

# Harry Camp Lugg

1882-1978

At the time of his death in November last year at the age of 96, all the leading Natal newspapers featured obituaries recalling the life and career of Harry Lugg, from court interpreter at the turn of the century, to magistrate, and finally to Chief Commissioner for Native Affairs in Natal. His subsequent appointment to the Health Commission (five years) was mentioned, and his post as Welfare Officer at King Edward VIII Hospital (12 years), from which he retired at about the age of 80. His next appointment (!) was as representative of the Permanent Building Society in its dealings with the Zulu people, and it was he who invented the Zulu equivalent for "Savings Account", *Kwagcinamafa*, "where the inheritances are preserved".

His qualities were widely recognised: administrative ability, fair-mindedness, understanding; an authority on Zulu life, language and culture; the author of several books on early Natal and Zulu history. I would simply like to add that his magisterial sense of justice was surely always tempered by the mercy of his sympathy, and softened by his sense of humour.

Here, however, I would like to record a lesser known quality; that of scholarship. He was a scholar in the real sense of the word: always humble, almost unaware of the extent of his knowledge; always inquiring, always researching into Zulu beliefs and attitudes. He never relied solely on his own knowledge, but would go to the people themselves: old men he had met at the hospital, school teachers, painters or gardeners, men whom he knew to be knowledgeable on particular matters. "The best thing I ever did was to let Mrs Hoernlé persuade me to take the Witwatersrand Diploma in Bantu Studies. It opened my eyes for the first time to the meaning of so many Zulu customs. She was a wonderful woman, Mrs Hoernlé." (She was the first lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand.) How many "authorities" on "native affairs" would admit that they could learn anything from a university diploma?

Although he was so great an authority, he frequently admitted that there were things he did not know about the Zulu people: "I have never lived with them, you know". He was never heard to utter such South Africanisms as "I have lived with Zulus all my life" and "I was born and brought up amongst the Zulus", meaning that the speaker had played with them as a child; as indeed had Harry Lugg, and herded and hunted with them in his boyhood. And yet his knowledge was so deep, stemming not only from memory and experience, but from his scholarly attitude of mind, always seeking to learn; and his perception and interpretation of Zulu concepts stemmed from this same scholarly attitude. No-one has seen to the heart of the Zulu concept of "insila" (personal essence) as has Harry Lugg (see Chapter 1, Zulu Religious Beliefs, in *Life under a Zulu Shield*; also Section



H. C. LUGG

Photograph: *Daily News*, Durban

1, Religion, in *A Guide to the Zulu Social System*). What does the standard Zulu dictionary say? "Body-dirt"!

I had heard about Mr. Lugg for a long time, but I hesitated to approach him, because of his great age and authority. It was he who approached me, after reading about my work in the newspaper, and from then a long series of visits began, and a deep friendship. On my return from long-leave in England at the beginning of 1978, he wrote "I am glad to know you have returned from England, but sorry to find that you are still a long way from me. (I was living in Himeville at the time, still on long-leave.) I have been anxious to see you for many months." Why? While I was away, he had produced his "Guide to the Zulu Social System" and he wanted me to see it. He sent it to me; he incorporated my suggestions; he sent it back: "I hope it will now meet with your approval, but do not hesitate to correct it further if necessary". The grand old nonagenarian to the middle-aged upstart! — the teacher to the disciple. He ended: "You must be finding it very cold at Himeville at this time of the year. I well recall the trips we had to make to hold branch court at the Underberg store in 1900 when I was stationed at Bulwer".

My visits to Mr. Lugg, apart from the mutual interest, were occasioned by his wanting to see me about his work [including the translation of Magema Fuze's *Abantu Abamnyama* (The Black People), the first book ever written in Zulu by a Zulu author, which I had persuaded him to undertake, and which is shortly to be published by the University of Natal Press], and by my wanting to see him about queries arising from the preparation for publication by the University of Natal Press of the James Stuart Archive, a vast collection of manuscript material relating to Zulu traditional life and history, partly in English and partly in Zulu. The editors used to send the difficulties down to me, and I would take the real teasers to Harry Lugg. As his sight and hearing deteriorated, I had to print out the queries in a large hand, and although communication became difficult towards the end, he could still talk from a mind as lively as ever. It was sad to see his fine and informed mind frustrated by the loss of his senses. He could read only by a combination of two magnifying glasses held at different angles, the one to magnify the print and one to magnify the light.

