

# The origin and development of Zulu Age-sets.

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## 1. Introduction.

As outlined by Bernardi (1985), there is no definitive file of every society, which possesses an age-class system. Although the geographical spread of such systems is not worldwide, there are common themes that run amongst all those societies that practice them. For example, where age-sets exist they function to bring structural aggregation to the society. This is achieved by constantly bringing individuals into the hierarchical system from a young age. Age-sets also distribute power within such a society to commanders, whereby acting as a mediating and controlling force, since all members of the society are at some stage of their lives dominated by the system. Similarly, Baxter and Almagor (1978) argue that age-set systems create cognitive and structural order within, and for, a population. I argue that this is due to the central position that the hierarchies hold within the age-set, leading the population to conclude that this is the only 'legitimate' means of organisation.

Africa has always been the richest continent for such systems, especially within the eastern countries of Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. Africa was, however, not alone in having such an organisational basis, with Asian countries such as Taiwan possessing villages based on age-sets. Similarly, the Ao-Nagas of India, Tanimbar Indians of Indonesia and Pukapuka of the Cook Islands also organised themselves on the basis of age, as did many North and South American aboriginal peoples. However, with the encroachment of the colonial frontier at varying times in the recent past, such age systems are, in all but the most remote groups, a mere feature of historical significance.

Southern Africa had arguably one of the most developed age class systems in the world, typified by the practices of the Nguni people and initiated by a series of migrations and natural disasters from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such societies include the Zulu and Xhosa of southern Africa, the Swazi of Swaziland, the Ndebele of Zimbabwe and the Ngoni of Malawi, with age-sets and regiments becoming integrated within all facets of their societies and providing one of their key organisational bases.

The first thorough work on the anthropology of age-sets was that of Schurtz (1902) who applied evolutionary theory to human societies. He saw stages of sexual promiscuity leading to matriarchy and then patriarchy. In order to pass from matriarchy to patriarchy, males had to form secret societies such as those based on age. Consequently, he saw that females were tied to their kin, whilst males were tied to age. Children were separated from youths, and youths from men. This three-fold distinction represented, in Schurtz's view, the first organisation of society. However, Lowie, who argued that Schurtz's view was too simplistic, effectively destroyed this view. Essentially he saw age-sets as developing out of opposition between the youth and old. Despite these early works, age-set research has only fully developed since World War Two, as it was in these years that anthropology became accepted as an academic profession.

Power for the individual in an age-set is achieved by one's relative position within that particular age-set, and the age-set position within the age-set hierarchy. Consequently, dictatorship and autocracy should not arise since one's ability is constantly mediated by the presence and actions of one's age-set colleagues. However, the Zulu system is far removed from this age-set template. Originating from circumcision guilds, the Nguni system, within which that of the Zulu is perhaps the best known, ensured that age-sets had inextricable links with the military machine. The Zulu system is interesting not only from this perspective, but also in that the position of the age-regiments, which arose from the age-set, were drastically reorganised, as were military tactics, during the reign of Shaka from 1818-1828. Similarly, the modern Zulus are the most racially homogenous member of the Nguni lineage, relatively unaffected by migration and immigration.

The Zulu system of organisation based on age was so successful that the resultant regiments' tactics and efficient mobilisation employed to fight the British in 1879 caused not only the defeat of Chelmsford's Central Column at Isandlwana, but also the eventual downfall of the Disraeli government in Britain. However, following the defeat of the Zulus in the same year, the age regiment system was crushed at the instruction of the ruling British; it was never to emerge again. Could, therefore, a system that had been the organising principle of the powerful Zulu people be totally forgotten, and is it conceivable that a new organisational basis was adopted? It appears that such a question has not, as yet, been posed, (John Laband 2001).

Whereas there is no doubt that the age regiment system did not re-emerge following the Zulu defeat in 1879, in this article, I argue that there are strong parallels of form between 19<sup>th</sup> century age regiment formations and 20<sup>th</sup> century migrant youth gangs, most notably those of the Johannesburg and Durban areas. I have chosen to discuss the gangs of Johannesburg and Durban since both are and have been important economic and political centres, and consequently have attracted a high frequency of migrant youths searching for work, originating from, amongst other areas, Kwa-Zulu Natal.

I argue that age regiments and gang formation reflect an 'inherent' response by the Zulu youth to adverse circumstances afflicting their society. I look specifically at the response of the youth in both eras to similar circumstances. I account for these parallels by examining the *emergence, employment, organisation and decline* of both forms of organisation within the Zulu context, as well as attempting to account for such continuities and discontinuities. (1)

Since the course of this article follows similarities and differences between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century forms of organisation with regard to the emergence, employment and decline of youth organisations, it has been necessary to provide background and contextual information to both forms of organisation. Consequently, in Part Two, the context into which the 19<sup>th</sup> century age-sets and 20<sup>th</sup> century gangs entered into existence, and the environment in which they operated, is discussed within the period 1820-1994. The year 1994 ends this article since it coincided with the end of the apartheid era. Part Two will discuss the prehistoric origins of the Nguni people, as well as the competing theories on the origins of the *Mfecane*, an event that ultimately led to the development of age-sets as regiments. The political landscape of 20<sup>th</sup> century Zululand is also discussed in detail so as to provide a background to the origins of the gang organisations. Consequently, with context examined at the fore, Parts Three and Four can ascertain the nature of the age-sets/regiments and gangs.

Part Three discusses the 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu age-set system within the context of the regiment. The origins, development, form and demise of the age-set and regiment system are considered. This Part is free from comparative analysis and instead concentrates on the detail of what turns out to be a particularly convoluted subject. Part Four provides detail on 20<sup>th</sup> century gang culture in Johannesburg and Durban in the post-1930 era. Again, comparative analysis has been omitted, to provide a more cohesive unit. Part Five concentrates on analysis, as well as concluding the article. This Part also focuses on the degree of parallelism between the two forms of organisation, as well as accounting for such parallels amongst the youth of both periods. I have chosen to take salient points of origin, organisation and identity, involvement with the wider community and decline from both forms of youth organisation, and then compare each side by side. This aids ease of presentation as well as understanding.

## **2. Putting the age-set and gang into context; conflict and political factors (1820-1994) .**

(nb Kya = thousand years ago)

In Part 2, my aim is to discuss the context into which the age-regiment and gangs entered into existence, and the likely factors that led to their development. Both systems are inextricably linked to the circumstances in which they found themselves, and I shall be looking at common factors in both their developments.

The prehistory of the KwaZulu-Natal region of southern Africa has long been a matter of contention. As Mazel (1989) indicates, since the 1960s, a shift to an ecological approach from the culture-historical focus in archaeology precipitated new goals and parameters in research, which have largely remained intact to date. I start the brief background to the Zulu people from the Later Stone Age (LSA), which starts 25kya.

The LSA is perhaps the best researched African Stone Age period due to the good preservation of organic remains, and this is especially the case in the Thukela Basin and Drakensberg regions of KwaZulu-Natal. Archaeologically, the record includes a high frequency of scrapers, adzes and backed stone pieces, as well as pottery from 2kya, ground and polished bone and ostrich egg shell, which has revealed that the Thukela Basin region was intensively occupied in this period. However, hunter gatherers did not keep the area to themselves since from 2-1.5kya, Iron Age populations entered the region from East Africa, exhibiting open air villages, cultivated crops and domestic stock.

Interaction of the two groups can be seen in pottery from the Drakensberg, which although being different in style is seen to have derived in principle from the agriculturists. Maggs (1989) demonstrates that oral history is not detailed enough to establish the origins of such Iron Age populations, but pottery connections have tied them with other sub-equatorial peoples in eastern central Africa. Here the Chifumbaze Complex (Zambia) and sites such as the Ivuna salt works (Tanzania) contain a range of ceramic attributes important in the undecorated Blackburn ceramic tradition, present on South Africa's eastern seaboard from 1100AD. (2) Archaeologically, such pottery indicates that from ±1100-1200AD the Iron Age people of Natal were culturally, linguistically and physically ancestral to the modern Nguni population, from which the Zulus derive. Additionally, wrecked Portuguese and other European sailors on the Zulu coastline reported the use of Nguni terms such as *inkosi* (king) *isinkwa* (bread) and *umlungu* (white person).

Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area now known as northern Zululand and the Drakensberg region were becoming increasingly overcrowded in terms of current methods of land-use. Consequently warfare became more frequent due to pressure on resources. The main sparring units were the Ndwandwe under Zwide, the Ngwane under Sobhuza and the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo. Battles became increasingly severe, gradually replacing the traditional *giya* (3) formation, and the tendency for regiments to be based on age rather than territory was becoming more widespread, although not to the extent

implemented later by Shaka. Through continued warfare, the Nguni were pushed into present day Swaziland, which left the larger Ndwandwe and Mthethwa to continue fighting alone. Despite the longevity of this turmoil, the peak, which is also most often discussed within academic discourse, is the period 1820 to 1840.

Eldredge (1995) clearly demonstrates that this period, known as the '*Mfecane*', was marked by tremendous demographic upheavals and fundamental social and political changes. Migrations, raids, killing and famine were commonplace. Eldredge attributes (4) the troubles to a combination of both environmental changes including a series of prolonged droughts and the state of economic and political organisation, such as competition for land, and social inequality induced by ivory and slave trade through Delagoa Bay from 1824.

There are a number of alternative theories as to the causes of the *Mfecane*, which I would like to explore due to the influence that the *Mfecane* had on the creation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu State. Cobbing argues that it was the slave trade at Delagoa Bay, exporting some 1,000 slaves per year between 1820 and 1830, which led to social inequality and thus upheavals. However, as Eldredge (1995) argues, this does not equate with the evidence, since there is evidence that the slave trade started after 1824, and the *Mfecane* was already well underway by then. Similarly, ivory had been exported from this region since the 1750s, and therefore it seems unlikely that this was the single factor leading to the *Mfecane*.

From an alternative perspective, Gluckman and Guy (1979) stress the importance of overpopulation, which I see as a valid trigger. As can be seen historically, overpopulation has long been the cause of unrest as resources diminish and organisational structures remain inflexible. I would cite examples of disintegration, as was the case of the *Mfecane*, or re-structuring as can be seen through, for instance, the origins of agriculture and states in Mesopotamia (Renfrew & Bahn, 1998) to induce change. Moffat attributes the environmental problems to deforestation for building materials and space, which could perhaps reflect over-population.

Despite the merits of individual theories, I attribute the *Mfecane* to a combination of factors, with no preference to any particular theory, and would argue that it has much to do with artificially induced environmental degradation in combination with increasing social inequality. It is, however, the implications of the *Mfecane* that I deem relevant since this provided the base from which the Zulu nation arose. As indicated by Fage (1995), the troubles affecting the northern Nguni, although *not* directly involving the Zulu, were skilfully exploited by two warrior kings, Dingiswayo (1808-1818) and following his murder by Zwibe, Shaka (1818-1828), who took advantage of the social, political and military void induced by these upheavals in the wider region to further the position of the relatively insignificant Zulu tribe. Dingiswayo sought a solution to the problems facing this small group by taking young men of similar ages out of mainstream society, and maintaining them as members of a standing army, which was then under the leadership of Shaka. By the time of Shaka's death in 1828, Zulu paramountcy between the Umfolozi and Tugela rivers had been established, equating to over 4,000 square kilometres.

Before Shaka's death, this continually expanding military force moved across southern Africa, eliminating all opposing groups. Conquered chiefdoms were allowed to continue their existing hierarchy, providing that they remained loyal to the Zulu, and on the condition that they would provide men and cattle for the regiments and herds of the Zulu king.

Once large enough, Shaka's army saw that significant competitors such as Zwibe were overrun, facilitating the absorption of an extra 15,000 square kilometres, extending north to the Umzimkulu River, and from the coast to the Drakensberg Mountains. This also had great implications in south eastern Africa; those people fleeing from Shaka moved north and put extra pressure on the land, which was inhabited by the southern Nguni, who were themselves concomitantly being pressured by the Europeans. Other fleeing peoples moved into the Drakensberg, fighting their own battles, (emulating the tactics of Shaka), and some moved into present day Lesotho. Some such as the Chube and Shenzi in the south had not been conquered by Shaka and consequently their ruling lineages remained unbroken. However in a period of some ten years, much of the political landscape of southern Africa had been completely upturned.

Whereas prior to Shaka's reign the black population of southern Africa was relatively free to live unimpeded within its own territory, directing resources in whichever direction it saw fit, Shaka's accession saw that this flexibility ceased. The local economy and political hierarchy were re-orientated to benefit the now centralised power, with tribute and people moving to various centres to aid the nation as a whole, feeding off the desire for stability and order, as opposed to during the *Mfecane*. I see this as an effective form of enforced social control. Such measures prevented the population from escaping the clutches of the military machine through national service, which involved all males from puberty, as well as all females in support of their men. By enforcing such a policy, which transcended territorial boundaries, the unity of the Zulu nation was constantly reinforced within the minds of the population. Birth rates and marriage were also carefully controlled to match resources.

Some 44 years after Shaka's death, the kingdom that Cetshwayo inherited could be considered as equally impressive as that of Shaka's creation. There were subtle differences between the reigns, but the aim was to exert control over their neighbours through exertion of control over their own people. The population of 300,000 worked to put food in their mouths, but also to sustain the kingdom. The King 'owned' the land, but each person who inhabited this land, providing they remained loyal, would have access to the land. Thus the King and his chiefs (or *Indunas*) ensured that the population was dependent upon the state.

As Guy (1979) states, the Zulu kingdom from the accession of Shaka to Cetshwayo can be considered as the social integration of two systems: Firstly that of power from the population based on production coming from the homestead; secondly, the power of the State based on the extraction of surplus through labour and the age-regiment system. Such an interaction of power can be seen in the *Amakhandas* where young men were enlisted into military regiments based on the age-sets to perform civic and military tasks on behalf of the King, whilst being supported by their homesteads. This therefore demonstrates the degree of cross-societal involvement that the state required to keep the desired degree of order.

With regard to the political hierarchy, the King was ultimately the decision-maker and was skilfully advised by the *izikhulu*, or the 'great ones' of the kingdom. The *izikhulu* are an excellent representation of the pre-Shakan chiefdom system, which through Shaka were absorbed into the Zulu kingdom. In order for decisions to be made of national importance, the King and all of his *izikhulu* had to be present. The *izikhulu* were instated on the basis of their lineage, as well as their natural ability, and could therefore be considered as quasi-democratic. I would argue that the success of the Zulu is because of this precise factor, i.e. the lack of pure democracy, involving the population. Consequently, I see that the 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu kingdom would never have grown to the extent that it did, (through such massive military victories) had it not been for the fact that decision making for so many, was in the hands of so few.

The total political domination of the population through military means can be seen to have certain parallels with the situation in 20<sup>th</sup> century in South Africa, subject to slight differences in the character of this domination. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the 1879 Zulu defeat in the Anglo Zulu war, the dominance of white colonials following such conquest and annexation ensured that they held considerable influence. They deprived Africans of their land rights, and made it increasingly difficult for them to work outside Natal by restricting the access of work-passes. It was in the same year, and consequential to such policies, that the Zulu people were incorporated into the Colony of Natal.

Such domination can be seen to have continued until 1994, although the foundations were laid from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, as Barber (1999) demonstrates, in the period 1929 to 1939 the National Party victory under Hertzog was achieved by promising the whites in southern Africa economic prosperity and security through control of the blacks. Similarly, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu policy imposed a certain political viewpoint, led by the views of the King and *Indunas*. In both circumstances the principle is essentially the same in that domination is achieved through the unifying of the population through apparent economic and political prosperity, which is in essence imposed upon the *majority* of the population, i.e. the rural population. The military system imposed economic sanctions upon dissenters, and all energy was orientated towards ensuring the nation remained strong. Similarly, the National Party was also seeking economic domination by withholding economic rights from the black population, and emphasising the core of the white minority. This can be emphasised best through a brief narrative.

In 1929 South Africa became involved in the worldwide depression, resulting in 19% decrease in the average household income and rendering some 22% of white and black men unemployed. Consequently many blacks migrated to the peripheries of towns in search of work, which resulted in a fear of what Barber terms 'the black peril'. Hertzog and Smuts joined forces as Prime Minister and Deputy, attempting to increase the potency of white supremacy for both the British and Afrikaans-speaking white residents.

