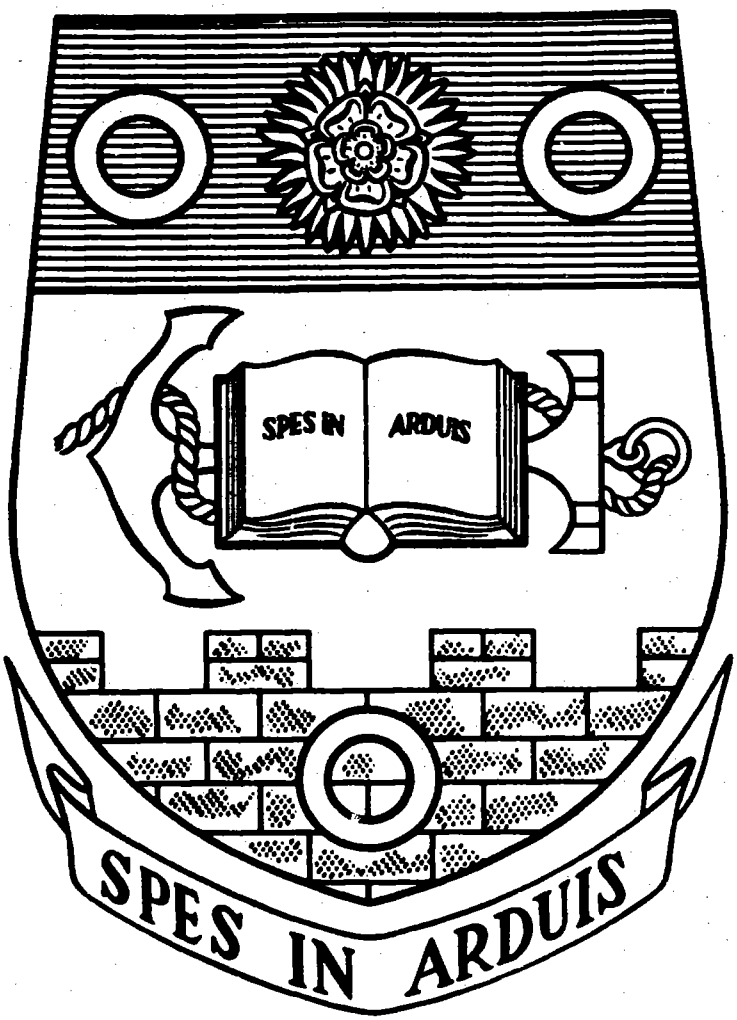

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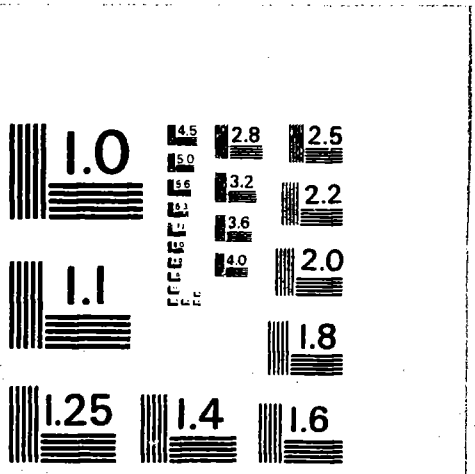

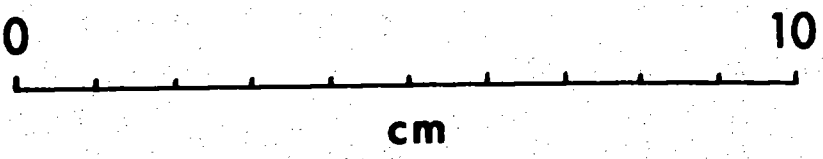

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN MPHEPHU AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC (1895 - 1899)

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PREFACE

When I undertook this research, I was faced with the formidable problem of collecting oral evidence from the people of Venda. As a result of the co-operation I received from Chief Patrick Ramaano Mphephu, the grandson of Mphephu and Chief Minister of Venda, as well as from Headman Frank Nndwakhulu Ravele, Cabinet Minister, I was, however, enabled to carry out field work. Without this support from Chief Mphephu and Headman Ravele, I would not have managed to obtain vital information, and I am extremely grateful to them.

I also wish to thank the officials of the State Library and the Library of the University of South Africa who readily gave me whatever I requested. The Department of Bibliographic services helped considerably by drawing my attention to many valuable secondary sources.

The Officials of the Transvaal Archives Depot, Pretoria, Miss J.M. Schoeman, Miss M.E. Olivier, Dr. M.H. Buys, Dr. J.H. Snyman, Messrs. J.F.C. Swart, S.J. Schoeman and G.J. Reynecke, and of the National Archives of Rhodesia, Salisbury, Mr. Mc Carthy and Dr. D.N. Beach, Editor of Mbire, a publication of Historical Research South of the Zambezi, helped me a great deal by making Archival documents available. Doing research at the Government Archives, although an onerous task, was made much easier owing to the warm understanding and co-operation of the officials.

I thank the Human Sciences Research Council for their Ad Hoc grant which made my visits to Pretoria and my fieldwork in Venda possible.

Opinions expressed or conclusions reached are those of the author and should not be regarded as a reflection of the views of any other person or of the Human Sciences Research Council.

To Prof. S.B. Spies, my Supervisor, with his experience and firm but sympathetic understanding, who had to guide me, direct my research, encourage me and correct the dissertation chapter by chapter by means of constructive suggestions, I owe much more than he can imagine. I convey my deepest gratitude for his supervision of my work.

In conclusion I wish to thank my dear wife Dorothy for her encouragement and moral support without which I would not have been in a position to undertake this gigantic task.

SUMMARY

From the available sources, it is now evident that by the end of the thirteenth century, the Vhavenda had already established themselves in Venda and that the Vhasenzi and Vhalemba subjugated them towards the turn of the seventeenth century and that after the disappearance of Thohoyandou, they spread throughout the country.

The arrival of the Voortrekkers under Louis Tregardt coincided with civil strife following the death of a chief. The Boers were cordially received but after Ramabulana's death, Makhado who had been assisted by them to gain control of the nation, turned against them and compelled them to evacuate Schoemansdal in 1867.

The involvement of the Boers in matters of succession became habitual. The weaker aspirants as a rule fled to the Boers for military assistance, and ultimately they found themselves confronted by the legitimate heir, Mphephu. Mphephu's stubborn resistance and refusal to pay taxation was viewed as calculated defiance of the authority of the Republic.

The protection offered to Maemu and Sinthumule created the impression that the Boers were furthering their cause. This period of history which led to misunderstandings and friction between the opposing parties has, in my opinion not been adequately handled by earlier writers who maintained that refusal to pay taxation, to allow a census to be taken and to receive the Location Commission, were the major causes of conflict.

I have tried to show that these secondary factors brought to light by earlier writers were only contributory to the main cause - the problem of succession which in itself created an atmosphere of discontent which ultimately led to hostilities.

The Boer expedition of 1898 appeared to Vhavenda to be an escalation of the civil war for supremacy between Mphephu and Sinthumule. Against this background, they felt compelled to defy General P.J. Joubert and to take up arms against him.

The Boer forces, with their military skill and their Black allies, drove Mphephu from Luatame with little resistance. His flight to Mirondoni where he hoped to be assisted by the gods and the expected arrival of the British South African Police led to further loss of life. Had he crossed the Vhembe immediately after the burning of Luatame on 16 November 1898, many people would have survived and few would have been taken prisoner.

The failure of the British South African Police to arrive compelled Mphephu to cross into Rhodesia on 21 December 1898, where he was given a location at Vhuxwa and he stayed there until the end of the Anglo-Boer War in 1902.

The attempts by the Boers to have Sinthumule proclaimed as Chief in the place of Mphephu, failed to materialize, as the people would not acknowledge him. After the war the town of Louis Trichardt was established and Venda was opened to White settlement.

Mphephu returned and he as well as Kutama and Sinthumule were given locations.

Thus, this study deals with the origin, the course and results of the Mphephu war.

Glossary of Abbreviations used in Footnotes

A.N.C. ... Archives of the Assistant Native Commissioner (Rhodesia)

B.A. ... Archives of Her Majesty's Representative in the South African Republic (British Agent)

C. ... Command Papers (Imperial Blue Book)

C.C. ... Archives of the Civil Commissioner (Rhodesia)

D.A. ... Archives of the Deputy Administrator (Rhodesia)

K.G. ... Argief van die Kommandant-Generaal van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek

S.N. ... Argief van die Superintendent van Naturelle

S.P. ... Argief van die Staatsprokureur

S.S. ... Argief van die Staatsekretaris van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek

Z.A.R. ... Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek: Amptelike Publikasies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Relations Between Vhavenda and Whites Before 1895, ...page 1

CHAPTER II

The Struggle For Supremacy Between Makhado's sons, ...page 32

CHAPTER III

The First Phase of Mphephu's Reign (December 1895 to June 1896), ...page 48

CHAPTER IV

Mphephu's Clash With Sinthumule and The Beginning of Hostilities With the South African Republic (July 1896 to June 1898), ...page 61

CHAPTER V

The Immediate Causes Of The War, ...page 93

CHAPTER VI

The Expedition of 1898 And The Outbreak of Hostilities, ...page 122

CHAPTER VII

The Aftermath Of The War, ...page 157

Appendices .....page 170

Sources .....page 196

CHAPTER ONE

RELATIONS BETWEEN VHAVENDA AND WHITES BEFORE 1895

When one considers that recorded history of the Vhavenda nation extends marginally beyond 300 years,[1] it is too ambitious an undertaking to endeavour to discuss the development of the nation within the confines of a dissertation. The task is further aggravated by several other factors. One must bear in mind that due to the geographical situation of Venda and its distance from seaports of the Southern tip of the continent, the Vhavenda had no contact whatsoever with any White man before the beginning of the first decade of the 19th century.

With the exception of the work done by authors such as I. Rademeyer, D. Möller-Malan, J. Flygare and N.J. Van Warmelo,[2] written material on the early history of the Vhavenda was based on anthropological and archaeological findings and from these only a few historical facts can be gleaned.

Furthermore the lack of sound anthropological and archaeological knowledge compelled these writers to concentrate their efforts on only two tribal divisions - Vhasenzi and Vhalemba.[3] In so doing they completely ignored the tribal multiplicity of Venda.

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1 G.P. Lestrade, "Some notes on the Ethnic History of the Vhavenda and their Rhodesian Affinities" in N.J. Van Warmelo, Contributions Towards Venda History Religion and Tribal Ritual, p.xxiv.

2 I. Rademeyer, "Die Oorlog teen Magato (Mpefu)", Historiese Studies; J. Flygare De Zoutpansbergen en de Bavenda Natie, D. Möller-Malan, The Chair of the Ramabulanas, Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners of Musina.

3 The archaeologists and anthropologists concentrated on the Nzhelele-Dzata and Vhasenzi-Vhalemba group.

It has been decided therefore to concentrate on the relations between the Vhavenda and Whites and more particularly on the conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic between 1895 and 1899 and to analyse the origin, the course and the results of that war; the early history of the Vhavenda has been dealt with only briefly to provide an introduction to the conflict of 1895 to 1899.

This study is therefore an attempt to place one aspect of the history and development of the Vhavenda nation into its rightful place in the South African historical arena by also making use of sources and by placing greater emphasis on the Venda point of view than other historians who have written on the topic have done.[4] In the initial chapters it will become evident that owing to lack of original documentary evidence the writer has been forced to rely heavily on secondary sources and on information gained verbally. All statements have been carefully processed in an attempt to gather historical facts which otherwise would have remained obscure.

Subsequent chapters will be augmented by reference to both verbal and documentary sources. Seemingly insurmountable difficulties immediately present themselves in that verbal information, had of necessity to be objectively criticised before selection could be made and original documents found in Government Archives are handwritten and in many instances proved unreadable and difficult to interpret.[5]

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[4] In his Ethnography and Condition of South Africa before A.D. 1505, page 188, G.M. Theal confesses that he is unacquainted with the history of Venda. This is also apparent in the works of other writers although they did not admit their lack of knowledge.

[5] Most of the documents found in Government Archives are handwritten and are often not easily legible.

In presenting the Vhavenda as a people within the orbit of South African history, reference will be made to traditional institutions[6] such as kingship, as such institutions are deeply embedded in Venda culture. It will be postulated that the misunderstanding of underlying beliefs, traditions and cultures of the Vhavenda nation was the basis of much of the disagreement between officials of the South African Republic and the rulers of the Vhaverda nation. As the focus will be on friction between Vhavenda and Whites which reached its zenith during the days of Mphephu, several important events will be high-lighted, especially those which presented major areas of confrontation dating from the time the Vhasenzi and Vhalemba settled in Venda to the turn of the 19th century.[7]

Shortcomings revealed in the few existing works on the subject will be rectified as the writer intends to portray the Vhavenda as a nation consisting of differing tribal units and clans,[8] bound by common language and land of habitation. This basis of discussion, has hitherto not received attention. It will, in some instances, be difficult to fix exact dates for some of the important events, but it will be attempted to indicate as nearly as possible when such an event might have occurred.

Throughout the length and breadth of the country there is still a vast and uncultivated ground in which to work as previous disclosures of anthropologists and archaeologists were limited to the Vhasenzi and Vhalemba tribes and the dating of a few recent ruins of Nzhelele-Dzata type.[9]

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[6] These were often misunderstood by the officials of the Republic and also by many writers.

[7] These were succession to the throne, land ownership, taxation which included the chief who up to that time was used to receive tribute from his subjects through their headmen.

[8] The Vhavenda consists of tribal divisions, i.e. Vhangona, Vhasenzi Vhanyai, Vhalemba, Vhatavhatsindi, Vhambedzi etc. Vhavenda means the inhabitants or citizens of Venda.

[9] Apart from Nzhelele-Dzata, Mapungubye etc., the archaeologists have done little while anthropologists concentrated on Vhasenzi and Vhalemba.

It is with these observations in mind that the writer will try to bring order to a somewhat disorganised and in certain instances incompleted field of study.

As for their place of origin, there seems to be some unanimity among existing writers that the Vhavenda originated from the region of the Great Lakes of Central Africa between the Lower Congo and present-day Malawi.[10] This has the support of Vhavenda themselves.[10(a)]

It is from this locality that the migratory stream, with its ramifications, started moving westward, southward and eastward. The form which this migration assumed was a wave of tribal divisions, each division most probably bound together by similarity of language, cultural links, religion and common ancestral heritage.[11]

The right wing of the stream, consisting of Vhangona first followed a westward direction and thereafter entered the Soutpansberg by way of Angola. The names "Angola" and "Vhangona" seem to have some common linguistic characteristics.[12]

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10 R. Vessmann, The Bawenda of the Spelonken, pp.9-10; Flygare, p.9; See also Transvaal Native Affairs Department, Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal (1905), p.62; Callwell E., Chase, Native Tribes of the Transvaal (prepared for the General Staff), War Office, pp.59-60; C. Beuster, "Das Volk der Vawenda", Gesellschaft für Erdkunde, p.239; E. Gottschling, "The Bawenda, A sketch of their History and customs", British and S. African Association for the Advancement of Science, III, p.365.

10(a) Van Warmelo, "Ngomalungundu", The Copper Miners of Musina and the early History of the Zoutpansberg, p.112; N. Netshiendeulu on 30 March 1973 stated that the Vhavenda came from the Congo.

11 J.F. Eloff and J.B. De Vaal, "The Secrets of Makahane", Custos, May 1974, p.24.

12 In Venda language the letters "l" and "n" easily merge as in Tshilapfene and Tshinapfene which mean the same thing. Following this explanation "Vhangola" and "Vhangona" could mean the same thing.

Under their chiefs Raphulu of Tshivheulwa, Tshidziwelele of Mutudi and Dewasi of Tshaulu, they inhabited the whole area from Mount Sunguzwi in the West to Mount Tshitumbe in the East.[13]

Two Vhavenda historians, H.M. Motenda and E.F.N. Mudau writing during the first half of this century, contend that the Vhangona were the true Vhavenda[14] which fact is accepted by all Vhavenda. The ruins of these primitive and peaceful people indicate that they occupied the Soutpansberg when development in Western Europe was still in the Middle Ages. Although H.A. Stayt did not know that the Vhangona were true Vhavenda, his greatest historical contribution was that he came across a Mungona named Netshitumbe who could recite the names of his paternal ancestors at Tshitumbe for the past sixteen generations.[15]

If we follow Professor Lestrade's method of periodization by assigning three chiefs to a century,[16] the Vhangona might have crossed the Vhembe river towards the end of the 13th century.[17] As first inhabitants of Venda they named all the places, mountains, rivers, hills, grass, trees, stones, birds etc. Even today the inhabitants of Venda revere the ruins and the sacred places of Vhangona.[18]

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13 H.A. Stayt, The Bavenda, p.11 and L.T. Marole, Makhulukuku, pp.6-7.

14 S.M. Dzivhani and E.F.N. Mudau, Mahosi a Venda na Vhadau vha Tshakhuma, p.66; See also E.F.N. Mudau and M.M. Motenda, Ngomalungundu na Ramabulana, p.11.

15 Stayt, p.11.

16 See footnote 1.

17 Stayt, p.11. The information supplied by Netshitumbe refers to the beginning of the dynasty of Dewasi at Tshaulu and not to the main line of Raphulu of Tshivheulwa from which the former branched.

18 There are still forests which nobody is allowed to enter. These are known as Zwifho. See also Stayt, p.11.

The second group, the Vhanyai followed an easterly direction and first settled at Mount Lombe in Rhodesia. After crossing the Vhembe river, they occupied the whole eastern Venda as far as Mount Madzimbanombe,[19] and their prominent rulers were Makahane, Nelombe and Tshilowa.[20]

The other group which followed the same direction were Vhambedzi who first settled at Mount Malungudzi in Rhodesia from where some of them crossed the Vhembe river and settled at Tshulu, Mianzwi, Tshiilavulu and east of Makonde mountains. Their ruler, Luvhimbi, who achieved some prominence, was believed to have had power to make rain.[21]

The largest group, the Vhatavhatsindi followed a southerly course and occupied the whole area from Mount Folovhodwe as far as the present-day Mamabolo's area. As the largest group, it had Vhakwevho of Lwandali, Luvhola and Vhafamadi of Mashau, as sub-divisions. Manenzhe, Nethengwe and Matidze were its best known rulers.[22]

The Vhalea and Vhatwamamba of Tshivhula and Musina settled at the present Messina as well as in the Soutpan areas.[23]

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19 Mount Madzimbanombe is situated in the Bendstore area where Gazankulu established its capital Giyani. This was part of Venda before the carving of the Tsonga-Shangaan Homeland.

20 Negululuni, a Munyai of Soni on 15 April 1965; See also Eloff and De Vaal, Custos, May 1974, pp.22-25.

21 S.M. Dzivhani, "Mahosi a Venda", Van Warmelo, Copper Miners, p.33; See also W.M. Phophi, "Vhambêdzi", Muvenda, Volume 5, no.5, 1975, pp.16-19.

22 Netshiendeulu on 30 March 1973.

23 Van Warmelo, Copper Miners, p.88.

The last group consisting of Vhasenzi and Vhalemba followed Vhatavhatsindi. The Vhasenzi appeared to have broken away from Vhalozwi. This split took place after the death of a king when the eldest son refused to be installed and consequently the elders installed his younger brother. The eldest son became known as Dambanyika and the younger as Lewanika.[24]

The Vhasenzi under Dambanyika left Central Africa for the South and on their way they made contact with the Vhalemba group, which they conquered. J.E. Mullan[25] states that the Vhalemba and the Vhavenda who were called Vhasenzi journeyed together from the territory around Sena to Vhuxwa and Mbelengwa. They moved southwards and crossed the Vhembe river about 1700[27] and settled at the picturesque Mount Lwandali facing the beautiful Nzhelele valley. At Lwandali they found Mmbwayapenga, Dambanyika's maternal uncle[28] and the ruler of Vhakwevho. Here they built their kraal which was known as Dzata la Nyamulanalwo at a place called Tumvi.

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[24] Netshiendeulu on 30 March 1973.

[25] J.E. Mullan, The Arab Builders of Zimbabwe, pp.68-69.

[26] Mullan draws a clear distinction between Vhavenda and Vhasenzi. Theal in his Ethnography and Condition of South Africa before A.D. 1505, pp.164-180 writes about the country of Zendj and the people of Zendj. It would appear this had something in common with Vhasenzi. E.F.N. Mudau in his Ngomalungundu stresses Vhasenzi and Vhalemba and not the versions Vhavenda and Vhalemba used by writers who seem to be less informed.

[27] Flygare, p.9; See also Theal, Ethnography and Condition, p.187; Eloff and De Vaal, "The Secrets of Makahane", Custos, May 1974, p.24; B. Tyrrel, Tribal Peoples of Southern Africa, p.43; Rademeyer, p.79.

[28] Netshiendeulu on 30 March 1973. He was a direct descendant of Mmbwayapenga.

After Dambanyika's tragic death in a cave at Lwandali while hunting rock-rabbits, they descended to the Nzhelele valley where they established their second capital called Dzata under the leadership of Dyambeu and his son, Phophi, who was later known as Thohoyandou. From Dzata, with the aid of their magic drum called Ngomalungundu they subjugated the aboriginal inhabitants of the country who had settled at Zwavhalombo, Zwavhumbwa and other areas. This group, the Vhasenzi wrongly referred to as Vhavenda in the works of writers like C. Beuster, I. Schapera, Theal, Flygare, Wessman, B. Fagan, Van Warmelo,[29] were speaking Kalanga according to M.M. Motenda.[30]

The contention of the above-named seven writers is excusable as it was based on second-hand information and perhaps as foreigners they had no means by which to verify the reliability of the information they received.

The Muvenda historian, E.F.M. Mudau explicitly states: "The name Vhavenda... belongs to the Ngona".[31] This statement is supported by all Vhavenda who possess some historical knowledge. In addition to the views expressed by Motenda and Mudau in connexion with Vhangona and Vhasenzi, D. Möller-Malan, one of the two White writers who understood the difference between Vhangona and Vhasenzi pointed out that a small group of Vhavenda had already established themselves and no one knew the place and time of their origin.[32]

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[29] C. Beuster, 236, I. Schapera, The Bantu Speaking Peoples of South Africa, p.64; B. Fagan, Southern Africa, p.165; Flygare, p.9; Theal, Ethnography and Conditions, p.187; Wessmann, p.10; Van Warmelo, Copper Miners, p.4.

[30] Mudau and Motenda, p.83.

[31] Mudau, "Ngomalungundu", Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, p.72.

[32] Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.1, no.3 (February 1957), p.220; Lestrade, "Africa", Vol.3, Van Warmelo, Contributions, p.i, writes about the non-Venda element found at Nzhelele while on page xxvi of the same book, he correctly states that the Thovhela clan (Vhasenzi) adopted the name Vhavenda at Nzhelele.

The only error she made was that she did not know that the Vhangona of Raphulu were a section of the Vhavenda she mentioned.

The fact as contained in the pages of Möller-Malan that it is the Vhasenzi and not Vhavenda who made their appearance in about 1700,[33] confused many White writers including some Vhavenda writers like Prof. M.E.R. Mathivha who wrote that,

> The leaders of the Vhalemba and the Vhasenzi migrated southwards about the 12th and 13th centuries and eventually established their homes in the present Vendaland. The leaders of these two communities are the real founders of what we can call VENDA CULTURE AND VENDA LITERATURE. These leaders gave Vendaland its name, its language... they presented a united front in North Eastern Transvaal in the early 14th century.[34]

Mathivha's contention would have been correct had he not confused the name Vhangona with Vhalemba and Vhasenzi who had not crossed the Vhembe river as early as he maintains. His error is excusable as he was more concerned with linguistic development than with historical facts.

The Vhasenzi and Vhalemba having settled in Venda lost their Kalanga affinities through intermarriage and became assimilated into Tshingona culture[35] and language. Möller-Malan who appears to have devoted a great deal of her research to this period maintains that the Vhavenda remained the conquerors as a result of their women who married the Vhasenzi men and who spoke their language with their children resulting in the fusion of Senzi and Venda.[36]

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33 Möller-Malan, Historia, Vol.1, no.3 (February 1957), p.220.

34 M.E.R. Mathivha, A Survey of the Literacy Achievements in Venda, p.7.

35 Möller-Malan, Historia, Vol.1, no.3 (February 1957), p.220.

36 Ibid.

A writer who still holds the view that the Vhavenda crossed the Vhembe towards the end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century may be compared with the one who may state that the English crossed the North Sea in 1066, referring to the Norman Conquest.[37] If the Vhavenda crossed the Vhembe during the above period, they would not have named all rivers, mountains, trees, places etc. within a period of 300 years.

During the golden era of the history of Venda[38] which coincided with the rule of Thohoyandou, whose hegemony according to verbal sources and endorsed by Flygare, covered the whole area from the Zambezi to present-day Pietersburg, Gwamasenga, the ancestor of Vhalaudzi clan, left Dzata for Vhulaudzi and thereafter Tshinavheni. His sons Masie, Nengodzi, Makumbane, Ketshivhulana, Maphaha and Tshipetane settled at Mathothwe Tshimbupfe, Tshisahulu, Tshivhulana, Phahwe and Tsianda respectively.[39]

At the height of his power and when tributes poured in from the Kalanga in the north and the Sotho in the south, the brave Thohoyandou disappeared from the scene. The cause of his disappearance has remained a mystery to the present. The superstitious Vhavenda did not know why Thohoyandou had left and they anticipated his return in the same way that the Germans anticipated the return of their Frederick Barbarossa.[40]

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37 H. Pirenne, A History of Europe from the Invasions to the XVI Century, pp.248-253.

38 Flygare, p.10. Venda means land and Vhavenda, people of Venda. Prof. Mathivha's explanation that "Venda" means "Vele-e-nnda" i.e. Vele, out of his land is not correct because Vele found the name in existence.

39 P.E. Schwellnus, Ndededzi IV, pp.90-94.

40 Wessmann, p.11.

The disappearance of Thohoyandou, the last of the kings who ruled a united Venda had important significance in the development of Venda monarchy as it can be regarded as the primary reason for the disintegration of a centralized monarchy.[41]

The three chief sons of Thohoyandou, Mpofu, Raluswielo and Ravhura left Dzata and established themselves at Sunguzwi, Depeni and Makonde respectively, while Nelunguda, who was an important person at Dzata established himself at Tshitomboni. The Vhaluvhu of Mashamba left Mount Kokwane and settled across Tavhana.[42] In this way Dzata the once famous capital of Venda, surrounded as it was by beautiful stone walls, was evacuated.

The small kingdoms which came into being were independent of each other as not one of the sons of Thohoyandou ever paid homage to the other. Thus the Vendas' lack of an official paramount chief can be traced as far back as this period. This decentralization or disintegration of monarchy had serious repercussions in the history of the nation as it could not co-operate in times of peace or present a united front in times of outside aggression. This fact would later become evident during the reign of Mphephu.

Another fact which sapped the vitality of the newly self-proclaimed monarchies was the age-old tradition whereby a chief was not permitted to sire more than three sons thereby lessening the possibility of the outbreak of hostilities in the event of the death of a ruler.[43]

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41 Venda was divided into three independent kingdoms.

42 Tavhana is Luvenda name for Klein Letaba.

43 A.M. Ncube, The Venda and the Mphephu War of 1898, p.3.

It was probably for this reason that the nation omitted to formulate stringent laws of succession. This omission, the repercussions of which were felt in the days of Makhado and Mphephu, left the whole issue unsafely at the discretion of the chief's main sister.

As a result of the prevailing tradition or rather the custom of having three sons, Mpofu, the ruler of Western Venda and the last chief to uphold the practice had three sons, Ramabulana,[44] Ramavhoya and Madzhie.

During Mpofu's reign an important event took place. This was the arrival in 1820 of the first White man, Coenrad Buys with his three coloured sons who later married Vhavenda women. The Buys folk were respected for their weapons - "the sticks that spat fire", and were given the Mara area by agreement.[45]

After Mpofu's death, his eldest son Ramabulana took over the leadership of the nation but his mother Nyamulanalwo preferred her second son Ramavhoya who unlike the elder brother was tall and brave. Consequently she created a rift between the two sons and influenced Ramavhoya against Ramabulana and openly proclaimed that she was Nyaramavhoya.[46] A.M. Ncube regards this as the first intervention by a woman in matters of succession to chieftainship. He did not correctly present this fact. He ought to have mentioned a "mother" instead of a "woman".

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[44] Ramabulana was also known as Munzhedzi, Rasithu or Ravele. White writers regard the four names as belonging to different people. In T.H. Le Roux's Die Dagboek van Louis Trichardt, pp.3-65, the name Rasithu (Rossetoe) appears several times. Rademeyer wrote that Ravele succeeded Thohoyandou and Rasithu was succeeded by Ramabulana.

[45] Möller-Malan, The Chair, pp.39-41; See also Mudau and Motenda, p.90.

[46] Nyaramavhoya means the mother of Ramavhoya.

As the two brothers belonged to the same house, the event divided the nation. It is the only known case in Venda history when two brothers born of the same mother fought for the chieftainship.

This bickering resulted in the ousting of Ramabulana from the throne and his ejection from his royal kraal, Tshirululuni. He ultimately sought refuge at Mount Rida in Nuledzhi.[47] Left in undisputed control Ramavhoya assumed the reins of chieftainship.

After Ramavhoya had established himself at Tshirululuni, Mmamugudubi the Tlokwa chief, accompanied by his followers on a game and elephant hunting expedition, made his appearance in Venda. Ramavhoya suspected them of being Ramabulana's spies but he did not display animosity towards them.[48]

While the Tlokwa felt that they were being warmly welcomed, Ramavhoya, treacherously assassinated their chief Mmamugudubi. Panic-stricken and leaderless, the Tlokwa fled and thereafter planned an attack on Ramavhoya in order to avenge this brutal act of murder. They reported and discussed the matter with Ramabulana at Rida and offered to assist him in his struggle against Ramavhoya. He doubted the authenticity of their intentions. Remaining non-commital, he adopted an attitude of "wait and see".[49]

The flight of Ramabulana to Rida and the assassination of Mmamugudubi coincided with the advent of the emigration of dissatisfied Dutch Colonists from the Cape Colony.[50]

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47 Mudau and Motenda, p.87; See also Möller-Malan; "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.1, no.3 (February 1957), p.226.

48 Mudau and Motenda, p.87.

49 Ibid.; Also Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

50 Ncube, p.4.

Ramabulana might have heard that a group of White people were on their way northwards. Chief Nesengani, the grandson of Davhana, who had accompanied his father, Ramabulana to Rida, stated that messengers were sent from Rida to Louis Tregardt who was at this time in the Eastern Transvaal.[51] Additional information which throws further light on this is supplied by Flygare when he wrote that Ramabulana approached the Voortrekkers who had settled in the district of Lydenburg for help and promised them land.[52]

Although Flygare mentions the name of Hendrik Potgieter in the same chapter, there is no doubt that the Voortrekker group referred to was that under the leadership of Louis Tregardt, this being revealed in the latter's diary.[53]

Whatever might have happened, the fact that there had been some communication between Ramabulana and Louis Tregardt cannot be totally discarded. Therefore, it can be assumed that the two might have conferred along the banks of Muungadi.[54] This contact between the two men might also help to shed light on the mystery surrounding Louis Tregardt's reasons for going to the Soutpansberg.

After an agreement had been reached the two leaders, together with their followers went along the Sand river and ultimately encamped at Gogobole not far from the place that was later known as Schoemansdal.[55]

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51 Nesengani on 14 June 1971; Mudau and Motenda, p.88.

52 Flygare, p.10.

53 T.H. Le Roux, Die Dagboek van Louis Trichardt, p.3.

54 Muungadi is the Luvenda name for Sand river.

55 Nesengani on 14 June 1971; See also Mudau and Motenda, p.89.

Louis Tregardt immediately sent a messenger to Ramavhoya whose mother, being suspicious of the White man's intentions, tried without success to dissuade him from going to Gogobole.[56]

Meanwhile Ramabulana had been hidden in a wagon covered by canvas. The canvas was removed after Ramavhoya's arrival. Encouraged and urged on by the Tlokwa and in the presence of Louis Tregardt, Ramabulana, using a cord, strangled his younger brother.[57] This event took place in October 1836.

The logical development, after Ramavhoya's death was the re-instatement of Ramabulana which would have been an impossibility without the latter's assistance. As a token of gratitude and the fulfilment of a previous promise, Ramabulana openly declared:

> Thovele, all this country you can see with the eyes; and much further, right up to the Limpopo belonged to my father... I will make over to you any part you may choose for you and your people to dwell in as your very own.[58]

From this sentence one deduces that according to Venda tradition, land does not belong to an ordinary person or a nation but to the chief. It is a property inherited from his forefathers. That is why private landownership did not exist.

