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AWG CHAMPION AND THE CHANGING FORTUNES OF ZULU NATIONALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1960S TO 1970s¹

Abstract

This article focuses on the role of Arthur Wessels George Champion in the promotion of Zulu nationalism and the introduction of the Zulu homeland from 1965 to 1975. The author will also examine his role in the Zulu Royal House, as it was central to the evolution of the Zulu homeland during the period under review, and examines how Champion combined the old and new elements of Zulu history to promote a Zulu nationalism that would embrace all Zulus inside and outside the Zulu homeland. The introduction briefly touches on the more contemporary role of Zulu ethnic nationalism before 1994, while the ambivalent attitude of Champion towards the policy of “separate development” will also be discussed. This is mainly an archival study of the role of Champion in his later years and the research fills a gap in the study of “separate development” and Zulu nationalism in South Africa.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/JCH41.v2.3>

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)

Journal for Contemporary History
2016 41(2):40-52
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Keywords: AWG Champion; Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi; Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement; Israel Mcwayizeni Zulu; Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu; Zulu nationalism; separate development; Zulu Royal House; Zulu homeland.

Stelutewoorde: AWG Champion; Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi; Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement; Israel Mcwayizeni Zulu; Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu; Zulu-nasionalisme; afsonderlike ontwikkeling; Zulu-koningshuis; Zulu-tuisland.

1. INTRODUCTION

Arthur Wessels George Champion could be regarded as one of the leading political figures who left an enduring legacy on Natal African politics. His strategy of linking broader African nationalism with Zulu nationalism has been used by many politicians after him, although in different political contexts. Historians are in agreement that Champion built a solid political base in Natal, combining trade unionism, African nationalism and Zulu nationalism.

1 This article is based on WF Tabata, *AWG Champion, Zulu nationalism and “separate development” in South Africa, 1965-1975* (MA, University of South Africa, 2006).

The emergence of President Jacob Zuma as President of the African National Congress (ANC) in 2007, and later in 2009 as President of the Republic of South Africa, also witnessed the phenomenal rise of the KwaZulu-Natal ANC as a kingmaker in politics.² One, therefore, cannot help but retrace the changing role of Zulu nationalism in South African politics to the period of the 1960s, deliberating how Zululand and Natal-based politicians used Zulu nationalism as an instrument of political mobilisation in different historical contexts. No one can dispute the fact that Zuma has steadily built the ANC to become a strong political movement in KwaZulu-Natal, outmaneuvering the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) of Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi.³ The forerunner of the IFP was the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement, which used Zulu ethnic nationalism to control the Zulu homeland (also referred to as the Zulu Bantustan) before 1994. It linked its existence to the early South African Native National Congress of Dr JL Dube and Pixley ka Isaka Seme, both early African nationalists with strong Natal and Zulu roots.⁴ In the eyes of the majority in KwaZulu-Natal, the ANC has now re-asserted its position in that region as an embodiment of the political values of Dr Dube and Pixley ka Isaka Seme.

2. DEFINING ZULU NATIONALISM

Zulu ethnic nationalism is based on historical myths around the figure of King Shaka who ruled the Zulu kingdom from the late 1810s until his assassination by his brothers and close advisers in 1828. The vastness of the Zulu kingdom and the greatness of Shaka have always been exaggerated.⁵ Shaka has been depicted by most historians, black and white, in the 19th and 20th centuries as a central figure, a “Great Man” and empire builder who created a centralized state and changed the map of Southern Africa.⁶ His image has been used for different purposes. African nationalists used the image of Shaka as warrior and unifier to build African unity against colonialism. In the early 20th century, the first *Inkatha* was formed to revive the Zulu Royal House after the destruction of the Zulu kingdom in 1879 and the subsequent imprisonment of Dinuzulu ka Cetshwayo,

2 M Ndletyana and BB Maaba, “The African National Congress’s unprecedented victory in KwaZulu-Natal: Spoils of a resurgent Zulu ethno-nationalism”, *Journal of African Elections* 9(2), 2010, pp. 123-141.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Niren Tolsi, “How the IFP lost Zululand to Zulu boy”, *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May 2009. In the 2009 elections, the ANC lost votes in all provinces, but made a staggering gain in KwaZulu-Natal, moving from 47,47% in the 2004 elections to 62,94% in the 2009 elections.