As was the case with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Shakan State, (albeit regarding different aspects of the relative infrastructure) the Hertzog/Smuts solidarity led to economic growth from the middle 1930s and the improvements of roads, harbours, airports and also establishing new services to support the gradually improving infrastructure. Native affairs were low on the agenda since no white wanted to have a 'Kaffir' state, but problems with the size of the traditional electorate of white males, necessitated Hertzog to seek an expanded audience. Hertzog's options could have included extending the vote to black males, or more likely white women. He chose the latter, which would later provide fuel for Black Nationalism, which I discuss below.

In 1948 the concept of Apartheid became official policy in southern Africa, under the leadership of Dr. Malan. Apartheid was not simply white discrimination against blacks, but instead, a complex process of social separation for the purposes of providing cheap labour. Consequently, as Barber (1999) clearly demonstrates, the whites wanted blacks as their labour force, but could not accept the social implications that followed. This inevitably had huge implications within the black population. Black leaders took divergent views on what action should be taken: some such as Thaele called for black isolationism, others

called for a united white and black church, while others criticised the church's assistance with white supremacy. Leaders of the blacks, such as Jabavu, saw that the new problem confronting them was far more serious than anything seen previously. Indeed, calls were made for a black labour boycott of white-run businesses as well as hinting at the possibility of open resistance to the government by inciting a fear of 'bloody revolution'. Barber (1999) states that by 1948 this had resulted in a strong African nationalist movement with distinctive aims and strong organisation to counter the white controlled state and its policies. The first sign of such policies seem to have induced the development of such movements as the ANC by Pixley ka Izeka Seme, who was appalled by the treatment of blacks. Such treatment included pass-checks on the streets, having to walk on the roads rather than pavement, being kept in a state of abject poverty and unfair courtroom representation.

A similar organisation can be seen to have emerged in 1975 to combat continued oppression. Prince Buthelezi, a staunch Zulu nationalist and the great-grandson of Cetshwayo, was an outspoken critic of Apartheid both at home and abroad. Consequently, he refused to accept the segregation created by the 1972 creation of 'tribal homelands' known as Bantustans and the self-governing region of KwaZulu, which consisted of 44 separate zones of land, north and south of the Thukela. He called for the release of political prisoners such as Mandela. Therefore in 1975 Buthelezi founded the Inkatha party, to initially complement the ANC and to serve as an 'instrument of liberation', albeit in the words of Lyndon-Dodds (1998), "one that eschewed armed confrontation with the South African security forces".

Violence erupted throughout the 1970s, such as the 1976 Soweto uprisings, which can be seen to continue until the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in Inkatha's political domination in *Zululand*. Yet, some Zulus met Buthelezi's party with hostility and contempt especially in Pietermaritzburg and Durban, where a significant force of the population considered that they were not considered sufficiently extreme and thus effective as for example the United Democratic Front (UDF). Indeed, as is indicated by Lyndon-Dodds (1998) it is believed that in the years 1990-1994 some 10,000 people were killed in KwaZulu-Natal as Inkatha and the UDF and ANC fought for supremacy.

I have therefore attempted to provide a context into which the 19<sup>th</sup> century age-set and 20<sup>th</sup> century gangs can be placed in subsequent chapters. There appears to be a tendency within Zulu society for quick and violent solutions to *socially induced* middle durée (Braudel 1980) problems, i.e. middle term economic circumstances. By referring to 'conflict' in the title of this section, my aim is to link militaristic conflict with political conflict, which despite a different form, seeks to achieve the same within different contexts. Through this, the Zulu nation is by no means isolated from the wider world in its approach to such problems. I shall not be developing this theme in detail, but acknowledge that it has wider anthropological application.

### **3. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu Age-set system within the context of the regiment**

The regimental system based on age is critical to the understanding of this article, and consequently in this section I shall discuss the formation, organisation, downfall and implications of such organisations, in order to facilitate comparison with later, 20<sup>th</sup> century gang organisations. The age-set system appears to re-emerge as age regiments in 1818 as solution to problems induced by the *Mfecane*, but using an existing structural feature to aid the organisation of the rapidly growing military system.

As Wright (1979) indicates, the establishment of a new form of regimental organisation based on age, as outlined above and the resultant changes in warfare tactics within certain chiefdoms in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were initiated primarily through the impetus of Shaka, and had wide social and military implications. As Stuart (1969) demonstrates, there was nothing particularly astonishing about the amalgamation of regional age-sets into regiments, or the military tactics of the Zulus: the advantage was derived from the application of these systems, which was far more sophisticated and aggressive than that of the surrounding groups. Indeed, the sophistication and aggressiveness of the military system led to a major defeat of the British in 1879.

Despite being an old source, Bryant's (1967) valuable ethnographic observations argue that the Zulu age-set was based primarily upon the Nguni formation of young men, and sometimes women, into *amabutho* (age-sets), which had specific civic and military tasks to perform. This he argues originated as circumcision sets, which appears to be a cross-cultural phenomenon among Bantu-speakers in southern Africa, as is the transformation of the non-militaristic, civic orientated age-sets into militaristic *and* civic orientated age-regiments. Indeed, as Whitelaw (1997) argues, many groups performed communal initiation rites in association with age from the early Iron Age, although it appears that these lacked the militaristic element for which the Zulu are renowned.

Pre-*Mfecane* no southern Bantu people possessed a permanent standing army with specialised military training or a military hierarchy, although many can be seen to have followed the Zulu in their form of military organisation. This relates to Stuart's (1969) argument that the Zulu military advantage was

achieved by unconventional behaviour, i.e. by creating a permanent standing army; cf. the awkward organisational basis of the other southern Bantu groups, which performed solely civic duties.

Yet, aside from their apparent contribution to organisation, the circumcision groups *per se* are not of central importance to this study, as opposed to the transition to and development of the age-set and then age regiment. Various theories exist regarding the transition, and one can clearly see a logical progression from circumcision groups to age-sets and regiments. However, Bryant *et al* argue that it is through the increase in use of these circumcision groups that their civic duty grew, and that the age-set/regiments should be considered as 'multifunctional organised labour *gangs*' performing a labour and reproductive role, as well as cattle raiding and looting in times of peace rather than a regiment of 'professional *soldiers*' used solely for military aggression. This point I see as being especially important, and will discuss this later.

It appears that Dingiswayo abandoned the circumcision ritual between ca. 1760-1780, and the reason for this is a matter of considerable academic contention. Bryant (1967) argues that this could have resulted from an increasing need for military strength that would not be achieved if a considerable portion of a tribe's manpower were held in circumcision schools. This was caused by competition between groups over trade access to Delagoa Bay, or alternatively, as Gluckman argues, this could have resulted from population pressure due to diminishing resources in the region of Zululand.

From a modern perspective, Guy (1979) argues that due to changing social circumstances, tribes needed access to groups of men, to help reproduce the material conditions which enabled them to maintain their positions of relative tribal economic dominance. He continues, "the basis of the king's power lay in the surplus labour which he extracted from every homestead". These views are broadly complemented by Wright (1979) who states that the power-holders wanted to stop the people from working for themselves and instead work for the state, and thus enhance its position. Alternatively Bryant (1967) argues that at Shaka's accession in 1818, the population of Zululand was so large relative to the administrative capacity that a system had to be applied to allow the leadership to manage the masses. For example, by holding certain individuals of a certain age within a defined group away from their homesteads, he could effectively balance reproduction through birth control against the increasingly deteriorating environmental conditions due to overpopulation, as well as homestead production. I see this as giving the king legitimate dominance over economic and social reproduction within the Zulu kingdom.

For example, I believe that Shaka's control of birth is of particular importance, since the holding of men in a celibate state until the age of 40-45 years in the military machine meant that the birth-rate was kept in harmony with resources as the number of men starting new homesteads was controlled. Similarly, it has been suggested that the might of the Zulu army was considerably enhanced, with the reward of marriage, or at least reproductive sex, following a victorious battle, and similarly the number of men in prime fighting age was kept at its height.

Indeed, as Reader (1966:275) explains, this interaction between individual and group was initiated by the king and his *Indunas* who call on the *noganda* (age-set policemen) of the various wards to form an age-set every ca. 3 years who will then enrol *en-mass* the men into a age-regiment named after the chief of the wider area or ward. The youths would then be sent to *Amakhanda* (barracks), where at the king's pleasure they would be called to the king's kraal in order for them to be *defined*. By definition I mean attributed with an identity, and a certain shield colour that would stay with them for life. Such an example could be the *abakwaBiyela* of the Biyela tribe, where the boys 'graduated' to higher status every 3 years or so, and then to a regiment at 16 years, remaining with it for life. However, as Reader (1966:276) demonstrates, confusion was often rife amongst old men as to whom they belonged.

