

# *UMahlekehlathini, uMehlomane, and uMbokodo\**

## *Zulu Names for Whites in Colonial Natal*

*by Adrian Koopman*

### **Introduction**

**A**NYONE interested in the history of Durban and Natal in the earlier years of the nineteenth century will be familiar with the names of Henry Francis Fynn and Lieutenant George Francis Farewell. Most readers will also know that Fynn was known to the Zulus as **uMsifile** (or **uSifile**) and as **uMbuyazi weTheku**, and Farewell was known as **uFebana**.<sup>1</sup> But perhaps less is known about how these names came about.

Fynn's names **uMsifile** and **uSifile** came about through confusing the title "mister" with the surname, and conflating, abbreviating and "Zulu-ising" *Mister Fynn* into **Msifile/uSifile**. This was for many years a common and

regular practice, with or without the incorporation of "Mister", and accounts for a considerable percentage of Zulu names given to whites in colonial Natal, such as **uKolise** (< *Collis*), **uJekiseni** (< *Jackson*) and **uMkhize** (< *McKenzie*). For reasons of space, they will not be discussed further in this article.

The Zulu name **uMbuyazi**, according to Lugg (1970:42) means "the hunter that returns empty-handed".<sup>2</sup> Lugg says that "this was a name given to him by Shaka, intended without doubt as a sarcastic reference to the paucity of Fynn's presents". Fynn was usually referred to as **uMbuyazi weTheku** ("Mbuyazi of the Bay", i.e. Durban) to distinguish him from **uMbuyazi kaMpande** ("Mbuyazi, son of Mpande").

\* **Umahlekehlathini** (lit. "he who laughs in the bush"): a heavily-bearded man; **uMehlomane** (lit. "four-eyes"): someone wearing spectacles; **uMbokodo** (lit. "grinding stone"): one who leans hard on his or her employees.



*Henry Francis Fynn, known as both uMsifile and as uMbuyazi weTheku*

The name **uFebana** is a bit of a mystery. If we analyse it in terms of existing Zulu vocabulary, it would appear that the name is derived from *isifebana*, a diminutive form of *isifebe* (“prostitute”, cf. the verb *feba* “carry on prostitution”). This seems an unlikely, if not actually bizarre, interpretation, so it must be assumed that uFebana is in some way a “Zulu-isation” of *Farewell*. This is not as strange as it may seem. The sounds “b” and “v” are frequently interchangeable<sup>3</sup> and if Farewell’s name had been pronounced with a “v” instead of a “w” (as happened regularly in Cockney English), this might have triggered the “b” in uFebana.

It can be seen, then, that there are many factors to be taken into consideration when considering the Zulu names of white people in the earlier years of Durban and Natal, and in this article I attempt to describe some of these factors.

### Sources of data for this article

The earliest source of Zulu names for whites is undoubtedly Carl Faye’s 1923 *Zulu References*, which gives the Zulu names of 45 magistrates who served in various districts in Natal and Zululand prior to 1922. Coupled with this is the Umvoti District Magistrates Court Historical Records [[http://www.greytown.co.za/district\\_records/excerpts.htm#magistrates](http://www.greytown.co.za/district_records/excerpts.htm#magistrates)] which gives the names of 33 magistrates who served over the period 1854 to 1992, 31 of whom have Zulu names.

Lugg gives the Zulu names of many white characters in his 1970 *A Natal Family Looks Back*, and a further 16 such names in his appendix, including the Zulu names of seven of Theophilus Shepstone’s 10 children. My 1986 study of Zulu names gives a one-page list of Zulu nicknames for white government officials which I collected in the late 1970s; while the five volumes of the James Stuart Archive (Webb & Wright, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1986, 2001) give many Zulu names for early nineteenth century explorers, traders and missionaries. Turner’s 1997 article gives a considerable number of Zulu names for whites collected roughly in the 1980s, as well as in-depth discussion on the processes of naming involved. And then finally, Steve Burns<sup>4</sup> has given the author access to his unpublished collection of Zulu names for white employees of the KZN Sharks Board (Natal North Coast area), for white farmers on the North Coast, and his own Zulu names and praises, all of these also dating from the 1980s.

The data discussed in this article, then, covers the period of the first white settlers in Natal from the 1820s to the period just before the first free elections of 1994. The names could thus be seen

as representative of Zulu names for whites during the whole of the period of “colonial Natal”.

While Xhosa names for whites are not strictly the subject of this article, De Klerk’s two articles (1998 and 2002) provide useful theoretical backing to cross-cultural and cross-linguistic naming, and she provides an extensive data base of notable whites in the history of the Eastern Cape who have received Xhosa names. I include some of these in this article where they provide interesting counterpoints to the Zulu examples.

### **Names, identities and interpretations**

Not all the Zulu names discussed in this article are linked to a specific person. The Zulu names are linked to specific, named individuals in the James Stuart Archive, Faye’s list of magistrates, the Umvoti Magistrates list, most of Lugg’s examples, and De Klerk’s list of notables in the Eastern Cape. On the other hand, the names given by Koopman, Turner and Burns are “anonymous” in the sense that they are not linked to any named individual, but are rather names for “a person with a hot temper” or a “person who always walks very fast”, and so on.

As to the interpretations of the name (in other words its underlying or literal meaning, and the perceived message it contains), these occur at three levels: the interpretation of the bearer (assuming that he or she knows his or her Zulu name), the interpretation of James Stuart, Carl Faye, Noleen Turner, Steve Burns, Vivian de Klerk and the other collectors of Zulu (or Xhosa) names for whites, and then the interpretation of the present author. These interpretations are not always the same. An excellent

example is the name **uMbokodo**, which Faye (1923:22) gives for magistrate R.A.L. Brandon.<sup>5</sup> The name is derived from the Zulu noun *imbokodo* (“grinding stone”),<sup>6</sup> and it is easy to interpret this as a name for a person who is hard in his dealings with other people, who “grinds them down” in the work environment. Magistrate Brandon’s own interpretation of this name is not known (nor do we know whether or not he was aware that he had a Zulu name), but Faye’s interpretation of this name is that it refers to a man who is “polished and smooth and all round with knowledge”. There are a number of examples of Faye’s glowingly positive interpretations. One that stands out is the name and its linked praises which he gives for magistrate A.D. Graham: **uZombeyana, uZombeyan’ okwela ngoti, okwela ngezihlangu zamadoda**, for which he gives the interpretation “The warrior who climbs by a stick, yea, climbs over the shields of men”. The section “who climbs by a stick, yea, climbs over the shields of men” is perfectly accurate (apart from the insertion of the unnecessary “yea”), but his interpretation of **uZombeyana** as “warrior” is suspicious, to say the least. Doke and Vilakazi (1958:897) give the sole meaning of the noun *uzombeyana* as “evasive person, one not straightforward”. One finds a similar avoidance of a highly critical name in the Mvoti Magistrates list. In this list of 33 magistrates, 31 have Zulu names, and of the 31 Zulu names, 29 have a meaning given. The two that have no meaning given are **uDhlovunga**, a name for magistrate J.W. Cross, who served from 1904 to 1907, and **uSomnyanya**, the Zulu name of V. Smit, magistrate from 1986 to 1991. The noun *udlovunga* is glossed in Doke and Vilakazi (1958:160) as “ruf-

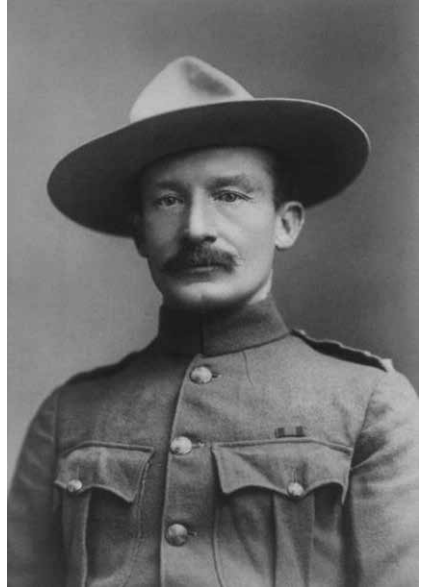
fian, wild, violent person”, and uSomnyanya is almost certainly a compound of the name-forming prefix *-so-* with the meaning of “figure of authority” in this context and the verb *nyanya* “have an aversion toward, dislike”.