5 J Wright, “Reconstituting Shaka Zulu for the twenty-first century”, *Southern African Humanities* 18(2), December 2006, pp. 139-153.

6 *Ibid.* See also C Hamilton, *Terrific majesty: The powers of Shaka Zulu and the limits of historical invention* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998).

and Zulu unity.⁷ It forged unity between Zulus in rural areas and the migrants in mines and urban factories. Its central mission was to strengthen the position of Solomon kaDinuzulu, who was then a nominal king with no powers. The image of “Shaka the Mighty” was employed by politicians, such as Champion, to mobilize Africans against colonial rule. In mobilizing support for the Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU) in the 1920s and 1930s, Champion constantly referred to the history of the Zulu people, mobilizing Zulu chiefs and deploying Zulu traditional songs (*ngoma*) to revoke the proud history of the Zulus who once owned the land.⁸

The 1960s to 1990s was also a period of African resistance to colonialism and the images of “Shaka the Mighty”, “the nation-builder” and “Black Emperor” were used by African nationalists throughout Southern Africa in their interface with colonialism and imperialism.⁹ African national organizations, such as the ANC, also incorporated “Shaka the Mighty” into their history and his achievements were praised alongside those of Hintsa of the Xhosa, Moshoeshe of the Basotho and Sekhukhune of the Pedi. During this period, Shaka emerged as a statesman who protected his people against the rising tide of colonialism. This uncritical use of the image of Shaka bolstered the political fortunes of Zulu ethnic nationalism, as embodied in *Inkatha Yenkululeko YeSizwe* and the Zulu homeland in the 1970s. In justifying his participation in Zulu homeland politics, Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi constantly argued that KwaZulu was born before apartheid, tracing back its existence to Shaka, and that he was only serving his people, although he was working within the apartheid system. He would use Shaka Day (24 September) to entrench Zulu unity and to exalt the achievements of the Zulu people and their right to regain power in South Africa.¹⁰ On the other hand, the architects of apartheid used the Shaka myth to support their belief in ethnic homelands for Africans, pointing out that Shaka created a state for Zulus and it was therefore logical for apartheid to create tribal homelands¹¹ to restore traditional rule.

7 S Marks, “Patriotism, patriarchy and purity: Natal and the politics of ethnic consciousness”. In: L Vail (ed.), *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey Ltd., 1998), pp. 215-234. See also N Cope, *To bind the nation: Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu nationalism, 1913- 1933* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1993).

8 P la Hausse, “The message of the warriors: The ICU, the labouring poor and the making of a popular political culture in Durban, 1925-1930”. Collected Seminar Papers, 1990, pp. 110-113, accessed at, <sas-spac.sas.ac.uk>.

9 Wright, pp. 145-147. Also see P Forsyth, “Manipulating the past: The political use of history by Chief ANMG Buthelezi”. In: A Dominy and B Guest (eds), *Debate on Zulu origins* (Pietermaritzburg: [s.n.], 1992).

10 M Buthelezi, *King Shaka Day speech*, KwaMashu, 27 September 1992.

11 H Kenney, *Architect of apartheid, H.F. Verwoerd: An appraisal* (Johannesburg: J Ball Publishers, 1980).

3. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON AWG CHAMPION

Champion was born at Sans Souci, Inanda, Durban in 1893 and he died in 1975 at the age of 82 years.¹² He was one of the founder members of the ICU and he later became the Provincial Secretary of the ICU in Natal. The ICU was the first African general workers' union in the then Union of South Africa. Champion was known for using Zulu symbols, such as war dance and songs, to mobilize African workers.¹³ Champion, also known as Mahlathámnyama (place of refuge for those in trouble) forged links with the Zulu Royal House which was under Solomon ka Dinuzulu at the time. He was prominent in Zulu Royal House affairs and he became closer to the successor of Solomon, Cyprian Bhekuzulu and his brother, Mcwayizeni Israel. It was Champion who supported Queen Christina Sibiya (OkaMathathela)¹⁴, mother of King Cyprian, during the succession dispute in the Zulu Royal House.

Champion was a member of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) and was assigned the portfolio of Labour in 1937. He represented the ANC in the Non-European Conferences against the segregation bills of General JBM Hertzog (the so-called Hertzog Bills). He served on the Native Representative Council, the Durban Native Advisory Board, the Joint Location Advisory Boards and later, the Urban Bantu Council.¹⁵ In the late 1940s to 1950s, the younger generation of ANC leaders in the Youth League rejected him as conservative and having a narrow approach to African nationalism.