Archaeology has provided considerable insight into the *Amakhanda*, such as the centres of Dingane's capital of Mgungundlovu and Cetshwayo's capital of Ondini. Both can be seen to exhibit the same typical *Amakhanda* layout (expanded version of the normal Zulu homestead), as well as having been largely non self-sufficient, relying instead on provisioning of from distant villages. (5)

Identity was provided through regimental songs and an individual war cry. This war cry was used when engaging the enemy, together with the national cry that demonstrated allegiance to the king, and supports the notion of a system that transcends territory. Apart from the shield colour, individual regiments also had their own dress style, such as headdress colour. Mpande's favourite was that of the *Indabakawombe*, which included ostrich, weaverbird and Stanley crane feathers with leopard skins. Identity is vital for groups to act in co-operation since it creates competition and a feeling of group specialism, which will benefit the wider institution.

Homogeneity was therefore maintained within the group itself. Associated materials relating to the regiments could also be considered as uniform. This can be clearly represented by the barracks, demonstrated by Stuart (1969). *Amakhanda* were designed and built by a principle, common to all. Consequently, if an age-regiment member visited another barracks, the member would instantly know his place within the hierarchy and space of the settlement.

Thus, the regiment was an effective form of social control: not necessarily explicit, but implicitly located in the very roots of Zulu society, since it was applicable to all people. While men fought and performed their civic

duties, women supported their men folk on the field through provisions and as baggage carriers, as well as care for the wounded, in addition to their civic duties of childcare and subsistence. Consequently children would be indirectly involved in such activities, accompanying their mothers, and thus the system was self-perpetuated over generations.

It is a notable feature of Bantu society that the mass or larger group is considered more valuable than the individual (Knight, I., 1995. p48). This factor combined with the simplicity and applicability of the age system account for its success. For example, children naturally gravitate around children of a similar age, and thus strength, experience, knowledge and attitude are homogenous within the group. Thus the formation of an *intaga* (age-set) at puberty does not require a massive reorganisation of society, which governed itself from the base level. This, combined with the gerontocracy in Zulu society, the age-set policemen, or *noganda*, provided legitimisation for the older *intaga* to control the younger *intaga*.

Thus it can be seen that the male age-set system affects and positions all males within the hierarchy. Yet, it also appears that girls were also formed into *intaga* in much the same way that boys were, but perhaps without such publicity within their own society, since they lacked the military aspect so valued within Zulu society. The emphasis on co-operation and harmony with the other members, which is so apparent among male groups, cannot be said for female groups, with loyalty being more locally orientated. I assume that this relates to effective production in the homestead, since one's loyalties need to be close to home in order to effectively co-operate with those in a like-situation regarding household and subsistence activities.

It appears that age-sets changed to age-regiments ca. 1818 which accompanied the change from fighting on the basis of *clan-based territorial* grounds, to that of fighting on the basis of nationalistic grounds, and therefore, on a large scale, as the State expanded. However, it is important to state that this did not mean that age-sets just vanished, but that in later life these age-sets represented themselves as age-based regiments, (Knight, I., 1995:49) Consequently, since this emphasis was on the regiment (which was therefore based on age), I refer to them as age-regiments.

Despite the importance of kinship in Zulu society, the 'army' could not be based on the co-operation between the ward and kinship, since this did not produce homogeneity between groups, i.e. individuals would support their local group cf. the State. There was, however, a degree of competition between regiments, which was encouraged through dances and mock battles to substantiate the bonds between members of the same regiment that had been established since childhood. Therefore, age organisation as the basis of a regiment was the perfect organisational factor, which transcended the former problems. Thus age-sets can be seen as an effective form of societal control, which transcends the individual in favour of the collective, and their interaction with others.

Interestingly, no soldier in the Zulu army was given formal military training (Stuart. 1969:73) except as a cadet in his youth, nor did they receive pay. This 'obligation' to serve without material reward can be accounted for since they were performing civic duties, which would have benefited their own kin, and therefore, indirectly, themselves. Due to the lack of training in the Zulu army, one might be of the impression that discipline was slack and standards not high. However, as Stuart argues it was through peer pressure and violence that a soldier performed his duties. For example cowards were shamed by their regiments through idle chat and punishments such as having one's meat dipped in cold water before eating it. This therefore demonstrates the social constraint that the regimental system imposed upon its members, as well as the wider society since one would not want to have one's father, brother or son shunned by society.

With regard to the collapse of the age-regiment system, it can be seen that despite the creation of an age-regiment in 1924 for the visit of the Prince of Wales, age-sets were eliminated following a combination of defeat in the Anglo Zulu War of 1879 and a series of droughts between 1900 and 1903. As Carton (2000) demonstrates, land shortages through European expansionism following defeat pushed the Southern Zulu into wooded areas, resulting in widespread deforestation. Homesteads were compelled to beg and steal, as the ensuing droughts took hold, and in combination with locust attacks on crops and an outbreak of cattle rinderpest, starvation imperilled entire chiefdoms. This had dramatic implications on (among many things due to the significance of cattle) the *lobola* (6) system. Men could not pay *lobola* for the girls that they impregnated, and this resulted in progressive social chaos and disintegration of family ties and homestead authority. The British did not improve matters by continuing a policy to take Zulu land for timber planting as well as cane plantations in coastal regions. Consequently, the harvest period, previously a time for celebration and generosity, was now an indication of the loss of homestead security. Consequently, as Carton argues, homestead heads saw their authority severely diminished; their sons stood to inherit a collapsing social structure with little promise of enjoying customary privileges. The social mechanisms, which used to be in place to check the behaviour of the youth, i.e. the hierarchical age-based system was upturned, since it relied upon the respect and obedience of the youth to the elders. This resulted in beer festivals and similar social functions becoming riots, and the collapse of traditional prohibitions such as drinking rights, i.e. initial access went to older, married men, and then married women and then the youth.

However, despite the collapse of the age-set, the implications of the system are still evident and wide reaching. For example, the values by which young men grew up with within age-set formations had a profound impact on the relationship between generations today: whereas the ethics of hard work, group loyalty and respect for hierarchy were ingrained within the generation brought up within the age-set system, the modern youth appear to be unruly and disrespectful, leaving for extended periods of time to work in the city. This might be an inevitable change of times and circumstances, but perhaps it should be considered that the homogeneity brought by the age-set system is now the catalyst for hierarchical disintegration in modern Zululand.

Despite the collapse of the age-set and regiment system in the form created by Dingiswayo and Shaka, I believe that one should see the Zulu State within this era as a fully militarised state. I say this cautiously since I do not regard all Zulus to have been in the military, but all Zulus had involvement with the military, from warrior to provision-maker. I argue that there are strong parallels between the age-regimental system and modern gang organisations, although there appears to be a different nature of expression, which relates to the environmental, political and social context in which they can be found. This I will cover in detail in the succeeding Parts.

#### **4. 20<sup>th</sup> century gang culture in the Johannesburg and Durban area - post 1930**

It appears that the *amalaita* gangs(bb), so infamous in contemporary southern Africa for their criminality and street fighting, may be linked to the age-regiments discussed in the previous chapters. Consequently, the primary aim of this section is to ascertain certain 'key' elements of the youth gangs, leaving the comparison of gangs and the 19<sup>th</sup> century age-regiments to the subsequent chapters.

With regard to identity, even the nomenclature of the gangs has associated such groups with crime, which self-perpetuates their rebellious image, and can, of course, be used to substantiate the gang's public image. The indigenous term for such gangs, '*amalaita*', derives from the post-South African War Transvaal region, and was the generic term for general urban African criminals, cf. the more specific *abatelisa* (robbers of tax collectors), *amasela* (housebreakers) or *isigebengu* (adult criminals). Strictly speaking, '*amalaita*' refers to Durban based migrant youth gangs (De Hausse, P., 1990. p. 80), often coming from Zululand, the Ciskei and Transkei.