After fifteen months sojourn in Venda, Louis Tregardt left for Delagoa Bay and he left Ramabulana on the throne from which he had been ousted by his younger brother.[59]

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[56] Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

[57] Ibid.; See also Mudau and Motenda, p.89.

[58] Möller-Malan, The Chair 74; Mudau and Motenda, p.88.

[59] Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

The intervention of a White man in the affairs of chieftainship was to have serious repercussions in the history of Venda monarchy. The advantages which accompanied or accrued from it were rather personal and short-lived, for although a king could reign, the situation was fraught with danger for his progeny. The Vhavenda had failed to settle their problem of succession themselves and had welcomed the intercession of a stranger. If this fact which created a war atmosphere, is not clearly comprehended, the broader issues of the Mphephu war which is the subject of this dissertation, will remain obscure.[60] The weaker aspirant to the throne would in future call in the help of the Whites and the Whites on the other hand would withhold recognition of any installation on which they had not been consulted. Any future strife or disagreement following the death of a chief could follow the same lines.

The arrival in 1849 of Commandant Hendrik Potgieter and his followers at Thivhalalwe where they established the town of Oudedorp, was welcomed by Ramabulana, but their large numbers and many wagons so frightened him that he avoided them and consequently any communication with them was through his eldest son, Davhana. The peaceful co-existence between Vhavenda and the Boers did not last long. Misunderstanding is alleged to have flared up when one Makumula stole a White man's cow and created the impression that it had come from Davhana. As a result Davhana was arrested but he escaped and returned to his father.[61]

The flourishing Boer settlement at Oudedorp, together with the arrest of Davhana created suspicion, an atmosphere of fear and a feeling of insecurity resulting in the flight of Ramabulana from Tshirululuni, first to Nngwekhulu, then to Mauluma and ultimately to Vuvha.[62]

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60 See also Ncube, p.4.

61 Van Warmelo, Contributions, p.22; Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.1 (June 1957), p.40.

62 Van Warmelo, Contributions, p.23; Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.1 (June 1957), p.40.

Makhado, one of the sons of Ramabulana, together with his nephew Ndwayamiomva, entered the circumcision school at Doli on the advice of Vhakwevho in order to render him acceptable to the circumcised in the event of succession to the throne.[63] Although Ramabulana and Davhana were incensed, they could do nothing about it.

Among the Potgieter Voortrekkers group was a young Portuguese trader from Ohrigstad, Joao Albasini, who was accompanied by his Shangaan carriers. After leaving Oudedorp (which later became known as Schoemansdal), Albasini established himself at Luonde where a Tsonga trader Munene had a trading station.[64] He was appointed Native Commissioner by the Volksraad of Schoemansdal and was given authority to collect tax.

The Boers' attempts to have Ramabulana return to his royal kraal at Tshirululuni were unsuccessful despite their assurances that he would not be molested as they were searching for Davhana who had escaped unpunished for theft.[65]

After the Boers had established themselves firmly at Schoemansdal, the Volksraad, through the Field-Cornets, levied a tax of five beasts or five pieces of ivory or 35 pieces of copper or 20 hides of leopard per male. Every hut had to pay a goat and a sheep.[66] The introduction of taxation which was foreign to the economic and political life of Venda and which was intended to be a form of subjugation was a further source of friction and confrontation between the Boers and Vhavenda, and continued to remain so right up to the time of Mphephu.

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63 Netshiendeulu on 30 March 1973. This event was a turning-point in the history of Venda as Makhado was the first circumcised prince to ascend the throne.

64 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.1 (June 1957), p.41.

65 Ibid., p.43.

66 Ibid., p.44.

The aged Ramabulana did not, however, live long enough to see the many changes brought about by the coming of the Boers. He died in 1864.[67] The eldest son Davhana immediately took over the reins of government but the people remained cool and passive towards him and consequently he received little support, as he was suspected of having poisoned his father. Similarly the rapid assumption of power by his younger brothers, Khangale and Nthabalala could not succeed without Makhadzi's[68] blessing.

Makhadzi Nyakhuhu, Ramabulana's sister, joined the people in rejecting Davhana. Together with her brother, khotsimunene[69] Madzhie, she insisted that the rightful heir to the throne of the Ramabulanas, was the youngest son, Makhado. Makhado's elder brothers would not accept him as he was regarded as Ramavhoya's son because originally, Limani, his mother had been intended as Ramavhoya's wife. In addition he had disqualified himself by entering into the circumcision school which was meant for the subjects. Although in reality and biologically, Makhado was Ramabulana's son, he was according to Venda law and tradition, regarded as Khotsimunene. This meant he could not aspire to the throne.[70] Ramabulana had already disregarded the royal law that a monarch should not have more than three sons[71] but he can hardly be blamed for this transgression when it is

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67 J.B. de Vaal, "Die rol van Joao Albasini in die Geskiedenis van die Transvaal", Argief Jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis, I, 1953, p.75. This information he obtained from De Transvaalse Argus of 25 March 1868. Flygare wrote that Ramabulana died in 1859. However, 1864 would appear to be correct as Makhado succeeded him in 1865.

68 The Chief's main sister with whom he is installed and her word is final in matters of succession.

69 The Chief's younger brother, an important personality in matters of succession.

70 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.1, no.3 (February 1957), p.227.

71 Ncube, p.6.

remembered that he spent many years as an ordinary man in exile. As long as Ramavhoya lived it seemed unlikely that the tide would one day turn in his favour. The mistake was not his but Vhavenda's failure or inability to empower the ruling monarch to designate his successor and consequently the throne was available to any brave son who could enlist support from the people and Makhadzi in particular.

Makhadzi's insistence that Makhado should succeed is understandable as Ramabulana and Ramavhoya were brothers of the same house. According to her, the deceased Mutumbe, Matumba's daughter, whom Limani replaced, had been married by the Dzekiso[72] cattle, and therefore Makhado's succession was ensured. The majority of the people, particularly the circumcised, preferred Makhado to anyone else as he was considered to be brave.[73]

Supported therefore by Makhadzi, Khotsimunene Madzhie, his age-group Madali as well as the Boers of Schoemansdal, on whose farms he had worked, Makhado ascended the throne in 1864. He did not stay at Vuvha but established his three royal kraals at Luatame on the western flank of Sunguzwi,[74] Malimuwa on the eastern side and Kolombani below Luatame.

The next step taken by Madzhie and Makhado was the ejection of Davhana from Vuvha who ultimately sought refuge at Albasini's fort at Luonde.[75] Makhado's request to have Davhana extradited fell on deaf ears. This was followed by an expedition which failed to achieve its purpose as Davhana was supported by Albasini and his Shangaan warriors.[75(a)]

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72 These are beasts passed on from the fore-fathers intended to bring a woman who would bear the next chief. Dzekiso means much more than lobola.

73 Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

74 Sunguzwi is the Luvenda name for Hanglip.

75 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.1 (June 1957), p.47.

75(a) Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

At Makhado's request, the Volksraad at Schoemansdal intervened and asked Albasini to hand over Davhana but he refused on the grounds that he owed his allegiance to the Pretoria government. This stubborn refusal and the protection of Davhana was a source of irritation to Makhado.[76]

Davhana ultimately crossed Luvuvhu to Mount Luvhola which was inhabited by Vhakwevho, and established his royal kraal at Mpheni from which he exercised a nominal control over the whole area as far as Madzimbanombe.[77]

The early years of Makhado's reign were marked by peaceful relations with the Boers because of the support they had given him in his struggle for succession to the throne.[78]

Before Makhado's accession, the aged Ramabulana had already voiced a complaint that the Whites were always demanding that the Vhavenda work for them.[79] This complaint, the redoubtable and war-like Madzhie carried further:

> It will be better if these White people could just go away...They do not know the difference between the Ramabulanas and the common folk. To them we are all alike, except for the Chief. We must fight them.[80]

The idea of attacking the Boers was forestalled by Makhado's friend, Terence Fitzgerald, an Irish-born soldier who had arrived with Hendrik Potgieter in 1849. Fitzgerald advised him to live in peace with the Boers who had offered him support in his struggle for succession.[81]

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76 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.1 (June 1957), p.47.

77 Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

78 Ibid.

79 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.132; Van Warmelo, Contributions, p.24.

80 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.152.

81 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.1 (June 1957), pp.47-48; Also refer to footnote 80.

The flourishing Boer settlement of Schoemansdal caused alarm and gave rise to a deterioration of relations between the two racial groups. The chiefs and Madzhie in particular regarded the settlement as a challenge to royal authority. This, coupled with the Vhavenda's stubborn refusal to hand over guns to the owners after elephant-hunting, widened the gulf which seriously affected relationships.[82]

As the gulf between the two groups widened, war became imminent. The Pretoria government could not keep its eyes closed to repeated requests from Schoemansdal and consequently in 1867 it decided on a course of action. However, the army which President Marthinus Wessel Pretorius organised and which Commandant General Paul Kruger led to the Soutpansberg, had little ammunition.[83]

On arrival of the army at Schoemansdal, Makhado was sent for but he replied by sending a group of young boys. This action was interpreted by the Boers as one of contempt. A group of Boers was sent to the royal kraal but Makhado met them with the demand that they hand over Davhana as a price for their guns. This unexpected request intensified the already deteriorating situation and culminated in the tragedy that engulfed Schoemansdal.[84]

The task of the expedition which attempted to storm Madzhie's stronghold in June, was complicated by the fact that the ammunition wagon from Pretoria failed to turn up.[85]

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82 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.1 (June 1957), p.47-48.

83 Theal, Vol. IV pp.483-484; Rademeyer, pp.85-86.

84 Möller-Malan, Historia, Vol.2, no.1, pp.49-50; Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

85 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.157.

The shortage of ammunition, the outbreak of malaria, Boer disobedience, thickly wooded forests, horse sickness and the prowess of the Vhavenda forced Commandant Kruger to abandon Schoemansdal on 15 July 1867.[86] Schoemansdal had been the centre of civilization in the Northern Transvaal for eighteen years and Commandant Kruger's decision was contrary to the wishes of the Soutpansbergers who felt that they had been betrayed.

In this way the whole area north of Muhohodi[87] and Luvuvhu rivers, was left to the Vhavenda and the few remaining White families consisting of Albasini, and the three farmers in the south - Koos Botha, Fitzgerald and Grieve were informed that Muhohodi would be the southern boundary between the lion and the elephant.[88] The solitary Whites had no alternative but to agree to the arrangement.

Although the Boers had evacuated Schoemansdal, Makhado remained restless and insecure as he was aware that the Boers would one day come back to avenge the destruction of Schoemansdal. As a precautionary step, he attempted without success to obtain bullet-proof medicine from Vhukalanga.[89]

Considering the abandonment of Schoemansdal as the greatest disaster the Republic had so far sustained, President Pretorius unsuccessfully appealed to the country for volunteers to recover the lost ground. Only fifty-three men responded and these were led into the Soutpansberg by Stephanus Schoeman. As the force was too weak to achieve anything, it was disbanded on 23 December 1867.[90]

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[86] Müller-Malan, Historia, Vol.2, no.1, p.50; See also The Chair, pp.157-158.

[87] This is Luvenda name for Doorn river.

[88] H.J. de Jager, "Louis Trichardt se Veelbewoë Geskiedenis", Die Huisgenoot, 25 October 1935, p.30.

[89] This is the Luvenda name for Rhodesia.

[90] Theal, Vol.IV, pp.486-487.

The failure of Schoeman's small force did not discourage Pretorius. In July 1868 he visited the Soutpansberg himself. Accompanied by Landdrost van Nispen, he met Davhana with his followers, the Shangaans and the adherents of Buys at the farm Welgevonden. At this meeting the President announced that Schoeman had been appointed diplomatic agent in the district and that Albasini was no longer in the service of the government. This announcement was cordially received by the Blacks who promised to be obedient to Schoeman. Several chiefs visited Pretorius and assurances of friendship were exchanged.[91]

President Pretorius then left Schoeman to conclude the arrangements. As a result of his efforts an atmosphere of comparative tranquility was restored which enabled many of the farmers to return to their former homes but absolute supremacy of the Republican government was by no means established over the Blacks.[92]

Another event of great significance was the arrival of German and Swiss Missionaries. A number of mission stations were mapped out at Maungani by Rev. C. Beuster in 1872, at Tshakhuma by Rev. E. Schwellnus in 1874 and at Mavhola by Rev. N. Kuhn in 1877. The Swiss Missionaries H. Berthoud and E. Creux established mission stations at Lwalani in 1875 and Vari in 1883.[93] The claim by the Lutheran church that it was the first to establish mission stations in Venda has no historical support as the Dutch Reformed church had already started at Goedgedacht in 1863.[93(a)]

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91 Theal, Vol.IV, p.489.

92 Ibid., pp.489-490.

93 D.W. Giesekke, A Hundred years of Christianity in Vendaland, pp.1-2. This is a pamphlet read at the Centenary Celebration of Mission Work in Venda in 1972.

93(a) W.L. Maree, Lig in Soutpansberg, p.49.

In 1879 Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the new ruler, who in 1877, annexed the Republic in the name of the British government visited the Soutpansberg in order to settle the native troubles. At a meeting attended by chiefs Ligegise Tshivhase, Ranwedzi Mphaphuli and Rammbuda and Makhado at J.D. Gill's store, Commandoboom, a form of agreement concerning the borders was concluded.[94]

The British administration of the Transvaal came to an end at the conclusion of the Anglo-Transvaal war when the Pretoria Convention was signed in 1881.

In 1884 General Piet Joubert who succeeded Kruger as Commandant-General, visited the Soutpansberg in order to investigate complaints of the Boers but although Makhado refused to see him, he confirmed that Muhohodi should be the southern boundary. What General Joubert had in mind with this arrangement nobody knew. Perhaps he accepted it as a temporary measure, but it was this event which later led to friction between Vhavenda and the Boers.[95]

In order to strengthen his position, Makhado's eldest sons Mphephu and Sinthumule led an army to Dzimauli to fight for Tshikosi, whose right for succession to the throne was being disputed by another son called Siphuma.[96]

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[94] Harole, p.13; Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.169.

[95] S.S. 1895, 4805 I, R.4807, Location Commission to Executive Council, 13 May 1895. Makhado is reported as having said that Joubert had shown him the frontier. This was reiterated by Funyufunyu on 29 October 1896 when he said the boundary was Doorn river.

[96] This information was supplied by Thonga Mphephu on 9 September 1971. She was the only surviving wife of Mphephu at the time of the interview.

Another army composed of Mavhegwa, which Mphephu led into Tshivhase's area successfully attacked Tshifhire and Tshifulani and captured cattle which were re-captured as the army returned home. Some of his warriors were murdered. Makhado was disappointed at this misfortune for it would have been better if Mphephu had died in battle rather than return defeated. This was viewed by him as bringing dishonour or disgrace to the Ramabulanas.[97]

In addition to this, Mphephu, as the eldest son, often interfered with his father's younger wives. In consequence of this he was ordered to leave Dzanani and allowed to settle at Gogobole from whence he left for Kimberley in 1886.[98]

Then Makhado, contrary to the Venda tradition of succession,[99] informed his counsellors and the elders that they should look to Maemu, Nwaphunga's fifth child and Makhado's youngest son, as the possible successor.[99(a)] This was dangerous advice as it provided his enemies with an excuse on which to plan his downfall in order to pave the way for Maemu.

According to Landdrost Munnik who visited him, Makhado,

> Proved himself to be a proud native aristocrat who ruled his tribe with an iron rod, but fairly. As Landdrost of Zoutpansberg I often came into contact with him, and always found him dignified but extremely courteous, and although he silently ignored the Republic's authority, he never openly defied it.[100]

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97 Thonga on 9 September 1971; See also Möller-Malan, The Chair, pp.169-170.

98 G.G. Munnik, Memoirs of Senator the Hon. G.G. Munnik, p.153; Makhado on 13 July 1971.

99 Stayt, pp.195-196.

99(a) Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

100 Munnik, Memoirs, pp.101-102.

The death of Albasini in 1888 ushered in a new era. In order to forestall the succession of his son Anthony as a Shangaan chief, the Republic intervened by despatching General Joubert to the north to introduce the new Native Commissioner thereby trying to settle differences. He met the Venda chiefs at J.S. Cooksley's,[101] Lovedale Park. Makhado did not attend the meeting. The new Native Commissioner, Adolf Schiel, was a German and as long as he occupied the two positions of Shangaan[102] chief and Native Commissioner, he would receive no co-operation from the Vhavenda as the latter had no respect for the Shangaans.

As the gulf of misunderstanding between Makhado and the Republic widened, Rev. Creux of Elim mission station who was Makhado's friend, advised him to hand over his territory to the Queen of England for protection. Although this suggestion met with Makhado's approval, his counsellors rejected it as they did not understand the implications.[103]

At this juncture and probably as a result of persistent appeals from the Boers along the frontier, the government established a ring of forts in order to protect the inhabitants against native raids. One of these, Fort Hendrina, was established in 1888 along the Muhohodi to guard the frontier. Fifty men were stationed at this fort and their relationship with Makhado was not cordial.[104]

At this time, on a return journey from Malebogo, Captain J.H. Taylor, the Chief Native Commissioner of the British South African Police, accompanied by two Englishmen, visited Makhado. The purpose of the visit was not disclosed and after a short sojourn at Dzanani, they left but later returned with thirteen soldiers and camped at Tshirululuni.[105]

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101 J.S. Cooksley was a trader who came to the Spelonken in 1886.

102 The Native Commissioner appeared more as a Shangaan chief than a government representative.

103 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.174.

104 Ibid., pp.178-179.

105 Ibid., pp.180-181.

The presence of Captain Taylor proved to be of great value as Makhado was shown how to build fortifications which would assist him in warding off any aggressors. The elders of the tribe who were more conservative and sceptical about the intentions of the Englishmen secretly forced them to leave the country. Being forced to leave did not distress Taylor as Makhado had promised to send his second son Sinthumule to Tuli.[106]

This bond of friendship between Makhado and Rhodesia soon came to the ears of the Pretoria government and General Piet Joubert reacted by writing a letter to Makhado via Rev. R. Wessmann of Tshakhuma.[107]

The letter prompted Wessmann to hurry to Dzanani where he received a cold reception from Makhado who intimated that he had nothing to do with the Commandant-General. The letter, however, warned him against White agitators and finally advised him to meet Joubert in Venda or in Pretoria.[108]

The treatment Wessmann received from Makhado encouraged the local officials at Fort Hendrina to request the General to come to Venda. The General arrived at the fort in 1894. Accompanied by one of the local traders J.D. Gill, he left for Luatame.[109]

This was, however, an ill-fated expedition as they were stopped by Makhado's army before crossing Muhohodi and consequently Makhado's fate was sealed.[110]

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106 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.181.

107 Ibid., pp.181-182; Also Wessmann, p.117 and Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.3, no.3 (September 1958), p.185.

108 Möller-Malan, The Chair, pp.182-183; Also Wessmann, pp.118-119.

109 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.184.

110 Ibid.

The General preferring peace to bloodshed, returned to Pretoria. The Editor of The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), Leo Weinthal offered to go to Makhado. Accompanied by J.S. Cooksley and his wife and Pogge of Gravelotte claims Fame, Leo Weinthal was warmly received by Makhado. At this meeting Makhado acknowledged the authority of President Kruger and concluded by informing the visitors that he did not want war.[111]

The message brought back by Weinthal was that Makhado had no intention of attacking the Boers. The impression gained by Leo Weinthal was correct, but the Pretoria government remained apprehensive. What then was the cause of their apprehension? Were they perhaps still thinking of the evacuation of Schoemansdal?[112]

In the same year the government took another step by sending a Location Commission to Makhado. The members of this commission were driven back across the Mulohodi.[113]

In the midst of this tense situation, Beuster sent a report to the government in which he stated that Makhado was planning to attack Tshivhase, in whose territory he had been allowed to establish a mission station. The government responded by instructing Barend Vorster, the District Commandant of the Soutpansberg in 1895, to attack Makhado. This prompted Landdrost Munnik to hurry to Rietvlei in an attempt to avoid a catastrophe by stopping the commando. He met Makhado and was convinced that the "Lion of the North" as Makhado was sometimes known, had no intention of attacking anybody.[114]

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111 Wessmann, p.143.

112 Land en Volk, 14 September 1898.

113 S.S. 1895, 4805 I, R.4807, Joubert to State President and Members of Executive Council of South African Republic, 13 May 1895.

114 Munnik, Memoirs, pp.145-147.

The unsuccessful attempt of the Location Commission to see Makhado did not discourage the government. Subsequently another attempt was made. The purpose of this Commission, under Henning Pretorius was to take a census of Makhado's people in order to demarcate his location.[115]

After the members of the Commission had crossed the Muhohodi, they were met by Makhado's soldiers who escorted them to Dzanani. On arrival at Tshitandani,[116] they sent one named Bomb Buser to the royal kraal to inform the chief about the Commission, as well as to make arrangements for a meeting. Information secretly reached the Commission that the chief had agreed to meet them. The men were suspicious but this gave them courage to climb the mountain and they were excited at the prospect of meeting the man whom General Joubert had failed to see.[117]

At Kolombani they were received by Funyufunyu, one of Makhado's chief indunas. He told them that as Makhado had refused to see them, they should tell him what had prompted their visit. The leader of the Commission, Pretorius, told the induna that they had been sent by the government to take a census in order to determine the extent of Makhado's location. In reply to this Funyufunyu informed the Commission that Barend Vorster, had made an agreement with Makhado that the boundary between the Whites and his country was the Muhohodi.[118]

Disappointed and confused, the Commission returned to Lovedale Park. The failure of the Commission to confer with Makhado aggravated the already tense situation.

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115 Flygare, p.14.

116 This is the Luvenda name for Rietvlei on which Louis Trichardt is situated.

117 S.S. 1895, 4805 I, R.4807, Location Commissioner to Commandant-General, 8 May 1895.

118 Ibid., Joubert to State President, 13 May 1895; See also Confidential Telegram in same bundle from Joubert to Executive Council, 13 May 1895.

In the meantime events in Venda took a different turn. The inhabitants of Malimuwa, felt the time was ripe for the succession of Maemu, as the two eldest sons Mphephu and Sinthumule were in Kimberley and Tuli respectively.[119]

Rasivhetshele, whose other names were Stuurman and Stemmer, together with Liswe, Makhokha, Makhethekhethe, Mutheiwana and Nwaphunga planned the assassination of Makhado.[120]

This was facilitated by the fact that the great chief had become fond of brandy. The poison which ended his life is alleged to have entered Malimuwa from across Muhohodi. The people who administered it were Nwaphunga and Rasivhetshele. At a beer party especially arranged by Nwaphunga, Makhado drank poisoned brandy. A few moments on 3 September 1895 the greatest of all the chiefs of Venda breathed his last breath.[121]

There are conflicting reports about the death of Makhado. Dzivhani and Wessmann contend that the death was caused by an overdose of medicine,[122] while Tshivhidzo Musekwa and Nesengani state that Rasivhetshele and Mutheiwana obtained poison from the White men which they placed in a bottle of brandy, which Makhado later drank.[123]

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119 Musekwa on 12 July 1971 and Thonga on 9 September 1971.

120 Ibid.; See also Müller-Malan, The Chair, pp.188-189.

121 S.S. 1895, 5002, R.9582, Munnik reported the death on 23 September 1895.

122 Wessmann, p.119; See also Dzivhani and Nwau, p.34.

123 Musekwa on 12 July 1971 and Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

Möller-Malan contends that there are still Blacks today who believe that the poison was administered with the help of the White men.[124] According to Wessmann, the inhabitants of Malimuwa had unsuccessfully advised Makhado to listen to Joubert's advice.[125] This implies that a sort of communication did exist between Malimuwa and the Whites. In other words, Rasivhetshele Mutheiwana and others might have felt worried and restless about Makhado's stubborn resistance towards government officials. Thus they might have poisoned him in order to pave the way for a negotiated settlement.

Whatever may be said, Makhado died of poisoning and the poison is reported to have been obtained by Rasivhetshele and his Malimuwa fellow-residents, from the White men's farms across the Muhohodi. Dzivhani who appears to have been uninformed and also influenced by the missionaries might have agreed with Wessmann and stated, without investigation, that the cause of death was an over-dose of medicine.[126] Landdrost Munnik who had recently paid Makhado a visit wrongly reported to the government that Makhado died of dropsy.[127]

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124 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol. 3, no.3 (September 1958), p.193.

125 Wessmann, p.119.

126 Dzivhani and Mudau, p.34; Wessmann, p.119.

127 S.S. 1895, 4998, R.9238, Munnik to Secretary of State, 30 September 1895; See also Landdrost Soutpansberg, Brieweboek, 5 October 1895.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY BETWEEN MAKHADO'S SONS

The successful coup engineered by Liswe, Rasivhetshele, Makhethekhethe, Mutheiwana, Makhokha and Nwaphunga which resulted in the premature death of Makhado, shocked the whole country, and yet it was not the first of its kind. Three of his predecessors Dambanyika, Thohoyandou and Ramabulana had not died naturally. Dambanyika, the first chief to cross the Vhembe river, had been trapped in a cave at Mount Lwandali; Thohoyandou, his grandson had disappeared into the unknown; Ramabulana's death had been ascribed to poisoning.[1]

The untimely death of Makhado, the mightiest chief who ever ruled the Soutpansberg,[2] and who was barely fifty-five years old,[3] was a blow to the Vhavenda, whom he so wisely ruled.[4]

After having succeeded in their objective, the inhabitants of Malimuwa under the leadership of Rasivhetshele, installed Maemu as chief. This installation was performed at a time when people were still shocked, stunned and confused. Some counsellors saw the fulfilment of Makhado's wish that the young Maemu should succeed him. They had forgotten the Venda tradition which prohibited the ruling chief from designating his successor.[5]

Some of Makhado's indunas like Masindi Ratombo of Tshidzivhani and one of Makhado's sons Kutama, who was at home, saw no alternative but to accept Maemu as chief.[6]

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1 Flygare, p.11.

2 Munnik, Kronieke van Noordelike Transvaal, p.130.

3 W. Grant, Magato and his Tribe, p.266.

4 Munnik, Kronieke, p.130.

5 Stayt, p.195.

6 Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

There is conflicting information about the place where the installation took place. Some informants contend that Maemu was installed at Malimuwa where his mother was stationed, while others maintain that he was installed at Luatame, Makhado's main royal kraal.[7] The subsequent events which followed the installation indicated that it might have taken place at Malimuwa and that the new chief moved to his father's capital after the ceremony.

The newly installed Maemu immediately sent word to Pretoria subjecting himself and his people to the government of the South African Republic. In this way Venda was won without bloodshed.[8] After this communication with Pretoria, Maemu, who knew that his installation did not have the support of many people probably felt secure.

When he murdered Makhado and installed Maemu, the cunning Rasivhetshele might have thought that he would rule the country through the young chief, but like many other historical characters, he had misinterpreted the situation.

The night after the installation, messengers hurriedly left for Tuli and Kimberley in order to bring back the two eldest sons, Sinthumule and Mphephu. Sinthumule had gone to Tuli in an ox-wagon, towards the end of 1894.[9] During Makhado's life time, he was also sent to Beira and Lourenco Marquese.[10]

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7 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.190; Mudau and Motenda, p.103.

8 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.189; Wessmann, p.119.

9 S.S. 1896, 5456, R.7418, T.T. Bain to Commissioner of Police, 29 May 1896.

10 Martha Mmbadaliga on 20 March 1973. She is Sinthumule's niece.

Wessmann, who appears to have been poorly informed about the whole situation, maintained that bad characters among the young population hastened to the elder brother, Mphephu in Kimberley.[11] The messengers were, however, responsible people who went to Tuli and Kimberley on the instructions of the elders of the nation.

With the exception of Ratombo of Tshidzivhani, reaction from other indunas was negative. These included Makhado's most senior headman Mavhasa Musekwa of Tshihanane who questioned the wisdom of installing Maemu during the absence of his two older brothers and whilst the country was still mourning the passing of their chief. He communicated his protests to Rasivhetshele and warned him that should they dare attack him, he would vehemently retaliate. He expressed the opinion that Rasivhetshele should have waited for the arrival of the heir to the throne, Mphephu.[12]

Mavhasa Musekwa was not alone in his protests. He was supported by headman Ravele Matsheketsheke of Mauluma who courageously proposed a meeting with Musekwa. After the two headmen had conferred, they approached the influential Raliphaswa, one of Makhado's half brothers for advice. Raliphaswa agreed with their proposal that Mphephu should come back and assume the reins of government.[13]

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[11] Wessmann, p.119.

[12] Musekwa on 12 July 1971. He is the son of Mavhasa.

[13] Ibid.

The contention of Ravele and Musekwa was that the idea that Mphephu should rule, was fully supported by all in the Vhalaudzi territory, stretching from Tshivhodza, through Phahwe, Tshitopeni to Khavhambe. The Vhalaudzi's attitude was understandable as Mphephu's mother Midana, was the daughter of headman Maphaha of Phahwe and therefore Mphephu was their grandson according to Venda custom.[14]

The influential general Funyufunyu of Vhuingamela secretly raised an army. Makhadzi Ndalammbi, Makhado's sister and Makongoza's wife, refused to acknowledge Maemu. As Makhadzi's decision was final in matters of succession to the Venda throne, Maemu's claim could not be justified. Funyufunyu and Ndalammbi came to an agreement that action should be delayed until the arrival of Mphephu and Sinthumule.[15]

As Tuli was not very far from Venda, Sinthumule soon arrived and this surprised the people as they saw him coming without the wagon in which he had left. The wagon it was learnt had been left at the Vhembe river. When he approached the kraal, he was greeted with rejoicing and jubilation because the people were still excited about the installation.[16]

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[14] Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

[15] Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

[16] Ramushwana on 2 February 1973.

Without entering the kraal where the situation seemed to be confused, Sinthumule proceeded to Makwatambani to confer with his aunt Makhadzi Ndalambi, who was very pleased to see him. She briefly recounted to him the whole sequence of events from Makhado's death to the installation of Maemu. In conclusion she advised him to remain composed until the arrival of his elder brother Mphephu.[17]

Meanwhile Rasivhetshele and his supporters were not idle. They feared that events might turn against them, and with this feeling in mind, they despatched messengers to ambush and assassinate Mphephu before he reached the royal kraal.[18]

In the midst of these activities, when the two opposing groups were planning and conspiring against each other, the common people could only murmur in secret: "Is Mphephu not the real one to sit in the Chair of his ancestors"?[19]

The common people's support for Mphephu had a sound foundation. In accordance with Venda law and tradition, Mphephu, the son of Midana, daughter of Maphaha of Phahwe of the Vhalaudzi clan, had undisputed right of succession to the throne. On the other hand Maemu's mother, Nwaphunga was the eldest wife, but according to the Dzekiso beasts,[20] she came second to Midana. Contemporary historians like Wessmann and Landdrost Munnik, who recorded the events appeared to have misunderstood the implications, as they were surprised by the trouble taken by the messengers who had to travel to Kimberley after the installation of Maemu.[21]

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17 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

18 Ramushwana on 2 February 1973; Also Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

19 Thonga on 9 September 1971 and Nwamakhado on 31 August 1971.

20 See Chapter I, footnote 72.

21 Wessmann, p.119; See also Munnik, Memoirs, p.153.

When the messengers despatched by Funyufunyu and Ndalammbi arrived in Kimberley, they informed Mphephu what had transpired. After hearing the information Mphephu and his Mavhegwa age-group, who had accompanied him to the Diamond-fields, waited till the end of the month in order to earn their salaries.[22]

Khorommbi Phosiwa further stated that after buying a white horse and guns, Mphephu started the long journey back to his father's country which he had left in 1886.[23] In order to protect himself from the conspirators sent by Rasivhetshele, he travelled by way of Botswana, which the Vhavenda called Hamanwadu at that time.

Before his arrival Mphephu visited Vhudogwa, the country of chiefs Matshaka and Ramokgopa. Chief Ramokgopa was Makhado's father-in-law, as one of Makhado's wives, Mokgadi was the chief's daughter.

Chief Ramokgopa confirmed that Makhado was dead and that Maemu had already been installed as his successor. Mphephu was advised to wait a while at Vhudogwa, while a spy was sent to find out more about the situation.[24]

The spy hurried to Sunguzwi. On entering Luatame, he was greeted with singing and dancing. He entered the kraal and observed as much as he could and then hurried back to Vhudogwa to report. Mphephu then left for home, fully determined to oust young Maemu and assume the reins.[25]

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[22] Khorommbi Phosiwa on 20 May 1972.