Being a businessman, he fought for African trading rights in Durban and, throughout his life, opposed Indian trading in African townships¹⁶.

Champion was voted out of office as ANC Provincial President in 1951. He lost the elections to Chief AJ Luthuli by ten votes¹⁷ and, thereafter, dedicated his time to local politics. He was a columnist for *Ilanga Lase Natal* and a prolific writer of letters to newspaper editors. In the 1960s, he strongly supported an alliance between Zulu chiefs and educated Africans to achieve political and economic

12 UNISA Library Archives. AWG Champion Collection, Box 1, Autobiographical notes, File 1/3/1, "The soul is irrepressible", 17 August 1969.

13 National Archives of South Africa. Natal Files, volume 7606, reference 49/328, AWG Champion, Agitator, 1929 to 1940 and part two, 1942 to 1943. See also JR Powell, *The role of A.W.G Champion and the ICU in the development of worker consciousness, 1926-1930* (BA Honours dissertation, University of Natal, 1980).

14 Structured interview with Chief MG Buthelezi, Mahlabathini, 31 January 2005.

15 National Archives of South Africa. Natal Files.

16 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, MSS for *Ilanga Lase Natal*, Box 38, 28/3/2/2/2, 28/3/2/6, *Ilanga Lase Natal* and other newspapers, letters to *Ilanga Lase Natal* and *Daily News* newspapers, dated 2 September 1967, 3 February 1968 and 23 February 1968 respectively.

17 Interview, Buthelezi, 31 January 2005.

rights in the greater South Africa by utilizing the Zulu homeland.¹⁸ He used Zulu history to legitimize his brand of Zulu ethnic nationalism. His last political home was the *Inkatha Yenkululeko Sizwe* National Cultural Liberation Movement, which controlled the KwaZulu homeland.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The period from 1965 to 1975 was crucial in the history of South Africa as the South African government stepped up its efforts of establishing Bantustans for Africans under the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951.¹⁹ The central hypothesis of this study is to establish whether or not Champion succeeded in promoting the idea of a KwaZulu Bantustan, grounded in the ideology of separate development, together with Zulu ethnic nationalism, in alliance with the black middle class and Zulu royalty.

In the discussion of the KwaZulu Bantustan, terms employed by Champion in his own writings, such as his *Okubonwa uMahlathi* column in the *Ilanga Lase Natal* isiZulu newspaper, are used. He used the term *Isifunda* (English translation: homeland) when referring to the KwaZulu Bantustan and also referred to *Uzibuse* (English translation: self-government) when talking about separate development. The term “Bantustan” was employed by opponents of apartheid to explain the policy of territorial segregation for Africans.²⁰

B Schmahman (1978) in her PhD thesis, *KwaZulu in contemporary South Africa: A case-study in the implementation of the policy of separate development*, defines the KwaZulu Bantustan as, “a creation of separate development”. According to her, separate development meant, “the ordering of societies into territorially distinct societies”. It was a policy that, “legitimise[d] continued white domination in areas common to Whites and Blacks and envisage[d] the gradual devaluation of political power to Blacks in embryonic, geographically distinct units, presently called homelands”. She further argues that separate development is a conceptual framework within which apartheid policies, “are rationalised and defended by authorities”.²¹

The KwaZulu Bantustan was a remnant of the Zulu kingdom which was invaded and defeated by the British colonial forces in 1879 and later annexed by

18 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, Boxes 37 and 38, MSS for *Ilanga Lase Natal* newspaper, File 28/1/1/1 to 28/3/8/6/

19 Mzala (pseud. Jabulani Nobleman Nxumalo), *Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief with a double agenda* (London: Zed Books, 1988), pp. 48-51.

20 The term “Bantu” was associated with apartheid terminology in South Africa, e.g. Bantu Education, Bantu Authorities, Bantu Law, Bantustans. It refers to Africans and was rejected like the term, “Native”, before it. Even the supporters of the Bantustan system preferred the term “homeland”, since it was regarded as less insulting.