The size of the gangs is reported as varying according to the territorial location and economic circumstances, as well as the relative strength of the neighbouring gangs. By using the term 'territory', it is important to identify the fact that this does necessarily relate to a region or neighbourhood in the western sense of the term, (or similarly 'ward' as was the case for the *Amakhanda*) but instead a street, which would have its own 'protection' gang, since gangs can be seen to be particularly parochial. These were known as the *tsotsi* youth gangs. Youth gang identity was nourished by other gangs' attacks on the group, reprisals, the loss and gain of individuals, as well as the competitiveness of the members to be the relative best, which led to group bonding. Names and styles were derived from varied sources, although one notable derivation is that of Hollywood, which provided gangs with the names of notorious hard-men or groups such as 'Dirty Dozen', 'Bandidos' and 'Jaws'. Similarly the use of Nazi symbology was widespread, such as the depiction of the Swastika, such as ZX5 (8). Gangs also had to commit certain crimes and acts in order to be respected by other gangs, and thus be considered as legitimate 'gangsters'. For example, the Hazels were notorious train robbers (Glaser, 1998).

I shall later use the results of the analysis of three gangs (Glaser, C., 1998. pp731-2) to assess the parallelism between triggers, form and organisation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century age-regiments and 20<sup>th</sup> century gangs. All three were located in Soweto in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and could be considered as 'youth gangs', as described above. Typically, gangs lasted for no longer than a decade before their members were jailed, killed or most commonly, grew up. Similarly, the conditions in which some gangs had been formed were gone, and consequently gang members sought another identity and members. The examples I have chosen are no exception to this hypothesis, and appear to be broadly homogenous with each other.

The 'Black Swines' could be considered as one of the largest gangs in the Mofolo/Jabaru region of Soweto, Johannesburg. They shared a north-south divide with another large group, the 'Pirates' with whom they regularly fought. Through oral accounts and police records, the Black Swines entered popular memory in the early 1960s, comprising between 40 and 60 members, most of whom were teenagers. These members tended to be school dropouts with few qualifications. To identify themselves, they were ragged in appearance, and dressed in a particular style emphasising khaki trousers and a particular style of earring in one ear. The Black Swines disbanded in 1966 as the South African Police captured and jailed the gang's most senior members.

The 'Apaches' were formed in 1958 in the Orlando territory of Soweto, and again comprised early school leavers, known to harass schoolgirls. Unlike the Black Swines, the Apaches were well armed and distinguished themselves from other gangs by riding bicycles and wearing Nazi-style leather and helmets. Again, in 1962 the police had to intervene after a series of killings, and following the capture of 66 gangsters, the gang broke up due to lack of support.

As the Apaches went into decline in 1962, so the 'Kwaitos' emerged to take their place. The Kwaitos were renowned for their harassment of schoolgirls, teachers and the elderly, and funded their pleasures through robbing the Friday pay-packet deliveries. The Kwaitos were a relatively small gang, comprising some 20 members, who were particularly protective of their territory. Residents in the Kwaitos' neighbourhood were not pestered, and violence tended to involve outsiders or 'intruders'. Indeed, as Glaser (1998) demonstrates, many children of school-going age idolised the Kwaitos and parents had an uphill struggle to get their children to school rather than to take rank within the gang.

The study of such gangs and their members has not been prolific in anthropological discourse, and consequently most information, especially relating to the years 1900 to 1936, derives from oral records, and living memory. As De Hausse (1990, p 79) demonstrates, the first emergence of such gang formations for young men and women can be traced to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was induced by the massive social dislocation in Natal and Zululand, primarily due to British intervention following the Zulu defeat in 1879 and the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, leading to massive rural depopulation. Under the command of Henrike Shepstone in 1888, workers were recruited into groups to relieve the growing rural labour emergency, which threatened to bring Natal to its knees. However this section is primarily concerned with post-1930 youth gangs in the Soweto suburbs of Johannesburg and in the Durban area since they had active gangs and neighbour the KwaZulu Natal region, whilst drawing comparisons with the migrant gangs of the same areas.

Organisation within the gangs was simple; there was a relative hierarchy, with leaders often possessing the best skills in valued activities such as fighting, drinking, courage, physical prowess, law breaking, attracting girls as well as a magnetic personality and good organisational skills. Due to the youthfulness of the gangsters (in most cases), skilfulness normally equated with age. However, since there would be a number of gangsters of a similar age, Mager (1998 p.657) argues that the constant use of fighting and activity involving the entire gang allowed the hierarchy to be constantly challenged, facilitating the promotion of skilled individuals. Normal members were pooled, and tasked to perform certain activities based on ability, at the whim of the leader.

The gangs can be seen as breeding grounds for masculine identities. McRobbie & Garber (1976) and Brake (1980) were the first to look at gender as the main cause of youth gang formation. They argue for the importance of the female presence in the formation and behaviour of the gangs, despite the girls' often being subordinate to the men, acting as girlfriends, decoys and lookouts. Masculinity and status was defined through stick fights (*umgangela*), dancing and sexual play. For the boys in these gangs, growing up within the system of segregation under the policy of Apartheid, a feeling of thwarted masculinity prevailed due to their inability to assert their desire for power due to the traditional values of their elders, for example the condemnation of stick fighting.

However, here enters an interesting diversion. Despite the abandonment of the circumcision guilds (i.e. the traditional differentiation between boy and man) before Shaka, it appears that the gangs of this period were troubled by the apparent continuation of the *principle* of dichotomy between man and boy. Consequently adolescent males had to find alternative means to express their masculinity against the circumcision tradition. Thus circumcision can be seen to both formulate and induce change: in one case for a system based on similar principles such as form and organisation as seen in circumcision guilds, whilst in the other, against the guilds' very principles, but using a similar organisational basis.

It is particularly interesting to note two factors regarding territoriality, which was marked using graffiti, in much the same way that murals are used in contemporary Northern Ireland. These factors are: a. Gangs often became the effective rulers of the street or town, and would punish those who upset the equilibrium, (while enforcing protection rackets on all inhabitants). This is interesting since their very formation revolved around rebellion, so I would argue that this reflected the need for power, which once achieved actually acted as a conservative force; b. If non-gang individuals were attacked, they would tend to be those outside of the gang's territory. Many rape cases involve women from outside of the offending gang's territory, who ventured inside it, thereby again emphasising the parochial nature of the gangs.

The ranks of these youth migrant gangs were filled with men entering the region primarily from (among other localities) Zululand, with same-aged peers from their own cattle kraals and such organisation continued whilst in these gangs. This extended to the distribution of tasks within the gangs, where youths and girls were given servant-like tasks, as opposed to the senior members who had leadership roles. (9) Some gangs, which had older members who were known to have wider social responsibilities and thus hierarchies remained between the older and younger members, such as the Ama-Rashea whose members were 20-60 years old (Glaser, C., 1998, p720). Territorial loyalty remained strong with regard to job types and this can be seen where certain territorial groups were associated with certain activities. For example, the rickshaw pullers came from Mahlabatini, while the Amabhaca were known rather disparagingly as Durban's sanitary workers.

Glaser indicates that there is also an important distinction between the gangs and school. Both have similar organisational hierarchies, involving young people, often mediated by one older individual. The members of both are all mediated and influenced by the actions and opinions of their peers. I do think that peer pressure is stronger in the gangs, where the need to achieve is proportional to the fear of beatings or death, and the need for

respect. One can see the attraction of gang culture compared to that of conventional schooling: school offered a particularly arduous means of success which involved hard mental work, whereas gangs offered group success which obviously improved the perceived social position of the members. However, for girls, school was a socially accepted way of peer interaction. For Soweto, the total of some 47,000 of 54,000 girls attended school in the years 1960-1976. This can be contrasted by adolescent men who in order to be seen to succeed, had to do so within the context of the gang, resulting in 30,000 school goers from 57,000 potentials, (Glaser, C., 1998. p724).

Bringing the existence of gangs up to date, towards the end of the 1960s there appears to have been a striking resurgence in gang culture in Soweto, which I attribute to growing dissatisfaction with the policies of Apartheid, and a substantial slump in the South African economy (10). The frequency of gangs increased from approximately 10 gangs in the early 1960s to 50 or more by the early 1970s, a notable example being the Hazels of Mzimhlophe. Such gangs were large with 50 or more members, and demonstrated an intensity of inter-gang conflict and concern with style, being influential as fashion setters and role models. However, this growth was a temporary phenomenon, as by 1974 the youth gangs had experienced a severe but not wholly successful backlash from civil guards, principally consisting of middle-aged householders, known as *Makgotla*, who assisted in turning the tide of gang fortunes. Glaser (1998) argues that this movement should be seen as an attempt to reassert patriarchal authority over the defiant urban youth that were in the process of redefining aspects of masculinity.