One can understand why Faye should have gone for glowingly positive interpretations, even if some of them were quite inaccurate. He was at the time of the publication of *Zulu References* a senior interpreter for the magistrates courts of Natal, and many of the men whose Zulu names he lists were still alive and in positions of authority.

As to self-interpretation, de Klerk points out (2002:150) of the Xhosa names for whites that while some whites, particularly farmers and missionaries (and this is true of the Zulu context), were fluent in Xhosa, a significant number were not and “simply had to accept their Xhosa nicknames at face value and hope it was not derogatory”. Often the name-bearer’s interpretation (or that given to him) was not the same as the interpretation of the coiners of the name. De Klerk gives an example (2002:161):

Professor Mtuze ... told of a superintendent known to him whose Xhosa name was *umlomo* [mouth]. The bearer was told it was because he always had such wise words to say, but the coiners all knew that the real reason was that he was a “loudmouth”.

For an excellent example of creative reinterpretation of one’s own nickname, we need to look no further than Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement. Jeal (1989:177), in writing about Baden-Powell’s several night-time scouting excursions in the Matopo Hills “seeking



*Robert Baden-Powell, known both as ‘Impeesa’ (uMpisi) and as uMhlalaphansi*

to establish the precise whereabouts of a Matabele impi”, says:

He was delighted to discover that some Matabele had been heard calling him “Impeesa”: the hyena or creature that skulks by night. Thinking it sounded more complimentary, Baden-Powell changed the hyena into a wolf, producing “the wolf that never sleeps” as his own translation.

This re-interpretation has persisted. In *The Scout Trail*, published in 2004, more than 100 years after Baden-Powell’s nocturnal skulking, we read:

Later [Baden-Powell] was in Matabeleland ... where he was given the nickname of “Impeesa”, the Wolf that Never Sleeps, because of the many night scouting trips he made, spying out where troops were hiding.

(Macey, 2004:33)

This was not the first of Baden-Powell’s African names to be subjected to his

creative impulses. In an earlier hunting expedition, in “Portuguese Mozambique” in 1885, Baden-Powell “acquired the nickname of M’hlapanzi” (Jeal, 1989:119). The name is derived from Zulu *hlala* (“sit”) and *phansi* (“down”, “on the ground”), and Baden-Powell translated it as “the man who lies down to shoot”. He then explained in his autobiography that the nickname was a compliment since the word had the subsidiary meaning of “the man who lays his plans carefully before putting them into practice”. In fact, the word *umhlalaphansi* in Baden-Powell’s time meant “a lazy lounging around, with nothing to do” (see Bryant 1905:237). Bryant gives as example *Badla ngomhlalaphansi* (“they enjoy a life of sweet indolence, merely lounging around”). Clearly, as with “skulking hyena” above, this meaning did not suit Baden-Powell at all.

### The names and their categories

Zulu names for whites can conveniently be divided into three major categories: those names which refer to the physical features of the bearer, those which refer to the personality of the bearer, and those that refer to characteristic behavioural patterns (for example, typical speech patterns or ways of walking). To these three categories I add a special minor category of names based on Zulu bird names, and another where the names are Zulu translations of the bearer’s originally surname (“loan translations” or “calques”).

### Physical descriptions

I will start here by looking at names which describe notably tall, short, fat, or thin people (i.e. overall body shape), and then go on to look at names which

refer to specific parts of the body, starting at the top with names that refer to hair, and making my way downwards until we reach the toes.

First up is the name **uNtamb’ende kaLayini** (lit. “Mr Long-String son of Mr Line”), where “line” refers to a railway line. This is an extremely well-known Zulu praise for an exceptionally tall person and it is discussed again below under the heading “Core Images”. Burns explains that the bearer of this name, a farmer near Balgowan, is 6ft 8 and “they say he looks like an electricity pylon”. This immediately brings to mind Turner’s example of a name for a very tall man: **uMbhoshongo** (“Mr Tower”). Turner also gives us the name **uNyonende** (“Mr Tall-bird”), another name common among the praise-names of Zulu youths, where it often occurs as *Yinde lenyoni ayiboni izulu* (“it is [so] tall this bird it doesn’t see the sky”).<sup>7</sup> Lugg (1970:49) gives the Zulu name of Theophilus Shepstone’s second son William as **uNsokonsokwana**, glossing this as “the tall, thin and stately one”. While some people are exceptionally tall, others are noticeably short. The Mvoti Magistrates List gives the name **uSinqamu** for magistrate E.D. Hickman, who served from 1975 to 1986, and glosses this as “piece cut off”, but another meaning of the Zulu noun *isinqamu* is more likely – “short person”). JSAlI:267 refers to Captain James Saunders King’s return to Port Natal when he built himself a house on the Bluff. This house was later occupied by Thomas William Bower whom the “natives” called **uMfitshane**. This name is based on the Zulu adjective *-mfishane* (“short”) and the name is another reminder that the sound “sh” (as in uShaka) was in those early days pronounced “tsh”

(as in uTshaka, written by earlier writers as “Chaka”). An amusing Zulu name for an exceptionally short man is **uSmehlane** (a slang word for a “nip” of Smirnoff or cane spirit, in other words a “short” of liquor). Burns, who gives this name, recalls the bearer of this name as “being only about 5ft tall”. The word is recognised by Zulu speakers of varying ages today (2014), and is one of the few slang words that lasts long enough to make it into a dictionary, appearing in Nyembezi (1992:298) as *isimehlane*, with the meaning “ibhodlela elincane likagologo” (“a small bottle of liquor”). Short and fat is seen in Turner’s example **uNgulubencane** (“little pig”).

Large and well-built people are seen in Turner’s example **uGandaganda** (“Mr Tractor” – a “large and physically powerful foreman”) and in **uNkunzenkulu** (“big bull”), the Zulu name given to magistrate L.J.J.E. Bester, at Mvoti Magistrates Court from 1957 to 1964. Men with large bellies are referred to in **uBhanelesaka** (< *ibhande* “belt” + *lesaka* “of the sack”, where Burns explains that this farmer had a huge stomach and his belt literally looked like a belt tied around a sack), and **uMaxuku** (a Xhosa example from Mtumane [2005:43] derived from the verb *ukuxukuzela* “walk in oversized trousers” – a name for a man with a large belly requiring exceptionally large trousers).

From general shapes we move now to specific body parts, starting with the hair, as in **uMadloldombiya** (< *amadloldombiya* “long, untidy, dishevelled hair”). This name from Turner (1997:62) clearly has the same base as Burns’ example **uMadlodlo** (a man whose thin wisps of hair almost stood

on end. Burns notes “an early balding guy from Phumula whose thin wisps of hair almost stood on end. He looked a little like a blond Charlie Chapman”).<sup>8</sup> Also referring to hair is the name **uStadyami** (< *isitadiyamu* “stadium”. Burns’ explanation (pers. comm. October 2013) is:

This person has a shiny bald top to his head and hair growing around the sides. The hair on the side looks like the stadium seats and the bald patch looks like the playing field in a football stadium. In 2010, the year of the Football World Cup played in South Africa, this person was briefly referred to as **u2010**.