[23] Munnik, Memoirs, p.153.

[24] Phosiwa on 20 May 1972.

[25] Ibid.

His first stop was probably the Gogobole area which he had been given by his father. After Gogobole he crossed the Litshovhu and Thivhalalwe rivers into Nakwatambani, the home of his aunt Makhadzi Ndalammbi.[26]

It was at this kraal that the two brothers Mphephu and Sinthumule met. Funyufunyu was summoned. After the latter's arrival, Ndalammbi, Makhado's sister, who had not been consulted in the installation of Maemu, explained to Mphephu the treachery of Nwaphunga, Rasivhetshele, Liswe, Mutheiwana and Makhethekhethe. She encouraged the two brothers to storm the mountain in order to avenge the death of her brother.[27]

Mphephu had by this time already worked out his plans while Funyufunyu, the headman of Vhulorwa had already raised an army for this purpose. Boldly and in a manly fashion Ndalammbi spoke:

> If any of you dare to return without having taken their village, you will never be given porridge by a woman's hand again...Up! Up and away! Let us once more hear the war-cry of our people on the mountainside of my father.[28]

She continued that if the two brothers were afraid of attacking the mountain, she would rather put on man's trousers and eat goat's tail.[29]

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[26] Phosiwa on 20 May 1972; See also Van Warmelo, Copper Miners, p.165.

[27] Van Warmelo, Copper Miners, p.165; Musekwa on 12 July 1971, and Phosiwa on 20 May 1972 are agreed on this point.

[28] Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.190.

[29] Ibid. The royal family of Venda do not eat the tail of a goat. If anyone of them says he will eat the tail, it means that conditions are very critical.

Mphephu with his Mavhegwa, Sinthumule with his Ngomakhosi and Funyufunyu with his Vhaingamela and the Vhalaudzi clan of Phahwe listened to Ndalammbi's sad but courageous words. It seemed as if new life had been injected into their veins, but Mphephu advised them to wait for day-break.[30]

At the appointed time, Mphephu told the army that he would lead it. To this Sinthumule could not agree and he told his elder brother to remain behind and offered to lead the expedition instead. Mphephu without any further argument agreed to do this.[31]

The expedition led by Sinthumule, the son of Dombo, the daughter of Madzivhandila of Tshakhuma, climbed the hills and mountains with Ndalammbi's words of encouragement ringing in their ears.[32]

Maemu's followers and supporters who knew the character of Mphephu and Sinthumule were demoralized before the advent of the expedition. They felt that they could not withstand the combined forces of the two brothers and Funyufunyu.[33]

The young Maemu had no alternative but to flee to Malimuwa, the third royal kraal of Makhado where he had grown up. The expedition followed them and fighting started. Maemu was not a fighter and he depended on Rasivhetshele who up to that time had not achieved any glory on the battle-field.[34]

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30 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

31 Ibid.

32 Van Warmelo, Copper Miners, p. 165.

33 Ramushwana on 2 February 1973.

34 Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

Sinthumule on the other hand was well versed in the use of fire-arms. He directed his fire from the picturesque Mount Malimuwa to the kraal which was situated at the foot of a smaller hill.[35]

When the supporters of Maemu realized that they were exposed to a hail of bullets from the mountain, they evacuated the kraal and fled northwards in the direction of Khavhambe, the area ruled by Ramalamula. They could not continue with their northwards flight as they were afraid of Mavhasa Musekwa's Maṅenu of Tshihanane, and similarly they could not flee to the east as they were afraid of Ravele's Maunavhathu of Mauluma.[36]

Meanwhile Sinthumule's expedition entered the kraal and found it deserted. Maemu's people changed direction and fled southwards. They crossed the Muhohodi river, which Leo Weinthal, Editor of The Pretoria Press called "the famous border 'rubicon' of Magato's territory".[37]

According to Venda tradition, no one was ever followed after crossing the Muhohodi river. The group which consisted of Maemu, his mother Nwaphunga, Rasivhetshele, Liswe, Makhethekhethe, Mutheiwana and others of less importance including young girls entered Tshabwa. They went to Fort Hendrina and reported to J.T. Kelly, Field-Cornet of the Spelonken. This event might have taken place in December 1895 as T. Wolmarans, the Native Commissioner reported at the beginning of February 1896, that he had been feeding the group for the last two months.[38]

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35 Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

36 Musekwa on 12 July 1971. Maṅenu is a praise and regional name of the army of Tshihanane, while Maunavhathu is a praise and regional name of the army of Mauluma.

37 Wessmann, p.148.

38 S.S. 1896, 5227, R.277(1), Report by G.A. Wolmarans, 4 February 1896.

The way was now paved for the installation of a new chief. The counsellors, headmen, Khotsimunene and Makhadzi were all unanimous that the only one who had the right to succeed Makhado was Mphephu. Arrangements for the important ceremony were made and on the specified day, sometime in December 1895,[39] the people gathered at Luatame to witness the occasion.

The Tshikona[40] dancers entertained the multitude and the echoes resounded in the mountains of Tshirululuni and Sunguzwi. Makhadzi Ndalammbi was naturally excited and jubilant as her wishes were being fulfilled.

When Mphephu ascended the throne of the Ramabulanas, the elders requested Sinthumule to be his Ndumi.[41] Sinthumule, however, turned down the offer in favour of his younger brother, Kutama. He told the elders that he would prefer to remain an ordinary Khotsimunene. This means an ordinary brother of the chief. Consequently Kutama appeared with the chief as his Ndumi. As the installation ceremony would not be complete without a Khadzi,[42] Funzani, Mphephu's younger sister occupied that position. No installation, according to Venda law and tradition could be valid without a Ndumi and a Khadzi.

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39 S.S. 1896, 5277, R.2037, J.P. Jacobus' declaration before Lieutenant G.A. du Toit dated 20 February 1896.

40 This is a traditional game of dancing to the rhythm of reeds, flutes and drums which graces the installation ceremony.

41 This is a sort of a deputy chief and he is always the younger brother or half brother of the installed chief.

42 The chief's sister with whom he is installed; See also page 18, footnote 68.

The installation of Maemu had been somewhat puzzling as not a single informant could remember his Khadzi and Ndumi. This may be partly explained by the fact that Maemu had few supporters.

After the installation of Mphephu there was general satisfaction throughout the country except for the few supporters of Maemu Malise who remained dissatisfied as they knew they would receive no consideration in the new regime. The other headmen including Mavhasa Musekwa, Ravele, Matidze, Funyufunyu, Madzivhandila, Netsianda Nelwamondo, the whole Vhalaudzi tribe from Tshivhodza right up to Vhulube and others were satisfied as Mphephu was their candidate.[43]

All the indunas who supported Maemu Malise were deposed. These indunas included Mutheiwana of Vuvha, Liswoga of Tshifhefhe and Rasivhetshele. Mutheiwana, the witchdoctor was replaced by his younger brother Makaulule. Ratombo who had first supported Maemu changed his attitude and paid homage to Mphephu.[44]

This re-shuffling of headmen was not correctly interpreted by Landdrost G. Munnik when he stated that: "No sooner had M'Pefu assumed the reins of chieftainship than he displaced all his father's old indunas and sentenced them to death, together with Magato's chief wife and two of his brothers".[45]

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[43] Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Munnik, Memoirs, p.153.

Lieutenant G.A. du Toit, an official at Fort Hendrina reported in March, 1896 that conditions in Mphephu's area where he was chief of the Makatese were unsatisfactory, and that all headmen of Makhado were dismissed. The source of this information was Mutheiwana, and other supporters of Maemu who wanted the government to re-instate them in their former territories.[46]

Lieutenant Du Toit cannot be blamed for providing incorrect information as he wrote what he had been told but there was no reason for him not obtaining the truth, before he submitted the report to the government. The number of headmen who were deposed did not exceed five, therefore the information supplied by both Landdrost Munnik and Lieutenant Du Toit was somewhat exaggerated. In view of the fact that Mutheiwana's intention was indirectly to request the government to reinstate him at Vuvha, the statement made by T.V. Bulpin that to some of the young bloods of the tribe, engaged in the endless faction fights common to a primitive people, the Europeans appeared attractive, possible allies,[47] appears to be correct.

The supporters of Maemu were blamed for the death of Makhado and the installation of Maemu; not only in the absence of his elder brothers but also without having consulted other indunas. In addition to this, they also organised a conspiracy against Mphephu. It was probable that these were the reasons why they were deposed and punished.

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46 S.S. 1896, 5288,C.R.1432(2), Report by Lieutenant G.A. du Toit of Fort Hendrina, 1 March 1896.

47 T.V. Bulpin, Lost Trails, p.62.

On the other hand Mphephu acted rather hastily in the reshuffling of the headmen as there was no reason for such haste. He temporarily silenced the supporters of Maemu but their spirit of opposition was driven underground. On the surface, conditions appeared normal and Mphephu's supporters were lulled into a false sense of security.

Mphephu could not forget the part played by his brother Sinthumule in his struggle for accession to the throne. Sinthumule's memorable words: "Brother sit down, I will drive them away from the mountain; you will fight when I am dead", were always ringing in his ears.[48] Sinthumule should be thanked. To put this idea into practice, Mphephu informed his counsellors that his brother, Sinthumule, the son of his father, with whom he was on friendly terms and who had helped him in ousting Maemu should be given a tract of land. The counsellors had no objection. Indeed they felt that Sinthumule should be given something as a token of gratitude.[49]

The land which was to be given to Sinthumule was Tshifhefhe, which was about 32 km east of Dzanani. This land was ruled by Liswoga who was one of the deposed indunas.[50]

Sinthumule, however, did not regard this as a reward worthy of the great service he had rendered in the succession of Mphephu. Nobody could have persuaded him to fight for Mphephu. He had been prompted by the fact that Maemu had been installed by the very people who had assassinated his father and that young Maemu was traditionally ineligible to sit in the Chair of the Ramabulanas. When he was offered Tshifhefhe by Mphephu, whom he had assisted voluntarily, he failed to understand the implications.[51]

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[48] Radzilani Nyatema on 13 July 1971.
[49] Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.
[50] Mathew Muntswu on 13 July 1971.
[51] Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

He consequently turned down the offer and voiced his complaint:

> Kutama o fhiwa Vhulorwa, nne nda fhiwa Tshifhefhe (tshihu).... Ndi mini ndi tshi fhiwa tshihu, Kutama ngavhe a fhiwe Tshilata. Ni nga mpha hani tshihu, Kutama na mu fha Muungadi, shango lihuluhulu.[52]

He told the counsellors that he was not ready to go to Tshifhefhe. He preferred Malimuwa to any other place. This preference was based on the fact that Malimuwa was a fertile area with good rainfall. He wanted this place and not the dry, barren and low-lying flats of Tshifhefhe.[53]

The counsellors reacted by saying that Malimuwa was not traditionally meant for male rulers and therefore Sinthumule could not be allowed to establish himself there. Mavhasa Musekwa, consoled him by saying that he had been given land among so many brothers and he should be satisfied.[54]

Sinthumule's mother, Dombo warned Mphephu of the danger of giving her son Malimuwa, as he was cunning. His going to Malimuwa might be followed by bloody wars. Other responsible people carried the idea further by stating, that once Sinthumule had established himself at this mountain, it would be difficult to dislodge him.[55]

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[52] This information was supplied by Nwamakhado of Madodonga, Mphephu's sister and probably the only surviving child of Makhado, on 31 August 1971. It means: "Kutama has been given Vhulorwa, I have been given Tshifhefhe, a small place... Why should I be given a monkey-nut plot, Kutama should have been given Tshilata.
Why should I be given a monkey-nut plot while Kutama is given a large area, Muungadi".

[53] Thonga on 9 September 1971.

[54] Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

[55] Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

Mphephu on the other hand was willing to give his brother any land because he remembered the active part he had played in ousting Maemu, from the throne.[56]

The counsellors were, however, adamant in their warning that Sinthumule's going to Malimuwa would soon spark off another conflagration in which many souls would perish.[57]

Sinthumule at last decided to go down to Tshifhefhe, accompanied by his Ngomakhosi age-group. The elder brother, Mphephu, was left at the royal kraal of Luatame with his Mavhegwa age-group.[58]

At Tshifhefhe, Sinthumule established a large kraal at the foot of the mountain, and Mphephu proclaimed that all indunas east of this area should no longer submit their petty differences to him. The minor cases would be settled at Tshifhefhe.[59] This showed that Mphephu had confidence in the ability of Sinthumule as a ruler.

In this way Mphephu completed his re-organisation of the country, which had suffered severe setbacks after Makhado's death.

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56 Thonga on 9 September 1971.

57 Nemauluma on 13 June 1971; Also Maifhani Ndouvhada on 31 August 1971.

58 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971; Also Ndouvhada on 31 August 1971.

59 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

The character of the young ruler, Mphephu, nicknamed Tshilamulelavhakalaha[60] or simply Tshilamulela, was clearly portrayed by Landdrost Munnik who had much to do with him whilst he was landdrost of the Soutpansberg. He regarded him as:

> A truculent scapegrace..., who for the last nine years had lived in banishment from his tribe in Kimberley. He was a very smart young fellow and, in consequent of never having had any education, he had learnt all the white man's vices and few of his virtues.[61]

The views expressed by Munnik cannot be denied as Mphephu was dark, brave and seldom had a smile on his face. He had no time to listen to anybody. He had inherited his father's bravery but not his intelligence.[62]

The accession of Mphephu to the throne marked the end of a period of peaceful co-existence with government officials at Fort Hendrina and the beginning of a new era, an era of mistrust and instability, which culminated in wars of aggression.

The sound of the drums and the Tshikona dance which graced the occasion of Mphephu's accession to power was felt by the three eastern chiefs Ligegise Tshivhase, Ranwedzi Mphaphuli and Tshikosi Rammbuda. Tshivhase in partifular did not see any prospect of peace with the Ramabulanas, as Mphephu was more war-like than Makhado, his father.[63]

Sinthumule on the other hand was tall, brave and kind. Unlike Mphephu, he seemed to have inherited Makhado's intelligence.[64]

The characters of the two brothers were irreconcilable and this provided a fertile ground for hostilities.

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60 This means one who protects the old men.

61 Munnik, Memoirs, p.153.

62 Netshiendeulu on 30 March 1973.

63 Jack Ramatsitsi on 13 July 1971.

64 Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIRST PHASE OF MPHEPHU'S REIGN (DECEMBER TO JUNE 1896)

After Mphephu had completed the re-organisation of his country, a step automatically taken by any newly installed chief according to Venda tradition, an atmosphere of satisfaction reigned and people were generally pleased, as Maemu and his anti-Makhado group, under the leadership of Rasivhetshele had been driven across the Muhohodi.[1]

Mutheiwana, the great war witchdoctor, Makhado's maternal uncle, was deposed from his headmanship at Vuvha. He was succeeded by his younger brother Makaulule. After leaving Vuvha Mutheiwana climbed the densely forested mountains of Luonde and Tshidzivhani and sought refuge at J.S. Cooksley's farm, Madrid. This farm was situated south east of Tshidzivhani, the land of Ratombo. Here he remained under the protection of an influential Tsonga trader called Nwandzinginya.[2]

Nwandzinginya and his Tsonga associates were regarded as loyal subjects of the Republic. His neighbour along the eastern boundary was Rasikhuthuma, one of Makhado's elder brothers. Rasikhuthuma, after fleeing from Makhado in 1864, established himself at Tshitungulu. He was in favour with the government officials. His other neighbours, Ravele of Mauluma and Ratombo were Mphephu's staunch supporters. With Rasikhuthuma, Mutheiwana lived in peace. He was, however, in constant fear of aggression from Ravele and Ratombo.[3]

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[1] Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

[2] S.S. 1896, 5227, S.R. 1422, Report from Fort Hendrina; See also S.S. 1896, 5277, R.2527, Declaration before Lieutenant G.A. du Toit, 20 February 1896.

[3] Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

From Madrid Mutheiwana frequently visited Fort Hendrina, hoping to obtain assistance in being re-instated at Vuvha.[4]

While the Vhavenda were rejoicing and jubilant at Sunguzwi, the fifty policemen stationed at Fort Hendrina, were rather disappointed with the succession of Mphephu. This made them somewhat restless and they advised Maemu or Malise as he was sometimes called to go to Pretoria to present his case.[5]

Maemu was accompanied by his main supporter, Rasivhetshele. What they told the government in Pretoria has not yet been disclosed. It is probable that they complained to the government that, Maemu, whom Makhado designated as his successor, had been ousted by Mphephu. The immediate consequence of this visit was that the government witheld recognition of Mphephu as chief of the Vhavenda and instead they regarded him as an usurper.[6]

Mphephu on the other hand was aggressive and bellicose.[7] The fact is that he had organised an army of his age-group called Mavhegwa.

The practice of dismissing some headmen and appointing others in their places was not started by Mphephu. It has always been traditional and customary for each newly installed ruler to appoint his friends and supporters as headmen.

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[4] S.S. 1896, 5227, S.R. 1422(2), Mutheiwana's declaration before Du Toit, 20 February 1896.

[5] S.S. 1896, 5992, R.18122, Report, Conditions at Mphephu, an undated document.

[6] Ibid.

[7] S.S. 1896, 5227, S.R. 1422, Report from Fort Hendrina, undated.

With the succession of Mphephu, the German missionaries particularly Wessmann of Tshakhuma, who anticipated good conditions after the death of Makhado, were dealt a heavy blow. They could not see any prospect of furthering evangelism in a country ruled by the cruel and war-like Mphephu.[8] The latter, like his father Makhado did not permit missionaries to work near his stronghold.

Relations between Mphephu and his brother Sinthumule were good from the outset. When Mphephu sent for him, even at short notice, he immediately responded. Unlike Mphephu, Sinthumule was shrewd and cunning and like a magnet he attracted many people to Tshifhefhe.[9]

When Makhado died, some of his wives were still young and according to Venda tradition they had to be part of the inheritance which must pass to his successor. These young women, the step-mothers of Mphephu were forced to flee to Sinthumule at Tshifhefhe for protection, as they did not receive good treatment from Mphephu. Mphephu did not approve, but he could do nothing as they were following the dictates of their reason. Sinthumule secretly welcomed them to his kraal.[10]

From the days of Makhado, the three eastern chiefs, Tshivhase, Mphaphuli and Rammbuda lived in constant fear of being attacked as the Ramabulanas were war-mongers. With the accession of Mphephu, this state of affairs continued, but these fears were unfounded as Mphephu had no reason to attack them.[11]

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[8] S.S. 1899, 7753, R.2536, Wessmann to the President and the Executive Council, 18 February 1899.

[9] Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

[10] Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

[11] Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

Relations with Tshivhase deteriorated after the latter's attack on Rammbuda in order to have Siphuma installed. Tshivhase might have thought that it would be an easy matter to defeat Tshikosi, as Makhado who normally had helped him had passed away. Siphuma's accession to the throne would mean an ally for Tshivhase.[12]

Mphephu, whose father had helped Tshikosi, could not remain impartial. He championed the cause of Tshikosi, whose mother came from Dzanani, and consequently the latter's victory would mean Rammbuda's continued subservience to the Ramabulanas.[13]

He therefore intervened. Tshivhase's untrained army could not withstand the onslaught of the trained disciplined Mavhegwa of Mphephu. After heavy shelling, Tshivhase's army retreated across the river Mutale and went home to Luaname. Tshikosi's mother perished in the war.[14]

The outcome of this war was reported in a press telegram to The Star on 14 April, 1896. Mphephu had secured Dzimauli, which had been the bone of contention between Makhado and Tshivhase for the last fifteen years. The possession of Dzimauli materially strengthened Mphephu.[15]

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12 Nyadenga Tshivhase on 15 May 1963.

13 Mudau and Motenda, p.106.

14 22-23 Landdrost Zoutpansberg, Brieweboek, Landdrost Zoutpansberg to Superintendent of Natives, Trouble between Tshivhase and Rammbuda on 16 March 1896.

15 S.S. 1896, 5277, R.2527, Conduct of Mphephu from Fort Hendrina dated 20 February 1896.

The Rev. Beuster of Maungani in Tshivhase's area, was shocked when he received the news that Mphephu had captured Dzimauli. He thought that Tshivhase's area might be the next battlefield. He was not alone in this, as the same fear was shared by the local Whites at Fort Hendrina, who requested the government to supply him with arms to counteract further aggression.[16]

Rumours of Mphephu's aggressive policy spread like wildfire throughout the western Soutpansberg. The refugee Mutheiwana at Nwandzinginya was in constant fear of being attacked, as Ravele and Ratombo, his neighbours, were Mphephu's great supporters. He felt that if he were to be found by any of Mphephu's supporters he would be murdered.[17]

A report from Fort Hendrina stated that Mutheiwana had great influence among Makhado's superstitious people because, he was the holder of the great medicine horn and a supporter of Maemu.[18] This was the impression created by Mutheiwana himself and yet he knew the truth that Mphephu could and would not forgive him for the part he had played in the assassination of Makhado.

In the same report it was stated that the cattle of Hans Klopper, a farmer, had been stolen by Mphephu's people. The statement might be true as his Mavhegwa were still excited. As Mphephu could no longer be trusted, the reporter suggested increasing the number of soldiers guarding the whole frontier because he could attack any farm at any time.[19]

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16 S.S. 1896, 5992, R.18122, Conditions at Rammbuda, 29 February 1896.

17 Ibid.

18 S.S. 1896, 5277, Conduct of Mphephu from Fort Hendrina dated 20 February 1896; See footnote 15.

19 Ibid.

Lieutenant Du Toit who was in charge of Fort Hendrina reported that he was convinced that Mphephu had cannon as he had heard their sounds in broad daylight. The Blacks themselves confirmed that he had two cannon.[20]

The fears at Fort Hendrina, although somewhat exaggerated, were not unfounded; Mphephu had certainly adopted an aggressive attitude. Although his army would not be expected to attack the White farms across the Muhohodi river, his Mavhegwa age-group, excited over their recent success in the accession of their chief would do anything. Already early in December 1895, Du Toit had referred to his impertinent attitude.[21]

Mphephu had no grudge against Mphaphuli.[22] This was probably due to the fact that the two chiefs were related by marriage. In addition to this, their lands were not adjacent. Any attempt to attack the latter would necessitate travelling through Tshivhase's territory. Relations with Tshivhase could not be expected to be good as Mphephu had forestalled the latter's attack on Dzimauli.

Despite the many unfavourable reports from Fort Hendrina, the Pretoria government did not take any steps against Mphephu. This "wait and see" attitude of the government frustrated the White officials and residents of the Spelonken. Mphephu like his father Makhado, acknowledged the authority of President Kruger.[23]

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20 S.S. 1896, 5277, R.2527, Conduct of Mphephu from Fort Hendrina, 20 February 1896.

21 S.S. 1896, 5227, C.R. 2037, Declaration by Du Toit, undated.

22 Nemauluma on 13 June 1971. Ranwedzi Mphaphuli had married Matsheketsheke of Mauluma who was a relative of Makhado.

23 Wessmann, p. 142.

The first positive step taken by the government was a letter addressed to Mphephu from General Joubert, the Commandant-General, on 9 May 1896.[24] The letter informed Mphephu that the Native Commissioner of the Spelonken, Captain A. Schiel, would be going to live in Pretoria and it expressed the hope that conditions would improve as a result. The important message conveyed to Mphephu was in connection with the Location Commission. General Joubert then informed him that members of the Location Commission, accompanied by A. Devenish the surveyor, and Field-Cornet T. Kelly of the Spelonken, would visit him in order to find out the number of farms given to people by Commandant H. Potgieter, where his location would be situated and to site the beacons. He concluded by requesting Mphephu to supply the commission with people who would be paid by the government for their service.

Tom Kelly, the Field-Cornet, was instructed to deliver the letter personally to Mphephu. Instead he sent the letter via a Black policeman called Tom.[25] This created a problem as neither the messenger nor the chief could read the contents of the letter and a local trader H. Austin, who had a shop at Nnzwobi,[26] near Mphephu's kraal was not available. When Austin did return, Mphephu requested him to read the letter and thereafter explain the contents.[27] After the contents of the letter were known, the chief summoned his senior headmen and counsellors to discuss the message contained in the letter.[28]

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[24] S.S. 1896, 5456, R.6826, Joubert to Mphephu, 9 May 1896.

[25] **Ibid**.

[26] Ramushwana on 2 February 1973.

[27] S.S. 1896, 5456, R.6826, A.L. Devenish to Superintendent of Natives, 11 June 1896.

[28] S.S. 1896, 5456, R.7418, T.T. Bain to Commissioner of Police, 29 May 1896.

The letter from the Commandant-General coincided with the visit of a reporter, who after conferring with Mphephu described him as, "the chief who seems to be a man not likely to give any trouble to the government".[29]

The reporter continued his investigation by paying visits to Funyufunyu, the senior headman, and Sinthumule of Tshifhefhe. He concluded that Mphephu was anxious to avoid any trouble with the government.[30]

The same reporter revealed that the chief had agreed to give the commission every possible assistance in marking out the location and erecting beacons and to do whatever was required to enable the commission to locate the boundaries of his location.[31]

Why did Tom Kelly not deliver the letter personally as instructed by the Commandant-General? It is possible that he wished to see a confrontation between Mphephu and the government. We already know that Tom Kelly had despatched a number of sworn declarations to the government against Mphephu. It would also appear that there was no communication between Mphephu and Fort Hendrina. Had Kelly visited Mphephu personally, he would have formed some positive impressions about him. This might have avoided some of the misunderstandings which eventually culminated in the unhappy events of November, 1898.

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[29] S.S. 1896, 5456, R.7418, T.T. Bain to Commissioner of Police, 29 May 1896.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

General Joubert's message about the departure of Captain Schiel, which was cordially received at Dzanani, revealed that relations between Mphephu and the Spelonken officials were strained and Pretoria was aware of this.[32]

The late chief Makhado, when asked about payment of taxation had stated that he would pay to Paul and not through the German Captain Schiel.[33]

The second step taken by General Joubert in connection with Mphephu, was the despatch of Carel Kekana, a Black constable,[34] who after visiting Dzanani, stated in his report that he had explained to Mphephu his alleged resistance to the authority of the government and his refusal to pay taxation. In his reply Mphephu stated that he was a subject of the government and expressed his willingness to pay taxation. He was also awaiting the Location Commission and wished to be given his own location. He had already sent one elephant tusk and £10 to Landdrost Munnik, as well as £5 for Maraba, a Black constable at Pietersburg. In conclusion Kekana stated that he was heartily welcomed and given an elephant tusk as a token of friendship.[35]

The Location Commission then visited Luatame from whence they sent a report to the Superintendent of Natives. In this report they stated that Mphephu had met Devenish, the Chairman of the Location Commission, and that everything was satisfactorily settled and the paramount chief expressed his willingness to assist Devenish in every way.[36]

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32 S.S. 1896, 5456, R.7418, T.T. Bain to Commissioner of Police, 29 May 1896.

33 Möller-Malan, "Die Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.3, no.3 (September 1958), p.187.

34 S.S. 1896. 5602., S.R. 10252, Kekana to the Superintendent of Natives, 10 June 1896.

35 Ibid.

36 S.S. 1896, 5602, S.R. 10252, Godson to Superintendent of Natives, 11 June 1896; Also see S.S. 1896, 5456, S.R.1355, an undated document by Godson.

In another letter of the same date, Devenish said that he had met Mphephu four times. After Mphephu had conferred with his main indunas with reference to the Commandant-General's letter of 9 May 1896, he informed Devenish that he was prepared to offer him any assistance in order that the task entrusted to the Location Commission should proceed smoothly. The chief could not give this promise before he had consulted with his indunas.[37]

The nature of this consultation between the chief and his indunas is characteristic of Venda government, because a chief is not allowed to implement any decision on his own.

After several verbal communications between the Location Commission and Mphephu, the chairman, Devenish finally informed the Pretoria government that Mphephu had now agreed to have his land surveyed.[38] The contents of this letter revealed Mphephu's attitude towards the government of the South African Republic. It was this information which should have been comprehended by the local officials at Fort Hendrina. Had there been some form of communication between Kelly and Mphephu at this stage, the history of relations between the latter and the South African Republic might have been better.

In another letter Devenish reported that the two eastern chiefs Tshivhase and Mphaphuli, who were regarded as being friendly to the government, would not allow their lands to be surveyed.[39] This refusal was not regarded

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37 S.S. 1896, 5456, R.6826, Devenish to Superintendent of Natives, 11 June 1896; Also see S.R. 1355, an undated document by Godson in the same bundle.

38 Ibid., S.R. 1396, A declaration by Mphephu of 18 June 1896 signed by Mphephu and his interpreters Lucas and Stephanus before Godson.

39 Ibid., Devenish's letter of 10 June 1896 to the Superintendent of Natives; See also R.6826, a report from Fort Hendrina of 27 May 1896 in the same bundle.

as disobedience. In other words, Fort Hendrina officials were not satisfied with Mphephu's obedience as they appeared to have been championing the cause of the deposed Maemu who had little support.[40]

Mphephu further revealed his willingness to co-operate with the government in a letter addressed to the Superintendent of Natives dated 18 June 1896. He indicated that after consultation with his people, he saw the necessity of having a census taken and to have his location beaconed and concluded by requesting the government to send the Location Commission.[41]

If the contents of this letter were understood by Mphephu, indications are that he had nothing against the government. Had Kelly or any other official at Fort Hendrina, visited Mphephu, there would have been a favourable report from the Spelonken. The government would have been exposed to a situation in which they would see the true picture despite earlier unfavourable reports concocted by people who wanted the government to re-instate them in their former positions.

During the chieftainship of the late Makhado, all attempts made by the Location Commission to consult with him, were unsuccessful.[42] On the contrary the young Mphephu, perhaps under the influence of his indunas agreed to co-operate and to simplify the task of the said Commission.

As Kelly had not seen Mphephu personally, the Black constable, Tom, made a sworn declaration of his meeting with Mphephu which was transmitted

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40 S.S. 1896, 5602, S.R.10252, Kekana to Superintendent of Natives, 10 June 1896.

41 S.S. 1896, 5456, S.R.1396, This was a declaration of 18 June 1896 signed by Mphephu and his interpreters Lucas and Stephanus before G. Godson.

42 S.S. 1895, 4805 I, R.4808, A confidential report of the Location Commission of 10 June 1895.

to the Superintendent of Natives. This declaration indicated Mphephu's friendly attitude and his willingness to receive and assist the Location Commission.[43]

Up to this time, June 1896, relationships between the two brothers - Mphephu and Sinthumule were still sound. The latter, as headman of Tshifhefhe and a sub-chief of the eastern area, still visited Luatame whenever his elder brother summoned him.[44]

The Maemu group, with the exception of Mutheiwana, who had sought refuge at Cooksley's farm, Madrid, were living across the Muhohodi river. The young Maemu, with Rasivhetshele, was still in Pretoria.[45]

The protection offered by the officials of the Republic to the Maemu group was a source of irritation to Mphephu. He had already expressed this dissatisfaction to Kekana, against the Native Commissioner of the Spelonken.[46]

The implications of this fact was that by harbouring the ousted Maemu group, the government appeared to have taken sides in the struggle for succession to the Venda throne. This seems to be substantiated by the fact that the Republican officials at Fort Hendrina and the Spelonken were interested in Maemu's succession.[47]

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43 S.S. 1896, 5456, R.6826, Tom's declaration of 10 June 1896.

44 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971; Also Thonga on 9 September 1971; Nwamakhado on 31 August 1971.

45 S.S. 1896, 5992, R.18122, Conditions at Mphephu. This was an undated report from Fort Hendrina.

46 S.S. 1896, 5602, S.R.10252, Kekana's letter of 10 June 1896 to the Superintendent of Natives.

47 Madzinge Sitholiwela on 13 July 1971; See also Wessmann, pp.119-120 and Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.191 for additional information.

In 1864 when the Boer settlement of Schoemansdal had supported the young Makhado against his elder brother Davhana,[48] they had the support of Makhadzi. In other words, they were acting in accordance with Venda tradition. During 1895 and 1896, the Boer officials at Fort Hendrina and the Spelonken did not enjoy Makhadzi's support in their plans to have Maemu succeed.

As Maemu's group was not strong enough to weaken Mphephu's position by dividing the nation, Fort Hendrina awaited further developments which were co-incidentally also the consequences of the weaknesses embodied in the Venda law of succession. These flaws in the law of succession actually weakened the authority of any new chief. Stayt has expressed this very clearly when he stated that every year the power of the chief diminishes.[49]

After the succession of a new chief to the throne, the dissatisfied and disappointed element of the population abandoned the stronghold with their candidate and installed him as a petty chief out of reach of the new chief.[50] That is why the Vhavenda as a nation, cannot, today boast of a legal paramount chief recognised by the whole nation.