However, the actions of *Makgotla* were not the only force for the decline in gang culture. In the latter section of this section I would like to explore the possibility that there is a temporal correlation between the decline in gang culture and rise in political party membership. Such a transition I see as being 1974 to 1975, through the decline of the gangs, and the beginnings of the Inkatha Freedom Party. In other words, I argue that in seizing the opportunity to rally the black population, a number of political organisations indirectly reduced the activities of the gangs in order to fight the battle against the policy of Apartheid. I will focus primarily on the Inkatha Freedom Party since it is this party that is arguably the most orientated towards the Zulu people, but I will be providing context through the discussion of elements of other opposition parties.

From an historical perspective, the origins of the modern Inkatha Freedom Party lie in the 1920s in an attempt to bridge the increasing divide between the governing bodies under the kingship of Solomon Nkayishana kaDinzulu (1913-1933), and the radically changing lower classes of Zulus. Such a union formulated the foetal features of the party seen today, such as the principles of unity and nationhood. As the title of Cope's (1993) book indicates, 'to bind the nation', was the driving force behind Inkatha, and despite the death of the first *Inkatha* with Solomon's death in 1933, the principles of unity and nationhood have endured to the present.

Thus the Inkatha national liberation movement founded by Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi in 1975 has some of its roots in the cultural organisation of the '*Inkatha*' founded by King Solomon in the 1920s. Solomon's principal desire was to make the Zulu people aware of the dangers of British and then Afrikaner policy, as well as the necessity for Zulu democracy. As is outlined in the Inkatha Freedom Party's web source, the difference and perhaps attraction of the modern movement compared to Solomon's original movement was the portrayal of the party as an all embracing national movement with its sights set on the liberation of all South Africans.

Opposition to the IFP included the African National Congress (ANC) formed in 1912.(11) By the early 1960s the ANC had entered into a pact with the South African Communist Party (SACP) to create a joint military organisation known as *Umkhonto we Sizwe* to fight Apartheid. Such organisations proved very popular for certain groups of men and boys who were opposed to the policy of Apartheid, and thus followed the call to arms issued by *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. However, a poll conducted in 1994 revealed that only 44% of Zulus would be prepared to vote for the ANC. This point is interesting from a number of perspectives. The ANC has its own Youth League (ANCYL) (12): formed in 1944, aiming to rally and unite the African youth into one national Front on the basis of African Nationalism, as well as providing youngsters who will continue to fight for the purposes of African Nationalism. The very wording of the 1948 Basic Policy is that of inciting action, and if necessary, violence. (13)

Consequently, one would expect this organisation to be was popular amongst the supposedly militant youth, seeking the downfall of the dominant whites. However this was not the case, with preference leaning towards the less militant organisations, namely the Inkatha Freedom Party, led primarily by Zulus. The reason for the lack of support for the ANC amongst the Zulu population could perhaps be attributed to the domination of the ANC by Xhosa people, which was not appreciated by Zulu people.

In such circumstances one can see the break up of the traditional hierarchy of the homestead and kinship unit, i.e. typical horizontal and vertical lines of hierarchy and loyalty disintegrate. This, De Hausse (1987 p.87) argues, acted as one factor in inducing such practices of *umgangela* (stick-fighting) to emerge, as a mechanism to cope with the increasing antagonisms along horizontal lines. This is especially the case when

in the face of different groups and regions, who may well be aggressive towards one's own group, there is competition for resources or territory, such as over borders.

Despite the lack of support for certain parties by the Zulus, the fact that certain policies of the ANC were worth pursuing is in my view indicative of changing attitudes held by males, especially the youth. For example, one could consider the ANC's education policy, which sought to achieve 100% literacy among South African people in order to ensure effective democracy. This was to be achieved through free but compulsory education for all children, as well as education facilities for adults through night schools, adult classes and courses. This, the ANC argued, would facilitate the 'moulding of the characters of the young' and provide them with a 'high sense of moral and ethical values' whereby preparing them for life in a democratic society. This is far removed from the pervasive anti-school ethos, which permeated within the gang culture. Similarly, it is for such reasons that the Inkatha Freedom Party Youth Brigade was founded. As outlined at the Brigade conference in August 2000, the aim of the Brigade is to allow the youth of the party to rise to the challenge of forging the present generation of young people to work towards the development of South Africa with integrity and maintaining the highest standards.

Indeed, the issue of youth is central to the policy of the Inkatha Freedom party, as well as the ANC. For example, Prince Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party, speaking in December 2000, urged the youth of South Africa not to abandon the rural communities for the cities. He argued that the fate of the communities was in the hands of the youth since they had the drive and energy to perpetuate and improve the communities in which they live. This he argues would 'push-back' the encroaching social evils and 'adverse circumstances'. Buthelezi (14) continued to argue that the youth should not be lured by crime or drugs since they impacted heavily not only upon themselves, but also their families and the wider community.

Consequently, it appears that political organisations have the ability to redefine that which is culturally acceptable to the youth, by providing them with an *alternative*, which in the case of Inkatha was political and most critically *effective*, as opposed to militant. In combination with such policies, I believe that it is important to indicate that from the 1960s there had been no significant organised black political activity following the banning of the ANC and the leftist/Marxist Pan African Congress (PAC) by the white South African government in 1961. Such organisations were reliant upon violence, as is demonstrated by the PAC slogan of, 'one settler – one bullet'. Considering the retaliatory nature of white dominance at this stage, in conjunction with a series of serious recessions, by 1975 black politics had been left in serious disarray.

However, it is important to make clear that Buthelezi moved from such traditional means of expression i.e. reversion to violence (15), by explicitly expressing his desire to cease the policy of committing black South Africa to armed struggle as the primary means to bring about change. However ironically this very fact was to cause friction and the loss of life, as the ANC fought Inkatha over the lack of the latter's support for the former's armed struggle. Instead, to solve the predicament that the majority of South Africans were in, they concentrated on a free market economy with heavy influence on social responsibility, as well as the champions of federalism, which the Inkatha Freedom Party argued was the antithesis of the policy of Apartheid.

As is outlined in the official Inkatha web-page, one of the tasks which the party wished to achieve from the post-1990 era was to, 'harness the great resources of the country to fight the real enemies of the people, namely; poverty, hunger, unemployment disease, ignorance, insecurity, homelessness and moral decay'. I believe that this has to a certain extent been achieved since I would argue that now the 'real enemies of the people' could be fought, as opposed to problems such as Apartheid and urban unrest. I appreciate that Apartheid did not cease until 1994 and that gang culture prevails today, but my point is that Inkatha, as one major example, facilitated the re-focussing of aggression towards 'external' factors such as oppression, which affected all individuals. Consequently the strife between groups over 'internal' factors such as territoriality was reduced whereby uniting the majority of members of the old gangs under one political heading.

I would also argue that due to the dissatisfaction, which led to the development of the gang culture, as well as lack of political representation, the youth in particular had no means of expression except for violence and disruption. This effectively brought attention to their predicament, and perhaps more importantly, provided them with an identity. However, with the re-emergence of the political institutions such as Inkatha in the early 1970s and their youth policies, the youth were given identity and attributed with value, whereby reducing the frequency of criminal practices.

This section therefore outlines the nature of the gangs from a number of perspectives. It is clear to see the motivations, organisation, objectives and problems with such gangs in the Soweto and Durban region from the 1930s onwards. Consequently, I will compare and contrast these findings with such information from the age-regiments in the following chapters.

## **5 Analyses and Conclusion**

In this chapter I aim to examine the degree of parallelism and change between the age-set and regiment formations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the gang formations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as concluding the

dissertation. Since a good century separates the zenith of both formations, it could be considered that any link is tenuous or that change is inevitable. Instead, by lifting the salient points from the preceding chapters, I argue that such similarities are representations of a type of response to circumstantial factors in which Zululand found itself.