Turner’s example of a name for a bald person is less complex: **uMashibilika** (from the verb *shibilika* “be smooth, slippery”).

One of the officials who worked in the Municipal Bantu Administration when I was there in the 1970s was named **uBusobendlazi** (< *ubuso* “face” + *bendlazi* “of the mousebird”), a reference to his round face. Apparently when he first started working there, it was shortly after he had returned from a prisoner-of-war camp after the Second World War, and he received the name **uBusobendlala** (Mr Face of Famine), to be changed later to uBusobendlazi. De Klerk (2002:157) gives the Xhosa name **uBusobengwe** (< *ubuso* “face” + *bengwe* “of the leopard” – so named because of the freckles on his face) for William Thompson Brownlee, the second son of Charles Brownlee, chief magistrate of Transkeian territories in the 1920s.

From hair on the head we move to facial hair. It is generally accepted that facial growth comes more easily to men of European descent than it does to black South Africans. For this

reason, even moderate beards often elicit a call of *Ntshabe!* (“Beard!”)<sup>9</sup> from passers-by. By all accounts, though, the bearers of the following names were exceptionally well-endowed with facial growth.

Bulpin (1969:247), writing about Estcourt in 1866, states

The original magistrate still lorded it over the place. He was John Macfarlane, a great character, known as iNdaba ineSilevo (the law with a beard) to the Africans, on account of the colossal whiskers on his face.

Thomas Jenkins at the eMfundisweni mission in Pondoland at the time of Dick King’s famous ride to Grahamstown<sup>10</sup> was given the name **uMarwanqana** (“the little man with whiskers”). De Klerk (2002:158) says that **uNdevu** (Xhosa: “whiskers”) was the name of Sir Walter Currie and quotes Brownlee (1975:63) as saying “... him what the Xhosas called Ndevu because he had a long beard that came right down over his weskit, or rather where his weskit ought to have bin”.

Turner gives three examples: **uMahlekehlathini** (a commonly used Zulu word for a heavily bearded person, literally meaning “he who laughs in the bush”); **uHlahlasikapelepele** (literally “the chilli-pepper bush”) and the splendid **uMadevuphulinkomishi** (literally “he whose whiskers break the cup”).

Names referring to eyes are **uMehlamamba** (“eyes of the mamba”) and **uNomvukuzane** (the feminising prefix *no-* with *imvukuzane* “mole”). Burns says of the first that it is the Zulu name of a farmer from Richmond “who had piercing black eyes, and an attitude to match!”, while Turner explains the second as a name for a white woman who had “slit eyes”. Several sources have

recorded the name **uMehlomane** (lit. “four eyes”) as being used for a person wearing spectacles,<sup>11</sup> but Turner gives a different interpretation when she says this name was given to a manager who never tired of telling his employees that he was watching them all the time with the two eyes in the front of his head and the two eyes at the back. Turner also gives **uDlubu** (Mr Glass Eye, from *udlubu* “ground bean”) and **uMehlembuzi** (Mr Half-closed Eyes, from *amehlo* “eyes” + *embuzi* “of a goat”).

Still staying on the head, we note the four names **uZikhalozembuzi**, **uKhalempongo**, **uThekwane** and **uChakide**. Turner gives **uZikhalozembuzi** (< *izikhalo* “nostrils” + *zembuzi* “of a goat”) for a man with big nostrils. **uKhalempongo** (“Mr Ram’s Nose”) was the name of an official at the Municipal Bantu Affairs office in the 1970s, as was **uThekwane** (Mr Hamerkop – the bird *Scopus umbretta*, so named, I recorded at the time, “because of the shape of his head”). Turner and De Klerk’s examples of white people named uThekwane, however, refer to vain, conceited show-offs, and I will discuss these under the heading “Names referring to birds” below. Burns explains the origin of the name **uChakide** (“mongoose”) as referring to “a thin guy with a very small head”. Turner gives two Zulu names for women with large breasts – **uFriesland** and **uMabele**. The first is derived from the *Friesland* dairy cow with large udders, and the second is more simply derived from *amabele* “breasts”, although as Turner notes, the woman so named also had the English name Mabel. Slightly less specific in terms of largeness is **uNozinyathi** (< *no-* + *izinyathi* “buffaloes”), the Zulu name of Theophilus Shepstone’s youngest

daughter Florence, explained by Lugg (1970:49) as “because of being plump like a young buffalo cow”.

Our last examples concern legs and knees. Turner records the name **uMathangetshitshi** (Mr Lovely Thighs, < *amathanga* “thighs” + *etshitshi* “of the young maiden”) and she also gives the curious name **uMadolokatsotsi** (lit. “the knees of a *tsotsi*”) for a person with ugly knees. From my own collection of Zulu names for Bantu Affairs officials comes **uZinti** (“sticks”), a name for a man with very thin legs. If I remember correctly, **KwaZinti** (“the place of Mr Sticks”) was the name given to the building (now demolished) where the Influx Control section of Bantu Administration was housed. Another person with thin legs was magistrate C. Foxon, for whom Faye (1923:22) gives the Zulu name **uMcondo, uMcondo azimilele**. Faye, with his own agenda for positive interpretation, says that this means “He who stands out”, but in fact the expression *umcondo azimilele* is a well-known Zulu expression, with Doke and Vilakazi (1958:124) giving *umcondo* as referring to “thin, scraggly leg, e.g. of fowl”, and the expression *UMcondo kaZimelela* as meaning “Mr Thin-legs, son of Mr Walk-with-sticks”, a praise-name used for “leggy individuals”. Bryant (1905:80) says of this phrase that it is “used derisively of a person with scraggy legs”.

Still on the topic of legs, we note that William Bazley, a settler on the Natal South Coast in the second half of the nineteenth century, a man with a great love for dynamite (see Bulpin 1969:361) was named **uGwembeshe** (“the bow-legged one”). He was the son of John Bazley, a Byrne settler in 1850, known as **uMahalavu** (“Mr Spades”), probably, as Bulpin says (1969:159),

because he built a mill and various other constructions and generally “became the mechanical life of the place”. JSAIV: 244 refers to the younger Bazley as **uGwembeshe kaMahalavu** (“Mr Bow-legs son of Mr Spades”).

### Personality types

A considerable number of Xhosa and Zulu surnames for whites reflect their personality, such as the name **uZithulele** (“Mr Keeps-quiet to himself”). I recorded this name for a senior official in the Municipal Bantu Administration in Durban in the 1970s; Lugg (1970:58) gives this as the Zulu name of John Royston, originally a store owner at St. Faith’s, but later a soldier who served in “the Zulu War, the Anglo-Boer War, the Bambata Rebellion and the first Great War”. He was later known as Brigadier “Galloping Jack” Royston. The English nickname seems somewhat at odds with the Zulu name.

