestowed later by King Dingiswayo, as part of the young warrior’s praises: “*uSitshaka ka sitshayeki*” (“He who beats but is not beaten”).

Whatever the truth may be, it is this last meaning that perhaps best reflects King Shaka’s character.





QUESTIONS AND IDEAS FOR GOING DEEPER

The way in which the material in this book is organized uses the following pattern:

- You start by reading (and viewing) the story just as it is.
- Next, there are questions and ideas to help you get a deeper understanding of what you have read.
- Finally, you think about how this applies to life as you know it (your own life, or the world in which you live).

You have read the story of King Shaka's reign and his murder. You have focused especially on the challenges he faced as a leader in a time of change. The questions that follow will require you to think what his story has to do with your life and the modern world you live in.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

How accurate is this story ?

- Some details in this storybook have been invented by the author. Does this mean that the story is not true?
- What is the difference between a fictional story and fake news?
- Is story telling important in your family? Why?

The history of King Shaka's time

- In what ways did the arrival of white settlers affect the Zulu people in King Shaka's time?
- How is your life affected by the history of colonial settlement?

The challenges of leadership

- King Shaka faced the dilemma of how to respond to the British settlers. What did he decide? What would you have done if you had been in his position?
- Think of a time when you had to make a difficult choice. Why was it difficult? How did you decide?

Zulu political structures

- During the Festival of First Fruits, King Shaka spent a lot of his time doing political work. Why did he need to do this?
- Are modern leaders and celebrities able to have private lives?

The role of women

- What effect did the key women in this story have on King Shaka's decisions?
- Why did King Shaka trust his sister's advice?
- In your community, do women have the same status as men? How do their roles differ? How do you feel about this?

Zulu culture and beliefs

- The Zulu people in King Shaka's time believed their ancestors (*amadlozi*) could influence their lives for good or bad. Find examples in this story. What do you believe about the role of your ancestors?
- In Zulu culture it is unacceptable to speak the king's name without his title. Dingane repeatedly refers to "Shaka" instead of calling him "King Shaka." What does this show about his attitude to King Shaka?
- In this story, people consulted herbalists and sangomas who sought wisdom from the ancestors for their health needs. In modern society, who are the people trained to care for our health and spiritual well-being?

Language and naming

- IsiZulu is a very expressive language. Look for examples of images that are used in this book.
- Imagery gives color to the language we use. Make a list of some images and idioms that we commonly use in English.
- How was your name chosen when you were born? Does it have a particular meaning?

GLOSSARY

Boer

Dutch settler (literally, "farmer")

Gogo

grandmother

ibutho (plural: **amabutho**)

age-grade regiment

idlozi (plural: **amadlozi**)

ancestral spirits

ikhanda (plural: **amakhanda**)

royal military homestead

imbongi (plural: **izimbongi**)

praise singer

imphepho

aromatic plant used as incense, burned during Zulu ceremonies

inkosi (plural: **amakhosi**)

chief/king

inkosikazi (plural: **amakhosikazi**)

female elder, part of the royal house, or principal wife

inyanga (plural: **izinyanga**)

traditional healer

isangoma (plural: **izangoma**)

diviner, witchdoctor

izibongo

praises, chanted in honor of a king or influential person

isigodlo

the royal enclosure at the upper end of the *ikhanda*; also the women of the king's household

isiZulu

the Zulu language

iziYendane

the name of one of Shaka's regiments (*isiYendane* is literally a person with a strange hairstyle)

inkosi yami

my chief/my king

umKhosi

The annual Zulu Ceremony of the First Fruits

umuthi (plural: **imithi**)

traditional medicine; more specifically occult medicine for ritual purposes

PRONUNCIATION

isiZulu contains some sounds which are not used in English, but it uses letters from the English alphabet to represent them.

CLICK SOUNDS: C, Q, AND X

- c** To make the sound of the letter "c," suck the tip of the tongue against the palate, just behind your front teeth and then pull it away. This makes a soft click sound. It is like the sound English speakers use to show sympathy ("tsk.")
- q** To make the sound of the letter "q," suck the tip of the tongue against the roof of your mouth, and then pull it away suddenly. This makes a hard click, like the sound English speakers use to imitate the sound of a horse's hoof on hard ground.
- x** To make the sound of the letter "x," suck the side of the tongue against the inside of your cheek, and then pull it away suddenly. This is the sound that English speakers use to call a horse.

ZULU PRONUNCIATION OF TH, PH AND KH

- th** The English sound "th" (as in "thank" or "this") is not used in isiZulu. The letter combination "th" in isiZulu is sounded like the English letter "t." ("Sithole" sounds like "Sitole.")
- ph** "ph" is pronounced like "p" and not like "f." ("*Imphepho*" sounds like "impepo.")
- kh** "kh" is pronounced like "k" in "kick;" but "k" in isiZulu is pronounced more like "g," as in "gun." Thus "Shaka" sounds more like "Shaga."