21 B Schmahman, *KwaZulu in contemporary South Africa: A case study in the implementation of the policy of separate development* (PhD, University of Natal, 1978), pp. 10-12.

the Natal colonial government through the enactment of the Annexation Act, Act 37 of 1897.²² SJ Maphalala identifies the Thukela River as the southern boundary of the Zulu kingdom during the rule of its founder, Shaka. The northern boundary was the Phongola River. Other major rivers were the Hluhluwe, the Mzinyathi, Imfolozi eMhlophe (White Mfolozi) and Imfolozi eMnyama (Black Mfolozi). The kingdom had the Indian Ocean coastline (*echwebeni*) as a natural border.²³

The political and administrative basis of the homeland system was enunciated in the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 which established tribal authorities under the control of chiefs in rural areas. Chiefs were accorded administrative and judicial functions under the supervision of magistrates. The Act also made provision for the establishment of Regional Authorities. These Regional Authorities had to create Territorial Authorities in Bantustans for African ethnic groups.

Territorial Authorities carried out functions, such as the control of lower courts and all matters related to the chieftainship in a designated homeland. In addition, a bureaucracy with state departments, such as Education, Health, Community Affairs and Agriculture came into being.²⁴

Champion urged Zulus to accept the Zulu homeland and self-government (*uzibuse*) as he believed that it would give them a political voice and an opportunity to rebuild the Zulu nation, shattered by colonial conquest.²⁵ He also wanted the Zulu king to have defined executive powers under the Bantu Authorities Act. The ANC, on the other hand, opposed the introduction of homelands since the policy meant the division of South Africa and would declare Africans stateless in their country.²⁶

Champion's support for the introduction of the Zulu homeland led to him being courted by the pro-government Africa Foundation of South Africa (hereafter referred to as the Foundation) under Bishop W Dimba of the Federation of Bantu Independent Churches. Between 1964 and 1965, the Foundation unsuccessfully tried to recruit Champion into its ranks.²⁷ Champion would have been a valuable

22 Summary of the Report of the Commission for Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas (UG 61 of 1955) [Tomlinson Report], pp. 46-50.

23 SJ Maphalala, "Prince Shingana ka Mpande and white supremacy: 1839-1911". In: DR Edgecombe, JPC Laband and PS Thompson (eds), *Settlement, conflict and development in Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1997). See the map showing the Zulu kingdom.

24 Kenney, p. 230.

25 AWG Champion, *The views of Mahlathi* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1982), pp. 110-117.

26 B Magubane (ed.), *The road to democracy in South Africa* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), Introduction.

27 Killie Campbell Africana Library, Box 1 [of 3], KCM 99/6/7/1-122, File 7, letter dated 11 January 1964, Mr BLEM Mahlase – Champion. Mahlase was living in Jabavu, Soweto, Johannesburg, and was Secretary of the Africa Foundation of South Africa. The letter asks Champion to work with the Foundation and promises him that he would have an opportunity of promoting his National Fund and of touring overseas countries. See also

member to the Foundation as he was also a member of the Paramount Chief Council (*Ibandla lenkosi*) in Durban and an adviser to King Cyprian Bhekuzulu ka Solomon of the Zulus.²⁸

In January 1965, the Foundation hosted Chief KD Matanzima in Durban and invited Champion to discuss the establishment of the Zulu homeland. Matanzima had earlier won the 1963 Transkei elections under the umbrella of separate development.²⁹ The architects of separate development presented the Transkei as a model Bantustan.³⁰

The Foundation facilitated the formation of the Zulu National Party of Lloyd Ndaba and other ethnic parties in the mid-1960s and early 1970s.³¹ It also sponsored a newspaper, *Africa South*, to support separate development.³² Ndaba, a former Bantu Affairs clerk, was the editor of this newspaper. Champion refused to be drawn to the Foundation, because it was known as a creation of the South African government. He did not want to be seen as a spokesperson of the government, or an apologist of its policy.

At the meeting, Champion informed those present that the Zulus had already accepted self-government in 1951 through the Bantu Authorities Act.³³ He regarded the implementation of the said Act as inevitable and did not want to drag King Cyprian into politics. He was mindful of the reluctance of the Zulus to accept separate development and avoided controversy.³⁴

The *Ilanga* newspaper embarrassed Champion when it carried an article quoting him as saying that the introduction of the Zulu homeland was inevitable and that King Cyprian had no alternative but to participate in the envisaged Zulu homeland.³⁵ Champion refuted the article in *Ilanga* and the *Natal Mercury*. *Ilanga* did not publish his letter, but the *Natal Mercury* did. Champion also wrote a

the letter from the Chief Organiser of the Foundation, dated 22 May 1965, requesting the support of Champion in organising seminars on behalf of the Foundation in Chesterville. There is no available evidence of Champion having accepted these overtures or of seminars being organised in Chesterville by Champion on behalf of the Foundation.