Mphephu was no exception to the rule. His cruelty and lack of sympathy, aggravated a situation which had already deteriorated. Some people, including a few of Makhado's wives drifted to Tshifhefhe where Sinthumule gave them a warm welcome.

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48 Van Warmelo, Contributions; p.31-32.

49 Stayt, p.203.

50 At the present when new lands are no longer obtainable, the disappointed element together with their candidate avoid the new chief by not going to his kraal.

CHAPTER FOUR

MPHEPHU'S CLASH WITH SINTHUMULE AND THE BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC (JULY 1896 TO JUNE 1898)

The accession of Mphephu to the throne of his predecessors was widely acclaimed by the anti-Maemu group, as it was this group which had sent messengers to Tuli and Kimberley to bring back Sinthumule and Mphephu.[1]

As already stated, Sinthumule was compelled to go to Tshifhefhe against his will. Considering the part he had played in the struggle for Mphephu's succession, he felt rejected. This ingratitude on the part of Mphephu for the services Sinthumule had rendered, was a source of discontent; despite this he continued to pay homage to his older brother.[2]

Makhado, their father, had had more than fifteen wives and when he died, some of them were still young. These young wives were in actuality part of the property to be inherited by his successor. Their children would still be regarded by the successor as the offspring of his predecessor, according to Venda law.[3]

The first open clash between the two brothers flared up when Sinthumule wanted to marry Matoro, one of Makhado's young wives. He did not succeed as she was already married to Mphephu. When he turned to Mokgadi, the daughter of Chief Ramokgopa of Vhudogwa, she agreed, but as Mphephu also wanted her, trouble started.[4]

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[1] Nwamakhado on 31 August 1971; Also Nemauluma on 13 June 1971.

[2] Thonga on 9 September 1971; and Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

[3] Mamidze Matse and Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

[4] Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

As a result of these differences, outsiders intervened and thereby widened the gulf between the two brothers. Suspicion and mistrust followed.[5]

These outsiders also informed Mphephu that Sinthumule had stolen guns, money and elephant tusks. Ivory was highly valued by the Vhavenda at the time.[6]

In addition to this, Mphephu complained to the Superintendent of Natives, P.A. Cronje on 29 October 1896 at Austin's store that Sinthumule had stolen cattle.[7]

The anti-Mphephu group led by Rasivhetshele also turned to Sinthumule and told him that Mphephu was only his older brother and not his father. Consequently there was nothing which compelled him to pay homage to him. Furthermore chieftainship was a prize to be won by fighting.[8]

The misunderstanding between the two brothers was intensified by the fact that those people who fled from Mphephu on account of ill-treatment, went to Tshifhefhe where Sinthumule welcomed them with kindness.[9]

The agitators kept on urging Sinthumule to fight for the chieftainship, as the Ramabulana chieftainship could not be obtained easily. In other words the two brothers were equal and whoever was the braver, should rule.[10]

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5 Mmbadaliga on 20 March 1973.

6 Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

7 S.N. 1896-97, 76,R.15515, Interview between Mphephu and P.A. Cronje, 29 October 1896.

8 Thonga on 9 September 1971.

9 Ibid.

10 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

At first Sinthumule discouraged them by saying that they should not create enmity between himself and his father's son, but later he changed his attitude, especially when he looked at his Ngomakhosi age-group. He believed they could oust Mphephu from the throne of the Ramabulanas.[11]

The supporters of Mphephu on the other hand, felt they should not procrastinate while Sinthumule's followers were increasing. They pointed out the dangers that would follow if no action were taken against Sinthumule.[12]

Mphephu did not believe their stories. He told them that they should not engender a feeling of hostility between his younger brother and himself. This attitude, however, did not discourage them. They insisted that Sinthumule was rebellious and that action should be taken to silence him.[13]

Due to the insistence of the people, Mphephu began to realise the seriousness of the situation. In order to verify the information, he despatched a messenger to Tshifhefhe to summon Sinthumule to his royal kraal. Sinthumule ignored this summons.[14]

In pursuance of this, Mphephu invited Sinthumule's group to work at his Dzunde of Malimuwa.[15] Sinthumule did not respond and consequently the chief was worried.[16] The chief's advisers urged him to depose the younger brother and instal someone else. He continued to resist their pleas as he loved his younger brother.[17]

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11 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Dzunde is the chief's field which is ploughed by all his subjects within his jurisdiction.

16 Ramushwana on 2 February 1973.

17 Mmbadaliga on 20 March 1973.

Sinthumule adopted a negative attitude. When he looked at his Ngomakhosi age-group, he became convinced that he could repulse any onslaught from Mphephu's people. In addition his Ngomakhosi followers urged him to fight. He sent word to his brother that he was also a chief. He lodged a complaint that he had been sent by Mphephu to many places and had not been paid for the service he had rendered.[18]

Mphephu consequently changed his attitude towards his brother and heeded his advisers who wished to bring about a confrontation. According to them the matter would be settled on a battlefield and if possible, Sinthumule should be annihilated.[19]

Sinthumule's principal adviser was Rasivhetshele who had formerly installed Maemu. He was interested in effecting a split between the two groups which had been instrumental in deposing his candidate, Maemu.[20]

As Mphephu became convinced that his brother was rebellious, he organised his Mavhegwa army. This army consisted of Vhaingamela of Funyufunyu, Vhalube of Makongoza and Mavhoi of Phahwe, Tshitopeni, Khavhambe and Malimuwa.[21]

Mphephu's advisers blamed him for having delayed in taking punitive action against Sinthumule, whose supporting ranks had been increased by fugitives who had escaped from the chief's vengeance.[22]

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[18] Headman Matse on 12 July 1971.
[19] Headman Mavhunga on 13 July 1971.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Musekwa on 12 July 1971.
[22] Ibid.

When the army was ready, Mphephu ordered it to go to the plains of Tshifhefhe to launch an attack against Sinthumule. Instructions were issued to the generals that they should destroy the supporters but that Sinthumule should be saved, as he had royal blood in his veins.[23]

The Mavhegwa army marched away, fully prepared to crush the rebellious Ngomakhosi group. Mphephu remained at home. The followers of Sinthumule knew about the coming of Mphephu's army and were therefore prepared.[24]

These events took place at the end of July 1896.[25] There are conflicting reports about the event. Motenda reported that there was fierce fighting at Tshifhefhe, in which Mphephu murdered many of Sinthumule's followers.[26] This report was supported by Devenish in a letter dated 30 July 1896.[27]

The account given by Martha Mmbadaliga, Sinthumule's niece, who stayed with Sinthumule at Tshifhefhe as a young girl, contradicts the statement that fighting took place. She emphatically contends that when Mphephu's army arrived, Sinthumule's people evacuated Tshifhefhe and crossed Luvuvhu without offering any resistance.[28]

Their first stop was at Tshivhodza, an area north-east of Tshifhefhe. This land was ruled by Makatu. As the Vhalaudzi of Tshivhodza did not receive them, they travelled in a south-easterly direction and arrived

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23 Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

24 Ibid.

25 Transvaal Native Affairs Department, Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p.63.

26 Mudau and Motenda, p.108.

27 S.S.1896, 5456, R.3809, Devenish to Superintendent of Natives, 30 July 1896.

28 Mmbadaliga on 20 March 1973.

at Luonde, which was ruled by Matidze, who belonged to the Vhakwevho clan. Here Sinthumule asked for aid, but headman Matidze replied that as he was a father-in-law of the late Makhado, the two feuding brothers were his grandsons and therefore he could not offer him any assistance.[29]

The fugitive Sinthumule and his followers saw no other alternative but to cross into the Tshabwa territory where they knew they would not be followed.[30]

Sinthumule settled at J.D. Gill's farm, a few miles east of the present Elim Hospital, where he was given political asylum.[31]

As Gill's farm was not far from Luvhola where Makhado's elder brother Davhana had established himself in the early 1860's, Sinthumule visited Davhana's son, Chief Nesengani, from whom he requested military assistance against Mphephu.[32]

Nesengani pointed out that the Davhanas had fought against the Makhados and consequently he could not interfere in a domestic matter. Disappointed, Sinthumule returned to Gill's farm.[33]

The Swiss Missionary, E. Creux of the Elim Mission station became acquainted with Sinthumule and taught him how to read and write.[34]

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[29] Neluvhola on 31 August 1971. Matidze was Makhado's maternal uncle as his mother was the daughter of Matumba of the Vhakwevho clan.

[30] Nyatema on 13 July 1971.

[31] Jack Ramatsitsi on 13 July 1971.

[32] Nesengani on 14 June 1971; Also Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

[33] Mmbadaliga on 20 March 1973.

[34] Ibid.

The fact that Sinthumule was allowed to live on Gill's farm did not please Mphephu but he could do nothing because Sinthumule had crossed the Muhohodi river where according to tradition he could not be pursued.[35]

Mphephu, whose aim was to force Sinthumule into subjection, ordered the fathers of Sinthumule's wives to tell their daughters to return. This caused all his wives, except one named Vhulondo to desert him.[36]

Sinthumule's followers who still hoped for an opportunity to retaliate declared that the whole area south of Muhohodi river belonged to them. They also laid claim to Manavhela's area, which was opposite Fort Hendrina. Manavhela was a Mundalamo headman installed by Makhado for the purpose of watching the activities of the fifty policemen stationed at Fort Hendrina. The name of the ruler at the time was Kumbani.[37]

Under the influence of his Ngomakhosi followers, Sinthumule went to Kumbani Manavhela for strategic reasons and military assistance. His aim was to use Mount Manavhela as a base from which to launch an offensive against Luatame. Situated between the Muhohodi river in the north and the Muananzhele river in the south, Mount Manavhela was suitable for this purpose. The other advantage which this mountain had, was the fact that any army intending to attack it from the north would be easily seen.[38]

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35 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.192.

36 Mmbadaliga on 20 March 1973.

37 Ibid.; Also Ramatsitsi on 13 July 1971.

38 Nyatema on 13 July 1971; Also Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

Unlike Makatu of Tshivhodza and Matidze of Luonde, Manavhela agreed to support Sinthumule. Möller-Malan even maintains that Sinthumule knew that Manavhela favoured his plan.[39] The leaders of his followers were Muthevhuli, Malidzhi and Mulayo.[40]

News that Sinthumule had established himself at Mount Manavhela soon reached Mphephu but he did not take any action. He also heard that Manavhela had joined Sinthumule.[41]

Mphephu's followers reported that Sinthumule had told his supporters that they should prepare themselves to launch an attack against Mphephu.[42] One of the reasons for attacking the older brother was that the Ngomakhosi group had been forced out of Tshifhefhe and settled at Tshabwa, where living conditions were not as good as they had been at their residence.[43]

Despite the information received from his followers and their efforts to persuade him to attack, Mphephu hesitated as he still loved his younger brother. As time passed, he was unable to withstand the pressure and ordered his generals to keep their armies in a state of readiness so that enemies could be repulsed.[44]

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39 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.193.
40 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.
41 Headman Matse on 12 July 1971.
42 Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.
43 Mmbadaliga on 20 March 1973.
44 Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

By the end of June 1896, Mphephu's enemies were limited to the Maemu group, but from July Sinthumule's group also opposed him. The two groups now joined forces against their common foe. As Ngomakhosi had based themselves at Mount Manavhela, Mutheiwana had sought refuge at Nwandzinginya's kraal in Madrid, the farm belonging to Cooksley.[45]

As his enemies were at Nwandzinginya and Mount Manavhela, Mphephu ordered his generals to attack both places. He instructed headmen Makaulule of Vuvha, Ravele of Mauluma and Ratombo of Tshidzivhani to attack Mutheiwana at Nwandzinginya. He further emphasized that he wanted to hear that Mutheiwana had been annihilated.[46]

The western army would accompany him to Manavhela's area where he would meet and greet his brother Sinthumule.[47] These plans were probably formulated at the end of the first week of October 1896.[48]

On 13 October 1896, Mphephu's army marched towards Manavhela's territory. They crossed the river and directed their attack on the mountain where Sinthumule's followers had established themselves. The invading army shelled the stronghold from different directions but they were driven back. Both armies were heavily armed with old guns obtained from Lourenco Marques and Kimberley as well as a few Martini-Henry rifles.[49]

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45 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Declaration by Motshini before M. Meyer, Field-Cornet, Fort Hendrina on 30 October 1896.

46 Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

47 Ibid.

48 22-23 Landdrost Zoutpansberg, Brieweboek, September 1896 to July 1897, 9 September 1896.

49 Nemauluma on 13 June, 1971.

On the following day, Mphephu joined the battle. When the warriors saw Tshilamulela in person they felt encouraged and he told them "Mavhoi, nna ni a kundwa naa? Imani tshinna ni wele kutavha nga ntha".[50]

With these encouraging words in mind, the army stormed the mountain despite heavy shelling from Sinthumule's followers. Two of Mphephu's followers started a fire on the mountain.[51]

This battle was vividly described by Möller-Malan:[52]

> During the fierce fight that raged round Manavhela's it was easy to recognise the tall dark figure of Sinthumulo since he was over six feet tall and light of build. He was using a new Martini-Henry rifle to defend himself with; using it as a club when he no longer could shoot; clearing a way for himself ... From a rise on their farm, Johannes Fitzgerald and his father watched the fray... Fire was set to the village on the kopjie, the flames mingling with the beautiful glow of the setting sun. Dark spirals of smoke rose upwards, fed by thick volumes from below because of the very dense bush; mingled with the twilight that brought on the night; when those who had hidden away came out to slink across the river.

According to some verbal accounts of the battle, all Sinthumule's people were killed.[53] This opinion was also recorded by Marole, Dzivhani and Motenda.[54] These three historians accepted the opinion without having checked the accuracy of their information.

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50 Nyatema on 13 July 1971. Mavhoi is the regional name of Mphephu's army around his royal kraal. The sentence means: "Mavhoi, are you falling back? Stand up like men and storm the mountain".

51 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

52 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.193.

53 Ramatsitsi on 13 July 1971; Also Neluvhola on 31 August 1971; Nemauluma on 13 June 1971; Headman Mavhunga on 13 July 1971; Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

54 Marole, p.20; Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, pp.144; 167.

Wessmann[55] who had an insight into their war-mentality, correctly concluded that,

> The Bawenda do not make wars in the ordinary meaning of the word. They only undertake treacherous raids for purposes of revenge and plunder. Spies find out the ways and the most suitable place for scaling the wall during the night; but the raiding party always keeps a retreat open, and should the enemy happen to get behind them and thus cut them off, they would lose their senses and everybody would run away only caring to save his own life... They could not stand an open battle, but only try to get near the enemy by cunning. In longer wars, ten dead are deemed by them a heavy loss which discourages and drives them home.

This explains why Sinthumule, after leaving Tshifhefhe took up a fresh stand at the mountains of Tshivhodza and Luonde. The same reason led him to go to Manavhela's kraal. After being surrounded by Mphephu's people, his soldiers dispersed and crossed the river one by one.[56]

Of all the people consulted, only headman Nyatema supplied the correct number of people killed at Manavhela's area.[57] The number was thirteen.[58] Five were Sinthumule's subjects; eight were subjects of Manavhela.[59] Two of Sinthumule's followers whose names were remembered, were Mulayo and Mabalanganya.[60]

Two people who visited the battlefield the following day, were Kelly and Du Toit, officials of the Republic stationed at Fort Hendrina. They saw the thirteen corpses and also the devastation caused by Mphephu's followers.[61]

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55 Wessmann, pp.111-112.

56 Ramatsitsi on 13 July 1971.

57 Nyatema on 13 July 1971.

58 Ibid.; See also S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.

59 Ibid.

60 Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

61 22 Landdrost Zoutpansberg, Brieweboek, September 1896 to June 1897, pp.381-385, Munnik to Superintendent of Natives.

Sinthumule accompanied by Muthevhuli and Malidzhi, was allowed to escape according to Mphephu's instructions: "Ndi malofha a khamba ane a mu vhulaha u do mu bika fhedzi arali ni tshi kona ni tou mu fara".[62]

After crossing the river, Sinthumule was joined by the Maemu group led by Rasivhetshele.[63] Some informants contend that they went to Pretoria but this is not true. They went to Constable Maraba[64] who took them to Landdrost Munnik, who later related:

> I was surprised one morning when my Chief Constable... informed me that Tromp, September, and two of M'Pefu's half-brothers, together with Magato's chief wife and their followers, numbering about fifteen in all, had arrived in Pietersburg during the night having fled from M'Pefu's vengeance. Having reported the matter to the Government, I was instructed to feed and take care of them until further orders.[65]

It is reported that Sinthumule told the younger brother Maemu to cry before the officials of the government and when they wanted to know the reason, he was to say that he had been forced to cry as Mphephu had ousted him from the throne and yet he was the rightful heir of Makhado.[66]

The fifteen fugitives placed themselves under the protection of the Republic.[67] From Pietersburg the group went back home and settled at Tshabwa where they would not be followed.

The attack on Mutheiwana at Madrid was preceded by peaceful manoeuvres to have him ejected from this farm. Motshini, a Knobnose living on the

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62 Musekwa on 12 July 1971. The sentence means: "He is of royal blood and anyone who kills him, will cook him, if you can, arrest him".

63 Mamidze Matse on 12 July 1971.

64 Headman Mavhunga on 13 July 1971.

65 Munnik, Memoirs, p.153.

66 Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

67 Munnik, Kronieke, p.131; Ramatsitsi on 13 July 1971.

farm reported that Ratombo's messengers brought a message[68] stating that they must eject Mutheiwana out of the farm but this could not be done as he was permitted by Cooksley to live there. The following day the same message was brought and the same answer was given. The following day Nwandzinginya was summoned by Masindi who told him that Mphephu had decreed that Mutheiwana must be driven away. Nwandzinginya's reply was that he could not do anything as Cooksley had allowed Mutheiwana to stay on his farm. The messengers might have gone to Nwandzinginya for the last time on 13 October 1896 as Motshini reported that two days later the army invaded Madrid.[69] This statement is supported by Kelly's letter of 19 October 1896 in which he stated that on the following day Mphephu attacked the Blacks living on and near Cooksley's farm Madrid.[70]

According to these statements the attack was on 15 October 1896. Neluvhola, who of all the informants, was at Tshidzivhani on which Madrid was situated, at the time of the invasion, contends that the attack was launched on the day following the battle of Manavhela, that is on 15 October 1896.[71]

The Knobnoses were attacked unawares. They saw the army plundering and pillaging the kraals, murdering the people and setting the houses on fire. Those who were able, crossed the Luvuvhu river to the Swiss

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68 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Report given to the Superintendent of Natives, P.A. Cronje at Cooksley's farm on 30 October 1896.

69 Ibid.

70 S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to the Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.

71 Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

Mission Station of Valdezia. The two Swiss Missionaries, H. Berthoud and E. Creux witnessed the attack and they saw houses in flames. Bags of mealies and cattle were taken.[72]

Dr. H.E. Schlaefli treated the wounded. The two missionaries supplied the fugitives with mealies.[73] Mutheiwana seems to have hidden, as nothing was heard of him.

The attack on the Knobnoses had serious repercussions on relations between Mphephu and the South African Republic. Kelly expressed his sympathy with the 22 Knobnoses who were murdered by Ratombo's people, when the attack was launched on the Blacks loyal to the Republic and who annually paid taxation to the government. He transmitted the report to the Commandant-General.[74]

Ratombo's murder of the Knobnoses has been interpreted in various ways. Wessmann states that Ratombo attacked them in order to gain favour with Mphephu. According to his account, 26 people were killed.[75] His statement shows that he misunderstood the purpose of the punitive expedition; Ratombo was sent by Mphephu to attack Mutheiwana, not the Knobnoses.

On the other hand Ratombo himself might have had ulterior motives, as the farm Madrid on which the Knobnoses lived, was originally part of his land, Tshidzivhani for he informed the Knobnoses and the Makatese living on private farms that they should immigrate to his vicinity.[76]

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[72] S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Declarations by Kaarie, Berthoud, Mbawa, Mashouw, Ramaru and Netawanie.

[73] Ibid., Berthoud's declaration before Field-Cornet Grieve; See also report of Dr. H.E. Schlaefli on 26 October 1896 in the same archival series.

[74] S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to the Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.

[75] Wessmann, p.120. The actual number killed was 22, as previously stated.

[76] S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to the Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.

These private farms included Madrid.

In reporting the battle of Manavhela and the murder of the Knobnoses, Kelly felt very pessimistic about the future of the Whites. He writes that as Field-Cornet, he was implored by the burghers for the protection of their property and enquired when stringent measures would be taken to prevent the repetition of such brutal acts and murder. He expressed apprehension for the safety of the lives and property of the Whites.[77]

Landdrost Munnik, after listening to the delegation led by Sinthumule and Rasivhetshele, and the reports from Fort Hendrina about the events of 14 and 15 October 1896, dispelled the fears expressed by Kelly by reporting to the Superintendent of Natives that he could not see any danger for the Whites in the Spelonken and had Sinthumule been removed from the Spelonken following his recommendations, nothing would have happened.[78]

Landdrost Munnik's view of the situation was apparently correct because while Whites continued to live across the Muhohodi, Mphephu would not attack them.[79]

Despite the many reports and affidavits despatched from Fort Hendrina and the Spelonken, the government did not respond but the two events at Manavhela and Nwandzinginya evoked reaction. On 4 September 1896, the Office of Superintendent of Natives was separated from that of the

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77 S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to the Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.

78 22 Landdrost Zoutpansberg, Brieweboek, September 1896 to June 1897 pp.381-385.

79 Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, pp.59-60.

Commandant-General and when the newly appointed Superintendent of Natives P.A. Cronje was on his way to set up the location of Kibi in the Blaauberg, he received information by telegram from Munnik, about the unfavourable conditions in Makhado's land and the government's instruction to proceed there as soon as Kibi's location was beaconed.[80]

When he arrived at Pietersburg, the Superintendent requested Mphephu, by means of a letter sent through Austin, to meet him at Sand River Poort at 10 o'clock in the morning for he was informed that the place was the best for the purpose.[81]

He also requested Native Commissioner Wolmarans and Field-Cornet Kelly to attend the meeting. On arrival at the place at the appointed hour, he found Austin alone, who informed him that Mphephu was on his way. An hour later Stephanus, Mphephu's interpreter came and stated that Mphephu was at the Dorps river, near Oudedorp, Schoemansdal and that he was unable to proceed further on account of ill-health. He handed him £14 from Mphephu.[82]

The Superintendent, Cronje, was also informed that Wolmarans had been delayed as one of his horses was weak. He then decided to go to Austin's shop which was situated in the mountains not far from Mphephu's kraal. He arrived at sunset. He sent Stephanus to request Mphephu to come even if it was during the night, because he planned to depart early the following day.[83]

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[80] S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Cronje to the State President and Executive Council on 9 November 1896.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

Accompanied by some followers, Mphephu arrived at half-past seven. The meeting was attended by Austin, Wolmarans and Funyufunyu or Tromp. The interpreter was Stephanus.[84]

Cronje wanted to know why blood had been shed at Manavhela and in reply Mphephu denied responsibility for the war and laid blame on Sinthumule and the Native Commissioner who did not respond positively to his complaints.[85]

The other question Cronje asked was on the murder of 24 Knobnoses committed by Ratombo at Nwandzinginya.[86] He reacted by stating that they were murdered by Ratombo who ordered his people to accompany him and later fled.[87]

Cronje requested Mphephu to deliver up Ratombo in order that he should be punished for shedding innocent blood. To this Mphephu replied that it would be difficult for him to get hold of Ratombo as he had sought refuge in Tshivhase's territory.[88]

The Superintendent ordered Mphephu to obey the law of the country and to help the Native Commissioner in creating peaceful conditions. In reply Mphephu said that he was under the law. Cronje concluded by informing Mphephu that he was still going to meet Sinthumule in order to hear the other side of the story. Before he left, Mphephu gave him £20.[89]

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[84] S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Interview with Mphephu, 29 October 1896.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

This was in keeping with the Venda tradition of entertaining a visitor of superior rank by giving him a present.

With reference to the battles at Manavhela and Nwandzinginya, Mphephu did not tell Cronje the truth. He had ordered his army to attack Sinthumule at Manavhela. The soldiers, as has been stated, were at liberty to wipe out all Sinthumule's soldiers. His statement that he did not order Ratombo to attack Nwandzinginya was also not true. Ratombo, Makaulule and Ravele were ordered to attack Mutheiwana who had sought refuge at the place. Instead of murdering Mutheiwana, the army killed 22 Knobnoses.[90]

On the following day Cronje had an interview with Sinthumule at Lovedale Park, Cooksley's farm. Sinthumule created the impression that Mphephu had summoned him twice for an interview at Manavhela. Although he was unwilling, he had decided to go. On his way he passed through Fort Hendrina in order to obtain Lieutenant Du Toit's advice. Du Toit had discouraged him, but he said he had had no choice other than to go.[91]

At Mount Manavhela Mphephu's force drove the people up the mountain and murdered them as they screamed. Thereafter the bush was set alight. Sinthumule and his followers fled to the plains and across the river, leaving thirteen corpses behind. To protect themselves they retained their arms.[92]

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[90] Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

[91] S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Interview with Sinthumule on 30 October 1896.

[92] Ibid.

Cronje blamed Sinthumule for going to Manavhela armed and said that nobody was allowed to move about with a rifle except if he were acting on the orders of the Commandant-General. In conclusion he informed Sinthumule that he would bring the matter to the attention of the State President.[93]

Sinthumule had also not told Cronje the truth. His Ngomakhosi followers claimed Manavhela's area as theirs and consequently they went there in order to use it as a base for launching an attack on Mphephu. He concealed this fact in order to attempt to gain the sympathy of the government.[94]

Cronje's next meeting was with three Knobnoses indunas, Nwandzinginya, Sherami and January. Their version was that they were attacked by a commando of Makatese under Masindi one night and a number of people were murdered. Ratombo himself they did not see except that they heard his voice. Twenty-two of their people were butchered without any cause.[95]

Cronje's reply was that they should make affidavits as he had already listened to the views of the Swiss missionaries. He promised them that he would not forget the awful murder of innocent souls by the Makatese. He concluded by ordering them to look for Ratombo and if they should find him, they should report to the Native Commissioner.[96]

After his meeting with the Knobnoses indunas and the Swiss Missionaries, Cronje started his journey back to Pretoria. He was by this time fully conversant with the explosive situation in the Spelonken area.

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93 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Interview with Sinthumule on 30 October 1896.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid., Interview with the Knobnoses on 30 October 1896.

96 Ibid.

One of the recommendations was that the business man H. Austin who had a shop a few miles south-west of Luatame should be appointed chief for he had become convinced that it was necessary to appoint a White man as Chief of the tribe of Makhado.[97]

This recommendation was approved but in a modified form by the government which while associating itself with the proposed appointment of H. Austin as Chief but in a temporary capacity, advised that Austin must not take any measures which might lead to confrontation, as the Makhado question ought to be settled amicably.[98]

The government in the above letter appears to have comprehended the implications of the whole situation better than the Superintendent who had visited the Spelonken. The situation created by the struggle for supremacy between Mphephu and Sinthumule was, as far as the Republic was concerned, not a threat because the two brothers were fighting over their family problems.[99]

After approving Austin's appointment as a government representative north of the Muhohodi river, Cronje informed him in writing that he had the honour to inform him that the government was prepared to appoint him temporarily as their representative and that he should act in accordance with his instructions over Makhado's tribe in the district Soutpansberg.[100] This arrangement Cronje thought would help in the preservation of peace in the Spelonken.

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97 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Letter to the State President and members of the Executive Council of the S.A.R. dated 7 November 1896.

98 Ibid., Secretary of State to Superintendent of Natives, 11 November 1896.

99 22 Landdrost Zoutpansberg, Brieweboek, September 1896 to June 1897, pp.381-385.

100 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Cronje to Austin on 14 November 1896.

Although Fort Hendrina and the Spelonken remained quiet over the appointment of Austin, Kalkbank applauded it. This applause was recorded in a letter by the Native Commissioner B.J. Vorster who informed the Superintendent on 14 November 1896 that he could give his consent, but went further by adding that Austin should be the sole chief and that Mphephu should not be recognized at all.[101] From this statement one can easily deduce the mood and the feeling of the White officials of the Soutpansberg towards Mphephu.

The Superintendent, however, corrected the above concept by writing to the Native Commissioner of Kalkbank that he should not be under the delusion that Mphephu would no longer be recognized.[102] The Native Commissioner who was not satisfied with the position of Mphephu after Austin's appointment conceded that although he could not associate himself with the government, he left it to them to make arrangements as they saw fit.[103]

With these arrangements the affairs of the Soutpansberg north of the Luvuvhu-Muhohodi rivers were left in the hands of the trader Austin whom the Native Commissioner Wolmarans regarded as the representative of the Superintendent.[104]

It would appear that Mphephu was not informed of this arrangement as no document to this effect has been located. Mphephu might have continued to regard him as a local trader who was often sent to him by the government.

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101 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, B.J. Vorster to Superintendent of Natives, 14 November 1896.

102 Ibid., Superintendent to Commissioner, 20 November 1896.

103 Ibid., Commissioner Kalkbank to Superintendent of Natives, 28 November 1896.

104 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Wolmarans to Superintendent of Natives, 14 April 1897.

Documents recording events from the first to the thirty-first December 1896, have not been located. After they had submitted their reports, Fort Hendrina and Kalkbank anticipated that action would be taken by the government to protect them.[105]

The interview between Mphephu and Cronje at Austin's store on 29 October 1896, ended with a vague promise that Ratombo would be delivered to the Native Commissioner, while Sinthumule would be punished.[106]

In order to expedite the matter, Landdrost Munnik, accompanied by Austin's clerk, T.A. Wotherspon visited Mphephu and requested him to send his representative to present his case against Sinthumule who would thereafter be arrested. Mphephu refused to give information to the Landdrost and said it would be better to leave Sinthumule alone and that he would withdraw his complaints.[107]

What he actually wanted from the government was to have Sinthumule extradited. His arrest would not mean anything. The withdrawal of the complaints against Sinthumule would also imply that Ratombo would not be delivered to the Native Commissioner.[108] This unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Landdrost of the Soutpansberg, to bring Mphephu to court, was reported to the government by Cronje.[109]

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105 S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to the Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.

106 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Interview with Mphephu, 29 October 1896.

107 Ibid., Secretary of State to Superintendent of Natives, 26 January 1897.

108 Ibid., Cronje to Secretary of State, 26 January 1897.

109 Ibid.

Mphephu's refusal to send a representative to Pietersburg and to deliver Ratombo widened the gulf between him and the South African Republic. At that stage the government had not contemplated taking any drastic steps as it preferred peace to bloodshed.[110]

On 12 March, 1897 Cronje wrote another letter to Mphephu addressing him as Acting Chief of Makhado's nation.[111] Does this phrase imply the deposition of Mphephu, as Austin had already been appointed chief over the whole nation? Or does it mean that he was already disgusted with Mphephu's behaviour?

In this letter Cronje expressed concern because Mphephu had not complied with the government's orders - delivering up Ratombo. He gave him yet another chance and requested him once more to deliver Ratombo without delay so that he should be treated according to law. He further indicated that he hoped the request would be complied with and that failure would render him guilty of failing to carry out commands.[112]

In conclusion Cronje warned Mphephu that his refusal to hand over Ratombo would mean that he would be held responsible for the murder of 22 Knobnoses.[113]

The next step taken at the Spelonken was the submission, by Wolmarans, of an affidavit from Sinthumule. The message conveyed by this document was that Mphephu had murdered three people - Marema, Khakhavhi's brother

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110 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Cronje to Secretary of State, 26 January 1897.

111 Ibid., Cronje to Mphephu, 12 March 1897.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

and Ramphaga and that he had sent his people to Mashonaland to enquire about the time the White men would come to fight and should they start, they should inform him so that he would offer them assistance.[114]

The fact that there was communication between Mphephu and the B.S.A. police at Tuli, cannot be denied. Sinthumule himself had visited Tuli in 1894. The last part of the affidavit might have been included in order to persuade the government to take action against Mphephu. On the other hand the Tuli officials were interested in Venda as shown by the two visits of Captain Taylor during the reign of Makhado.[115]

Wolmarans sent another letter to the Superintendent of Natives stating that Mphephu had ultimately refused to deliver up the accused murderer, Ratombo in order to have charges or complaints against Sinthumule withdrawn. The taking of a census was rejected and he openly said that he would not allow that but that he would collect tax himself and hand it over.[116]

In February 1897 Wolmarans reported that he had requested Mphephu to fix a time and place where they could meet in order to receive the collected taxes. Mphephu refused to co-operate and told the messenger, a Black constable, that he would pay tax to the Landdrost of Pietersburg when his mealies had ripened.[117]

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114 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Sinthumule's affidavit before Wolmarans, 2 May 1897.