A name commonly found for a person with a hot temper is **uPelepele** (“hot chilli peppers”). There are several examples in my data lists. Turner (1997:55) says, “This name is a common nickname which was recorded in eight environments to describe a hot-tempered person”. Presumably the same connotation is found in **uTshisiwe** (“one who burns”), a name given to E.T.J. Stowers, magistrate of the Mvoti Magistrates Court from 1930 to 1932. Based on the same verb *shisa* (“burn”) is Sharks Board official **uShisambango** (“burn up the dispute”), a man described by Steve Burns as a “short, aggressive field officer who would not agree with anything”. Using a plant-based metaphor in the same way as uPelepele is **uMhlakuva** (“castor-oil plant”), a name Lugg (1970:49) gives for Theophilus Shepstone’s third son





Brigadier "Galloping Jack" Royston,  
known as **uZithulele**

Theophilus (known as "Offie"), with Lugg explaining this as "[a man] forever 'going off pop' like the seeds of this plant when expelled from the pod on ripening". A similar type of person is referred to by a different metaphor from the natural world: **uBhejane** ("black rhinoceros"), a name which Turner says refers to "an aggressive person, always on the attack". This sounds like the kind of person to avoid, as was obviously also the case of magistrate M. Stuart, serving at Mvoti from 1876 to 1877, who had the Zulu name **uMcopela** ("be careful of possible danger"). Also someone to avoid would have been Mvoti magistrate J.W. Cross (1904-1907), named **uDhlovunga** ("ruffian; wild violent person"). C.R. Saunders, chief magistrate and civil commissioner for Zululand in 1906, was given the name **uMashiqela** ("dictator", "one who uses force in government").

Quite different to these wild, violent ruffians and dictators was S.B. Beningfield, who settled in Natal in 1840 (JSAIL:305 fn). His Zulu name **uMangcingci** is derived from the Zulu exclamation *ngcingi!* ("how happy I am!") and the related verb *ngcingiza* "be happy, show delight, etc."

Three sharp-minded magistrates are reflected in the names **uMangotobana** ("intelligent guesser")<sup>12</sup>, **uMkhonto** ("spear") and **uMhabhama** ("he who pounces, is quick to detect"). The first two are Mvoti magistrates, W.A. Burton (1951 to 1955) and J. van R. Pietersen (1969 to 1974) respectively; the third is a name Faye gives for G.V. Essery. Rather different in mental acuity is the person somewhat cruelly referred to as **uLamthuthu** ("battery chicken"), a name Turner records for a secretary considered not to be too bright. Battery chickens are considered to be far more stupid than farmyard chickens which have to deal with the realities of life.

Turner also gives the following four Zulu names which refer to character: **uNtabaka-yikhonjwa** ("the mountain is not pointed at"),<sup>13</sup> a reference to a person not easily confronted; **uMangqafane** (lit. "a burr that gets into sheep's wool and pricks the skin"), a name for a cheeky, irritating person; **uHlakan-yane** (the well-known half human, half mongoose trickster character from Zulu folktales, a reference to a cunning person); and **uNkunzikayihlehli** (< *inkunzi* "bull" + *kayihlehli* "does not withdraw", a person always willing to enter into a fight.)

Our last example of a name referring to personality is **uMsimbithi** ("ironwood tree" (*Millettia grandis*) – from his strong, steadfast character).

### Characteristic behaviour

My first example here is **uMakhanda** or **uMakhanda-khanda** (“heads”, “many heads”), a name given to Commandant Sighart Bourquin, head of Bantu Administration in Durban in the 1950s and 1960s. He was a renowned Zulu linguist and historian, with a superb library of books on Zulu history. When he was asked a question about Zulu history or culture for which he had no answer, he would say, “I’ll give you the answer tomorrow,” then go back home and find the answer in his extensive library. On giving the answer the next day, the Zulus would say, “Oh, he went home to consult with one of his other heads.” (See Gillings 2004.) J.E. Fannin, magistrate at Mvoti from 1887 to 1899, was also given the name **uMakhanda**, but no reason has been recorded. Lugg (1970:49) says that Theophilus Shepstone’s youngest son Walter was named **uKhanda** because he was “the man with brains”.

Three other officials from the Bantu Administration at the time as Bourquin with names referring to habitual behaviour were **uGudlulwandle** (“skirt the sea”, from his habit of riding his bicycle on the sea-shore every morning), **uMaqalaza** (Mr Keeps-glancing-around), and **uMphethiza** (“Mr To-and-fro”, from his habit of walking up and down his office whenever discussing a problem).

Walking and walking styles account for a surprising number of Zulu names for white people. Mvoti magistrate W.D. Wheelwright (1877 to 1887) was known as **uRoqoza** (“dragging feet while walking”) and Mvoti magistrate I.J. de Villiers (1964-1968) as **uMashe-sha** (“one who moves or acts quickly”). R.C.A. Samuelson, author of the King Cetshwayo Zulu Dictionary and a 1925



*Commandant Sighart Bourquin,  
known as **uMakhanda** or  
**uMakhanda-khanda***

Zulu Grammar, was known as **uLub-hembhedu**, which either means “person who walks with stiff, rigid gait” or “person of resolute determination”. Faye gives **uMqwakuza** (“he who walks actively, in spite of stiffness”) as the Zulu name for magistrate L.A. Crosse, while De Klerk gives the Xhosa name **uNoqakatha** (< feminising prefix *no-* + Xh. verb *qakatha* “to walk with a firm gait”), for Dr Jane Waterston, first principal of the Lovedale Girls School in 1868. Turner’s example **uNkalankala** (“crab”) for a person who never walked in a straight line is echoed in De Klerk’s Xhosa name **uNonkala** (Xh. “crab”) for early Queenstown businessman Mr E. Crouch, who “had a fast walk, leaning forward with one side rather in advance of another”. Faye gives the name **uMbhekaphansi** (< *bheka* “look” + *phansi* “down”) for H. Sangmeister, assistant magistrate at Mvoti from 1915 to 1920. Faye explains this name as “The Contemplative One”, adding that literally the name means “the one who

walks with bowed head”. Steve Burns has the same name in his list of Natal Sharks Board Officials, but treats it differently, saying “Our Senior Field Officer [named **uMbhekaphansi**] had the habit of looking at the ground wherever he walked. How he never walked into something amazed everyone”.<sup>14</sup> Note there is no mention of “the contemplative one” here.

Turner’s “walking names” include **uBhodloza** (< *bhodloza* “smash through”, so named from his aggressive manner of walking); **uMazenze** (< *amazenze* “fleas”, a fast-moving woman), and **uGundane** (< *igundane* “rat”, a name which Turner interprets as “Mr Fast-Mover-Found-Everywhere”).

Turner’s “non-walking” personality-trait names include **uGedleyihlekisa** (“one who pretends to laugh” < *gedla* “gnash teeth” + *hlelekisa* “cause to laugh”, an interesting name for a white person as it is also the personal name of the current South African president Jacob Zuma);<sup>15</sup> **uKhombanathingi** (“one who points at nothing”, said of a manager who insisted on showing his workers every insignificant detail of jobs given to them); **uMacoshamaphepha** (“Miss Neat-and-Tidy” < *cosha* “pick up” + *amaphepha* “papers”) and **uLwembu** (Miss Spider), from her habit of wrapping her arms around all and sundry when greeting them. This boisterous greeting habit brings to mind Faye’s example **uShay’emhlane** (< *shaya* “hit” + *emhlane* “on the back”). Faye gives this for Mvoti magistrate G. Brunton Warner (1919 to 1923); the Mvoti Magistrates List gives the name as **uMashayemhlane** (“one who strikes backs”). The back-striking referred to here is surely of the “hail-fellow-well-met” type of back-slapping, a habit totally foreign to Zulu culture and thus remarkable

enough to elicit a name. We must note, however, that Lugg (1970:51) gives the name **uMashayemhlane** (which he explains as “Mr Back Lasher”) for an unidentified magistrate<sup>16</sup> because he was “prone to impose lashes”. Again, we have an issue of ambiguous interpretation.

The name **uGwalagwala** (“loerie bird”, because he always wore a feather from this bird in his hat), was given to Henry Francis Fynn junior, son of **uMbuyazi weTheku**.<sup>17</sup> What is particularly interesting about Fynn junior’s Zulu name uGwalagwala relates to the praises of his father. Cope (1968:192-195) records 31 lines of praises for Fynn senior, of which the first two lines are

*UMbuyazi weTheku!*  
(Mbuyazi of the Bay!)