- 28 Interview, Buthelezi, 31 January 2005. Buthelezi described the Paramount Chief Council as a body of Durban-based personalities who organised functions for King Cyprian in Durban and supported activities of the Zulu Royal House. Buthelezi also detailed the historic involvement of Champion in the Zulu Royal House.
- 29 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, Box 25, Zululand/KwaZulu, File 20/1/1, AWG Champion – King Cyprian Bhekuzulu, 23 January 1965.
- 30 GM Carter, TG Karis and NM Schultz, *South Africa's Transkei: The politics of domestic colonialism* (London: s.n., 1967), pp. 66-74.
- 31 NT Sambureni, "From mainstream politics to township politics", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 17, 1997, p. 45.
- 32 *Africa South* IV(10), October 1969.
- 33 UNISA Library Archives, Champion – King Cyprian, 23 January 1965.
- 34 Magubane, chapters 3 and 4. Chief MG Buthelezi also stated in the 31 January 2005 interview that the Zulus did not want to accept the Zulu homeland. They relented after it became clear that the homeland was being forced on them.
- 35 Magubane, chapters 3 and 4. See second paragraph, letter dated 23 January 1965.

letter on 23 January 1965 to King Cyprian in which he tried to draw a distinction between the introduction of the Zulu homeland and the “betterment scheme” established under Proclamation 31 of 1939. The so-called “betterment scheme” involved forced removals under the guise of consolidating villages, culling of stock in rural areas and the fencing of grazing camps.³⁶ Champion was aware of the unpopularity of this measure, as it was also opposed by King Cyprian in kwaNongoma and he tried to delink the homeland system from the “betterment scheme”. He regarded the Zulu homeland as a step in the right direction.³⁷

The distinction drawn by Champion was inaccurate, because the South African state linked the Bantu Authorities to the implementation of all laws affecting rural people, including the betterment scheme. The letter exposed a political contradiction on his part, as he was prepared to disregard certain aspects of segregation and apartheid in his quest for political rights through a homeland that was the product of apartheid laws.

In his support for a Zulu homeland, Champion projected himself as a modernising force. He argued that the homeland had the potential to open up development opportunities to African people and that it was a model of equality and sound race relations in South Africa. He wanted a Zulu Territorial Authority (ZTA) with elected African representatives to serve as a counter-weight against the unrivaled power of government-appointed chiefs in the Zulu legislature.³⁸ Clearly convinced that ex-officio members could not represent the popular will, he perceived the role of experienced leaders like himself, business people and professionals as vital to the ZTA.

Regional developments in Southern Africa during the 1960s encouraged Champion to call for the stepping up of efforts to establish a ZTA.³⁹ The three British Protectorates – Basutoland (today Lesotho), Bechuanaland (today Botswana) and Swaziland – gained independence from Britain by constitutional means. They also had monarchies playing unifying roles. Champion received a personal invitation from King Sobhuza 11 to attend the independence celebration of Swaziland in September 1968 at Mbabane. Champion’s resolve to strive for a Zulu homeland with a sovereign king, was strengthened by his

36 T Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Longman Group, 1987), p. 262.

37 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, MSS for Ilanga by AWG Champion, Newspaper in Zulu, Box 38, File 28/3/2/6, “Okubonwa uMahlathi”, Buyelanini emakhaya (Go back home), 1 July 1970. Champion states that he had always opposed land dispossession by the government and in the *Ilanga* article, 15 April 1970, Champion attacks the 13% allocation of land to Africans.

38 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, 28/3/2/6, “Okubonwa uMahlathi” column, “AmaChiefs Abantu”, 13 November 1970. Champion asserts that the Chiefs under the Native Administration Act No. 38 of 1927 are servants of the state and are like police sergeants. They therefore need the support of educated Africans.