115 Möller-Malan, The Chair, pp. 180-181.

116 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Wolmarans to Cronje, 8 February 1897.

117 Ibid.

Why did Mphephu inform Wolmarans that he would pay his taxation to the Landdrost? Wolmarans, like his predecessors, Albasini and Captain Schiel, was regarded by the Ramabulana chiefs as chief of the Knobnoses.[118] This statement was re-iterated by Cronje when he told the Knobnoses that the White chief was still existing and that was the Native Commissioner Wolmarans.[119]

The Native Commissioner further complained that on account of Mphephu's negative and unco-operative attitude, he was not in a position to discharge his official duties effectively for all the thousands of Blacks living in the Soutpansberg as well as Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Nelwamondo, Rammbuda and Nethengwe rejected the census on account of Mphephu's influence.[120]

This statement gives the impression that Mphephu's influence had spread to other areas. He could forbid Nelwamondo to pay taxation as he was his subject, while Rammbuda, although an independent chief, could not go against his wishes as Mphephu's late father Makhado had been instrumental in securing his succession.[121] With Tshivhase, Mphaphuli and Nethengwe, he could not do as he pleased, as they were independent.

That Mphephu had influence over the chiefs mentioned in the preceding paragraph, is not borne out by a letter addressed to the government by the Superintendent of Natives on 26 January 1897 in which it was stated that Tshivhase and Mphaphuli were co-operative.[122]

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118 War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p.65. The Native Commissioner of the Spelonken was always considered chief of the Shangaans ex officio...

119 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Pitso with Knobnoses indunas at Lovedale Park, 30 October 1896.

120 Ibid., Wolmarans to Cronje, 8 February 1897.

121 S.S. 1896, 5992, R.18122, Conditions at Rammbuda, 29 February 1896, A report from Fort Hendrina.

122 S.S. 1896, 6110, S.R.298/97, Letter to the Secretary of State, 26 January 1897.

It is clear from the above documents that relationships between Wolmarans and Mphephu had so deteriorated that they could not sit at the same conference table. Wolmarans seems to have been biased whilst Mphephu, on the other hand, seems to have misinterpreted the whole situation. His stubborn resistance precipitated the conflict. His unreasonable refusal to listen to the Native Commissioner enabled the latter to convince the Landdrost and the Superintendent of Natives that Mphephu was not prepared to subject himself to the authority of the Republic.

No archival records were found to indicate whether any form of communication from either side did take place between May and December 1897. The government might have expected to hear of positive developments from Austin and Fort Hendrina in respect of the extradition of Ratombo and the payment of taxation. As for the erection of beacons and measuring of ground, it had already been done in 1896.[123]

A census was also taken in 1896 as it had been pointed out by Mphephu to Cronje at Austin's store that Commandant Pretorius, Wolmarans and Stiemens had already taken a census.[124]

At the beginning of 1898, Mphephu showed that he wanted to retain the favour of the government; this is indicated by Landdrost Munnik who reported that two of Mphephu's indunas had visited his office with one large elephant tusk as a present from their chief to the President, and the government.[125]

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123 S.S. 1896, 5456, R.6826, Kelly to the Superintendent of Natives, 17 September 1896.

124 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Interview with Mphephu, 29 October 1896.

125 S.S. 1898, 6963, R.647, Munnik to the Secretary of State, 27 January 1898.

Mphephu was trying to show that he had nothing against President Kruger and the government of the South African Republic. Perhaps he was also trying to discredit the reports sent by the Native Commissioner.

The personal present sent to the State President did not mollify the government, however. The Superintendent despatched another letter to the Native Commissioner of the Spelonken in which he asked what steps Mphephu had taken with reference to the delivery of the murderer of the Knobnoses and how far the taking of census had gone and the type of taxes he collected.[126]

Wolmarans' reply was that Mphephu had refused to extradite Ratombo in order that his complaints and accusations against Sinthumule should be withdrawn. He had also refused to pay taxation and to allow a census to be taken and had forbidden policemen to enter his land.[127]

With this information the Superintendent of Natives wrote to the Secretary of State that[128] he considered it his duty to bring to the notice of the government that Mphephu, the so-called successor of Makhado in the Soutpansberg was still obdurate and refusing to carry out any order. He refused to extradite Ratombo and other murderers and did not allow the taking of a census of his people and stated that he would collect taxes by himself and hand them over to the Native Commissioner. Makhado's people were paying almost nothing in the form of taxation to the

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126 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Superintendent of Natives to the Native Commissioner, 7 February 1898.

127 Ibid., Native Commissioner to the Superintendent of Natives, 18 February 1898.

128 Ibid., Superintendent of Natives to the Secretary of State, 14 March 1898.

government. He lured the other Blacks to his side and it was not that they did not want to pay tax but because of fear of being attacked, robbed and massacred by Mphephu and his followers.

He concluded by recommending that he considered it necessary that for the sake of offering protection to the burghers of the Soutpansberg Mphephu should be brought within the law that winter.[129]

This letter summarizes all the complaints which the government had against Mphephu and revealed his attitude. What was the cause of his stubborness and open rebellion? All informants are unanimous that Mphephu was by nature obdurate and would not listen to anybody. The statement that the burghers ought to be protected against Mphephu's aggression is unfounded because as long as the Boers remained across the Muhohodi, nobody would molest them.[130]

In order to give Mphephu yet another chance to change his attitude, the government once again despatched Kekana to Mphephu. This was a positive step. Kekana, after his meeting with the chief on 16 May 1898, came to the conclusion[131] that Mphephu had indicated that he was under the government and that he was paying taxes. Up to that time nobody had visited him for the purpose of collecting taxes. He expressed dissatisfaction over the commissioners of the Spelonken for the

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129 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Superintendent of Natives to the Secretary of State, 14 March 1898.

130 Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, pp.59-60.

131 K.G. 660, S.R. 10252, Declaration by Kekana, 2 June 1898.

protection they offered to his two rebellious brothers. He intimated that someone should be sent from Pretoria to collect the taxes.

This affidavit given by Kekana revealed the innermost feelings of Mphephu towards the officials of the Republic stationed at the Spelonken. It may also help in throwing light on the causes of Mphephu's obstinacy as reported by Cronje. This obduracy was not caused by external factors. It was the result of the struggle for succession between Makhado's three sons.[132]

According to Rademeyer's contention, the immediate causes of the Mphephu war, were the result of his refusal to pay taxation, the siting of beacons to demarcate his location and the taking of a census.[133]

The causes of the war were, however, inherited because his predecessors had failed to formulate laws of succession and had left the appointment of a chief to the decision of Makhadzi and Khotsimunene. This left the throne open to any brave son who could obtain the favour of the people mentioned in the previous sentence. Following the traditional view that the throne of the Ramabulanas could not be served like porridge, Rasivhetshele installed Maemu. Sinthumule and Mphephu co-operated to oust him, but subsequently Sinthumule wished to oust Mphephu.[134]

After Maemu's and Sinthumule's defeats, they had fled to Vari[135] where they were in touch with Fort Hendrina and could present their case to

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132 S.S. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Cronje to the Secretary of State, 14 March 1898.

133 Rademeyer, pp.92-96.

134 Ncube, p.9.

135 This area was ruled by Nthabalala. It went as far as Elim Mission Station.

officials in order that the Republic might help them. Fort Hendrina officials sympathised with them and reported to the government that on 14 October 1896 Mphephu attacked the kraal of Manavhela on the other side of Doorn river and set it on fire, massacring 13 followers of Sinthumule,[136] and urged the government to take measures in order to prevent the repetition of Mphephu's brutal acts of murder.[137] In this way Fort Hendrina and the Spelonken took sides against Mphephu whom the people regarded as the rightful heir.

The question of the census and the siting of beacons to demarcate the location was secondary. The government would not have taken the trouble to fight against Mphephu because of his refusal to have the land surveyed. As early as June 1896 there had been a report from Fort Hendrina in which Kelly stated that Mphaphuli and Tshivhase would not allow their lands to be surveyed.[138]

These two chiefs Tshivhase and Mphaphuli also refused to take instructions as it was reported that the two chiefs did not want to receive letters sent to them.[139] In spite of these negative attitudes, no punitive steps were taken against these chiefs. In other words reports from Fort Hendrina and the Spelonken were intended to persuade the government to take steps against Mphephu who was regarded as a rebellious chief.[140]

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136 S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to the Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.

137 Ibid.

138 S.S. 1896, 5456, S.R. 1318, Report from Fort Hendrina, 10 June 1896.

139 S.S. 1896, 5198, R.826, Kelly to the Commandant-General, 28 September 1896.

140 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Letter to the Secretary of State, 14 March 1898.

After Kekana's visit to Mphephu, the former stated that Mphephu had expressed his longing that he be given the land which he then occupied as a location and that the beacons should not be changed. He further stated that he had already sent £1 000 to the President, £20 of which was meant for Landdrost Munnik, and £20 for Maraba and also the Superintendent of Natives. Kekana reported that he received good treatment and was given an elephant tusk as a token of satisfaction.[141]

From this document it may be deduced that Mphephu was not against the idea of a location. What he wanted was an assurance that he would not be removed from his place of residence. This is understandable as the Dzanani area in the vicinity of Sunguzwi, Luatame and Tshirululuni was a beautiful and fertile region, which was known as the "Garden of the Transvaal".[142] No one would have chosen to leave such an area.

Kekana's declaration reveals that Mphephu had no confidence in the officials of the Spelonken, and consequently he had felt it necessary to send the £1 000 to the President directly. The fact that the other money was sent to Landdrost Munnik and Maraba shows that he had respect for the office of the Magistrate which was situated at Pietersburg.[143]

In pursuance of his policy of effecting some form of contact with the government, Mphephu despatched Lucas and Stephanus his interpreters, to the Landdrost's Office at Pietersburg, towards the middle of June 1898. After receiving this information, the Superintendent of Natives enquired from Munnik about the presence of two indunas Stephanus and Lucas, a

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141 S.S. 1896, 5602, S.R. 10252, Kekana's letter to Superintendent of Natives, 10 June 1896.

142 Pretoria News, 16 December 1898.

143 See footnote 141.

deputation from Mphephu, which had come to Pietersburg. He enquired about the type of present they h/ d brought.[144]

This was followed by another deputation which went to Pretoria and was received by the Superintendent. It was composed of Gumani and Lishivha, both messengers of Mphephu. Cronje immediately wrote to Fort Schutte, the new name for the place that was formerly known as Fort Hendrina that two messengers from Mphephu, Gumani and Lishivha brought a letter from Mphephu directed to Kekana, informing him that Mphephu had £1 000 ready for despatch as taxation but he was afraid that it might be interfered with on the way. The messengers confirmed the letter and returned to Mphephu to tell him that the government had not yet received anything and that he should reconsider the matter.[145]

This document reveals that communication between Mphephu and the Native Commissioner had ceased and consequently the former had to send his messengers to Pretoria in order to pay taxes.

Such was the state of affairs at the beginning of the second half of 1898. Mphephu's attempts to pacify the government had not been successful. The situation was tense and relations had deteriorated.

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144 S.N. 176, Brieweboek, Cronje to Munnik, 13 June 1898.

145 K.G. 656, Telegram from Superintendent of Natives to Commandant-General, 19 October 1898.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE WAR

The causes of the conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic having been discussed in the foregoing chapters, it becomes necessary at this juncture to concentrate on the major issues. Wessmann regards the conflict as, "the short Mpefo war which to many Europeans has hitherto been a puzzle..."[1]

The two contending parties had different motives and consequently each tried to justify its own course of action. Mphephu openly declared that, "we never had one pitched battle with the Boers. It was not my wish to fight them".[2] This implies that he was compelled to fight.

The mood of the Republic was clearly translated into words by the statement in Land en Volk that the Makhado nation was a thorn in the flesh and that Mphephu was obdurate and rebellious. The head of the tribe was not only insolent but had become absolutely rebellious.[3] It was this attitude which compelled the Republic to take up arms against Mphephu, and they consequently felt justified in crushing him once and for all.

Rademeyer contends that the collection of taxes among the natives of the Soutpansberg was a matter which continually led to confrontation, clashes and friction with the South African Republic as it brought

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1 Wessman, pp.123-124.

2 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-1899, Rhodesian Archives, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

3 Land en Volk, 14 September 1898.

White and Black into close contact. The question of taxation was therefore one of the most important causes of the clash of 1898.[4]

This statement is somewhat exaggerated as taxation was merely a secondary cause. In 1864 the Volksraad decided to levy a general native tax which had to be paid annually at the magisterial offices. In 1869 a commission was despatched to the Soutpansberg where they met the representatives of the various tribes at Goedewensch and requested them to pay their taxes. The representatives promised to do so. This tax was levied on huts.[5]

In 1876 the Volksraad decided to increase taxation. The inhabitants of large locations would pay t . shillings per head and in addition every male subject would pay ten shillings annually. The inhabitants of small locations had to pay five shillings per hut.[6]

In 1875 another tax of two shillings and sixpence was levied on all males above 16 years irrespective of race. This was intended for the maintenance of public roads. The collection of these taxes, however presented several problems. Some tribes did not contribute anything while others sent small presents as their contributions towards taxation. Other chiefs allowed their subjects to pay individually but they did not allow anybody to enter their lands in order to take a census on huts on which the hut tax was levied.[7]

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4 Rademeyer, p.92.
5 Ibid., p.93.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.

The other problem that arose was where taxation was to be paid in kind. At that time there was not enough money in circulation and animals had to be exchanged in order to obtain money to pay the required taxes.[8]

The collection of taxes was further complicated by the fact that the Native Commissioners were not able to collect all taxes themselves. In some cases Field-Cornets were appointed as assistant Native Commissioners and they were entrusted with this duty on a commission basis. When they were afraid of contacting chiefs, they sent private people to do the work for them and in most cases these people only obtained presents.[9]

On 3 October 1895 the Volksraad levied a general tax of two pounds per male native. In 1897 £37 306 was received for this tax as against £40 233 in 1896. In 1897 a sum of £120 908 - 18 - 6 was collected for native taxes against £20 738 - 9 - 6. From this it is apparent that the general tax was poorly paid when compared with other taxes consisting of hut tax, road tax and dog tax.[10]

Of an estimated total of 89 638 natives in the Transvaal in 1897, a sum of £120 908 - 18 - 6 was collected; and this amounted to an average of £1-7-0 per head. The average amount per native in the Soutpansberg was less than 16/- which indicates that this district accounted for less tax than anywhere else in the Transvaal.[11]

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[8] Rademeyer, pp.93-94.

[9] Ibid., 94.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

Rademeyer ascribes this state of affairs to the vastness of the territory and Mphephu's refusal to pay tax, which had a negative effect on the smaller tribes which owed allegiance to him.[12]

In the light of the political and geographical situation at that time, Rademeyer's attempts to explain the reasons for the poor payment of taxes in the Soutpansberg are not convincing. Mphephu's refusal to pay taxation in 1897 might have influenced the other chiefs, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli,[13] but he could not have forced them as they were independent. In addition the Soutpansberg district at that time included the present-day Letaba, Pietersburg and Blaauberg districts. The inhabitants were Vhalovhedzi, Batlokoa, the western Sotho and the Shangaans. Mphephu's subjects, although scattered from Lwamondo in the east to the end of the Soutpansberg district in the west, formed an insignificant percentage of the population of the district.

Rademeyer further blamed Mphephu for persuading and forcing other tribes not to pay tax.[13] The statement that he compelled Tshivhase and other chiefs to carry out his orders[14] was not based on fact.

As previously stated, Mphephu, as chief of western Venda, could not force Tshivhase to refuse to pay tax as he had no jurisdiction over him. The Field-Cornets and the Native Commissioners ascribed their failure to collect tax to Mphephu's attitude.

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[12] Rademeyer, p.94.

[13] Ibid., p.95.

[14] Ibid.

Before 1897 Mphephu had paid a little amount in taxation to the Native Commissioner but had immediately changed his behaviour and suddenly displayed a desire of open rebellion and caused unrest.[15] From this statement it can be deduced that relations had deteriorated between Mphephu and the South African Republic.

Furthermore there was the problem of knowing how many male natives were living in the Republic. This could only be done by means of a census taken through the chiefs. Statistics taken for 1897 show that only 25 602 male natives were registered for the Soutpansberg plus a further estimated number of 75 000. From these numbers about £20 000 was obtained which showed an average of 5/- per male native.[16] The Native Commissioner regularly complained that Mphephu was not co-operative in this respect.[17] Mphephu reported to Cronje that Commandants Pretorius, Stiemens and Wolmarans had taken the census.[18]

Another factor which caused friction between the natives and the government was the question of locations. The size of the locations could not be determined before a proper census had been taken. As early as 1876, it had already been determined that the government would delimit and fix the locations of large tribes.[19] For this purpose a commission was appointed in 1881 in order to mark out locations. According to the Rev. Bovill this question was a cause of friction between the Boers and the natives. He considered it unfair that the natives should have to be

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15 Mouton, p.154.

16 Rademeyer, p. 95.

17 Ibid., pp.94-95.

18 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Interview with Mphephu, 29 October 1896.

19 Rademeyer, p. 89.

granted permission to occupy land which rightly belonged to them.[20]

The location commission could not commence with the marking out of boundaries. It had to take a census in order to determine the number of heads of families. Between 1884 and 1896 22 locations were already marked. The policy was ultimately to have all natives settled in locations.[21]

The removal of natives to locations demarcated by the government was bound to cause friction. According to Venda tradition, a chief has no land and his royal kraal is usually situated on the land of one of his indunas. He does not rule the people directly as he exercises his power through the indunas and this aspect was not understood by the government. Their failure to comprehend this led to misunderstanding and further friction.

After the evacuation of Schoemansdal in 1867, Makhado and Madzhie set the town on fire. This event earned Makhado the nickname of "Tshilwavhusiku".[22] Makhado felt that the Republic had suffered a defeat when they evacuated Schoemansdal.[23] As a result the Muhohodi was declared the southern boundary. Nunnik states that,

> Magato had meanwhile sent messengers to the laager and to the leaders that any White man crossing Thorn River after that notice would be killed forthwith, so that he was left through force of circumstances in undisputed dominion of the northern part of Zoutpansberg. The Boers, therefore, determined to remain for good and all in the southern portions of the district, and settled on farms around.[24]

Landdrost Munnik continued the statement by saying that, "Magato claimed

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20 Rev. Bovill, Natives under Transvaal Flag, p.17.

21 S.A.P. van Biljon, Grensbakens Tussen Blank end Swart, in S.A., pp.379; 385.

22 This means one who fights in the night.

23 Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, p.58.

24 Munnik, Memoirs, p.102; Möller-Malan, "Donker Soutpansberg", Historia, Vol.2, no.2 (September 1957), p.169.

the Thorn River as his southern boundary, and so great was the fear of the comparatively few settlers left that even the small band in Albasini's Schans acknowledged the arrangement".[25]

The Whites were thus allowed to settle at Tshabwa where according to tradition they would not be molested.[26] This state of affairs continued until the annexation of the Transvaal by Shepstone.

The Transvaal's claim to the area north of Muhohodi was in name only because according to the Blue Book, "it is true that the Boers laid claim to the country and formerly held possession of parts of it but they had been gradually pushed back by the natives who had gained their independence".[27]

Makhado, however, did not know that the London Convention of 1884 confirmed that the northern boundary of the Transvaal was the Vhembe river.[28] In other words he did not know that his country fell within the borders of the Republic.

When General Joubert visited the Soutpansberg in 1884 he informed Makhado that the government wanted to give him a location and the borders were determined and shown to Makhado with stringent obligations prohibiting crossing without permission of the government.[29]

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25 Munnik, p.101.

26 Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, pp.59-60.

27 C.3114, Report of Transvaal Commissioners, p.16.

28 C.3914, Convention of London, 27 February 1884; See also H. Blink, De Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en Hare Bewoners, p.15.

29 Flygare, p.14.

This location did not satisfy Makhado because he said in 1895 that Joubert had shown him the line which did not satisfy him but when Barend Vorster pointed out that the line was Doorn river and Witklip passing to Soutpan and Crocodile river, it was a satisfactory arrangement.[30] The question may arise as to why the arrangement did not satisfy Makhado. As has been stated in preceding chapters, the idea of a location was foreign to Makhado. The line of demarcation starting from Muhohodi (Doorn) left several lands outside his area of jurisdiction. These lands included Luonde, Vuvha, Tshidzivhani, Mauluma, Tshitungulu, Tshakhuma, Tshivhazwaulu, Tsianda, Tshifulanani and Lwamondo. Makhado's territory without these would be very small indeed. That is why the whole idea was unacceptable to him.

When Mphephu ascended the throne in December 1895, it would appear that the frontier was the one suggested by Vorster which meant that Mphephu would not attack the Boers as long as they remained within its limits.

Another issue which caused friction was the fact that the Native Commissioners at Spelonken were also chiefs of the Knobnoses.[31]

This fact led to suspicion, distrust and misunderstanding between Makhado and the Native Commissioners. The government, on the other hand could do nothing else but work through the latter. The first Native

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[30] S.S. 1895, 4805[illegible], R.4807, Joubert to Executive Council, 13 May 1895.

[31] War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p.65; See also Bulpin, p.66; S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Pitso, 30 October 1896.

Commissioner, Albasini was, in addition to being chief of the Knobnoses, also responsible for inviting Swazis to attack the people of Venda. That is why Makhado openly said to Leo Weinthal that he would pay taxation direct to Paul and not to the then Native Commissioner, Captain Schiel.[32] Mphephu adopted the same policy and went even further by forbidding native constables to enter his territory.[33] These native constables were usually Knobnoses. Paying taxation through the Native Commissioners would be tantamount to acknowledging chieftainship of these people who were regarded by the Vhavenda, as fugitives from the Portuguese Colony of Mozambique.

Ever since the evacuation of Schoemansdal in 1867, the government had been under heavy pressure from the inhabitants who had owned land. This fact was expressed by Landdrost Munnik when he said that in the land where Makhado claimed jurisdiction, there was a number of farms on which the owners had to pay quit-rent year after year in order to perpetuate their possession despite the fact that they could not in any way make use of them. The owners had to press on occupation of the farms and the government was ultimately compelled especially after its officials were unceremoniously driven away, to view the case in a more serious light and to apply stringent measures.[34]

The Zoutpansbergen Boeren Vriend further drew the attention of the government to the fact that it was well-known that the most beautiful and most fertile parts of our district was in possession of the Makhado nation.[35]

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[32] Wessmann, p.142.

[33] S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Wolmarans to Superintendent of Natives, 8 February 1897.

[34] Munnik, Memoirs, pp.154; 156.

[35] Land en Volk, 14 September 1898.

These two statements indicate the seriousness of the situation. Under this pressure the government had to negotiate with Mphephu who did not understand the situation at all.

These complaints voiced by Munnik and the newspaper revealed that the line of demarcation between Makhado's territory and the Whites, by Joubert and Barend Vorster in 1884[36] and 1895[37] had been a personal decision because if it had been official other people would have known about it. This frontier line which Makhado and Mphephu regarded as being official aggravated the stubborn attitude which Mphephu was often accused of having adopted.

Another factor which forced the Republic to take steps against Mphephu was expressed by Joubert in his address to the commandants at Rietvlei on 15 November 1898, the day before the final attack was launched on the following day. He said that civilisation had once flourished in the early days in the Soutpansberg and that the people had been driven away by the natives who thereafter burnt churches, schools and dwellings of inhabitants.[38] This implies that the government was intent on wiping out the stain that had been left at the evacuation of Schoemansdal. This is understandable. The wounds had to be healed otherwise the evacuation would remain a blot in the history of the Republic.

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[36] Flygare, p.14.

[37] S.S. 1895, 4805 I, R.4807, Joubert to Executive Council, 13 May 1895.

[38] The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 15 November 1898.

The Berlin Missionaries headed by Wessmann of Tshakhuma, which area fell under Ramabulanas, had a grudge against Makhado and Mphephu as Makhado had refused to allow them to work in the vicinity of Dzanani.

In a letter to the Executive Council, Wessmann gave vent to his feelings by stating that his missionary society had helped the government in subjugating Makhado's people and he regarded Mphephu as the scourge of the Soutpansberg who had terrorized the land for many years.[39] He further stated that as missionaries, they had to work under difficult conditions and his predecessor E. Schwellnus who started in 1874 had been exhausted by the opposition he encountered from Makhado and Mphephu.

The Berlin missionaries had every opportunity of averting the conflict as they were in constant communication with Mphephu on the one hand and the Native Commissioner, the Landdrost and the government, on the other but they were more interested in a showdown which would result in the annihilation of Mphephu.

The other factor which precipitated the conflagration was the attitude of government officials stationed at Fort Hendrina. They exploited the murder of the 22 Knobnoses in October 1896. In addition to the reports given to the Superintendent of Natives in the same month, they had gathered affidavits from Kaarie, Mbawa, Netawanie, the Swiss Missionary H. Berthoud, Motshini as well as Dr. E.H. Schlaefli who had given medical aid to the wounded.[40]

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39 S.S. 1899, 7753, R.2536, Wessmann to the Executive Council, 2 February 1899.

40 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Affidavits taken before Field-Cornet Grieve and despatched by Wolmarans on 31 March 1898.

Rumours had also reached the Pretoria government that there had been communication between Mphephu and the Chartered Company. This statement is partly true as Captain J.H. Taylor had visited Makhado towards the end of 1889 on his way from Malebogo. Captain Taylor was stationed at Tuli as Native Commissioner of the area.[41]

Makhado replied by sending his second son Sinthumule to Tuli in 1894. The purpose of the visit was to sell mealies in order to obtain a cannon.[42]

In an affidavit before M.F. Stiemens, the acting Landdrost, on 20 June 1896, Mutheiwana reported that Mphephu was receiving help from the Englishmen as he had heard that Mphephu had despatched Mavhasa to Buluwayo to solicit the help of the Englishmen.[43] This was followed by an affidavit made by Sinthumule before Wolmarans on May 1897 in which he said Mphephu had sent his people to Mashonaland to enquire when the people of that land would be coming to fight against the White men of this country and as soon as they began, he should be informed so that he would come to their assistance.[44]

These documents are proof enough that communication did exist between Mphephu and Rhodesia but it was not at government level. Mphephu and his people might have thought that any White men from Rhodesia represented the government as these men created such an impression in order to obtain trade concessions. In this way Mphephu and his people would come to believe that should hostilities develop, they would receive help from across the Limpopo.

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41 Möller-Malan, The Chair, pp. 180-181.

42 Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

43 S.S. 1896, 5456, R.6826, Mutheiwana's affidavit before the Superintendent of Natives, 20 June 1896.

44 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Sinthumule's affidavit, 2 May 1897.

In his official report of the Mphephu war General Joubert complained about the resistance and disobedience of this tribe and the resistance of the chiefs to the laws and the government of the South African Republic. The resistance of these Black people was not of recent origin but extended over a number of years, he maintained.[45]

This statement stretches the scope of the causes of the war over a long period of time. This implies that the causes of the war may be traced to the time when Makhado had been ruler.

W.L. Maree, however, does not fully concur with the assertion that Mphephu was stubborn and rebellious because according to accounts given by Rev. Helm, some of the reports about Mphephu's impertinence were rather exaggerated.[46]

As far as Mphephu was concerned these factors could not have forced him to take up arms against the Republic. This would indicate that the causes of the war may not only be traced to relations between the Vhavenda and the Boers. Other chiefs like Tshivhase and Mphaphuli had also resisted the taking of census, payment of taxation and demarcation of locations. They had also from time to time refused to take instructions from the Native Commissioner but they did not take up arms against the government.[47]

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45 S.S. 1898 7412, R.5123, Report of Commandant-General on Mphephu War, undated.

46 W.L. Maree, Lig in Soutpansberg, p.151.

47 S.S. 1897, 6420, R.6826, an undated report from Fort Hendrina.

What then were the issues underlying this conflict? Why did Mphephu fight? Even before Mphephu ascended the throne, during the days of Makhado, the government had already felt impelled to take action but before it could consider the necessity of despatching an expedition against him, he suddenly passed away in 1895 and succeeded by Mphephu.[48] This was the situation before Mphephu assumed the reins of government.

Mphephu, like Makhado his father, would not attack the Boers as long as they were settled across the Muhohodi. This is confirmed by the statement made by the Editor of The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition) Leo Weinthal after visiting Makhado in 1894 that,

> A PEACEABLE SOLUTION of the problem is still within the range of probability. The Boers residing in the Spelonken below the Berg have worked themselves up to a considerable state of fear, for which there as yet seems to be no tangible reason.[49]

This statement expressed the true state of affairs and it still held good up to the time of Mphephu. The local Whites, especially officials stationed at Fort Hendrina, exaggerated their fears in order to persuade the government to take action. They knew the true state of affairs and they had not seen Makhado's or Mphephu's warriors cross the Muhohodi.

What then were the factors which led to open confrontation between Mphephu and the government? The answer to this question which also clears the mystery surrounding Mphephu's alleged stubborness and rebellious attitude is supplied by Ncube when he states:

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48 Rademeyer, p.91; See also Flygare, p.14.

49 Wessmann, pp.144-145.

> The basic origins of the Mphephu war should be sought in the internal history of the Venda people. It is often alleged that the cause of the war lay in the Venda-Boer relations, but this factor will be seen to have been secondary inasfar as creating the atmosphere of war is concerned. It was the internal strife in Venda domestic politics that may be said to have caused the war.[50]

Ncube appears to have struck the right chord. His statement has the support of numerous people whom I personally, have consulted. Some of the internal conditions hinted above were beyond Mphephu's control as he had inherited them.

The root of the trouble lay in the Vhavenda's failure to formulate laws of succession. The ruling chief could not designate his successor as the decision to appoint a new ruler lay in the hands of Makhadzi and Khotsimunene. This custom automatically divided the nation as various groups had their own candidates.[51]

After the death of Makhado, one of Mphephu's younger brothers, Maemu aspired to succeed. He and his supporters, Mutheiwana and Rasivhetshele were driven away by Mphephu and Sinthumule. Mutheiwana and Rasivhetshele then found refuge at Madrid and Fort Hendrina where they sought the help of the Whites.

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[50] Ncube, p.6.

[51] Stayt, p. 195.

According to the information supplied by The Star:

> The young son of Magato travelled to Pretoria accompanied by several indunas who espoused his cause to plead with the government for moral support in his claim to chieftainship. After a prolonged stay in Pretoria the government came to an arrangement with the boy and he left for his home only to re-appear soon seeking support...[52]

It was this protection which the government offered to Maemu and his followers which antagonised Mphephu. That is why he ordered Ratombo, Makaululе and Ravele to launch an attack on Mutheiwana in October 1896.[53]

Republican officials at Fort Hendrina and the Spelonken regarded this as an act of murder. The mistake on Mphephu's side was that instead of having Mutheiwana murdered, Ratombo killed twenty-two Knobnoses. The murder of these twenty-two innocent souls was the result of civil war between Makhado's sons as well as the assassination of the latter in which Mutheiwana played a prominent role. Correspondence between Pretoria and the Spelonken shows that the government, which was not aware of the background of events leading to the murder, viewed the situation in a very serious light.[54]

Maemu's case did not assume serious proportions as he did not have sufficient support. The matter came to a head after Sinthumule and his Ngomakhosi were driven from Tshifhefhe and sought refuge at Gill's farm. This was followed by the battle of Mount Manavhela which in turn united Maemu and Sinthumule groups against Mphephu.[55]

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[52] The Star of September 1898, "Mpefu and the Makatese"; See also S.S. 1896, 5992, R.18122, The Native Chief, an undated document.

[53] Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

[54] S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Affidavits from Spelonken on the murder of Knobnoses.

[55] Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

In the eyes of the government, the battle of Mount Manavhela, like that of Nwandzinginya, appeared as acts of cruelty and murder. Had the Republic remained cool and impartial after these events, history would have taken a different course. The government was, however, urged by its local officials to intervene.[56]

Mphephu on the other hand failed to interpret correctly the peaceful intervention of the government and the resentment of the local officials and consequently proved the latter to be correct in their allegations. As a result the matter thus became an issue between Mphephu and the government.