Because of his deafness, Mr. Lugg did not always immediately get the point. On one occasion I asked him what he thought the name Nomagaga meant. He told me about three Nomagagas, one at the time of Shaka, one in the Richmond district, and one in the Greytown district, where, as a young man in his early twenties, he had been sent out to a remote valley to settle a boundary dispute. When he got there, he found a huge crowd of people waiting to receive him and to hear his decision. The boundary seemed quite clear to him, and, at this young age, he had the responsibility to point it out. Nomagaga became very angry, and his men started to threaten that they would fight it out. "I was really scared, and it was terribly hot, a real scorcher. I had only a few sardine sandwiches with me, and a small flask of water, and by the time I got back to Greytown after a long ride, I had the worst headache of my life."

"And what does Nomagaga mean?"

"Oh, it means an emaciated person, skin and bones", which is what I wanted to know, but I would not have missed the rest.

Readers of *Natalia* may be interested to hear Mr. Lugg's answers to some of the Stuart queries:

23.6.72            The king (Shaka) used to be shaved every two months or so.  
*Question*            His head or his face?

*Answer*            The circular patch inside the headring, which should always be bare. Perhaps also the pubic hair, which should likewise not be allowed to grow. The face did not matter — wisps of hair could be allowed to stay, if they grew, and even encouraged and dressed.

23.4.74            One of Colenso's praises was *Indlondlo yasEkukhanyeni*.  
*Question*            Would his viper-like attributes have been his quickness of mind or certain physical characteristics?

*Answer*            *Indlondlo* is an old black mamba with a crest on the back of his head, the remnant of successive sloughings, which the natives call a feather and say it whistles — a common praise-name for an important and powerful person, which need not refer to particular characteristics.

29.8.74            Makhonda was called Dambuza by Dingane.  
*Question*            Why?

*Answer*            Dambuza is a common praise-name and means "toddler" or "totterer". A man could get it as a child and retain it when he grew up, or he could get it because of the way he walked. Europeans are particularly prone to get it because of the way they walk. The man who issued me with my interpreter's certificate in 1902 was known as Dambuza: Mr. Harrison, Under Secretary for Native Affairs. (Mr. Lugg knew everyone who had ever been in the Department of Native Affairs — and could tell stories about them!)

Also the Marole cattle: I had puzzled over the Marole cattle, thinking that *marole* was the Suthu equivalent of *mathole*, and so on. Lugg clicked immediately: Oh, yes, the Marole cattle, *izinkomo zikaMarole*, and continued to relate that when the Boers came to claim their cattle, the Zulus said they were to be found at the place of the headman Marole down yonder, and so off they went. When they got there, they were told that it was not these, but those over there, at the place of another headman. And so they went from pillar to post, and hence the expression *izinkomo zikaMarole*, referring to cattle claimed by the Boers.

13.10.78            The tribe had a medicine which could cause buffalo to leave the forests and come and be herded like cattle. It is found at *incana* where *amaula* are.

*Question*            *incana? amaula?*

*Answer*            The medicine is found on the Oribi Flats (which the local natives used to call *incana* or *incane*) where the oribi (*amawula*)

live. I used to hunt there often with my father when I was a boy. There were so many oribi and they were so tame, that they wouldn't even stand up, let alone run away, when approached. This is why they were called *amawula*, because they seemed to be so foolish. (The Zulu word for "fool" is *isiwula*.)

This was the last Stuart query I raised with Harry Lugg, almost exactly a year before his death. For once he was pleased with himself: "I don't think many people would know about that today". Not many people today would have hunted in the 1890s, and even if they had, they would not have so fine a mind to recall it in this sort of detail.

A. T. COPE

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Mr. Lugg also wrote an article on 'ukweshwama', first-fruit ceremonies, for African Studies in the early days (circa 1930) when it was still called Bantu Studies, under the title *Agricultural Ceremonies in Natal and Zululand*. Otherwise all his publications followed his retirement.

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