### **Origins:**

With regard to origins, I see clear parallels between the formations of both categories of organisations. As I have already outlined, the Zulu age-set system came about through the social upheaval induced by the *Mfecane*. It can be seen that through overpopulation, migration, raiding, battles, famine and trade, as well as the resultant political changes as groups waxed and waned in their relative strength, the *Mfecane* gradually came about. Dingiswayo and Shaka then skilfully exploited the *Mfecane*. Despite their groups not being directly affected by the troubles, it was their desire to improve the relative situation of their groups *vis à vis* their opposition who were directly affected by the *Mfecane*. The advantage achieved was to transcend the existing vying territorial units and instead bring men of a similar age together for the benefit of the group as a whole, which was then expanded to be for the benefit of the nation following the success of Shaka's many campaigns.

Adverse circumstances are also the key to the formation of gangs, such as the massive social dislocation in Natal and Zululand, primarily due to British intervention following the Zulu defeat in 1879, and then the discovery of gold in the Transvaal. This led to massive rural depopulation as men left for the cities and mines for work. Whilst this is a major factor, I do not attribute the gangs of the post-1930 era solely to this factor. The social dislocation induced a feeling of discontentment and negative sentiment towards the occupying forces. Therefore the post-1929 period of economic depression, and oppression felt by blacks under Hertzog's National Party, which intended to reduce the fear of the 'black peril', intensified the problems experienced by the black population. Further black marginalisation by Dr. Malan's 1948 policy of Apartheid led to the *re-intensification* of various black-nationalist movements such as the Inkatha Freedom Party. However, it was primarily a feeling of thwarted masculinity felt by young men, brought about by changing gender and generation relations induced by changing economic circumstances, which created the violence and behaviour exemplified by the gangs of Johannesburg and Durban.

There also appears to be evidence that the social dislocation created by the South African governmental 'resettlement boards' in the 1960s actually encouraged a heightening of juvenile crime. Thus one can see parallels between the post-1879 social relocation follow the Zulu defeat at the hands of the British, and the 'resettlement boards' of the 1960s. These boards removed certain overpopulated zones of cities, such as Sophiatown and Alexandria in Johannesburg. The inhabitants were relocated to new peripheral city areas such as Orlando, Mofolo, Pimville and Meadowlands in Soweto, often improving the living conditions for people, which had previously been used to temporary shelters, emergency camps and squatter settlements.

### **Organisation & Identity:**

One can see further parallels with regard to the actual nature of the respective organisations. For example, both organisations have a strong impact on the wider society, and this is one of the aims of both organisations, since the age-regiment's very existence is to provide a service to the wider community through civic and military duties, and the members of such regiments are taken from the wider society. Similarly, the gangs, in a search for recognition ensure that they are central to the lives of the community, albeit not on the whole committing violent acts towards locals, but displaying their occupation through damage and graffiti.

Both organisations had strict identity codes. The age-sets and regiments had individualistic shield patterns, feather colours as well as headdress styles and names. These were the only ones of their kind, and there was a considerable degree of competition between the age groups with regard to dancing, singing and fighting. This was much the same as the gangs, with names, dress and equipment being individualistic. Similarly, there was a considerable degree of fighting between the groups, which seem to have represented sparring for respect from the wider community.

Masculine identities are bred in both organisations. The age-set and regiments, although involving females, is primarily organised around males and male activities. This is perhaps due to the patriarchal nature of Zulu society, as well as the significance of the male activity of fighting, especially in Shaka's reign. Consequently females take the supporting role. I would argue that this presence is the force, which drove males, since in the reign of Shaka warriors were only allowed access to females following battle. The importance of women in Zulu society could perhaps be represented by the high number of wives that high-ranking men in society had. Similarly, among gangs one finds *male* groups, with *female* supporters or beneficiaries. In other words, females are central to the gangs, but not *directly* involved.

Gang members were also driven by the masculine ethos and female presence. As was indicated by McRobbie & Garber (1976) and Brake (1980), girls were fought for and often used as a status symbol apart from their involvement as decoys and lookouts. As was the case with the age-sets and regiments, fighting was central to gang life, with the traditional stick fights being replaced by firearm incidents with regularity from the 1960s. Thus the issue of thwarted masculinity is perhaps central to the issue of gang formation, as discussed above, due to their inability to assert their masculine desires over the traditional values of the elders and the restrictive policies of the white governments. Consequently the gangs provided a means of expressing such desires and frustration, where such conditions were valued and respected.

Both systems have strict rank hierarchies, the age-regiment being military orientated with officers and men, and the gangs with leaders based on aggression and age. The hierarchies of both systems appear to have been organised on the basis of a meritocracy. Therefore a parallel can be seen, although I believe an argument for *continuity* would be tenuous.

### **The Wider Community:**

This ability of the gang to be applicable to both males and females is much the same as the age-set and regiment, although the migrant Zulu gangs in Durban and Johannesburg tend to be for youngsters only, whereas the age-sets and regiments continue throughout life. Yet, I would argue that due to peer pressure and tradition, membership of neither organisation was a choice, despite the option for youngsters to go to school. Both systems had strict sanctions for non-compliance, which for the age-regiment may have included cowardice or not completing one's tasks within the group, and within the gang not being 'tough' or loyal. Despite the need of this compliance in both organisations, there is no evidence for training in either organisation, which for the age-regiment is perhaps the most surprising. It appears that both organisations tended to allow an individual to learn techniques from his peers, which could perhaps function to increase bonding between members and thus overall efficiency.

### **Decline:**

Regarding the cessation of both forms of organisation, both seem to have declined for very similar reasons. In essence, the age-set and regimental system ceased from between 1879 and 1903 following the British defeat of the Zulus in 1879 which centred around the British policy of confederation which amongst many criteria, banned the continuation of the regimental system, which ended organisation based on age to reduce the Zulu military threat, as well as a policy of land consolidation for the purposes of timber and cane production. Similarly, the gangs were effectively given an alternative means of expression in the form of political representation, such as through the ANC and particularly the IFP. Despite differing party methodologies, the gangs were united under one heading in much the same way as young men were united in *amabutho* at the *Amakhandu* in the century before. Generally, this made the local and minor gangs obsolete as parties with broader representation took up their cause. Therefore it appears that political policy ended both organisations, albeit for different reasons, but in essence, neither organisation was suitable for the context into which it was entering and change was inevitable.

### **Contrasts between the two forms of organisation:**

Despite the strong argument for parallels, there are certain contrasts between the two organisations. For example, the issue of centralisation: perhaps a key factor of the age-set and regiment was that it was co-ordinated by the king, and supervised by his officers. This was organised on a territorial basis although the actual regiment would transcend the territory for the benefit of the nation. However the gang was on a local street scale, territorially organised with no discernable leader. Leaders came and went with regularity as leaders were killed, usurped or beaten. I see this facility to change as an inherent advantage in both systems, which allows ideas to remain fresh, and leaders to remain the best individuals available. Whereas both phenomena existed on a large scale i.e. across Zululand, the gangs, despite having contact with neighbouring gangs, had no contact with gangs on the other side of the nation. Conversely, the advantage of the age-sets and regiments was that it transcended the territories and members from hundreds of miles apart, sharing common ideas and values through their age, would be brought together to serve together.

Despite my earlier argument for both organisations seeking a place or niche in their respective societies, I would argue that there is also a distinct difference within this similarity. For example, the age-set and regiment was given a task to perform, be it military or civic and the nature of this action was to suit circumstances at the time in which the society was placed. One could perhaps consider that the gangs'

actions were induced by the actions of other gangs and the societies in which they were placed, but the difference was the extent of centralised co-ordination.

On the issue of membership, there is a stark contrast between the longevity of both organisations. The age-set and regiment identity and colleagues remained together for life, despite the 'graduation' in seniority with the absorption of new age-grade initiates every four years or so. This contrasts with the gangs in which the life expectancy of the gang itself was limited to a decade or so. Within this timeframe the membership of an individual was not assured as loyalties and friendships inevitably changed with shake-ups in the gang hierarchy.

Furthermore, another superficial similarity should be considered as an inherent difference: both systems can be seen as inextricably linked to the working of the ruling and opposition elements of government. However, whereas the age-set and regiment is the tool for the government to carry out both military and civic functions, the gang was the government's problem, into which resources were poured to counter the actions of such gangs through the police and military.