The local officials, particularly Kelly, had every opportunity of knowing the truth. Unfortunately, as Kelly was in favour of the Maemu-Sinthumule alliance, he fabricated his own story and reported that the future of the Whites in the Spelonken was at stake as a result of Mphephu's aggressive policy.[57]

General Joubert was not told the truth about the civil war between Makhado's sons and this ignorance is revealed in a letter to some Venda chiefs when he informed chiefs Tromp, Maemu, Gwalagwala, Sinthumule, Kutama and others that the government was compelled to despatch him on account of Mphephu's behaviour and actions against this country, for the purpose of investigating complaints against Mphephu. After the death of Makhado, Mphephu had not waited for the government to hear from the people who should be appointed chief in order to maintain peace among the

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[56] S.S. 1896, 5845, R.14864, Kelly to Commandant-General, 19 October 1896.
[57] Ibid.

nation. This means Mphephu has appointed himself chief.[58]

This information might have been supplied by the followers of Maemu and Sinthumule and yet it was the latter who played an active part in the accession of Mphephu.[59]

In the document referred to in the preceding chapter, Joubert appears to have been ignorant of the internal history of Venda, Mphephu held the undisputed right to succeed his father. Joubert complained that Mphephu did not wait for the people to inform the government on who should be the new chief,[60] and yet it was the people who brought him back from Kimberley. He was not a usurper of the throne as he was installed in accordance with Venda law and tradition with the full backing of Makhadzi. That is why he had many followers, a fact which appeared to have been misunderstood by the government.

When Mphephu realised that the Whites were sympathetic towards his two brothers, he changed his attitude of peaceful co-existence and became aggressive. He gave vent to his feelings by expressing this to Kekana.[61]

Ncube who has uncovered the root of the conflict and who does not seem to blame anybody, has this to say:

> The causes of the Mphephu war were therefore not of his own creation. He inherited a war situation from his father Makhado. When Mphephu became chief of the Venda in 1895 his chieftainship was seated on a powder-keg. His right to chieftainship was hotly contested by Sinthumule his brother.[62]

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58 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123 (C), Joubert to Venda Chiefs, 17 October 1898.

59 Neluvhola on 31 August 1971; Ramushwana on 2 February 1973; Thonga on 9 September 1971.

60 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123 (C), Joubert to Venda Chiefs, 17 October 1898.

61 K.G. 660, S.R. 10252, Kekana's affidavit, 2 June 1898.

62 Ncube, p.9.

The first two sentences of this passage were refuted by Joubert himself when he wrote that as long as Makhado lived, no commando had been sent to him as he had regularly paid tax.[63] This is not true as Makhado told Landdrost Munnik that, "I will pay no taxes..!"[64] In addition to this Makhado died when the government was planning to subjugate him.[65]

The above statements do indicate that Mphephu had inherited an explosive situation from his father. The last sentence of Ncube's statement that Sinthumule contested Mphephu's right to chieftainship is not correct as the two brothers were united in their opposition against Maemu.

All informants are, however, unanimous in the view that Sinthumule played an active role in the installation of Mphephu and some even go to the extent of stating that without him the latter would not have succeeded in ousting Maemu. His thoughts of aspiring to the chieftainship came midway through the year 1896 as the first clash with his brother occurred in July 1896. This resulted in his ejection from Tshifhefhe.

By protecting Sinthumule, Mphephu might have thought that the government was intending to champion his cause. In matters of disputes the Boers had in the past supported the weaker candidate as was shown in 1839 when Mpande defected to their side.[66] This facet of the native policy of the Republic greatly contributed to the deterioration of peaceful relationships between Mphephu and the Republic.[67]

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[63] S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123 (C), Joubert to Venda Chiefs, 17 October 1898.
[64] Munnik, p.147.
[65] Flygare, p.14.
[66] E. Walker, The Great Trek, pp.197-199.
[67] Ncube, p. 9.

Matters worsened when Mphephu's attempts to communicate with the government were not successful. He did attempt to send ivory and money for taxation through his indunas.[68] According to Venda tradition, ivory was of great value and the fact that it was sent to the President shows respect for the person or office to which it was intended. But Pretoria wanted him to negotiate through its local representative, the Native Commissioner, in whom he had no confidence.

Pretoria decided to take action against Mphephu, thus precipitating the conflict. To add fuel to the fire, Land en Volk reported that White traders were given notice as Mphephu did not want any White man in his land. The paper went on to say that it stands to reason that the tribe of Makhado did not only constitute a danger for the Spelonken but that the whole Soutpansberg had no protection. Mphephu and his barbarians could annihilate the whole Soutpansberg within 24 hours. Had the time not yet arrived for the government to effect a rapprochement with Mphephu and to give him an option of settling his arrears in taxation or to face an armed conflict in which case he would be driven out of his country.[69]

At this stage the situation had become critical and war was in the offing. Land en Volk summarized the attitude and the mood of the burghers of the Soutpansberg. It is doubtful whether Mphephu comprehended the implications of the government's efforts to subjugate him to the authority of the Republic as symbolized by the visit of Kekana.[70]

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[68] S.S. 1898, 6963, R.647, Munnik to Secretary of State, 17 January 1898.

[69] Land en Volk, 14 September 1898.

[70] K.G. 660, Kekana's affidavit, 2 June 1898.

It would appear that the intentions of the government to negotiate were not correctly interpreted by Mphephu as he had already concluded that Pretoria favoured Sinthumule. This is shown in his complaint that Sinthumule's followers had been armed with rifles obtained from the Boers.[71]

At the battle of Mount Manavhela on 14 October 1896, some of Sinthumule's warriors were reported to have been armed with Martini-Henry rifles and as Sinthumule fled across Nuananzhele river, the Boers were reported to have prepared themselves to repel any attack should Mphephu's followers cross the river.[72]

Mphephu furthermore complained that Sinthumule had taken away all Makhado's treasure and handed it to the government in order to further his cause.[73]

As a result of this he sent his messengers to Pretoria. They were told that the President had heard of the dispute and as Mphephu had been unable to control his people, he must abide by the consequences.[74]

When his people urged him to annihilate Sinthumule, he decided to refer the matter to the Transvaal government asking them for their assistance in having the matter amicably settled.[75] From the beginning of the struggle with Sinthumule Mphephu prohibited them from perpetrating any harm to Sinthumule as he had royal blood in his veins.

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71 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 25(a); 3 January 1899.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

The message from Pretoria was not encouraging. Mphephu was ordered to pay all overdue taxes immediately. To this Mphephu's reply was:

> How can you expect me to pay the taxes, when you will not recognize me as Chief of the Mavetsha. When you bring Situmuli and his people before me and make them recognize me, I will pay the taxes, and until this is done, I must ask you to wait.[76]

This statement from Mphephu uncovers the primary cause of the war which Rademeyer does not mention in his thesis. The other factors of stubborness, obduracy, defiance and refusal to pay taxation, stem from Sinthumule's attempts to succeed to the throne and yet he had no right to accede, as his mother had not been married by the Dzekiso cattle.[77]

It is also doubtful whether the causes of the civil war between the two brothers had been objectively presented to the government. Had they known about the prevailing conditions, perhaps they would have acted differently as their aim was to have the matter peacefully settled. This means they would not have protected Sinthumule. Had they sent him back across the Muhohodi river, Mphephu would not have murdered him as he loved his brother sincerely.[78]

On the other hand Mphephu himself is also to blame. Even if he was at logger-heads with Fort Hendrina, nothing would have prevented him from putting his case to the Magistrate. Cronje had recommended that Sinthumule be arrested and that Mphephu should send his representative to Pietersburg.[79] He himself withdrew the case as he had failed to extradite Ratombo.

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76 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

77 Ibid. All informants agree.

78 Ibid.

79 S.N. 1896-97, 76, R.15515, Cronje to Executive Council, 26 January 1897.

From the above one can infer that Venda-Boer relations were strongly affected by the internal politics of the Venda nation.

In his interview in Rhodesia, Mphephu reported that he had received another:

> Message from the government informing that his not having paid up his tax having a bad effect on the neighbouring tribes and unless he paid the whole of the money due to the government, they would send an impi to wipe him out... Few days elapsed and after discussing the purport of the message with his councillors it was decided to send a message to the President requesting him to send an official to his kraal in order to discuss the matter and to arrive at an amicable settlement as he had no wish to fight the Boers. One messenger returned wounded and told them they should not go to Pretoria but to Joubert. As they declined, they were fired upon, one was killed. Mpefu then sent Lisiba and Matshiri to Joubert with the same message. They did not come back.[80]

All attempts to reach a settlement having proved unsuccessful preparations for war started. Mphephu decided to defend his chieftainship against his rebellious brother Sinthumule, who according to all informants had solicited the support of the government.[81]

Apart from age-groups, the Vhavenda had no other form of military organisation. Mphephu would naturally receive unqualified support from his Mavhegwa and Mazulu,[82] while Sinthumule had the support of his Ngomakhosi.

The struggle for succession to the throne among the three sons, Mphephu, Sinthumule and Maemu had seriously divided the once powerful tribe, Vhailafuri.[83] The other tribes Vhaphani[84] of Tshivhase and Mphaphuli,

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80 R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

81 Nesengani on 14 June 1971; Neluvhola on 31 August 1971; Musekwa on 12 July 1971 and Thonga on 9 September 1971.

82 The age-group which followed Mavhegwa.

83 These are western Vhavenda.

84 The Vhavenda around the present Sibasa.

Vhatavhatsindi of Rammbuda and Nethengwe and Vharonga[85] of Davhana and other chiefs who were under the influence of the Native Commissioner and the missionaries were not involved in the war.

Mphephu banked on the support of Manenu of Tshihanane, Vhalube of Makongoza and his Vhalaudzi relatives. Some of the subjects under his jurisdiction like Maunavhathu of Mauluma, Vhadau of Tshakhuma and Vhalaudzi of Lwamondo could not offer active assistance as they were under the influence of the German missionary, Wessmann.[86]

Rifles were obtained from Delagoa Bay, Rhodesia and Kimberley. Others were supplied by traders. Ammunition could be manufactured locally.[87] It was also rumoured that the Chartered Company had sold two maxims at £1 000 to Mphephu for which he had no ammunition.[88] Munnik had put it on record that Mphephu's people were well-armed and had an abundance of ammunition. The chief had always sent his messengers to Delagoa Bay where they could easily purchase rifles and as it later appeared, dishonest traders from the Republic smuggled ammunition.[89]

In addition to this The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition) stated that Mphephu was well armed and that he had 600 mounted men armed with Martini-Henry rifles and 3 000 armed infantry.[90] This statement appears rather exaggerated for according to a telegram to the Acting High Commissioner despatched from Tuli, Mphephu crossed into Rhodesia with 237 guns of which 107 were breech loaders.[91]

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85 The Vhavenda across Luvuvhu river.

86 Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

87 Mathew Muntswu on 13 July 1971.

88 Land en Volk, 14 September 1898.

89 Munnik, Memoirs, p.156.

90 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 October 1898.

91 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 16, Telegram of 22 December 1898 to the Acting High Commissioner.

When the government demanded its taxes, Mphephu had demanded the extradition of Sinthumule who according to him was under the protection of the government. As neither side was prepared to move a step further, no further negotiations were possible.[92]

The government then decided to put to an end the undesirable situation in the Soutpansberg by taking a census of Mphephu's tribe, measuring of the land and demarcation of his location in relation to the number of his tribe in accordance with the location act.[93]

For this purpose Landdrost Munnik, accompanied by the District Commandant and Lieutenant of police G.A. du Toit were sent to Dzanani to inform Mphephu of the decision of the government in the fulfilment of their duties and to offer them assistance. Mphephu immediately displayed an obstinate and unfriendly tone.[94] The cold reception accorded to the three officials gave rise to an unhealthy atmosphere.

Despite this tense situation, the government's decision was nevertheless handed to Mphephu. This message which sounded like an ultimatum had a somewhat unfriendly tone:

> M'Pefu, you are hereby directed by the Government to take a census of your people within a month from this date and report to the Landdrost of Pietersburg how many able-bodied men there are in your tribe, when the Government will at once nominate a Commission consisting of a sworn Government land surveyor and a Field-Cornet to beacon off your location.[95]

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92 R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

93 Rademeyer, p.96.

94 Ibid.; See also Munnik, Memoirs, pp.153-154.

95 Munnik, Memoirs, p.154.

According to the available records this was the last meeting between government officials and Mphephu, whose reply was that they should go to tell the government that he would not allow any counting of his people and that no land surveyor or white man would be tolerated amongst his people unless he had his permission.[96]

This attitude Munnik did not like and before he left he warned Mphephu that the government was determined to put the law into practice.[97] Back in Pietersburg he submitted a report to the government.

The government's decision, (although an ultimatum) indicates a shift in approach and policy towards Mphephu as the latter was instructed to report to the Landdrost of Pietersburg instead of the local Native Commissioner. Mphephu himself had so far shown his desire to communicate with Pretoria through Pietersburg. The question may be posed: Why was Mphephu's attitude so negative despite the offer that he should report to Pietersburg? The answer is simple. Mphephu had requested the extradition of Sinthumule and also that the government should send an official in order that the problem should be discussed and peacefully settled.[98] Instead of discussing the differences between the two feuding brothers, Munnik delivered an ultimatum.

The next step was taken by the Commander of Fort Hendrina who requested Chief Ranwedzi Mphaphuli to send him a man who would be sent to Pretoria.

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[96] Munnik, Memoirs, p.154; Kronieke, p.133.

[97] Ibid.

[98] R.A, 25(a),Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

This man was Mbidi Nyamita Nemakanga who was taken to the arsenal and shown cannon, rifles and ammunition. He was convinced that Mphephu would be unable to resist the Boers who would be armed with such powerful weapons. From the arsenal he went straight to Dzanani and told Mphephu all he had seen. He also advised the latter to submit.[99]

The reply from Mphephu and his people was that, "ai, ai, Muphani, a u divhi nndwa, rine ri mavhoi a vho-Mammbada na takata na mangoma, Livhuru li nga si wele hafha".[100] They went further and told Mbidi that he was a government stooge. Mbidi then left for Mbilwi, the royal kraal of his chief, Mphaphuli and advised him not to become involved in Mphephu's war with the Republic.[101]

At this time Mphephu's attitude towards the government hardened and he continued to maintain his defiant attitude and to disregard all regulations imposed by the government. It is reported that he proclaimed himself independent and commenced to collect tribute from members of his tribes wherever they might be living.[102]

In August 1898 he sent a commando to Kranspoort, a mission station under Rev. S. Hofmeyr in order to collect tax from his people but one headman named Kgari resisted. This headman was a subject of Chief Moloto of Muledzhi.[103] When he attempted to levy tax on the Buys settlement, they sought government protection.[104] What was in Mphephu's mind when he

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99 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.196; See also Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, p.41.

100 Nesengani on 14 June 1971. It means: "We are mavhoi of Mammbada, takata and Mangoma, the Boer will not cross".

101 Ibid.; See also Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, p.41; Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.197.

102 War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p.115.

103 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.4427, Letter from V.C. du Preez, Commandant of Soutpansberg, 9 September 1898.

104 Ibid.; See also K.G. 656, C.R. 4882, Buys to Commandant-General, 18 September 1898.

decided to collect these taxes nobody knows but perhaps he did this as Moloto was a subject of Makhado while Kranspoort was situated north of the frontier line suggested by Barend Vorster, and confirmed by Makhado.[105]

According to General Joubert, the immediate cause of the war was the sending by Mphephu of a mounted commando and soldiers on foot to the Mission Station of Kranspoort under the Rev. Hofmeyr in order to forbid the inhabitants resident there and especially the Buys, a hybrid people, to pay tax to the government.[106]

After the receipt of Munnik's report, the government did not take immediate steps. They waited for the expiration of the month granted to Mphephu during which to carry out the instructions of the government.[107]

As Mphephu did not show any positive signs within the stipulated time, the government despatched Land Surveyor Devenish and Field-Cornet Jan du Preez with the necessary appliances to demarcate Mphephu's location in terms of the message sent to him. When they arrived there, he took them and their wagons across the Muhohodi and informed them that if they came back, there would be trouble.[108] This step taken by Mphephu undoubtedly precipitated the conflict.

The measuring of farms and beaconing of location was regarded by H.J. de Jager as the direct cause of disagreement with the Vhavenda under the chieftainship of Mphephu.[109] This is true to a certain extent because

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105 S.S. 1895, 4805 I, R.4807, Joubert to Executive Council, 13 May 1895.

106 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, Report of Commandant-General; See also Land en Volk, 14 September 1898.

107 Munnik, Memoirs, p.156.

108 Ibid.

109 H.J. de Jager, "Louis Trichardt se veelbewoë Geskiedenis", Die Huisgenoot, 25 October 1935, p.30.

Mphephu's refusal to allow the surveyors to start their work would have to be met by force of arms as negotiations between the two parties had broken down.

This and other factors discussed in the preceding chapters forced the Executive Council of the South African Republic to meet on 13 September 1898 to consider the desirability of assuring calm and order once and for all in order to guarantee the safety of lives and property of the inhabitants in that district.[110]

At the same meeting the Executive empowered the Commandant-General to call 500 men in order to remove Fort Schutte to Rietvlei where a town should be established for the purpose of preventing the rebellious Blacks from leaving their places in order to commit plunder and murder.[111]

This was the decisive step which led to the outbreak of the war.

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110 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.11440, Confidential Executive Committee Decision No. 19, 13 September 1898.

111 Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

THE EXPEDITION OF 1898 AND THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES

The Executive Council decided on immediate action in order "to teach Mpefu a lesson".[1] The Krygsraad was instructed to remove Fort Schutte to Rietvlei in order to lay out a town for the purpose of preventing rebellious Blacks from leaving their place of abode to commit robbery and murder and to prevent them from uniting and in the case of clashes to be able to call an army of considerable strength within a short time in order to suppress the rebellion and thereby bring to an end the situation engendered by the rebellious attitude of Mphephu.[2]

Entrusted with the task of organising an army, the Commandant-General immediately called a meeting of the available commandants in Pretoria in order to brief them about the situation that had developed and to discuss ways of executing the plan. The first step was to mobilize 850 burghers - 150 from Pretoria, 200 from Potchefstroom, 100 from Waterberg, 200 from Heidelberg, 200 from Standerton and shortly thereafter 250 from Soutpansberg.[3]

The artillery was instructed to go to Soutpansberg with 100 men and a cannon.[4] Meanwhile no native commando would be called up unless the war actually broke out and only trustworthy and obedient Blacks would be used as cattle drivers and herdsmen.[5]

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1 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 3 October 1898.

2 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report of the Commandant-General, 1898; See also Rademeyer, pp.102-103.

3 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report 1898.

4 Ibid.; See also Land en Volk, 21 October 1898.

5 Rademeyer, p.104.

The first task of the artillery was to dismantle the two iron forts at Klipdam and Fort Schutte and to remove them to Rietvlei.[6]

The Commandos of Soutpansberg and Waterberg were to unite at Kalkbank whence they would proceed to a point south-west of Soutpansberg where Schoemansdal was established. They would sojourn here until they received further instructions to proceed northwards. Other commandeered burghers were ordered to meet at Rietvlei on 28 September 1898.[7]

After the finalisation of preparations and arrangements, the army started for the north. The artillery arrived at Klipdam, while 200 Potchefstroom burghers passed through Johannesburg station on 3 October 1898. The other burghers had already reached Potgietersrust on their way to Pietersburg. Another batch passed through Johannesburg station on 5 October 1898.[8]

As the troops were converging on Fort Schutte, Mphephu is reported as having threatened them that, "he would allow the Boers to cross the Doorn but would not allow them to return".[9] He might have issued this warning in an attempt to intimidate the burghers.

The allegation that Mphephu had 600 mounted men armed with Martini-Henry rifles and 3 000 armed infantry was exaggerated.[10] The Vhavenda unlike the Zulus did not have trained standing armies. Warriors were called up in times of war and they had no training in the use of fire-arms. The war came at a time when the followers of Makhado were hopelessly divided among the three sons - Mphephu, Sinthumule and Maemu.[11]

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6 Rademeyer, p.104.

7 Ibid.

8 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 3 October 1898.

9 Ibid., 8 October 1898.

10 Ibid.

11 Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

The Commandant-General left Pretoria on 8 October 1898. He arrived at Potgietersrust where he found 200 burghers from Standerton. On 9 October he left for Planknek and arrived at Pietersburg two days later. On 12 October he left Pietersburg for Rhenosterspoort where he met burghers from Potchefstroom. Here he had an interview with Machaka, the Batlokoa chief.[12]

On his way to Fort Schutte, Joubert met another Batlokoa chief, Ramokgopa at Dwars river. At Fort Schutte he found assembled burghers from Pretoria under Commandant Erasmus and from Heidelberg under Commandant Weilbach as well as the State artillery under Commandant S.P. Trichardt.[13]

On 15 October 1898 the Commandant-General, accompanied by some men from Pretoria and Heidelberg, went to Doorn river to inspect drifts and this was followed by a display of weapons in the afternoon.[14]

At this juncture Mphephu's attitude was conciliatory as he saw the burghers assembling at Fort Schutte. His threat that they would not return after crossing the Muhohodi did not evoke any reaction. He had already despatched Lishivha and Matshikiri to negotiate with General Joubert as, according to himself, he had no intention of fighting the Boers.[15]

This was, however, contradicted by some steps he had already taken in preparation for the war. Armed men had been stationed along the Muhohodi guarding drifts and footpaths. Kraals on the flats were burnt. Tom

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12 K.G. 655, Diary, "Mpefu" Commando, 12 October 1898.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-1899, R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

Pittendrigh, one of the oldest residents of Klein Spelonken went to Mphephu in order to persuade him to meet the Commandant-General either at Fort Schutte or Rietvlei but the response was negative.[16]

Mphephu then opened negotiations with the Rhodesian authorities. He despatched Stephanus Mugolidwa, Tshikombeni and Tshikhulumela to Tuli. Leaving Stephanus at Tuli, Tshikombeni and Tshikhulumela returned with a certain Theodore Williams who indicated that he was a government representative. Mphephu gave him a sum of £500 and he promised to contact the Rhodesian officials.[17]

Mphephu's mistake was to regard every English-speaking White from Rhodesia as a representative of the Rhodesian authorities.

The burghers' next step was to cross the Muhohodi which according to Joubert should be considered as an important moment in the chronicle of this war. When Mphephu realized that the government was going to apply stringent measures against him, he informed them that he would allow the burghers to cross the Doorn river but would see to it that they did not return as his intention was to annihilate them. The Doorn river was the border of the territory which Mphephu usurped. It was therefore not surprising that the emotions were tense on the historic 17 day of October 1898.[18]

When Mphephu saw the commando cross the river he despatched his interpreter, Lucas, with a mule cart requesting that the General come up the mountain to see him.[19]

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16 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 13 October 1898.

17 Documents with reference to "Mpefu",1898-99, R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

18 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

19 Ibid.

The ordinary people who did not know what was going to happen, likened the expedition to the Tlokwa's using oxen to drag branches of thorn trees.[20]

Joubert who regarded Mphephu's messengers as spies sent him a letter explaining the purpose of his coming and informing him of governmental instructions. He expressed a desire to meet him in order to settle the matter peacefully.[21]

He also wrote letters to Sinthumule, Maemu, Matidze, Ravele and Kutama in which he blamed Mphephu for the troubles which had occurred since his accession to the throne.[22]

The tone of the letters differed. In his letters to Matidze, Maemu, Kutama, Sinthumule and Funyufunyu, Joubert addressed them as chiefs. By so doing he placed them on the same footing as Mphephu. In fact Kutama, Matidze, Funyufunyu and Ravele were headmen and according to Venda law they owed their chieftainship to Mphephu. Sinthumule was headman until July 1896 when he was driven from Tshifhefhe. Significantly at the time of the writing of the letter he had already been deposed. As for Maemu he was neither headman nor chief.

Although the letter was not addressed to Mphephu, it is probable that he knew the contents as Ravele, Matidze, Funyufunyu and Kutama were his supporters. The letter might have contributed to his refusal to meet

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[20] Thonga on 9 September 1971.

[21] S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

[22] Ibid.

the general.

The Commando reached Tshitandani[23] on 18 October 1898. The arrival was followed by the construction of a laager in the form of a square, fortified by a stone wall in order to combat night attacks. A strong fort was built in one corner and through holes in the wall of this fort twenty to thirty men could shoot at the enemy.[24]

The Vhavenda on the other hand also constructed their fortifications about a mile from the laager. These consisted of stone walls.[25]

The general's letter to Mphephu was delivered by Kekana who knew the Luvenda language. After the receipt of the letter Mphephu is reported to have called a meeting of his principal indunas in order to discuss the matter. He informed them that he wanted to go down to meet General Joubert. His indunas, however dissuaded him from taking such a step as they feared that he would be arrested and replaced by Sinthumule. The feeling was that Sinthumule had invited the burghers in order to further his interests.[26]

Mphephu then sent messengers inviting the general accompanied by an escort of about a dozen men to meet him at an appointed place. The reason for inviting the general was that Mphephu was afraid to go down to the laager because of the many burghers who had assembled at Rietvlei. Joubert refused and instead promised Mphephu that he would be returned safely, should he come down to the laager. Mphephu was also informed that

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23 See page 29, footnote 116.

24 Rademeyer, p.105.

25 Ibid.

26 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 October 1898. This information was also confirmed by Neluvhola on 31 August 1971, Thonga on 9 September 1971, Musekwa on 12 July 1971 and Ramatsitsi on 13 July 1971.

he could lodge his complaints if he had any and that he could also bring his witnesses with him to consider complaints lodged against him.[27]

The reply Kekana brought back was: "If anybody calls a dog and expects it to come he does not hold a whip in his hand".[28]

It was also reported by a younger brother of Carel Kekana who had been with Mphephu since August 1898 that the chief had ordered his men not to fire a shot on the Boers until the Boers fired on them.[29]

The question that may now arise is, would any peaceful solution have been arrived at if Mphephu had agreed to meet the general? What had the general had in mind? Perhaps the answer was supplied by The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition) when it stated that the Commandant-General would send for Mphephu with the promise that he could come and go unmolested. He would then dictate the terms to him, the terms being such that he would not accept.[30]

The same paper reported that one of the oldest inhabitants of the Spelonken, Cooksley, said that, "there is no doubt Mphephu will defy the general and the law and will positively refuse to leave the mountain and go down to a location on the flats".[31]

As previously stated, Mphephu had ordered his men not to start the war, but he could not maintain control of events. His people who had

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27 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 October 1898. Mphephu's complaint was that the officials based at Fort Schutte were protecting his two brothers while the government on the other hand complained that he was refusing to pay taxation.

28 K.G. 656, Press telegram of 18 October 1898; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 20 October 1898.

29 Ibid. This was also confirmed by Musekwa on 12 July 1971 and Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

30 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 20 October 1898.

31 Ibid.

prevented him from meeting the general wanted to fight just as they had forced him to fight against Sinthumule in 1896; and they had already erected stone fortifications at Tshirululuni and Maguni.[32]

Thus on 21 October, when the burghers were busy putting up their laager, shots were heard from the direction of the mountain. The first shot was fired by Funyufunyu who was under the influence of liquor. He fired the shot which to the other men heralded the beginning of hostilities.[33]

The burghers were caught unawares; and Mphephu's men advanced from three sides while the burgers were constructing the laager and fortifying it with a stone wall, five feet high. When the sound of a gun was heard, shots fell on every side of the laager. Mphephu's men swarmed down the hills in their thousands, on every side of the camp, firing at horses and the guards who drove the horses and oxen to the laager. The artillery camped on the side facing Mphephu's kraal and the mountain were in action very quickly and played havoc with the schanzes of Mphephu's men who fled when the first shell was dropped on the mountain.[34]

A number of burghers on horseback chased the Vhavenda into the hills. After this skirmish which lasted about 15 minutes, 12 of Mphephu's soldiers were found lying on the veld. Amongst the guns found beside the dead natives was only one Martini-Henry rifle, marked Z.A.R. The other guns

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[32] Museiwa on 12 July 1971 and Makhado on 13 July 1971.

[33] The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 21 October 1898. This was confirmed by Nesengani on 14 June 1971.

[34] The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 21 October 1898; See also S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

were old "Sanna" type. Among the burghers not a single person had been hurt and not even a horse or ox had been wounded.[35]

As a result of this surprise attack the Krygsraad met on 22 October 1898 and requested the government to send another 2 700 burghers. They also instructed the general to write to Mphephu to persuade him to negotiate. The letter was transmitted by Kekana. The government agreed to send more men.[36]

Mphephu informed Joubert that the attack of the previous afternoon was not launched on his orders.[37] The general, however, regarded the short skirmish as a sign that the war had begun.[38]

Before any other steps could be considered, Joubert sent another letter to Mphephu which The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition) regarded as an ultimatum to the recalcitrant chief. In this letter he complained about the recent attacks and Mphephu's negative attitude towards maintaining peace.[39]

In spite of this the general offered Mphephu one further opportunity of coming to terms and implored him once more to go to see him and if his friendly request was not heeded within 24 hours after receipt, he would conclude that he was responsible for everything and that all correspondence would cease and he would be unhappily compelled to put on gloves and the

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35 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 21 October 1898; See also S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report; Rademeyer p.107 and Rhodesian Herald, 21 October 1898.

36 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 22 October 1898; See also S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

37 Nesengani on 14 June 1971 and Musekwa on 12 July 1971 confirmed that the attack was not ordered by Mphephu.

38 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

39 Ibid.

matter would be written on his account.[40]

After the receipt of this letter, Mphephu sent two messengers to the general enquiring about the contents of the letter and on 28 October 1898 expressed willingness to come down to Hooflaager but he never appeared.[41]

While Joubert was awaiting the arrival of Mphephu, news was received that the Buys settlement had been attacked. They repulsed the attack and shot dead three Vhavenda but lost one brother Simon Buys.[42]

Although Mphephu's failure to meet Joubert might be partly ascribed to the fact that Sinthumule who had now become his greatest enemy was with the burghers, there were other factors which encouraged him to resist. The significance of Sinthumule's alliance with the burghers should not be underestimated. The old people, particularly the Madali age-group, still remembered what had happened to Ramavhoya in 1836 when he had agreed to meet Louis Tregardt who had hidden Ramabulana in a wagon. It was thought if Ramavhoya had been murdered by Ramabulana in 1836, Mphephu could be murdered by Sinthumule with the assistance of the Boers. This was the greatest stumbling block.[43]

Mphephu had already opened the door to communication with the B.S.A. police at Tuli by despatching messengers and by paying £500 to Theodore Williams.[44]

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40 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

41 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 25 October 1898.

42 Ibid., 21 October 1898; See also S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report; K.G. 657, F. Brennan to Commandant du Preez, 29 October 1898.

43 Neluvhola on 31 August 1971.

44 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-1899, R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

His messengers Stephanus, Tshikombeni and Tshikhulumela were sent to Tuli and the Assistant Native Commissioner of the area transmitted the message to the Chief Native Commissioner, Buluwayo. The message according to Mphephu was that his father Makhado had told him that should ever the nation be in distress, they should appeal to the British Government for assistance.[45]

The authenticity of this statement is open to doubt because during the last nine years of Makhado's rule, Mphephu had been working in the diamond fields of Kimberley and had only returned after his father's death. It might have been intended as a means of introducing the matter in such a way as to evoke a positive response. In addition to this he also requested the British government to allow him to cross into Rhodesia in case he would be unable to resist the Boers.[46]

The man who was instrumental in transmitting Mphephu's message was the Chief Native Commissioner, H.J. Taylor who had visited Makhado in 1889. It was in his own interests that the Rhodesian authorities should help Mphephu, although he did not mention this publicly.[47] His activities indicate that he wanted Venda to become part of Rhodesia.

The reply from the Deputy Administrator was: "Please inform Mpefu's envoy that as long as he is at war with the Transvaal, it is impossible for the B.S.A. to enter into negotiations with him".[48]

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45 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-1899, R.A, 24, Minutes of a meeting held between Mphephu and his indunas and Administrator, Buluwayo on 3 January 1899.

46 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-1899, R.A, 2, From Tuli to D.A. Buluwayo, 26 October 1898.

47 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, D.A. to C.C. Tuli, 29 October 1898. The telegram is unnumbered.

48 Ibid.

Meanwhile hostilities continued. Two wagons were attacked in the neighbourhood of Machaba hill, where one Black and some oxen were killed.[49]

The intense diplomatic activities between Mphephu and White Rhodesians did not escape the notice of the Boers. J.P. Visser made a sworn statement before Waterberg District Commandant P.J. Potgieter that some White men, supposed to be Englishmen from Rhodesia to judge by their clothing, had been seen in Transvaal territory in the company of armed natives, making their way into Makhado's country.[50]

This statement was refuted by Her Majesty's Agent who said the story was highly improbable.[51] But it would appear that this official had been misinformed as Visser's statement was correct.