*UJoj’ ovel’ emaMpondweni*  
(The long-tailed finch that came from Pondoland)

Cope (1968:192) explains “long-tailed finch” in a footnote as

For many years Fynn always wore a bunch of tail-feathers of the *sakabuli* (Longtailed Widow bird) in his hat. He prized it because it had been presented to him by Shaka.

One wonders whether Fynn junior had similarly received his loerie feather from royalty. In Swazi culture the red feathers of the *igwalagwala* bird are *de rigueur* for royalty (worn in the hair rather than in a hat) and many royal family members of the Zulu clan do so as well.

To continue with names referring to habitual behaviour, let us consider three examples from Burns referring to officials of the Natal Sharks Board, beginning with **uManduva** (< *induva* “anything of little value”). Burns gives

a lengthy explanation of this Zulu name for this Natal Sharks Board official, which can be summed up in his (Burns') own words: "On the whole he was a useless, lazy individual, who did as little as he could possibly get away with". Also from Burns is the name **uMatatazela** (< *tatazela* "be agitated, act in a flurried manner"). Burns' hilarious description of how this white Natal Sharks Board employee would try to launch a boat makes it all too clear why he received this Zulu name. A rather more positive name is **uNkonka** (< *inkonka* "male bushbuck": a competent boat operator in the Sharks Board who (in Burns' words) "bobbed and weaved his way out to sea, similar to the gait of a bushbuck ram").

Returning to plant metaphors, Lugg (1970:51) gives **uMbabazane** ("Mr Stinging Nettle") as the Zulu name for "a magistrate who meted out punishment in a quiet, gentle manner, but whose sentences always had a sting in their tails". De Klerk gives the Xhosa name **uZwinye** (Xh. "one word") for nineteenth century magistrate Mr Welsh, "so-named because he was known never to depart from his word". Talking of words, some nicknames are given because a person continually uses the same words or expression. The first examples here are of Xhosa names. One such person was the Gaika Commissioner Charles Brownlee, father of **uBusobengwe** mentioned above, who in 1857 tried hard to stop the cattle-killing started by the prophecies of Nongqawuse. He would ride up and down the country saying, "Nongqawuse's prophecies will *never* come true, *never!*" The Xhosas named him **uNaphakade** (< Xh. *naphakade* "never"). Another example concerns Michael Goss, trader near Idutywa in



*Charles Brownlee, known as  
uNaphakade*

the Eastern Cape in the 1800s, who could not tolerate slowness on the part of his servants, and was in the habit of calling out "Banja Gou!" (in today's Afrikaans this is *baie gou*). The closest Xhosa approximation was *banja ru*,<sup>18</sup> and Goss was accordingly given the nickname **uMbanyaru**, a name which passed on to his son Eddie.<sup>19</sup> Mtumane (2005:47) gives the Xhosa nickname **uDyongwana** (< Afrik. *jong* "youth" + diminutive suffix *-ana*). This nickname was given to a farmer who was always calling out "Mayiz' aph' eny' idyongwana!" ("Let one of the young ones come here!"). Mtumane (2005:45) also records the Xhosa name **uNothusile** for a woman who liked startling her employees and would then say "Ngo-kothusile!" ("I have startled you!"). The name uses the feminising prefix *no-*. Lugg (1970:50) says that **uKhiphikasi** ("Mr Remove the Thrash") was the name of a "cane farmer whose knowledge of Zulu was limited to this phrase". Lugg (1970:51) also gives the name

**uManzekhofi** (“Mr Coffee Water”) for Sir Harry Escombe,<sup>20</sup> whose first call in the morning (says Lugg) was “Manzi coffee, Charlie!”, “and so he acquired the name Manzekhofi”.

Farmer Rob Speirs, farming in the Boston area near Pietermaritzburg, has told me (pers. comm. 14.12.2010) that two of his cows have been given names which reflect utterances that he himself is known for. When he wants to indicate that one of his labourers is not pulling his weight, the farmer is wont to call out “Ijoka liyahaya”, a Zulu idiomatic expression meaning literally “the yoke is causing discomfort” (i.e. the yoked ox is not pulling hard enough). The cow is named **uLiyahaya**. Another cow is named **uAngazi** (< Zulu *angazi* “I don’t know”), a reference to Speir’s frequent habit of telling his labourers that “Mr Angazi is not welcome on this farm”.<sup>21</sup>

### Loan translations or calques

A curious way of forming Zulu nicknames for whites is translating the name (or what appears to be the name) into Zulu, a linguistic process known as a “loan translation” or a “calque”. Turner (1997:58) tells of a Mr. Bourne being given the nickname uMathambo (< *amathambo* “bones”).<sup>22</sup> De Klerk has a similar Xhosa example, the name uThambo for Mr Bone. Turner gives four more examples of calques:

**uMashimane** (< *isishimane* “young man unsuccessful in courtship”), for a Mr Bachelor. UMashimane is also the clan praise for the Maphumulo clan, making Mr Bachelor an honorary member of this clan);

**uMpungose** (< the adjective *-mpungga* “grey”), for a man whose surname was Grey. **UMpungose** is also a common Zulu clan name;



*Sir Evelyn Wood, known as uLukhuni*

**uNkinsula** (< *inkinsula* “important person”) for a Mr. Squires; and **uMthimkhulu** (“big tree”) for a Mr Grootboom (< Afrikaans *groot* “big” + *boom* “tree”). UMthimkhulu is an existing Zulu clan name, and also the praise name for the common clan name Hadebe.

Sir Evelyn Wood (who was unhorsed by the Zulus at the battle of Hlobane in 1879, but defeated them later at the battle of Khambule) was known as **uLukhuni**, which could mean “The Tough One” (from the adjective *-lukhuni* “tough”, “hard”), but is more likely to be a calque (cf. *u(lu)khuni* “piece of firewood”). John Bird, resident magistrate in Pietermaritzburg from 1859 to 1876 was named **uNyoniyantaba** (“bird of the mountain”).<sup>23</sup>

John Bird’s Zulu name may be the result of a loan translation, but many whites have been given names which refer to actual birds.

### Names referring to birds

Faye gives the example **uMpangele** (< *impangele* “guinea fowl”) for magistrate G.W. Adamson. Although there is no doubt that *impangele* means “guinea-fowl”, Faye chooses to explain this name as “The Man of Fine Parts”, yet another example of his “creative” interpretations. I recall recording the same name (**uMpangele**) as a nickname for a Zulu youth who was known for walking along whistling and singing, so perhaps magistrate Adamson had the same habit.

The name **uThekwane** (< *uthekwane* “hamerkop”, the bird *Scopus umbretta*) is a name frequently found. Although I gave it above as referring to a man with a head shaped like a Hamerkop, both De Klerk and Turner give it as referring to a vain arrogant man, with Turner pointing out that in Zulu oral traditions, the bird is pictured as staring at its reflection in water and complaining that were it not for the ugly crest on its head, it would be quite a good-looking bird.<sup>24</sup> The James Stuart Archive (I:75) gives uThekwane as the Zulu name of a certain Paul du Pre, who took part in the battle of Ndondakusuka in 1856.