39 Champion, pp. 131-133.

visit to Swaziland. He described Swaziland as a picture of prosperity and peace where different races co-existed peacefully without conflict. To him the Zulu were delaying progress by not accepting the ZTA. This period also coincided with the death of King Cyprian. Israel Mcwayizeni, brother to Cyprian, was then installed as Regent.

In April 1969, after the installation of the Regent, Champion again argued that the government had placed chiefs under the control of white magistrates and that they could not truly represent the aspirations of their people without the assistance of educated Africans, business people and experienced leaders.⁴⁰ He became a firm supporter of Prince Israel, seeing him as the future head of the Zulu government. In the process, he criticized Buthelezi for calling himself Prime Minister of the late king, King Cyprian.⁴¹

It is clear that the years 1968 and 1969 were years of political instability in the Zulu Royal House. The Regent resented the presence of Buthelezi in royal affairs. Champion worsened already tense relations by drawing the attention of the Regent to a 1969 newspaper article which cited Buthelezi and Prince Clement ka Solomon Zulu as saying that Buthelezi had been Prime Minister to the late king. In his letter to Prince Israel, Champion refuted the claim that Buthelezi was appointed by King Cyprian as Prime Minister.

Israel, supported by Champion, wanted executive powers for the king in the ZTA. Buthelezi, supported by Prince Clement Zulu, who later became the Speaker of the ZTA, campaigned for a ceremonial king. Therefore, Buthelezi was presented to the public as the traditional Prime Minister of the late king, and also the future Prime Minister of KwaZulu with executive powers.

As later developments would show, Buthelezi won the 1970 elections for Chief Executive Officer and Champion's favourite, Israel, entered the ZTA as a less significant Representative of the Paramount Chief. This is one of the political battles that he lost in his quest for influence and position in the Zulu homeland.

5. CHAMPION AND THE POLITICAL ASCENDANCY OF CHIEF MANGOSUTHU GATSHA BUTHELEZI IN THE KWAZULU HOMELAND AND NATAL

In a political turnaround, Champion welcomed the election of Chief Buthelezi as Chief Executive Officer of the KwaZulu Territorial Authority (KTA) on 9 June 1970. He remarked that Buthelezi possessed both education and royalty.⁴²

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

41 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, Box 25, Zululand/KwaZulu, Correspondence between AWG Champion and the Zulu Royal House, File 20/1/1, Champion – Prince Israel, 25 May 1969.

42 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, File 20/6/1/2, Champion – Buthelezi, 24 May 1972.

Buthelezi was indeed the most educated chief in Zululand at the time, holding the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Native Administration and History from the University of Fort Hare.⁴³ Champion, as a product of a Christian family on the Inanda Mission Station, valued education and consistently maintained that chiefs who represented people in the KTA should be highly qualified.⁴⁴ His support of Buthelezi was also driven by his political pragmatism. Buthelezi was in charge of the KTA and, as someone who believed in working within the constitutional structures of government, Champion regarded collaboration with Buthelezi as an opportunity.

Champion contributed to the unfolding of the Zulu homeland and the *Inkatha Cultural Liberation Movement* which had a broader constituency of urban and rural people. He was, as Buthelezi called him, *iDhlozi eliphilayo* (the living ancestor).⁴⁵ He brought to Zulu homeland politics the strategy of using government structures in the struggle for greater African political rights in South Africa. However, Champion's emphasis on a monolithic Zulu political unity in KwaZulu sowed the seeds of political intolerance as Inkatha, from 1970 onwards, developed a tradition of non-accommodation towards other political formations in the KwaZulu Bantustan.

6. CHAMPION AND THE ZULU ROYAL HOUSE

The involvement of Champion in the Zulu Royal House predates the period under review. In September 1930, he was banished from Natal as authorities alleged that he was involving King Solomon in the activities of the ICU⁴⁶. He also assisted Queen Christina Sibiya (OkaMathathela) in her battles for the installation of Cyprian Bhekuzulu as successor to Solomon.⁴⁷

In 1954 Champion was appointed to the committee organising the unveiling of King Shaka's grave by the then reigning Zulu king, King Cyprian Bhekuzulu ka Solomon. In 1955, he was also selected to speak on behalf of the Zulu king when the then Minister of Native Affairs, Dr HF Verwoerd, visited the Zulu king at kwaNongoma Mona Salesyards. Other speakers were Buthelezi, Chief Charles Hlengwa and Prince Phika ka Sitheku Zulu.⁴⁸

It was at the 1955 Indaba that Champion demanded clarity on the status of the Zulu king with the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. Two authors who covered this Indaba, Temkin (1976) and Mzala (1978),

43 B Temkin, *Gatsha Buthelezi* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1976), pp. 39-59.

44 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, Box 38, MSS for *Ilanga*, File 28/3/2/6, "Okubonwa uMahlathi", 4 June 1970.