On 31 October 1898, Rietvlei was telegraphically connected with Fort Schutte by Trotsen, de Bruyn and Smit, and consequently communication between Pietersburg and Rietvlei became possible.[52]

The result of the general's letter to Mphephu was the arrival of Mphephu's messengers at the laager. Joubert was informed that Mphephu would have come down before but he could not do so as his men were away. He then promised to come down on Saturday 29 or Sunday 30 October 1898. Those assurances and promises, however, were never fulfilled.[53]

Visser's affidavit that some Englishmen from Rhodesia had been seen on

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49 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 30 October 1898.

50 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 5, J.P. Visser's affidavit, 20 October 1898. Musekwa on 12 July 1971 and Neluvhola on 31 August 1971 declare that there were some Englishmen at Mphephu's stronghold.

51 B.A. 34, 66 S.A.R, Her Majesty's Agency, E. Fraser to Secretary of State, 24 October 1898.

52 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 31 October 1898.

53 Ibid.

Visser's affidavit that some Englishmen from Rhodesia had been seen on Mphephu's land did not fall on deaf ears. Sir Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner, having received the information from Her Majesty's Agent, Edmund Fraser, reacted by issuing a proclamation on 31 October 1898 forbidding any White man from crossing into the Transvaal. In this way the authorities hoped to have sealed the Transvaal-Rhodesian border.[54]

Meanwhile the commandeered burghers from different parts of the Republic were pouring in and no military operations could be undertaken before they had all arrived. Communications between Mphephu and Joubert had already ceased after the expiration of the 24-hour period.[55]

The government of the South African Republic, which as a result of the request following the attack on the laager on 21 October 1898, had agreed to re-inforce the commando, went further and issued a proclamation on 1 November 1898, that natives armed with assegai or any other weapon, and unarmed natives in company of more than three would not be allowed to travel along the roads in the Soutpansberg north of Dwars river and west of Hout river without the accompaniment of a police constable or a known White man, and without a passport.[56]

The promulgation of this proclamation may be regarded as an announcement that the S.A.R. was officially at war with Mphephu.

On 2 November 1898, the Rev. Beuster, arrived with two indunas from Tshivhase. They brought with them four oxen and an assurance that Tshivhase would

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[54] The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 31 October 1898; See also B.A. 34, 68 S.A.R, Her Majesty's Agency, 31 October 1898.

[55] S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

[56] Z.A.R. 79, R.14046, Staatscourant der Z.A.R., Woensdag 2 November 1898; See also Land en Volk, 1 November 1898.

support the Commandant-General. This was an indication that the Vhaphani of Tshivhase would not support Mphephu. Another fact to be deduced from this is that this was not a war involving the whole nation. It was Mphephu's war. If it had been a Venda war, the two mighty chiefs, so closely related, would have followed the same course. The war was thus the direct result of the struggle for supremacy between Makhado's sons.[57]

As more burghers arrived, patrols were sent out between 4 November and 11 November 1898. When and wherever they were attacked they retaliated.[58]

On 11 November the two Batlokoa chiefs, Machaka and Ramokgopa arrived at the laager with Native Commissioner, C. Dahl. These, like Tshivhase indicated they would not support Mphephu,[59] and this meant the isolation of Mphephu.

The Commandant-General, with an escort, set out on a tour to the west. At Sand River poort, he was fired upon by Kutama, one of Mphephu's brothers. He arrived at Mara and investigated complaints against Tshiangamela, a headman under Mphephu. Differences with the former were settled.[60]

The next step was the second sitting of the Krygsraad in order to discuss the plan of operations. At this meeting which was attended by commandants and field-cornets, the Commandant-General explained why it was necessary for the government to send the burghers to the Soutpansberg.

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57 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 2 November 1898; See also Land en Volk, 2 November 1898.

58 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 7 November 1898.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 11 November 1898.

He focused the attention of the members on the once flourishing settlement of Schoemansdal which had been destroyed in 1867. They agreed that the date for a general attack of Luatame would be Wednesday 16 November 1898. The plan of attack was left in the hands of the Commandant-General and in order to achieve a speedy success the mountain on which Mphephu's royal kraal was situated was to be attacked by seven divisions from three sides.[61]

The easterly section was composed of the combined forces of Potchefstroom and Lydenburg with Swazis and the Ermelo, Wakkerstroom, Johannesburg and Krugersdorp commandos. The Johannesburg and Wakkerstroom forces took the most easterly position i.e. facing Mount Malimuwa. The second division of this section consisted of forces from Ermelo under Captain Wolmarans. They had to take the road leading up to the top of Mount Sunguzwi. The western section of this division consisted of the Potchefstroom and Lydenburg commandos numbering 1 400 burghers and 700 Swazis.

The central division took up its position in front of Luatame where the royal kraal was situated. It consisted of commandos from Pretoria, Standerton and Heidelberg assisted by Major J.E. Erasmus with two guns towards the east and Colonel S.P. Trichardt with two other guns on the west. This division was accompanied by the Commandant-General and Sinthumule, who had to lead them to the royal kraal. It consisted of 1 100 men.

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[61] S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 12 November 1898; Land en Volk, 12 November 1898.

The third or westerly division stationed at Schoemansdal consisted of about 1 000 burghers from Waterberg, Soutpansberg, Middelburg, Carolina and Bethal. The plan was to force their way through Vhulorwa and join the eastern division above Luatame; thereby surrounding it. Together with the central division a complete circle round the royal kraal would be formed making it impossible for the occupants to escape. Colonel Trichardt took up position in such a way as to be able to cover this last division. Every section was accompanied by Lieutenant Paff's field telegraph with a central station at Hooflaager.[62]

Field-Cornet Kelly had to attack Luonde with a small force and by 15 November 1898, all burghers and Swazis had arrived.[63] Mphephu's people on the other hand had taken up their positions at their fortifications at Tshirululuni, Maguni and other places scattered in the bush.[64]

In addition to the 1 000 Swazis there were also about 1 000 Shangaans helping the burghers. It was also decided that Tshivhase and Mphaphuli would station their men between Dzanani and Dzimauli as it was feared that as soon as Mphephu was driven from his kraal, he might flee to Dzimauli. Rammbuda, chief of Dzimauli, was also instructed to bring Mphephu back should he flee to his country.[65]

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62 This information was obtained from The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 15 November 1898; S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report and Land en Volk, 12 November 1898.

63 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 15 November 1898.

64 Makhado on 13 July 1971; Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

65 Rademeyer, p.108 estimated the number of Swazis and Shangaans at 1 500. The Star, The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition) of 15 November 1898 reported the number to be about 1 000. The informants all agree that there were Shangaans, Swazis and followers of Sinthumule and Davhana at this stage of the war.

As a further preparatory step, Mphephu called his great witchdoctor Lishivha to doctor the royal kraal and to make preparations for Tshirovha.[66] This was not surprising as the Vhavenda believed more in the power of the witchdoctor than in military training.

When Mphephu saw the Boer commandos taking up their positions he despatched Tshikombeni to Tuli explaining the position and asking for assistance and he stated:

> My people when seeing the Boers advancing were in great distress but I encouraged them by saying that the English were coming to our assistance. Boers continued to advance and my heart sank when I heard the message. I did not tell my people for fear it might discourage them and that they might desert me.[67]

Another messenger was sent to Tuli and the reply was the same but this reply Mphephu kept to himself.

At 3 o'clock on Wednesday morning, the commandos started to advance towards the mountain. General Joubert stated that that day, the 16th of November 1898 would be remembered in the history of the South African Republic, because under God's blessing, they broke down the military strength of him who regarded himself as "the lion of the north".[68]

The battle commenced at dawn. At 4.30 a.m. Colonel Trichardt's guns were in position facing the royal kraal, about 1 000 yards from the position.

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66 Nwamakhado on 31 August 1971: This is a medicine which is believed to cause a smoke or fog which confused the enemy.

67 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

68 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

Mphephu's commando was firing heavily from behind very strong fortifications. The Heidelbergers stormed them while covered by the fire of the guns. They were driven out and took flight in the direction of Luatame. A very heavy fog then set in and prevented the burghers from pursuing them.[69] At the fortifications nine Blacks were found dead and one severely wounded. Another was taken prisoner.

When the mist cleared at about 9 o'clock, the cannon opened fire on the royal kraal. It is stated that when the cannon fired the second shot into the kraal and set fire to a hut, Mphephu was still standing under his verandah distributing ammunition. When a second hut was set on fire at another place in the kraal, he called out that they were lost and that everyone must seek safety. The commando reached the royal kraal at 10.30 a.m.[70]

The Vierkleur was planted on a huge rock in front of Mphephu's palace. The kraal was found deserted except for a few old women who had been left behind. The artillery had been of incalculable service although they had been exposed to a hail of bullets. Mphephu's people who fled more

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[69] This fog is supposed to have been caused by the medicines of the witchdoctor. It is known as Tshirovha. The present Chief Mphephu told me on 21 May 1971 it was intended to protect the chief. It is extremely doubtful whether the fog was in fact caused by the witchdoctor. It is known that fogs are very common at Dzanani.

[70] S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 November 1898.

from fright and the sound of cannon than from heavy loss of life could have defended their well-fortified kraal for some time. They cannot be blamed for this as they had not yet experienced such a war situation because never before in the history of the Republic had so great a commando been called out for active service against the Blacks or such elaborate and perfect arrangements made to ensure victory.[71]

In this division, only one man, Peter Geldenhuis from Potgietersrus, was killed by a shot fired from a crevice. The Commandant-General thanked God for protecting them against heavy loss of life.[72]

At 11.30 a.m. the burghers took Luatame, Mphephu's stronghold. The huts were set on fire. The Johannesburg and Krugersdorp commandos under Commandant Potgieter and Field-Cornets Viljoen, P. Botha, Oosthuizen and Van Wyk had to climb the mountain from the east and pass through a poort, which was narrow and dangerous, for the purpose of coming round the back of the range so as to attack the royal kraal from two sides simultaneously.[73]

At about 5 a.m. the artillery officers fired a small shell at a krantz, directly in the path and this alerted the Blacks. They commenced firing directly in the line of advance and the forces were brought to a standstill. The Blacks kept the forces at bay for the whole day. These were the

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71 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 November 1898 and The Star, 18 November 1898. The two informants Makhado and Thonga who were at the kraal at the time of bombardment create an impression that when some old women and men heard the sound of the cannon, they fainted.

72 The Star, 18 November 1898; The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 November 1898; Land en Volk, 17 November 1898; S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

73 The Star, 16 November 1898.

soldiers of Phahwe, Malimuwa and Tshitopeni. They were armed with Martini-Henry rifles. In this skirmish three Blacks were shot dead and the burghers lost one man, H.A. Auerswald of Krugersdorp while another Theunis Bester of Burgersdorp was wounded.[74]

In the afternoon the commandos were rescued by the arrival of Commandant Erasmus of Pretoria with about 500 men and two cannon. The burghers had been in their saddles for sixteen hours.[75]

The following morning when heavy guns shelled the krantzes, there was no response as the Blacks had fled in the night. The passage had now been opened and the burghers advanced around the mountain.[76]

Field-Cornet Kelly who attacked Luonde lost only one man, De Beer.

The commandants of Potchefstroom, Wakkerstroom and Ermelo who had to attack the pass from the west, soon succeeded in taking it and communicating with the other commandants without suffering any losses.[77]

Mphephu's stronghold, Luatame was almost impregnable if it had been properly defended. About 1 000 plucky men could hold out against an army of many thousands as long as provisions and ammunition lasted. A considerable number of huge boulders formed part of the fortifications so that the cannon could not do much damage but the Vhavenda on this occasion fled in all directions when the first shells burst.[78]

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74 The Star, 16 November 1898.

75 Ibid. The Star correspondent accompanied this commando; See also Rhodesian Herald, 16 November 1898.

76 The Star, 16 November 1898.

77 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 19 November 1898.

78 Ibid.

The number of people who perished in this phase of the war was not more than 150. Most of them were old men and women who were unable to flee.[79]

After the burning of the second hut, when Mphephu was still distributing ammunition, his maternal uncle rushed to him and said: "Mphephu, Tshinavhe, ṅwana wa khaladzi anga, Tshinavhe, takuwani mavhuru vho swika".[80] The chief got hold of whatever belongings he could lay his hands on and fled with the rest of his people.[81]

Amongst the 150 people who died were Khakhavhi, Ralithadala and Maduguma. The fugitives went through the pass west of Luatame. By the time that the royal kraal was enveloped in flames, they had already reached Gaza. Their movements were disorderly as they just scattered over the mountains. Everyone wanted to save his own life. On their way they passed through Musindoni, Sangali, Luvhundini, Matshema, Tshihanane and finally crossed the Nzhelele river and pitched their tents at Mamuhoi's settlement. Mamuhoi was one of Mphephu's headmen who was stationed at Mirondoni, one of the mountains of the Tshiendeulu range. They fled in this direction in order to avoid the Boer commando which was advancing from

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79 The Star, 18 November 1898. The impression obtained from all informants is that many people were killed.

80 This means: "Mphephu, Tshinavhe, my sister's son, why are you delaying here? Stand up, let us go, the Boers are on us".

81 This information was supplied by Makhado, Mphephu's younger sister on 13 July 1971 and Thonga his surviving wife on 9 September 1971, who accompanied the fleeing group.

the eastern direction. From Dzanani to Mirondoni, might have taken one day.[82]

The question may be asked as to why they chose Tshiendeulu as their next stronghold? Why did they not go to the Tshipange mountains where Musekwa's people were waiting to receive them? The reason is that Tshiendeulu was regarded as a sacred place as their forefathers had first settled there and it was regarded as a mountain of the gods. They went there in the hope that they would be protected by the gods.[83]

In addition to this, on Tuesday 15 November, before the Boers launched a final attack on his kraal, Mphephu held a meeting in which four Englishmen were present. They assured him that two strong armies from Matabeleland and Mashonaland were ready at Floor's Drift to come to his assistance and he should expect them any day. These Englishmen whose names are not mentioned left after the meeting in order to guide the two armies or so they said.[84]

It would appear that Theodore Williams was one of these men as he returned to Tuli with Mphephu's induna Malile who had been sent to verify the answer given to Tshikhulumela and Tshikombeni. Malile was disappointed as the B.S.A. police were not ready to help Mphephu.[85]

The Boers were disappointed at having failed to intercept Mphephu at Sunguzwi. The Commandant-General despatched messages to chiefs through Native Commissioners and missionaries telling them to come and discuss with him the safety and peace of the Soutpansberg and that the war would be

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82 Rademeyer, p.111; The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 19 November 1898; S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report, state that Mphephu fled to Rammbuda. This is an error. He fled to Tshiendeulu, an area under his jurisdiction.

83 Musekwa on 12 July 1971.

84 Land en Volk, 17 November 1898.

85 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 19, C.C. Tuli to D.A. Buluwayo, 19 November 1898.

over as soon as Mphephu had been arrested.[86]

From the children and women taken prisoners, he learnt that Mphephu was hiding in a large underground cave near the stronghold. As a result of this, orders were given to surround and guard the mountain as far as possible. The events of the next day were characterised by activities intended to get Mphephu out of the caves where the prisoners had reported him to be hiding.[87]

Did the prisoners really know where Mphephu was? They told the burghers that Mphephu had sprung onto his wagon when the cannon started firing and had left quickly.[88] If that had been the case how could he have got into a cave on a wagon?

The prisoners might have known where Mphephu had fled but might have twisted the story in order to confuse the Boers.

The commandants who were at the stronghold decided to launch a further search into the caves. Accompanied by one female prisoner, Vosloo, the Swazi leader, young Potgieter who could speak Swazi language well, Abraham Malan, the Commandant-General's deputy and two natives went to search the caves, which they found uninhabited although there were traces of human footprints. In one cave they found two elephant tusks. As night fell, they decided to abandon the search.[89]

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86 Land en Volk, 16 November 1898; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 16 November 1898.

87 Land en Volk, 16 November 1898.

88 Ibid., 17 November 1898.

89 Ibid.

On 18 November, three more Blacks were arrested by Steenkamp and they said that Mphephu was still in the bush. This led the Commandant-General to double the search. Burghers stood almost shoulder to shoulder as they surrounded the mountain.[90]

The search for Mphephu was continued on 19 November 1898. Assuming that Mphephu was still in the caves, (as stated by the prisoners), the general went to the stronghold with 150 pounds of dynamite. The charge was laid immediately above Mphephu's house but it did not work as expected as the rock was of a very sandy nature.[91]

On 20 November the general received congratulatory messages from Tshivhase and Mphaphuli. The two chiefs offered a commando to guard the boundary on the north-east to prevent Mphephu from escaping that way.[92]

Tshivhase's messengers had brought £3 as a present from their chief. One of Mphephu's headmen, Tshiangamela came to the laager to surrender. Another headman of his, Nelwamondo was also on his way.[93]

Meanwhile Field-Cornet Kelly with his commando and Commandant Wolmarans were instructed to leave for the border between Tshivhase and Mphephu. In order to mark the border clearly, white flags were planted and hence the name "Witvlag".[94]

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90 Land en Volk, 18 November 1898; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 18 November 1898.

91 Ibid.; See also K.G.655, Diary, "Mpefu" Commando, 19 November 1898.

92 K.G.655, Diary, "Mpefu" Commando, 19 November 1898; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 20 November 1898; Land en Volk, 20 November 1898.

93 K.G. 655, Diary, 20 November 1898; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 20 November 1898.

94 Nesengani, 14 June 1971.

The search for Mphephu continued and the Commandant-General, accompanied by a commando, moved in the direction of Nara on 21 November. They only saw two Blacks. One was shot dead and the other escaped. They went as far as Madzhie's stronghold where no one was found as all the people had fled.[95]

During this expedition to Nara, 350 cattle and 400 sheep and goats were captured. On 23 November, the Pretoria contingent under Field-Cornet Zeederberg returned having captured 203 cattle, 267 sheep and one prisoner. The Commandant-General also returned. Very little opposition was shown by the followers of Funyufunyu, Madzhie and Kutama. From this expedition, the commando returned with 500 cattle and 1 000 goats and sheep.[96]

At the mission station of Kranspoort where the Rev. J.H. Hofmeyr was in charge, Tshiangamela, Kharivhe, Matshisevhe, Lishivha and Madzhie came to negotiate with the Commandant-General. These were all Mphephu's indunas.[97]

On the same day, the Commandant-General arrived at the Hooflaager. Tshivhase sent information through the Rev. Beuster that Mphephu was in his area in the bush and that he would arrest him if about 200 burghers could be sent to help.[98] This information was sent by Ramaremisa, one of Tshivhase's sons who was stationed at Thononda. Tshivhase was interested in Mphephu's defeat and arrest as this would give him undisputed rights over the other chiefs.

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95 Land en Volk, 22 November 1898; The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 22 November 1898.

96 Ibid.

97 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

98 Land en Volk, 23 November 1898; S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report; K.G. 655, Diary, 23 November 1898.

The information that Mphephu was hiding in Rammbuda's area as stated in Rademeyer[99] and Joubert's report[100] is not correct as Mirondoni in the Tshiendeulu mountains was within his territory.

On the same day the War Council sat and decided to allow the burghers, who had arrived first on the scene of action to go home. In response to Tshivhase's request, the Commandant-General with 200 men decided to leave the following day in order to follow Mphephu; the remaining burghers would follow in the same direction as soon as they were ready.[101]

On the following day, 24 November, the Commandant-General with commandants from Carolina, Middelburg and Wakkerstroom and 200 burghers and Commandant Trichardt and two cannon left for Tshiendeulu.[102]

They followed the road that passed through Fort Schutte, Elim mission station, Valdezia mission station and Tshakhuma. It was a difficult undertaking as it was raining heavily and they only had rations for one day. As a result they were wet, cold and hungry and they were forced to eat wild fruit. They reached Muledane where they were entertained by a Greek trader, Palmary, who did all he could to feed them.[103]

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99 Rademeyer, p.112. He obtained the information from The Star, 25 October 1898.

100 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

101 K.G. 655, Diary, 24 November 1898; See also S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

102 Ibid.; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 24 November 1898.

103 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report; See also K.G. 655, Diary, 24 November 1898.

From Muledane they went to the Rev. Beuster of Maungani. It was here that Rev. Wessmann brought Tshivhase, Mphaphuli and Rammbuda to conclude peace negotiations with the Commandant-General.[104]

Mphephu's indunas from the east, Ravele, Madzivhandila and Mugivhi brought an ox each as a gift for the commando. Other indunas Nelwamondo and Netsianda also came to conclude terms of peace on 26 November 1898, while Tshivhase sent four more oxen on the following day.[105]

On the following evening, Sunday 27 November 1898, the expedition left Maungani for the Tshiendeulu mountains. They passed through Tshamutshetshete and descended into the Nzhelele river valley, and slept in sight of their destination. Early on Monday morning, they trekked again and met the other contingent at about 4.00 p.m. The expedition was supposed to have met this contingent on Friday, 25 November, but they had been delayed and then had taken the Witvlag road which proved to be a shorter route.[106]

On 27 November 1898, Commandants Steenkamp, Smuts, Potgieter, Weilbach and Wolmarans passed through Thononda where Ramaremisa who had sent them information was stationed, into Madala, an area under Chief Khakhu. Their purpose was to go round Tshiendeulu in order to prevent Mphephu from escaping.[107]

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104 Nesengani ; S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

105 K.G. 655, Diary, 26 November 1898.

106 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 8 December 1898.

107 K.G. 655, Diary, 27 November 1898. Netshiendeulu who was a young man at the time reported on 30 March 1973 that he saw the Boers approaching Tshiendeulu from the east.

Or 29 November 1898 the commando reached the plain below Mirondoni and pitched camp near the Nzhelele river. Mphephu's people who had pitched their tents at Mamuhoi's settlement did not know that they had been betrayed by Ramaremisa.[108]

The Swazis advanced up the eastern side of the mountain through the thick, thorny bush. Other commandos went round the mountain to the west and north.[109]

The army which was to storm the mountain consisted of 1 000 burghers, 600 Swazis, Tshivhase's men and 5 cannon.

Mphephu had not yet lost hope of soliciting help from across Vhembe river. This is apparent from the correspondence between the Assistant Native Commissioner of Middeldrift and the Civil Commissioner. The Middeldrift official reported that two envoys had been sent to him on 25 November requesting assistance from the B.S.A. police as the Boers had driven Mphephu from his stronghold and that he would be unable to resist them. The Civil Commissioner of Tuli conveyed the message to the Deputy Administrator at Buluwayo.[110]

The reply was the same as before that as long as Mphephu was at war with the Transvaal, it was impossible for the B.S.A. police to enter into any negotiations with him.[111]

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108 K.G. 655, Diary, 29 November 1898. Makhado who as a young girl was with the group stated on 13 July 1971 that they were surprised by the coming of the Boers.

109 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 29 November 1898.

110 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, unnumbered, A.N.C. Middeldrift to C.C. Tuli, 26 November 1898.

111 Ibid., unnumbered, C.C. Tuli to D.A. Buluwayo, 28 November 1898.

When Mphephu received the message, he despaired and informed his people of the failure of the British to offer him assistance and stated that he would not leave the Mirondoni caves without fighting.[112]

Meanwhile the Boers had completed their preparations for storming Mount Mirondoni. They launched their attack on 29 November 1898. The Swazis were ordered to enter the bush straight from the base and Commandant Potgieter commanding the Goldfields contingent, was instructed to proceed with a cannon along the foot of the hill until he found an opening where he could go through. He was to proceed northwards to cut off Mphephu.[113]

The Krugersdorp contingent, under Field-Cornet Japie du Preez climbed the mountain from the south and captured four women as well as cattle, sheep and goats. The bombardment of Mirondoni commenced and the sound of a cannon resounded in the valleys and ravines.[114]

Land en Volk reported that the heavy bombardment was heard at Luonde and as far as Mashau's mountain across the Luvuvhu river.[115]

The purpose of this phase of the war was to capture Mphephu and the burghers were encouraged as they heard from the captured Blacks that the

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112 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899. The situation of Mount Mirondoni is such that all enemies must come from the same direction i.e. southern direction. Going behind it means going much further as there are other mountains in the north.

113 The Star, 5 December 1898.

114 Land en Volk, 1 December 1898.

115 Ibid.

chief was still taking cover in the bush.[116]

It was during this phase of the operation that the Swazis ruthlessly murdered about 400 defenceless women and children. Mphephu reported that the Swazis and Tshivhase's people had killed everything before them while the Boers did not kill anybody who was unarmed. Instead they took them prisoner.[117]

As the butchering continued, people fled from the mountain in different directions. Makhado, Mphephu's younger sister who was travelling with him, said that people were scattered in the bush and that some were stabbed in their attempt to climb the mountain and trees.[118]

Mphephu himself stated that in order to distract the Boers, he had sent his impi in three directions. In this way people were scattered in the bush and consequently the extensive search by the Johannesburg, Wakkerstroom and Krugersdorp commandos proved fruitless.[119] As the commandos combed the mountain, the number of captured cattle, goats and sheep increased. On 30 November Joubert personally went up the mountain to see the place at which Mphephu had made his base. The place was virtually impregnable.

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116 The Star, 5 December 1898. The Star correspondent who had accompanied the expedition entered the bush with the burghers.

117 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 25(a), Interview with Mphephu, 3 January 1899. Makhadzi of Mavhunga, probably the only surviving war prisoner at the time of interview on 13 July 1971 and who was captured at Rabali at the foot of Mirondoni testified this. The atrocities committed by the Swazis were also reported by other informants.

118 Makhado on 13 July 1971.

119 The Star, 5 December 1898.

Heavy guns could have little effect upon it unless a path was cut through the forest in order to gain a site from which a gun might be lumbered into an advantageous position. One of Mphephu's wives who was captured, reported that the chief was in the caves and that he would fight to the last and in the event of fortune going against him, he would take his own life.[120]

The Commandant-General sealed the campaign by voicing his gratitude to the artillery, officers and the commandos and above all he thanked God for His goodness and guidance throughout the campaign.[121]

As General Joubert was launching his last attack on Mirondoni, where Mphephu had established himself, the B.S.A. police stationed a force under Inspector Straker at five different posts along the Vhembe river in order to prevent any military intervention from Rhodesia.[122]

On the following day the Commandat-General left the laager along the Nzhelele river and proceeded to Rietvlei, which he reached on 2 December 1898. Meanwhile Field-Cornets Du Preez and Botha continued the search for Mphephu. They captured some Blacks who informed them that Mphephu had started trekking that morning for another mountain and that he had sent for help across the Vhembe river and that his request had been turned down. They said that Mphephu, Tromp and other sub-chiefs, indunas and fighting men, armed with modern weapons, women and children and cattle were gathered together and were determined to fight.[123]

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120 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 1 December 1898.

121 Ibid.

122 B.A. 34, 79 S.A.R, Her Majesty's Representative, 30 November 1898.

123 The Star, 5 December 1898.

On 5 December 1898, the Krygsraad met for the last time in order to discuss the departure of the burghers. The Krygsraad also decided on the division of the spoils as well as the question of leaving 200 volunteers at the forts in order to prevent further hostilities.[124]

Some of Mphephu's followers had crossed the Vhembe river as early as 25 November 1898. This group, which consisted of about twenty-five people might have come from Tshihanane. They were followed by a group of forty-four on 3 December 1898.[125]

On the same date another group crossed the Vhembe river at its confluence with the Nzhelele. It consisted of thirty-three men, women and children with eight head of cattle and thirty-one sheep and goats. They were temporarily located at Gonwe.[126]

On 8 December 1898 the Commandant-General began his homeward journey and arrived at Pretoria on 14 December 1898 after several months of toil and struggle with the rebels of the North, who headed by the bantam Mphephu had risen against the government of the South African Republic. He was met by a reception committee and the station was decorated by the Vierkleur, and officials and an enormous crowd thronged to welcome him.[127]

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124 K.G. 655, Diary, 5 December 1898; See also S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

125 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", R.A, 7, Milton, the Commandant-General, Buluwayo, to Resident-Commissioner, Salisbury, 5 December 1898. Musekwa was among the first group.

126 K.G. 655, Diary, 5 December 1898; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 15 December 1898.

127 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 15 December 1898.

In a banquet held in the honour of the Commandant-General, the Executive Council expressed their gratitude to him "for the many and faithful services rendered to the country and people in the last expedition and trust that peace is now established in the district of the Zoutpansberg".[128]

In his reply General Joubert said:

> Although we have not done what we would have liked to do, and Mpefu has escaped, we have subdued the natives, and though Mpefu's course is still open, and he may still go about sowing seeds of discord, he can do nothing openly. We have put an end to his reign of terror in the Zoutpansberg. He is now compelled to keep quiet and hide himself, so that his power is practically broken.[129]

He also hoped that before long a town would be established in the Soutpansberg which would bid fair to be one of the most prosperous in the state and have a Burgomaster and Town Board of its own.[130]

As the search for Mphephu continued, information reached Hooflaager through Wessmann. He based his information on a report given to him by Madzivhandila's spy. This information stated that on 15 December, Mphephu held a meeting at which he had expressed himself as greatly surprised by the fact that the English had taken his men's guns away as he had thought that these English were his friends. He had expressed great disappointment and seemed convinced that his career was finished. He had twice attempted to commit suicide, but had been prevented from doing so

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128 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 15 December 1898.

129 The Star, 14 December 1898; See also The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 December 1898.

130 The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 17 December 1898.

by his men who had to disarm him.[131]

As the Boers searched from mountain to mountain for Mphephu, his followers continued to cross the Vhembe at Dohe. On 13 and 15 December, 1 300 crossed with 700 cattle and 130 guns. This group included nine of Mphephu's wives who stated that he would be following shortly. Mavhasa Musekwa had already crossed.[132]

Then on 21 December, Mphephu crossed with 1 100 refugees, 250 cattle and 237 guns.[133] They were all located at Gonwe. They were disarmed and their guns were burnt at Tshitengele. The survivors still recall this incident and believe that bullets scars can still be seen on the stem of a baobab tree.[134]

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131 Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition), 15 December 1898. None of the informants confirmed this event. Even Makhado and Thonga who travelled with the chief did not know; See also K.G. 660, undated declaration by R. Wessmann.

132 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 11, Telegram to High Commissioner, 15 December 1898.

133 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 20, C.C. Tuli to H.E. Acting High Commissioner, 23 December 1898; See also B.A. 34, 81 S.A.R, Her Majesty's Agency to T.J. Kroch, Acting Secretary of State, 28 December 1898.

134 Tshirundu on 12 July 1971. Mphephu crossed the Vhembe river into Rhodesia through the former's land.

The total number of refugees who had crossed into Rhodesia by the end of December was 2 402. They had 400 cattle, four horses, many goats and sheep with them. According to the report of the Assistant Native Commissioner: "These natives brought no food whatsoever with them. They were utterly destitute and some of them lacked even the ordinary cow-hide with them to cover themselves".[135]

Thus with the recall of the Commandos to Pretoria and Mphephu and his followers crossing the Rhodesian border, the war ended. What did the future hold? What benefits would accrue to both conflicting parties and what would eventually happen to Mphephu and his followers and to the Vhavenda nation as a whole?

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135 Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 35, A.N.C. Report for month-ending 31 December 1898.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR

After the heavy shelling and bombardment of Mount Mirondoni, Commandant-General Joubert went up the mountain on 30 November 1898 to ascertain where Mphephu was. As Mphephu had already evacuated the cave, only 1 000 cattle and 1 500 sheep and goats were captured. Joubert returned to the laager along the Nzhelele river and left on 1 December 1898 for Hooflager at Rietvlei which place he reached the following day.[1]

On 7 December the Krygsraad held its last meeting and discussed the return of the last expedition, the manning of the forts and the prisoners of war. It was agreed that Maemu and Sinthumule, Mphephu's brothers should first look for their families. For the rest the Commandant-General must keep in custody until Mphephu's case was finally settled.[2] The Krygsraad also appointed a committee composed of one member from each commando for the purpose of sharing the spoils in accordance with the law.

Before General Joubert left on 8 December 1898, he appointed Commandant-S.P. Trichardt in his place. He had to see that the forts were repaired and maintained, that the proposed aims thereof were enforced and he had to keep an eye on any mischief and attacks from the Vhavenda.[3]

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[1] K.G. 655, Diary, 1 December 1898.

[2] K.G. 654, Minutes of Krygsraad, 7 December 1898.

[3] Rademeyer, p.114.

The power of the Vhavenda had been broken and it had now become necessary to subjugate them once and for all, to look for Mphephu, to man the forts and to have the area inhabited by Whites.