Faye gives **uNgqungqulu** (< *ingqungqulu* “Bateleur Eagle”) for magistrate T.R. Bennett (who served in the Umgeni circuit circa 1906), interpreting it as “The Eagle-Eyed, Watchful One”. The Bateleur Eagle, also known as *indlamadoda* (“the eater of men”) is held in great awe in both the Zulu and the Xhosa cultures and as Godfrey points out (1941:34) “... is one of the great birds of omen. Its very cry indicates trouble somewhere ...”. The Bateleur is used in this way in the praises of Mangosuthu Buthelezi and in the praises of Isaiah Shembe, appearing in Buthelezi’s praises as *Ingqungulu eshay’amaphiko phezu kwaseMona* (“Bateleur Eagle that

clapped its wings above us at Mona’s”) and in Shembe’s praises as *Ingqungulu eshay’amaphiko phezu komuzi wakithi eKuphakameni* (“Bateleur Eagle that clapped its wings above our house at eKuphakameni”).<sup>25</sup> Amongst this august company of eagle-eyed, omen-filled, awe-inspiring eaters of men, Turner’s example of the man called **uKhozi** (Mr Eagle) because he had “forward stooping shoulders” seems very flat indeed.

**UMngqangendlela** is one of several Zulu names which Faye gives for magistrate J.W. Robertson. Doke and Vilakazi (1958:599) give the noun *ungqangendlela* for the Rufous-naped Lark (*Mirafra africana*) and say it means “what goes straight along the path”. Faye interprets it as “he who holds to the path, is acquainted with ways (e.g. Laws, etc.)”, which seems reasonable enough. Faye also gives the alternative form **uNgqengendlela**, as well as **uHhayi**, and **uZangqwashi**, all for J.W. Robertson. Doke and Vilakazi have *uzangqoshi*, *umangqwashi* and *unongqwashi* for the same bird, as well as *uhuyi* and *uhuye*. (See also Godfrey (1941:71), who says that in Northern Natal this bird is known as *uhoyi* and *ingqwayimba*.) With all these various names for the same bird flying around, no wonder Faye needs to give magistrate Robertson four of them.

Faye gives **uMngcelu** as the Zulu name of magistrate G. Walker Wilson, and says it means “the early riser”. Doke and Vilakazi give both *umngelu* and *umncelekeshe* for the “road-lark”, correctly Richard’s Pipit (*Anthus novaeelandiae*). Clearly, what Faye had in mind was a man who “rose with the lark”.

Lugg (1970:50) gives the Zulu name **uNondwayiza** for a “long-legged

gentleman with the stately walk of this bird". Doke and Vilakazi (1958:585) record *unondwayiza* as the name of the "marsh-crake or lily-trotter" *Actophilornis africanus*.<sup>26</sup> Also from Lugg (1970:51) is **uNtungonono** (Mr Secretary Bird), a name for "a tall, thin man with the stride of this bird".<sup>27</sup>

I end this section on names derived from birds with an example from De Klerk (2002:156), who gives the Xhosa name **uNgqatyana** ("sparrow") for Dr Henderson of Lovedale,<sup>28</sup> saying, "He was given the name for a 'mossie' because of his small stature."

### Names, praises and 'core-images'

Faye (1923:21) says of the Zulu names he gives for magistrates that

it is interesting to note that some of these native names are borrowed from the praise names of *amaqawe*, ancient Zulu hero warriors: each of these is indicated by an asterisk.

Ten of his 46 magistrates are marked in this way, showing that a fair proportion (22 per cent) of his magistrates "inherited" already-existing praises. Unfortunately Faye does not identify the "ancient hero warriors" from whom these more modern magisterial warriors inherited the praises, and I have not been able to identify them myself. A number of these "borrowed" praises are given below.

For magistrate T.R. Bennett, whose Zulu name **uNgqungqulu** ("Bateleur") we discussed above, Faye also gives *uBhelende la'Mazinyane*; *uTambo, utambo-lenyoka elamhlab'omzondayo*. This extended praise is said by Faye to mean "The Sharp One". I cannot trace "ubhelende" in any Zulu dictionary, and wonder if it is not an extreme adaptation of "Bennett".<sup>29</sup> If so, the whole praise

translates as "Bennett of the young of animals, Mr Bone, the bone of the snake that stabs the one who hates him".

Magistrate G.O. Cauvin, says Faye, was known as *uLaduma, ladum' obala, kwacengece, lapo kungemunga, kungemtolo*. Faye gives this as meaning "The awe-inspiring warrior, like Thunder", but in fact there is an intriguing landscape in these praises, which translate as "The Thunderer, who thundered out in the open, on the open plateau, where there is no acacia, and no mimosa".

Faye records for magistrate C.O. Griffin the praises *uMhabula, uMhabul'ngwebu kwa'Mashobana*, which he renders as "The warrior who scents war in distant lands, hence, he who is quick to detect, is soon on the spoor". This is perhaps the most extreme of Faye's imaginative interpretations. The Zulu words as they stand mean "The Sipper, who sipped at the froth on the beer at Mashobane's place".

The praises for magistrate R.M. Tanner offer intriguing possibilities. Faye gives *uSibhaha, uSibhah'umanqum'ulimi*, which he interprets as "The warrior like strong medicine". His "strong medicine" comes from the first meaning of *isibhaha*, given by Doke and Vilakazi (1958:20) as "fever tree, *Warburgia breyeri*, whose very hot and ginger-like root-bark is used for malarial fever and as an expectorant". The whole praise means "Isibhaha tree that cuts off the tongue". When we realise that *isibhaha* has a second meaning, namely "domineering, fiery-tempered person", a whole new picture emerges of a magistrate who cuts off anyone who opens his mouth in his (Tanner's) court. Our final example here concerns magistrate H.E. Wallace, who served at Mvoti from 1929 to 1930. The

Mvoti Magistrates List gives his Zulu name simply as **Impunyuka**; Faye expands this as *uMpunyuka, uMpunyuka bempete ezandleni*, which he translates (perfectly accurately, for a change) as “He who escapes, escapes from their very hands”. What is interesting about this is that **uMpunyukabemphethe** (“he who wriggles free as they hold him in their hands”) is a praise-name for current South African president Jacob Zuma, making this the second white person to share an onomastic identity with Zuma (see **uGedleyihlekisa** above).

In the late 1990s I did research into how certain “praise-phrases” or “praise images” transcend genre boundaries. I looked into how certain lines, certain images jumped from one set of royal *izibongo* to another over several generations, how they moved from the praise of kings to the praises of commoners over a hundred years later, how images in the clan praises of one clan ended up in the personal praises of an individual from another clan. This research was presented at a conference on oral poetry in Cape Town in 1998 and published three years later (Koopman 2001). I noted at the time only one example of how an image from the praises of a Zulu king had somehow become part of the praises of a white person:

In Shaka’s praises we find the line *ondande ngankalo wabuya ngokhalo* (“he who glided slowly along one ridge and came back on another”), repeated later in the poem as *ondande ngokhalo olude* (“he who glided along a long ridge”). Several decades after Shaka’s death the writer Rider Haggard visited Natal and was given the Zulu praise *Lundanda undand’ okhalweni* (“tall one who glides slowly along the ridge”). At the time I saw this as a unique example



*Henry Rider Haggard, known as  
uLundanda lundand’ okhalweni*

of a white person inheriting a praise from an earlier “warrior hero”; Faye’s examples, however (and however interpreted!), show this to have been a much more common occurrence.

Gunner (1990:200) refers to phrases which appear and re-appear as “formulas” and says,

A formula may in fact begin by being simply a line borrowed from another praise poem, then borrowed again and so gradually becoming established as a widely-known and useful line.

Her concept of a formula, and what I like to call a “core-image” (a phrase or image taken from a “pool of images” held in Zulu society as a whole), explains Haggard’s Zulu name, as well as the names/praises/phrases **uNtamb’ende kaLayini** (Mr Long-string son of Line), **Nyon’ende** (Mr Tall-bird), and **uMcondo kaZimilele** (Mr Thin-legs son of Mr Walk-with-sticks) and others mentioned above.