45 UNISA Library Archives, File 20/6/1, Buthelezi – Champion, 24 June 1972.

46 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, Box 36, File 27/4/4, Memorial Lecture in honour of Dr JL Dube, s.a.

47 Interview, Buthelezi, 31 January 2005.

48 *Ibid.*

overlooked the significance of Champion's address. What he actually called for was executive powers for the king in the envisaged Zulu homeland. He saw the Zulu king and the institution of kingship as the centre of Zulu unity and political power. Verwoerd could not respond, as the apartheid state had not at that stage developed a constitutional framework for the ZTA. The matter was also not resolved during the lifetime of King Cyprian who died in 1968, two years before the establishment of the ZTA. The South African government left it to the first legislature of the Zulu homeland to define the status of the Zulu king.

In October 1969, when Crown Prince Goodwill Zwelithini wanted to marry and assume office, Champion entered the fray by granting an interview to the *Rand Daily Mail*,⁴⁹ calling on Prince Israel to send the young prince back to school. Champion argued that Zulus needed a well-educated king who would be able to lead people in modern times.⁵⁰ In 1969 Zwelithini was 21 years old and Champion felt he should wait until he was older. He also wrote to Commissioner JJ Boshoff of the Zulu and Swazi Unit, as well as to Buthelezi and specifically asked him to intervene as an educated uncle of the Crown Prince. In his letter to Buthelezi, Champion *inter alia* said, "I have seen many boys forced to go back to school against their so-called will for their own benefit [...] for the sake of the Zulu nation. I am against the marriage of a school going heir who may stand to lose [rather] than gain."⁵¹ His use of the media to air his views against the future Zulu king offended many members and relatives of the Zulu Royal Family, so that he lost rather than gained the trust of the Zulu Royal House. This was typical of Champion who always boldly stated his views on topical matters without considering the collateral damage these may cause.

At this stage, Champion came under pressure from the *Africa South* newspaper, edited by Ndaba. As has been indicated, the newspaper was the mouthpiece of the state-sponsored Foundation. It attacked the Regent, Prince Israel, and accused him of trying to assassinate Crown Prince Zwelithini and to assume the kingship.⁵² Champion rallied to the defence of Prince Israel, but, as a sole politician relying on letters to editors, the apartheid machinery was too powerful for him. *Ilanga Lase Natal* did not offer support to him either.⁵³ The South African government controlled the media and had propaganda

49 *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 September 1969.

50 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, Box 25, Prince Goodwill controversy, File 20/1/5/2, Champion – Editor of the *Daily News*, 11 September 1969.

51 *Ibid.*, third paragraph. See also, AWG Champion Collection, Box 25, Zululand/KwaZulu, File 20/3/1, Champion – Commissioner JJ Boshoff, 16 May 1970.

52 *Africa South* IV(10), October 1969, p. 5.

53 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, 28/1/1.3. Champion – AT Retief, Managing Editor of *Ilanga*, 9 September 1969. In the letter, Champion is requesting reasons for the non-publication of his letter in defence of Prince Israel. Also see Champion – Bishop WG Dimba and Lloyd Ndaba, 19 December 1969. Champion attacked them for not publishing his letter on the marriage of Zwelithini.

structures on the ground. Champion could not stop the marriage of 1969 and, in December 1971, Zwelithini was installed as King of the Zulus.⁵⁴

Champion's direct influence on the Zulu royal family ended when Zwelithini became king, as it was clear that Israel Mcwayizeni Zulu was Champion's preferred candidate for kingship. Under Zwelithini he became notorious in the royal court and, as a result, his name appears negatively in the praises of the current king, which still carry the following lines, "Our Great Chief of the Naleni Regiment whom Champion, the Forest, spluttered against in the papers".⁵⁵