### **Conclusion:**

One critical issue not yet covered is whether the organisation of gangs present in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Johannesburg and Durban had any connection to age. As mentioned previously, there is evidence that the *tsotsi* gang members tended to be of a similar age. Late adolescence to early twenties is the most volatile and impressionable age, when feelings of thwarted masculinity would matter the most to young men. Similarly, individuals work at their best when with their peers, and are therefore more manageable if there is a centralised administration, such as with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu nation. With regard to the gangs, despite there being no centralisation of administration, I would argue that the gangs would not have functioned had their members not been of a similar age since there would have been more obvious older leaders, and consequently the constant reshuffling and competition within the group would not have occurred. Age-sets tended to form every four years or so and *tsotsi* gang members tended to be of a similarly close age range. Consequently, there is broad analogy in the ages, but there is little evidence to suggest that the gangs actively pursued such a defined age as the sets did, and there was certainly no progression or graduation to a higher status with age, although the leaders of the gangs did tend to be the older members, but I would attribute this to issues of strength and experience. With regard to the migrant gangs briefly discussed in the text, there is very little evidence that they organised themselves on the basis of defined age groupings. Indeed a distinction between the migrant and *tsotsi* gangs was that the migrant gang members were of all ages.

Consequently, I would argue that there are greater parallels than disparity between the two systems. However it must be said that this parallel is not in respect of the use of the age, in the sense of the sets and regiments usage within the gangs, but instead the type of organisation, which the circumstances induce. It is important to stress that I do not argue that the age-set and regiment system merely became gangs, as indeed they were separate entities. However, I believe that it is no coincidence that both forms of organisation have a similar form in their origins, nature and decline.

I do not believe that fundamental attitudes and values have changed from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but I do believe that the context in which they can be expressed has changed. Therefore people have adapted in their expression of this attitude to accommodate changing social, political and economic conditions. Both systems are extremely effective as means of societal control. The former provides a means to control the entire population directly, whilst the latter controls the local population through rackets and intimidation. Yet, I see both as ultimately perpetuating homogeneity within their respective populations.

(16)

I suggest that the tendency for violence and expression of masculine qualities need only emerge when there is a definite *necessity* for it, such as the post *Mfecane* and then Apartheid periods discussed in the previous chapters. In both situations, males needed to define and prove themselves since they saw themselves as the means to alleviate the situation for *their* society or territory. The age-regiment is a reflection of this need, in that males were called upon to perform civic and military duties, which expressed itself in the form of age-sets and regiments, and gangs could espouse masculine ideals to bring attention to their predicament. Consequently, in the case of the gangs, once political movements arose, the males no longer needed to define themselves on a small-scale territorial basis, or by such 'masculine' properties as violence. Consequently, the Inkatha Freedom Party provided an alternative means of expression, or a channel, for masculine identity and I argue that the gangs fell into decline as such an organisation, which was better led, on a larger scale and more widely recognised, increased in strength. As for the age-sets and regiments, political manoeuvring, albeit British, replaced the organisation of the Zulu nation by providing a new framework within which to function.

It would be misleading and incorrect to assume that the Zulu people solve nationwide crises through an inherent inclination towards groups of young men with the 'right' to bear arms. I would however argue in favour of what Jung termed the 'collective unconscious' of the Zulu youth. Jung illustrated his theory with the metaphor of a chain of islands, which seem to be separate and distinct, but which are actually linked together on the sea floor. This deepest level is the unconscious, which is shared by all humans. Although Jung attempted to steer clear of racial connotations, I would apply the *principle* to the ethnic groups discussed.

This is supportive of Skinner's (1953) argument that all human behaviour could be explained in terms of conditioning principles. Zulu society has long been associated with conflict and strife, as I have outlined in this dissertation, both from external oppression and internal tensions. I argue that such events are the 'conditioning principles' and that the emergent 'collective unconscious' has taken the form in Zulu society of male groups with a tendency for violent action. This has prevailed until the modern era whereupon political representation, on a far broader scale than before, took up the 'male case'. Most importantly, such political representation was successful.

Consequently, I conclude that there are strong parallels between the age-sets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the youth gangs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Parallels of origin, organisation & identity, the linkages with the community and decline lead me to conclude that given the adverse circumstances that both forms of organisation found themselves in, the collective Zulu unconscious found that the best and perhaps *easiest* means of success for their cause was regimented groups of young men to assert control over their world, which was gradually spiralling out of their control. However, I do not believe that such strong parallels necessarily indicate that there is specific *continuity* between the two forms of organisation since there is no evidence of *unbroken* or *continuous* use of such systems – in fact quite the opposite can be seen through the distinct cessation of both systems.

## References.

1. While this article relates specifically to the Zulu people, due to the demographic mixture of the modern southern African population, it has been occasionally necessary to refer to non-Zulu people. However, this is reflective of the mixture of ethnicity in contemporary Johannesburg and Durban as well as the enduring power that the Zulu people have, which has resulted in many Zulu social traits such as in gang culture, being employed by non-Zulu.
2. Source: Mitchell, P., (2002) *Archaeology of Southern Africa*.
3. The *giya* took the form of a shouting match, with occasional spear throwing. Casualties were rare. (From Knight, I., (1995) *The anatomy of the Zulu Army: from Shaka to Cetshwayo 1818-1879*
4. The archaeological analysis of tree rings document a series of drought episodes in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Huffman (1996b) argues that a shift to maize, which, although providing a three-fold yield compared to millet or sorghum, does require 25% more rain, and may have resulted in food shortages. Source: Mitchell, P., (2002) *Archaeology of Southern Africa*.
5. Mgungundlovu was established in 1829 and enlarged five years later. The site comprised of a central enclosure for cattle, parades and dances, surrounded by barracks, stilted storage facilities and uniformly sized warrior accommodation. The Royal enclosure was divided into two, one for storage and one for Royal accommodation. Due to the razing of this site in 1838, and the Zulu prohibition of reusing Royal sites, baked clay house bases have survived well. Total population estimated at 5-7000 living in 1700 houses. Dingane's own house, (72 square metres), was characterised by a 6-pointed central hearth with 22 postholes, each housing a timber pole covered entirely in glass beads. This is much the same situation as can be seen at Ondini. Destroyed by the British in 1879, again baked floors are well preserved. Excavations revealed Cetshwayo's private quarters, revealing grindstones, pottery and glass bottles, implying functions such as ritual medicine manufacture and the entertainment of guests. Both Mgungundlovu and Ondini reveal through faunal analysis (Plug & Roodt 1990; Watson & Watson 1990) a complete dependence on cattle, with younger animals being preferred in the Royal quarters.
6. Bride Price was paid in cattle.
7. The Oxford concise English dictionary (1999) defines 'gang' as: **n. 1** an organised group of criminals or disorderly young people. ► *informal* a group of people who regularly associate together. ► an organised group of people doing manual work.
8. The ZX5 spoke their own unintelligible language, called *tsotsitaal*. The 'X' in gang names symbolised the Swastika.
9. Some gangs had older members who were known to have wider social responsibilities, such as the Ama-Rashea whose members were 20-60 years old (Glaser, C., 1998. p720).
10. 1971-73, GDP tailed off to 4% p.a., and then in 1976, 1.5%. In 1973-4 foreign investment slumps due to disputes over restrictive Apartheid policies. 1971 witnesses high unemployment and labour shortages, as well as decline in local investment. (Glaser, C., 2000. pp127-8).
11. Up until the 1976 Soweto uprisings, (See Fig.9) the ANC and Inkatha had been complementary organisations, but after such disturbances, Buthelezi found himself increasingly marginalized by the larger ANC. It would be insufficient

to assume that such divergence was purely down to political factors, as rivalries between the two groups could well have stemmed back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century over land, cattle and dagga issues, and 1976 served as a trigger to the divergence.

12. Source on ANCYL basic policy at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/ancypol.html>

13. For a copy of the 1948 ANC Youth League Basic Policy, see: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/ancylpol.html>

14. Source and more information at <http://www.ifp.org.za/>

15. Although this is not to argue that violence was not used: see 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Amnesty Hearings' – Hammasdale. Aug 13 1998)

16. In essence, the former controls the population by asserting influence at all levels of society. The latter controls the non-gang members through criminal activity, and gang members through the hierarchy. The gang in control of the neighbourhood attempts to prevent others from gaining control, whereby perpetuating homogeneity.

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