A feature common to all genres of Zulu oral poetry (Zulu royal *izibongo*, the *izihhasho* of commoners, clan praises (*izithakazelo*), nicknames and nicknaming, and indeed, the giving of



Zulu names to white people), is that a name, once given, may be further qualified and expanded into a phrase. To illustrate this, let us look at the following extract from Lugg (1970:64), in reference to the Lugg family's beach holiday in 1887:

At Ifafa beach we occupied a cottage owned by a man named Goldstone. He was a queer old stick, about four foot nothing, with a long yellow beard, always shabbily dressed, and from his habit of bobbing up when least expected, was known to the Natives as *Jaz' Manikiniki* or Mr. Tatterdemalion, with the following praises composed in his honour:

*Jaz' manikiniki,*  
*Wena ocatsha ekweneni njengenayidi.*  
(Rags and tatters,  
Who hides in long undergrowth like  
a needle.)

We see here that the *name* of this individual is *Jaz' manikiniki*, but once this basic name has been extended by *Wena ocatsha ekweneni njengenayidi*, the name becomes "praises composed in his honour".

If a person is given more than one name – and this happens frequently – each name may be expanded into a longer phrase. Once a person is known by four or five praise phrases, he or she no longer is identified by name, but by his or her own praise poem. Names and praise poems, it can be said, effectively belong to opposite ends of the single continuum of oral creativity.

In the final section of this article, I look at examples of white people whose individual Zulu names have been expanded into praise poems.

We have already considered a number of examples of white people with extended praise phrases instead of single one-word names, all taken from Faye's

1923 list of names for magistrates. But as Faye pointed out, these were (or at least he considered them to be) praises "inherited" or "borrowed" from "ancient warrior heroes".

The Zulu name of 1840 Natal settler S.B. Beningfield has already been discussed above.<sup>30</sup> In the James Stuart Archive (II:305) editors Webb and Wright give " ... Beningfield was called *Mangcingci of the people of Saoti's place, the knife that is sharp even among the 'Kaffirs'*". The use of italics here suggests that in Stuart's original notebook, this praise was given in Zulu, but Webb and Wright have chosen to give it in English translation. They keep the original Zulu, however, when referring to the praises of Nathaniel Isaacs (II:267):

Kamu Kengi [Captain James Saunders King] was accompanied by Mis Isisi [Nathaniel Isaacs], a young man afterwards called by natives "*uDambuza m tabate, u zimema ze Ngome*".

Later, in footnote 17 on page 303, Webb and Wright explain the praise:

Isaac's praise-name literally means "the one who waddles, off he goes at speed, the echoes of the cliffs at Ngome". The occasion of him getting this praise was when he went to Zululand and was stabbed by the Kumalo people at the Ngome ...

However, of all the early settlers at Port Natal in the 1820s, it was Henry Francis Fynn who was given extensive praises, almost certainly built up over a number of years, as it is the nature of praises to be added whenever something significant happens in the life of the person praised. Cope explains (1968:190):

Farewell was the leader of the first white settlement at Port Natal ...

... However, it was Fynn who became the great favourite of Shaka and who was in closest contact with the Zulu people; hence his praise-poem.

There is no space in this article to look at any details of Fynn's *izibongo*. Suffice it to say that for Cope (1968:190) Fynn's praise-poem "represents the most primitive type of praise-poem, for it is simply a collection of praises, consisting for the most part of single lines or verses", which is, in fact, as I have pointed out above, how the praises of an individual may accumulate.

It is probable that a number of the earlier white settlers accumulated praises in this way. Unhappily, they do not seem to have been collected. Cope only gives the praises of two white men in his 1968 book – Fynn and Sir Theophilus Shepstone. Cope (1968:191) considers Shepstone's praises to be far more sophisticated and developed than those of Fynn, and even a cursory scan of them shows this to be the case. Again, there is no space for a detailed discussion of the contents of Shepstone's praise, but I would like to look at just one stanza in the 84-line poem. Cope (*ibid*) says of this stanza, "The UKhozi praise ... is a well-developed Shakan praise-stanza: statement plus extension ... development ... and conclusion."

The reason I choose to look at this stanza specifically is to show how a single core-image may be a single name in one case, and a well-developed five-line stanza in another. Above we saw how Turner recorded the Zulu name **uKhozi** ("eagle") for a tall man with forward stooping shoulders, and we compared this to the use of **uNgqungqulu** ("Bateleur"). Compare now Turner's unidentified stooped-shouldered individual to Theophilus Shepstone:



*Theophilus Shepstone, known as  
uSomtsewu*

*UKhozi lwakithi lumazipho,*  
(Our own eagle with the sharp talons.)  
*Ebelubal' amadoda;*  
(That accounted for certain men;)  
*Ngoba lubal' uCetshwayo kaMpande,*  
(For it accounted for Cetshwayo son  
of Mpande.)  
*Lwamthatha ngamazipho,*  
(It took him in its claws.)  
*Lwamphonsa phesheya eNgilandi;*  
(And threw him over the seas to  
England.)  
*Lwamudla lwamyekelela,*  
(It destroyed him, then gave him a  
respite.)  
*Lwabuya lwamkhafula.*  
(And eventually spat him out.)

Not quite as developed a metaphor as the above, but along the same lines, is the following extract from the praises of Fynn's contemporary Dick King:<sup>31</sup>

*uNgqungqulu, udladla lwamafu,*  
(Bateleur eagle, plundering talons of  
the clouds.)  
*Yashay' amaphiko kwaduma*  
(That thrashed its wings)  
*Izulu ngokuthukuthela.*  
(And the heavens thundered with rage.)

I end this section on the extended praises of white men by looking at the praise of Steve Burns, who has contributed a number of names discussed in this article.<sup>32</sup>

Burns joined the Natal Sharks Board in 1979 as a young “meshing officer” and was posted to Zinkwazi on the KZN North Coast. Having no money, he spent most of his time at the [Zulu] staff compound “sharing their food and listening to all the Zulu antics”. A master stick-fighter among them took young Burns under his wing and taught him the art of stick fighting, using the shorter blocking stick (*ubhoko*) and the longer striking stick (*isikhwili*). After some time he was challenged by a certain Zondi, who thereafter would fight regularly with him, and beat him every time. Eventually he won a stick fight with Zondi, and thereafter was known by the Zulu name **uSikhwili nobhoko**. After some years with the Natal Sharks Board Burns worked with Clover Dairies as a marketing development manager and worked in various townships and rural areas, accumulating praises as he went. The praises which he has sent me are:<sup>33</sup>

*USikhwili nobhoko,  
Uphume masango sango ukubamba  
mahlolo, umfana kaBurns.  
Enzansi eNhlazuka wazalwa khona,  
Wakhile [phanse kwe]Nkosi Mkhize  
Khabazela Mavovo,  
Waphuza umfula waseLovu,  
Lapha khona izinkomo ziyokha amanzi  
ngophondo zithi ngqi.*

Sikhwili nobhoko (Mr Striking-stick and Blocking-stick),  
He went out through gateway after  
gateway to take hold of “mahlolo”,<sup>34</sup>  
this son of Burns,  
Down south at Nhlazuka is where he  
was born,

He has built (established himself)  
under chief Mkhize Khabazelo Ma-  
vovo,<sup>35</sup>

He has drunk [the water of] the Lovu  
River,

There where the cattle go to draw  
water with their horns and get stuck.