It would also appear that Champion supported a king with executive powers as long as Prince Israel was the candidate for kingship. When that did not materialise, he supported Buthelezi and snubbed Zwelithini, whom he clearly did not recognise as a king with leadership qualities. On the surface, Champion could be perceived as an opportunist for switching sides. However, a deeper political analysis of the situation reveals Champion as more politically astute at the time, as he had known Buthelezi as a political factor since the late 1940s. Buthelezi was a member of the ANC Youth League and familiar to Champion, who was one of the senior leaders of the ANC in Natal from the 1920s to 1951. Archival sources at the University of South Africa (UNISA, cf. the AWG Champion Collection) indicate that Champion corresponded with Buthelezi on political matters long before the establishment of the ZTA. Champion was confident that Buthelezi would be ideally suited as Chief in the ZTA to promote his political agenda; namely, the use of government structures to promote African nationalism and liberation in South Africa.

The decision by Champion to throw his weight behind Buthelezi would, however, have other political implications for the relationship between Buthelezi and the Zulu Royal House. Buthelezi buttressed his position as Chief Minister of KwaZulu and as President of the mass-based Inkatha which attracted political veterans like Champion, who earned his political experience in the ANC. Zwelithini was later forced to accept the leadership of Buthelezi, as the latter enjoyed political hegemony in the KwaZulu homeland and among the Zulus. Buthelezi also had the power to dispense patronage, as he became the paymaster of Zulu traditional leaders, including the king.

7. CONCLUSION

From the mid 1960s till 1975, Champion was one of the few surviving members of an early generation of African nationalists in South Africa who effectively wielded the power of newspapers in shaping public opinion. Champion utilised his

54 OEHM Nxumalo, CT Msimang and IS Cooke, *King of goodwill: The authorised biography of King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu* (Cape Town: Nasou via Afrika, 2003), p. 55. For his December marriage, see *Daily News*, 22 October 1969.

55 Nxumalo, Msimang and Cooke, p. 3.

column in the *Ilanga Lase Natal* newspaper, “Okubonwa uMahlathi”, to advocate for the acceptance of a Zulu homeland and its government as a strategic political tactic. It should be emphasized that the introduction of homelands was a new development which was also discussed by other leaders, including those associated with the then banned ANC.⁵⁶ Champion was not the only one to see the political possibility of using the homelands to advance African interests. He was, however, the most vocal in motivating Africans in Natal to support the Zulu homeland concept.

Champion saw the Zulu homeland as a strategic political platform to advance broader African liberation in South Africa. He also appealed to Zulu history and the achievements of outstanding Zulu personalities to show that Zulus were intellectually ready to govern themselves. Champion’s political thinking converged with that of Buthelezi, who became the first Chief Executive Officer of the ZTA and later the President of the *Inkatha Yenkululeko YeSizwe* Cultural Movement. Champion collaborated with Buthelezi in the formation of *Inkatha* and articulated a new political order that would be achieved through collaboration between chiefs and educated African elite. Moreover, Champion sowed the seeds of Zulu ethnic nationalism which used separate development as a base for political mobilisation. This form of nationalism, the so-called Zulu ethnic nationalism, was frowned upon by the ANC and the Black Consciousness Movement as narrow and chauvinistic.⁵⁷ These liberation movements perceived Zulu ethnic nationalism as a threat to black unity,⁵⁸ since they believed that the apartheid state used ethnicity to divide and rule Africans.

It may be categorically stated that Champion never fulfilled the role he wished to play in Zulu homeland politics, because he could not build his own political base within the separate development policy framework. He did, however, play a strategic role in laying the foundation for Zulu nationalism and for Buthelezi to participate in the Natal and South African politics. On the other hand, Champion failed to achieve his ideal of a Zulu Homeland Constitution with an executive king, as the ZTA was captured by Buthelezi who modelled it along the lines of a constitutional monarch with ceremonial powers.

56 Nelson Mandela mentions these ANC discussions on the introduction of self-government for Transkei in his book, *Long walk to freedom*. In 1976, when Transkei attained nominal independence, a number of ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) members returned to a nominally independent Transkei and some, like Mlahleni Njisane and TT Letlaka, served on the Transkei Cabinet and as senior diplomats. The ANC also held political discussions with *Inkatha* in the 1970s and a political relationship was created although it later collapsed after the 1976 student uprisings.

57 Karis and Gerhart, pp. 446-470.

58 R Suttner, “ANC underground”, *South African Historical Journal* 49, 2003, pp. 123-146.