What is particularly noticeable about these praises is how much they draw from the *maskandi* tradition. Maskandi musicians (the word is derived from the Afrikaans *musikant* “musician”) sing ballads to the accompaniment of guitar, concertina or harmonica. The ballads are usually about the travails of life, and almost invariably each song starts with the singer identifying himself. He normally does this by including any or all of the following: his own name, the name of his father, the name of the *induna* (“headman”) or chief under whom he has settled, the name of the river he drinks from, and the name of the mountain, in the shadow of which he sits. Note how many of these are present here.

### Conclusion

Zulu names and the Zulu naming system have been extensively studied over the last 40 or so years. They have been described as filled with meaning, intensely linked to Zulu culture, and in the case of nicknames and praise-names, sharp, witty, amusing, penetrating, and highly allusive. All of these attributes are true of the Zulu names given to white people since the earliest years of contact.

Zulu nicknames, praise-names, and clan praises are all characterised by extensive use of metaphor, and these metaphors are for the most part drawn from the natural world, with names referring to mountains, rivers, the sun, moon and rain. Metaphors referring to

animals and birds are particularly common. In the discussion of Zulu names above, I have shone a small light on names which refer to birds. But there are as many names which refer to animals, and in the names discussed in this article, we have found references to bushbuck, mongooses, crabs and goats among others.

While many of the names discussed above are benign or neutral in their underlying meaning and intent, others are distinctly critical. This again has its roots in the Zulu oral tradition, especially in the genre *izibongo zamakhosi* (the praises of kings and chiefs). Traditionally, the bard (*imbongi*) who composed and performed these praise-poems would concentrate on the good qualities of the person being praised. But he also had a duty to mention (however subtly) shortcoming and imperfections and so to air these publicly and in the hearing of the chief or king being praised. Many of the Zulu names for whites discussed above, particularly those referring to personality and character traits, are decidedly critical. Whether or not these criticisms were aired publicly in the same way as *izibongo* would depend on whether the (white) bearer of the critical names was aware he had such a name, was aware of what it meant, and whether it was used aloud in his or her presence. I think it is fair to assume that many of such persons would have been aware of their names, as the giving of a Zulu name to a prominent white person has been a common practice since the 1820s, and any prominent white person working in daily contact with Zulu speakers would have expected to be given a Zulu name. In many such cases, the original critical intention of the name-coiners may not have coincided exactly with the interpretation later

given by the name-bearer to his white contemporaries, and where a third party was involved, as in the case of Carl Faye recording the Zulu names of magistrates, the published explanation of the Zulu names may have little or nothing to do with their actual meanings. Part of this may well have to do with the deliberate ambiguity in the Zulu names, allowing the Zulu-speaking coiners to smile quietly when they see the negative connotations of a name they have given to a white person being replaced publicly by a different interpretation with a much more favourable connotation.

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#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Cope (1968:190) says that "although [Farewell] was simply a private trader, the Zulus regarded him as **Febana kaJoji** (Farewell, son of King George)".
- 2 Derived from *buya* "to return + -ze [with] nothing".
- 3 For example, Sotho does not have the sound "v", and replaces this with "b" when borrowing words that begin with "v", as in *benkele* from *winkel* and *boroso* from *wors*.
- 4 Director of Amabutho Marketing, based in KwaZulu-Natal.
- 5 Faye does not say where or when these men served as magistrates, only that his list contains the names of people who served up to 1922. Some of Faye's magistrates have been more accurately identified through the Mvoti Magistrates List.

- 6 In its plural form *izimbokodo*, the base of the river name *eZimbokodweni*, recorded for many years on colonial maps as “Umbogintwini”.
- 7 See Koopman 1987.
- 8 Presumably Burns means Charlie *Chaplin* here ...
- 9 Turner gives **uNtshebe** as a Zulu name for a bearded white man, and it is quite a common Zulu name for a bearded person.
- 10 Dick King’s companion Ndongeni’s narrative in JSaIV:246 says, “We got beyond Mzimvubu to a missionary called Marwanqana.”
- 11 Faye, for example, gives this name for magistrates R.G. Boggs and H. Von Gerard.
- 12 I cannot trace the name **uMangotobana** or any parts of it in any Zulu dictionary, so must just take the interpretation given by the Mvoti Magistrates List at face value.
- 13 There are a number of mountains in KwaZulu-Natal with this name, denoting cultural respect for the mountain.
- 14 Steve Burns, pers. comm. 15.10.2013.
- 15 Turner (2000:135) also give uGedleyihlekisa as a name for a dog. She translates it as “relaxed and laughing” as well as “two-faced person” and says the owner “named his dog to let his neighbour know that he suspected the neighbour of being the source of all his problems”.
- 16 But probably G. Brunton Warner.
- 17 All the Fynn family had Zulu names in those days. Frank Fynn, the younger brother of uMbuyazi weTheku, was known as **uPhobana** (“penis”, see JSA I:53), although there is no explanation for this name. He may have been a prolific womaniser.
- 18 In Xhosa orthography, “r” stands for the same velar fricative sound represented in Afrikaans by “g”.
- 19 Both examples from De Klerk 2002: 153, 158).
- 20 Premier of Natal in 1897.
- 21 This is not to say that Mr Speirs does not have his own Zulu name. An undated note from him, delivered in Feb 2014, says that his “childhood dancing name” was **uFahl’ufenisi** (“Crash! goes the fence”).
- 22 Note that as the Zulu vowel system does not have a sound directly equivalent to the “o” in English *bone*, the word “bone” is pronounced as “born” in Zulu.
- 23 Presumably a reference to the fact that Pietermaritzburg nestles in a hollow of hills.
- 24 Godfrey (1941:12), writing about bird folklore in the Xhosa culture, says: “The vain, conceited action of the hammerhead [i.e. hamerkop bird] by the pool is also interpreted proverbially as implying that ‘the eye that sees everything else does not see itself’”. De Klerk’s example refers to “a farmer near Kei Road who was a conceited show-off” (2002:159).
- 25 Gunner and Gwala, 1991:92, 66. See also Koopman 2001:147.
- 26 The current English vernacular name is African Jacana.
- 27 The Zulu name for the Secretary Bird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) occurs as *intungunono* and as *intinginono*.
- 28 The Revd Dr James Henderson succeeded the Revd Dr James Stewart as principal of Lovedale College on the death of the latter in 1905.
- 29 The sounds “l”, “t”, “n” and “d” are all alveolar consonants, and are sometimes interchangeable when English and Afrikaans words are adopted into Zulu, as for example, when “lemonade” becomes *unamanadi*. Earlier we saw how “Fynn” became “[uSi] file”
- 30 **UMangingci**, from Zulu *ngcingci* “how happy I am!”
- 31 Dick King was known as **uDiki**, and as **uMlamulankunzi** (“separator of the fighting bulls”). The praises are in Lugg (1970:52-54). The name uMlamulankunzi appears again, several decades later, in another stirring colonial scene: MacDonald (1994:137), in writing of the famous meeting of Cecil John Rhodes with the amaNdebele chiefs and “indunas” at the Matopos Hills in 1896, says that to the amaNdebele, Rhodes was known as “Umlamulanmkunzi [*sic*] ‘he who separates the fighting bulls’”.
- 32 The information that follows was sent to me by Steve Burns in emails dated 13.10.2013 and 15.10.2013 after I had quite accidentally met him in the small village of uMfolozi in KwaZulu-Natal at the end of September 2013.
- 33 I have corrected his Zulu spelling.
- 34 “Mahlolo” is obscure. He might mean *mihlolo*, which can refer to the beer reserved for the kraal-head.
- 35 Khabazela and Mavovo are clan-praises for the clan name Mkhize.