Most of Mphephu's indunas had surrendered and for the little resistance which Commandant Trichardt might face, Joubert left a section of the artillery and one hundred burghers from the Soutpansberg under Commandant Du Preez as well as one hundred volunteers under Commandant P. Botha. The police which [illegible] up to then had been stationed at Fort Schutte were transferred to Rietvlei.[4]

A new fort (Fort Botha) was situated in a strategic position in the mountain near Mphephu's deserted kraal in order to prevent the return of the latter to his kraal after the Boer forces had left. Provision was made for one hundred men and stabling for one hundred horses.[5]

One of the aims of the government in despatching the expedition of 1898 had been to establish a town on a suitable site in order to stop Black aggression. It had also wanted to establish a centre of civilization in the Soutpansberg.[6]

After the arrival of the commando at Rietvlei, Joubert had informed the government that the soil and water were suitable for the establishment of a town. He had also declared that as soon as the town was built,

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[4] Rademeyer, p.114.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., pp.116-117.

civilization would flourish. In a further communiqué, he stated that the region was beautiful and very suitable for agricultural farming as the soil was very fertile and if it was opened for occupation, thousands of poor people could make a living and the grain production could easily surpass the consumption of the whole Republic.[7]

The government received written requests signed by a number of burghers and officers from Rietvlei in which they politely requested that the town be named after Louis Tregardt, the fearless old Voortrekker whose history was well-known because he was the first person ever to set a foot on the Soutpansberg with family trekkers and the trees which he planted that time were still seen.[8]

The government by a proclamation published on 22 February 1899 named the town Louis Trichardt.[9]

The government thereupon issued instructions to the Surveyor-General to commence planning a water furrow leading to the town as well as one thousand preliminary sites. No one was entitled to more than two sites, unless they were to be occupied. In this way a foundation was laid for the establishment of Louis Trichardt as a town.[10]

On the evening of 13 November 1898 which followed the meeting of the Krygsraad, General Joubert conducted a prayer meeting at the Hooflager in which he promised that if the Lord blessed their efforts in the

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7 Rademeyer, p.117.

8 Land en Volk, 12 December 1898.

9 Rademeyer, p.117.

10 Ibid., pp.117-118.

expansion of civilization in the North and granted them victory over the Blacks, they promised to build a house in the honour of God".[11]

All the commandants who participated in the solemn prayer promised to move their commandos so that they should have their share of the spoils sold in order to make money available for the erection of a church. It is necessary to explain that one third of the spoils was taken by the government while the rest was proportionally divided amongst the burghers.[12]

During the capture of Luatame on 16 November 1898 a large rock which had been in front of Mphephu's palace and on which mealie cobs were sometimes dried, was blasted and a portion was broken and on the instruction of General Joubert, was transported by the state artillery to the very place where the promised church had to be built. Out of that block of stone, a corner-stone for the present church was manufactured.[13]

The church was built on the very spot where the Hooflaager had been constructed and today it stands as a commemorative monument to the victory achieved in 1898.

The volunteers who remained in the Soutpansberg continued to search for Mphephu as they had been told by the prisoners that he was still in the mountains. Some of them even went as far as the Vhembe river. In their search they came across some of Mphephu's followers hidden in the bushes

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11 H.J. de Jager, "Louis Trichardt se Veelbewoë Geskiedenis", Die Huisgenoot, 25 October 1935, p.36.

12 Ibid., p.32.

13 Ibid., p.34.

and these they arrested.[14]

The search for Mphephu ended after the Republic was informed by the British Agent in Pretoria that the former had crossed into Rhodesia.[15] After receiving this information, the Republic communicated with the British officials asking when and where the fugitive Mphephu would be brought back to the border from Southern Rhodesia and handed over to the Republic in order to answer to charges of murder and other crimes brought against him.[16]

In reply they were told that had the government of the Republic agreed to Extradition arrangement proposed in 1897 by Sir Alfred Milner, but declined by the State Secretary, His Excellency would have been ready to consider the evidence on which the application for Mphephu's extradition might be based. But, as matters now stood, His Excellency had no legal power to accede to this government's request; and it would be altogether contrary to the traditions of Her Majesty's Government, as well as the principles of the Law of Nations, to surrender a man who could only be regarded as a political refugee having sought shelter within the Queen's jurisdiction. If Mphephu, however, after being made aware of the intentions of the Transvaal Government towards him, were to express a desire to return, there would of course be no impediment placed in the way of his surrendering himself to the Transvaal officials.[17]

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[14] This search was motivated by rumours that Mphephu had returned to his stronghold.

[15] B.A. 34, 81 S.A.R, Her Majesty's Agency, Edmund Fraser to T.J. Krogh, Acting State Secretary, 28 December 1898.

[16] B.A. 34, 1 S.A.R, Her Majesty's Agency, E. Fraser to F.W. Reitz, State Secretary, 9 January, 1899; See also Land en Volk, 28 December 1898.

[17] B.A. 34, 1 S.A.R, Her Majesty's Agency, E. Fraser to F.W. Reitz, State Secretary, 9 January 1899.

Gonwe, where Mphephu's followers were temporarily settled was about 35 miles from the Vhembe river and 85 miles from Tuli.[18] From Gonwe Mphephu went to Tuli.[19]

From Tuli Mphephu, with Captain Straker, whose 80 policemen were guarding the border, and four of his indunas left for Buluwayo on 26 December 1898 which place he reached on 3 January 1899. Mphephu also informed Captain Straker that he had given Williams £500 as the British South African Company's Representative and that the money had not yet been refunded by Williams.[20]

At Buluwayo a meeting was held between the Administrator, Captain Lawley, Sir Marshall Clerk, the Resident Commissioner, H.J. Taylor, the Chief Native Commissioner, Captain Straker, Mphephu and his indunas. Mphephu told Captain Lawley that he did not wish his country to belong to the Boers. He would rather hand it over to the Queen as Makhado had said he must never allow the Boers to have it. Captain Lawley replied that Mphephu was a subject of the Transvaal and the British could not interfere but they would rather give him a location.[21]

The matter of the £500 given to Williams was also settled and Mphephu agreed to accept a location. He had to choose between Nyamandlovu and Vhuxwa. He preferred the latter probably as his ancestors had first settled at this place before they crossed into Venda. After the meeting

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[18] Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 35, A.N.C.'s Report for Tuli District, 31 December 1898 by A.T. Pullen.

[19] Ibid., unnumbered, C.C. Tuli to Administrator, Matabeleland, 23 December 1898.

[20] Ibid., 19, Telegram from C.C. Tuli to Administrator, Buluwayo, 25 December 1898.

[21] Ibid., 24, Minutes of meeting between Rhodesian officials and Mphephu, 3 January 1899.

he went back to Tuli and informed his people that they had to go to Vhuxwa.[22]

On the way to Vhuxwa they travelled through Musimbi which fell under Mathalise and Tshamagota. They ultimately reached Vhuxwa and established four main settlements under Mphephu himself, his indunas Manavhela, Funyufunyu and Ramalamula. The location covered 36 square miles. During his stay at Vhuxwa his subjects, who had remained in Venda, secretly sent him tribute and when the Anglo-Boer War broke out in October 1899, he encouraged them to assist the British who were friendly towards their chief.[23]

While Mphephu was establishing himself in Rhodesia, the search for his followers continued. One of the Boer leaders G.L. Vosloo went to Dzimauli and told Rammbuda to send messengers to bring back Mphephu's followers from Mutele, Tshikundamalema and Mukununde and that he would come to collect them together with Maemu. Rammbuda, who was prepared to accept Maemu as chief, agreed. Vosloo did not see any sign of preparations for war at Dzimauli.[24]

The three indunas Mutele, Tshikundamalema and Mukumunde reacted by stating that Mphephu's people were in their territories and they would not deliver them to any White men at the request of Rammbuda but on Tshivhase's alone.[25]

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[22] Documents with reference to "Mpefu", 1898-99, R.A, 25, Telegram from Administrator, Buluwayo, 3 January 1899.

[23] Nemauluma on 13 June 1971; Musekwa on 12 July 1971; See also Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.201.

[24] K.G. 662, Document by G.L. Vosloo, 6 January 1899.

[25] Ibid.

This indicates that they regarded Chief Rammbuda as their equal and Tshivhase as their senior.

As Mphephu's followers were rounded up the leading indunas were arrested. Mphephu's younger brother Kutama at first resisted in a cave but he later surrendered and was arrested. The following were amongst those arrested: Ratombo, Ravele, Nelwamondo, Tshifhango, Mahadulula, Makaulule, Makongoza, Mavhungu, Mashavha, Netshiendeulu, Netshituni, Radzilani etc. Altogether 160 were arrested, mostly women and children. Commandant Trichardt first detained them at the Hooflager and thereafter took them to Pietersburg where they boarded the train. As they crossed Dwars river, Ravele, out of love for Mphephu and despair attempted to commit suicide but was stopped from committing this criminal act.[26]

When the prisoners of war arrived in Pretoria, A.J. Basson, Vrederechter of the South African Republic declared before General Joubert that he knew them and knew why they had been arrested. They had helped Mphephu against the burghers of the Republic and they had been brought to Pretoria under orders of Commandant Trichardt.[27]

The prisoners were charged for disturbing the peace of the Republic and they were detained abiding the decision of the Executive Council, in accordance with article 13 of Law No. 5 of 1885.[28]

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[26] Nemauluma, Ravele's younger brother, on 13 June 1971. Makhadzi of Mavhunga on 13 July 1971, the only surviving prisoner of war still remembers going to Pietersburg on foot.

[27] S.S. 1899, 7753, R.3779, A.J. Basson before Joubert, 3 January 1899.

[28] Ibid., State Attorney to Keeper of the Prison, 8 February 1899.

The Commandant-General inquired from the Superintendent of Natives whether any of the prisoners had any other charge pending.[29] The latter communicated with the Spelonken and the reply was that only one of them, Ratombo, had committed a crime when he attacked Knobnoses' kraals at Nwandzinginya in October 1896. In the same letter it was stated that Ravele and Nelwamondo who had come to see the Commandant-General after the burning of Mphephu's royal kraal had said they would obey the Government as they had been freed from Mphephu's yoke.[30]

At the same time, a letter was received from R. Wessmann who pleaded for the release of the headmen, Ravele and Nelwamondo on the grounds that they had not been captured nor followed into caves like the others but had instead come of their own free will in response to General Joubert's warning. This he asked in the interest of the Church and State. He went further and asked that if his request was granted, such an act of mercy would make a lasting impression on the nation of Makhado. There existed a danger that the English on the other side of the Crocodile river might attempt to entice the people to follow Mphephu.[31]

The request of Wessmann in respect of the two indunas of Mphephu, Ravele and Nelwamondo was seriously considered by the Executive Council and they were told that they attacked people who were loyal to the government. It

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[29] S.S. 1899, 7753, R.3779, Commandant-General to Superintendent of Natives, 16 February 1899.

[30] Ibid., Meyer to Superintendent of Natives, undated.

[31] S.S. 1899, 7692, R.1648, Wessmann to State President and Executive Council, 10 February 1899.

was for this reason that they were brought there in order that their case be investigated. It could not be established that they were totally innocent as satisfactory evidence was not available and that they were acquitted at the request of the missionary Wessmann and it was up to them to prevent the recurrence of this in future.[32]

The Executive discharged the two indunas and nine others; Muhela, Nalu, Masayne, Matidze, Thomas Seerema, Netshituni, Marodiela and Muhopad. The others would be treated according to article 13 of Law No. 4 of 1885 except for Ratombo who would be charged with murder.[33] These people were released during the Anglo-Boer war.

The expenditure of the war had reached about £107 000 by 14 February 1899, while in March another £50 000 was drawn to meet further expenses. This was high and consequently a war tax was levied but the people who were active in the war were exempted.[34]

During the whole campaign about 550 Vhavenda[35] perished. The casualties on the side of the Republic were three dead and nine wounded.[36]

The man who helped the burghers in the war, Sinthumule, Mphephu's brother, was now proclaimed chief and once more received the ground that had been ceded to him in the past for his reserve by Mphephu. This was Tshifhefhe. He was allowed to occupy the deserted kraals and make use of mealies and

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32 S.S. 1899, 7753, R.3779, Minute, 14 March 1899.

33 Ibid., Minute (U.I.R.), 14 March 1899.

34 Rademeyer, p.116.

35 The Star, 5 December 1899. The number of the dead given by The Pretoria Press (Weekly Edition) is 200. General Joubert also estimated the same number in his report; See also pages 142 and 151, footnotes 79 and 117.

36 S.S. 1898, 7412, R.5123, The Report.

corn which might be found.[37] The other brother, Maemu, was also given a portion of land, South of Rietvlei.[38] These were the two brothers who actively opposed Mphephu.

Although Sinthumule was proclaimed chief, people did not acknowledge him as they thought he had conspired with the government of the Republic against his brother. That is why the people remained faithful to Mphephu, sending him a yearly present to enable him to live according to his royal status.[39]

During this time the Shangaans or Knobnoses who had had no land of their own since their arrival from Portuguese East Africa were also promised a location of their own.[40] This was the so-called "Knobneuzen Lokasie" which covered parts of Tshilindi, Mavhulani and Tshimbupfe.

Immediately after the Anglo-Boer war and when people's minds were turned to the affairs of peace, the Chief Native Commissioner of Matabeleland, Captain Taylor brought Mphephu back and held a court case in which some of Mphephu's enemies were condemned to death.[41] These people, including Rasivhetshele, were told to dig themselves holes down to a certain depth at Tshamuya, were then shot by Maruli under command of Taylor and this gave him the nickname "Bulala Zonke Machangaan". Sinthumule and Maemu were saved by Mphephu himself as he said they were his brothers.[42]

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37 K.G. 662, General Joubert to Sinthumule, 7 December 1898; See also Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.201; and Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, p.80.

38 K.G. 662, Joubert to Maemu, 7 December 1898.

39 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.201.

40 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.201; See also Map 3/1449, Skets aan tonende die ligging van Knobneuzen Lokasie, Tabaans,Schuinshoogte; N.A. 1967/02 Item 5 (10.10.1905). The two locations Knobneuzen and Tabaans were carved out of Mavhulani, Tshilindi, Tshimbupfe and Nngwekhulu areas.

41 Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.201.

42 This event was described by all informants. The difference comes with the saving of the life of Sinthumule and Maemu as some say the two just escaped while others contend that they were saved by Mphephu himself.

The news of the killing of Mphephu's enemies soon reached the authorities and Mphephu was arrested. During Mphephu's absence the people felt the need for the circumcision of the boys as the last ceremony had been held during the life-time of Makhado. This was done by Rammbiyana who remained in charge of the royal kraal. The age-group which was circumcised by Rammbiyana was known as "Malatwa nga khosi" or "Takata".[43]

Mphephu was later released and he again established himself at his old royal kraal, Luatame. The period of his stay at Luatame cannot be established but writers like Van Warmelo[44] accepted the fact that Mphephu moved to the Nzhelele valley in 1910 where he was given a location. After he had established himself there he organised a circumcision ceremony for his eldest son Mmbulaheni. On the last day of the ceremony, he criticised the name "Malatwa" given by Rammbiyana to the previous age-group and said the latter was not conversant with the naming and gave them the name "Mauxu" and said that those whose ceremony had been organised at Nzhelele were "Dzithahamirivha".[45]

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43 Makhado on 13 July 1971: Nyatema on 13 July 1971 etc. Rammbiyana called them "Malatwa", "the unwanted", as they were circumcised in the absence of their Chief.

44 Van Warmelo, The Copper Miners, p.61; See also Möller-Malan, The Chair, p.202. The informants just stated that they went to Nzhelele but did not know when.

45 Mauxu and Dzithahamirivha are names given to age-groups, most of the old men who supplied me with this information belong to the "Mauxu" age-group.

Mphephu now settled on a piece of ground some 60 000 acres in extent and he was on account of his descent and through his own personality the most influential chief of Venda and seemed inclined to use his influence for good, probably owing to the fact that he had acquired respect for the White men after his experience at the hands of the Boers in 1898.[46] He died in 1924.

The other two brothers, Kutama and Sinthumule were given locations of their own which they ruled independently of Mphephu.[47] In this way Venda was divided among seven independent chiefs; Mphephu, Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Rammbuda, Sinthumule, Nesengani and Kutama. The whole country was open to White occupation.

A police station was established in 1902 at Tshanowa in Tshivhase's area. A Native Commissioner was also appointed and stationed at the same place. This was the first official residence of government officials in the eastern part of Venda. The eastern chiefs were advised to hand over their rifles in exchange for new ones. After these had been collected, the owners were given 10/- instead. This money they used for payment of taxes.[48] The old rifles were burnt and parts of some of them can still be seen today. The police station was removed to Miluwani in 1908 where Sibasa camp was established which has now developed into the Capital of Venda.

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46 War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p.61.

47 Rademeyer, p.118.

48 Information supplied by S.M. Dzivhani on 21 September 1975; Nesengani on 13 June 1971.

APPENDICES

I

R.11440/98. R.5123

VERSLAG

Algemene overzicht van den Commandant Generaal der Z.A.R. over den oproerigen kafferstam van Mpefu te Zoutpansberg.

INLEIDING

De oorzaken die tot den kryg tegen den kapitein Mpefu en het volk van den stam van Ramapoelaan in het district Zoutpansberg aanleiding hebben gegeven, zoo algemeen bekend, dat het onnodig is daarsover in dit verslag lang uit te wijden. Indien ik zulks wilde doen, zoude ik een deel van de geschiedenis van de Z.A.R. en meer in 't byzonder van het district Zoutpansberg moeten schrijven, hetwelk mij buiten de zaak zoude voeren en ook niet op mijn weg ligt. Daarom kan ik hier volstaan met te wijzen op de vele bekende gevallen van verzet en ongehoorzaamheid aan de wetten en de Regeering der Z.A.R. van dezen kafferstam en hun kapiteins. De onmiddelyke oorzaak die tot de laaste moeielykheden aanleiding gegeven heeft was het zenden door den kapitein Mpefu van een Commando paardenruiters en voetgangers naar de statie Kranspoort van den Eer. Heer Hofmeyr zendeling aldan met het doel om het betalen van belasting aan de H.E.D. Regeering door het aldaar wonende volk, en meer in 't byzonder door de Buysen een bastard stam aldaar woonachting, te beletten. Zoals het met overtreders gewoonlyk gaat; komt er eenmaal een tyd dat de mast vol is, en er een einde moet komen aan hun verzet tegen wet en orde en het aanmatigen van rechten die van geen persoon of stam maar alleen aan

een onafhankelyke staat toe komen. In het geval van deze Kaffers kan gezeg worden dat de H.Ed. Regeering niet eenmaal maar gedurig getracht heeft langs vreedzamen weg, hen terug te brengen van hunne verkeerde paden en terug te voeren tot wet, orde en gehoorzaamheid. Het verzet van deze naturellen is niet van gisteren of eergisteren maar strekt zich uit tot over een reeks van jaren. De H.Ed. Regeering was dan ook gedwongen en genoodzaakt toen zy op den 13 den September '98 na overweging der wenschelykheid om eens en vooral de rust en vrede in dat gedeelte van het district Zoutpansberg te verzekeren waardoor de veiligheid van leven en eigendom der bevolking aldaar gewaarborgd wordt; aan het Krygs-departement opdraag om een Commando op te roepen om Fort Schutte te gaan verplaatsen naar de dorpsplaats Rietvlei en om die plaats een dorp uit te leggen om daardoor te beletten, dat de oproerige kaffers hunne Standplaatsen verlieten om met het doel om roof en moord te plegen zich met andere kafferstammen te vereenigen en verder zulke voorzieningen te treffen om ingeval van botsing met de oproerige kaffers in den korst mogelyken tyd eene macht van voldoende sterkte op te roepen om het oproer te onderdrukken en zoo noodig voorgoed een einde te maken aan den toestand veroorzaakt door de oproerige houding van Mpefu...

II

S.S. 1898, 7412(B).

Kamp nabij Rietvlei.

17 Oct. '98.

Van

Commandant Generaal,

P.J. Joubert,

Groetenis aan alle bevriende kaffer opperhoofden kapiteins en volk die

nog steeds getrouw en gehoorzaam aan de wetten en aan het Gouvernment zyn gebleven. Ik doen nu weten aan kapitein Tromp, Mahema, Matetsa, Gwalagwala, Sintumula, Kutama en anderen, dat door de brutale en onredelevende houding en handelingen van Mpefu, de H.Ed. Regeering gedwongen en genoodzaakt werd om my naar hier te zenden om alle klachten tegen hem Mpefu te onderzoeken zoo als julle allen zullen weten dat zoo lang als die kapitein Magato geleef heeft, heeft hy altoos de belasting betaald en aan de orders van het Gouvernment voldoen, en dan was geen oorlog of Commandos al dien tyd van Kapitein Magato, maar toen Magato dood is, heeft Mpefu niet gewacht totdat de H.Ed. Regeering van het volk van Magato gehoord heeft wie of de kapitein moest worden en zoo doende de vrede onder het volk te bewaren meen hy Mpefu maakte hem zelf kapitein, roep een commando, vergoot onschuldig bloed op onwettige wyze en ging van toen af voort het Goevernment te miskennen te trotseren en zich meer en meer onwettige gezacht toe te eigenen het district Zoutpansberg en zoo doende de Z.A.R. te verontrusten en ten laatsten commandos met allerlei dreigementen uit te zenden om onwettige belasting in te vorderen en te weigeren zelfs belasting aan het Goevernment te betalen en andere te beletten aan de wetten te voldoen. Om zulke en meer andere ernstige klachten tegen Mpefu te onderzoeken, ben ik door de H.Ed. Regeering naar hier gezonden en nu ik ben hier. Ik wil niet aan u allen af aan het volk kwaad doen. Ik wil hebben dat u allen, dat al het volk in rust en vrede zullen wonen, maar Mpefu moet zich komen verantwoorden en gy alle die onschuldig zyt en die getrouw aan de wetten en de orders willen blyven moeten nu voor uit komen en het Gouvernment door wy te helpen en in staat te stellen om de wetten te handhaven van daag is het nog tyd van daag kunt gy het nog doen om u zelfen en uw volk te redden en niet om

het kwaad van een onrust van een kwaad doener, het, het gansche volk, het ga-nsche land in oorlogen en bloed bad te brengen. Daarom waarsku ik u allen en roep u op om my te helpen om Mpefu tot verantwoording te brengen. Ik en myne mannen zullen bescherming geven aan alle gehoorzame en getrouwe volk. Daarom, luister nu zoo lang er nog tyd is om te gehoorzamen. Als Mpefu eerst het vuur in het brand gemaakt heeft dan wiet ik en dan wiet ook gy niet hoe lang het zal duren om het dood te slaan, daarom hoor naar myn raad en bring Mpefu hier voor en als hy onschulding is dan waarborg ik u zal hem geen kwaad gedaan worden maar laat komen met vrede afgeweld. Nu ik hele gezegd en zal nu zien wat gy allen en Mpefu doen zullen. Ik wacht uw antwoord en voldoening af.

De Commandant Genl.

W.g. P.J. Joubert.

III

S.N., R.15515/96 14.3.98.

KONFIDENTIEEL

Staatssekretaris,

Ik acht het myne plicht onder de aandacht van de Regeering te brengen dat Mpefu, de zoogenaamde opvolger van Magato, district - Zoutpansberg nog steeds hardnekkig blijft, en wygert Ratombo en andere moordenaars uit te leveren, en wil niet toelaten dat de census van zyn volk opgenomen wordt; hy zegt zelf de belasting te zullen invorderen en dan aan de Commisjaris te overhandigen. Nu, zooals de Regeering weet, betaalt de stam van Magato byna niets aan belasting, en werden daardoor al meer en meer van onze getrouwe naturellen naar hem overlokt, niet alleen omdat zy geene

belasting aan de Regeering betalen, maar omdat zy dan ook niet blootstaan om door Mpefu en zyn aanhang aangevallen, beroofd en vermoord te worden. Naar myne ondervinding wordt de toestand van zaken by Mpefu van dag tot dag erger. Ek het hem zelf gesproken (Zooals reeds aan die Regeering is gerapporteerd) en hem het gevaar waarin hy en de stam verkeert onder het oog gebracht; hem ook gelast de moordenaaren Ratombo en anderen uit te leveren waaraan niets wordt voldaan; hy is en blyft hardnekkig.

Ik acht het dus noodzakelyk ook ter bescherming van de burgers van Zoutpansberg, dat nog in dezen winter Mpefu onder de wet wordt gebracht. Ik ben er van overtuigd dat zoodra eene machtvertooning van onze zyd wordt gemaakt vele naturellen onder zyn dwang en gezag staande van hem afvallig zullen worden en het niet lang zal duren dat hy en zyn volk aan de wet zullen moeten gehoorzamen.

P.A. Cronje.

18.3.98 Superintendent V. Nat.

S.R.10252/98

Pretoria 2 Junie 1898.

Heden verscheen den mynen kantore de politie Kapitein Carl Kekane die verklaart als volgt -

Volgens opdracht heb ik my op 9 April '98 orweg begeven naar Zoutpansberg om met Mpefu te spreken over zyne houding tegenover de H.Ed. Regeering wegens ernstige ziekte is myne reis zeer vertraagd en kwam ik eerst den zesden Mei aan by Mpefu. Ik heb Mpefu gewezen op het gevaarlyke zyner handelwyze om zich tegen orders de H.Ed. Regeering te verzetten en om te wygeren de belastingen te betalen. Mpefu gaaf daarop den antwoord dat hy onderdanig is aan de H.Ed. Regeering en de belastingen betaald.

Ik het hem daarop gevraagd of hy die jaar se belasting reeds betaald waarop hy antwoorde dat niemand nog was gekomen om de belastingen in te vorderen. Hy gaf verder zyn ontevredenheid te kennen over Commisjaris van Spelonken omreden die twee broeders van hem die met hem hebben gestreden onder zyne bescherming houd. Hy wensche dat er iemand zou gezonden worden van Pretoria om de belasting in te vorderen. Spreekt verder zyn verlangen uit om als locatie te ontvangen die gronden welke thans door hem worden bewoond en dat de bakens niet zullen worden veranderd.

Heeft verder gezegd dat hy een olifantstand heeft gezonden voor de President en £20..... waarvan £10 .... bestemd was voor Landd. Munnik en £10... voor Maraba ... Verder heeft Mpefu my goed behandeld en my een olifantstand present gegeven als een blyk van tevredenheid.

G.C. Feirer.

C.I. Kekana.

V

S.N., R.1355/96

11 Junie 1896.

P.J. Joubert

Superintendent van Naturellen, Pretoria.

Wel Ed. Gestr. Heer,

Op verzoek van Mpefu opperhoofd van de Mavenda stam heb ik de eer Ra Gest. mede te deelen dat heden een byeenkomst plaats vond by de Hoofd Stad alwaar Mpefu met zyne voornaamst Indunas den heer Devenish ontmoeten ten einde de instructies vervat in Ra Gestr.'s Brief van 9 Mei U te bespreken. Alles werd bevredigend afgedaan en de opperhoofd gaf te kennen van zyne begeerte om de heer Devenish op allerlei wyze te assisteren.

W. Gas. Gestr. dw dienaar

G. Godron Godson.

VI

S.N., S.R. 1396 18.6.96

Magatos

Superintendent van Naturelle, Pretoria.

Ik ondergetekende met overleg van my volk ziet de noodzakelykheid om ten sterkste in dat eene census worde opgemaakt en onze locatie worde afgebakend en verzoek derhalwe de H.Ed. Regeering eerbiediglyk de Commissie nu hier af te zenden.

Mpefu

Witness: G. Godron Godson.

Witnesses: Stephanus and Lucas.

VII

C.R.7418/96

Pietersburg Zoutpansberg

May 29th 1896.

To the Commissioner of Police

PRETORIA

Herewith I beg to report my return to Pretoria and the result of my visit to Pietersburg. "The Spelonken" and "Magatos Mountain." My last report to you was sent from Pietersburg after my return from the "Klein Spelonken" but I had left for "Magatos" before the receipt of yours of the 2nd of this month. I left Pietersburg for Magatos on May 1st going by way of Malitziesland where I stayed two days. Reached Magatos Mountain on Monday 4th inst. where I put up at H. Austins store. On Tuesday the 5th inst. I had an interview with "Mpefu" the chief who seems to be a man not likely to give any trouble to the Government..... On the 6th of the month there was a large meeting at the Hoofstadt of the principal indunas. The meeting lasted two full days and many of those who were present came carrying guns... All the natives when told by Mpefu that Capt. Schiel was not coming back were pleased and seemed satisfied at the news and I should think it a very easy task to keep the whole of these natives contented and in good order... The natives are fairly well armed and that they have a considerable amount of ammunition stowed away in caves.... but there is no intention of using them unless the government orders them to leave the mountain and the neighbouring flats in front. I noticed before leaving that all official communication from General Joubert to Mpefu and which stated that it would be delivered and explained by Tom Kelly, the veldcornet but entrusted for safe delivery to an ordinary kaffir policeman who brought it from Cooksley to the Hoofstadt - at the

Headkraal no one could read it - Luckly Mr. Austen turned up on the 21st and read and translated it to the chief who at once agreed to give the commission whom the letter mentioned every assistance in his power to mark the ground and erect beacons etc. and to do whatever was required to enable the commission to locate the boundaries of his location.

T.B. Bain.

VIII

Sup. van N.S. Nylstroom.

Heden bericht ontvangen dat er omtrent onder de kaffirs in die Spelonken zijn en dat de volk van Sentimoela en Mpefu zijn slacht geweest op de 13 na acht uur der avonds ontmoeten den heer Mernig die op reis was tussen 40 en 50 van Sentimoela's volk gewapen. Zy verteld hem dat Mpefu Sentimoela laten roepen had, daarna bleikt dat zy gegaan heeft naar een kraal van een onder kaptein van Mpefu genaamd Manamella. Die in een klipachtig boschkopje overkant Doorn woont. Daar heeft Mpefu hulle aangevallen en er werd gevecht gedurende de nacht met resultaat dat ongeveer 10 gedood zyn. Op de vyftiende ging veld.kor. Kelly de publieke aanklager die bouvallig in Spelonken was, Lut. du Toit en eenige andere blanken naar de kraal van Manamella waar zy een commando van omtrent 700 vond. Maffefa, een broeder van Manamella aangesteld door Mpefu in plaats van Manamella hy zeide dat Sentimoella de gevecht begonnen had terwyl Sentimoella aan de andere kant zeide dat Mpefu gevecht begonnen had. Sentimoella's volk heeft over de kralen van Manamella naar deze zyde van Doorn gebracht. Ook ontving ik bericht dat Mpefu dezelfde tyd der rust mensen aan de

andere zyd van Levobo aangevallen heeft, en eenige gedood had Com. Wolmarans meld wy ook dat tussen Manamella en Shewas gevecht is geweest over de wraak tusschen hulle en eenige gedood. Ik denk niet dat er eenige gevaar in voor de blankes in de Spelonken en ben van opinie dat er niets voor zou gevallen heeft, indien Sentimoella volgens mij aanbevelen een maand geleden uit de Spelonken werd genomen. Gelieve met zyn Hoog Ed. te raadpleegen op het met raadzaam zal zijn dat als voor uw cone zou gvt mulen geven kond om naar de Spelonken te gaan.

G.G. Munnik.

IX

25(a) Interview with Mpefu and his indunas, 3rd January 1899, Buluwayo, National Archives of Rhodesia.

In appears that Magato died four years ago: at the time of his death Mpefu was working at the Diamond fields: he was immediately sent for to take his father's place. In the meantime it was thought advisable to report to the government at Pretoria the death of Magato and the appointment of Mpefu as king by the Nation. A younger brother Situmuli, together with several headmen amongst whom was Stefani, who is with Mpefu, were selected to report the matter to the President: On arrival at Pretoria they were granted an interview with the Government and Situmuli, who was the chief man of the party acted as spokesman, and reported the death of Magato and the appointment of Mpefu as king. The President received the information, asked if Mpefu was at the stronghold, but was told that he had not returned from the Diamond Fields. He then gave them

the following message to Mpefu:- to tell Mpefu that he recognised him as chief of the Amavetsha tribe and commanded him to observe the laws of the country and to be loyal to the Government. He then asked the Indunas how it was that Mpefu should be away as he was heir to the kingship, and if there was no likelihood of there being some dispute to the throne. Situmuli replied that this could not happen as Mpefu was always recognised as the heir. The messengers then returned to Magatoland. Some time appears to have elapsed before Mpefu returned, and Situmuli, taking advantage of Mpefu's absence, worked up a quarrel between some of Mpefu's principal Indunas, in order to obtain the chieftainship: in this he was supported by his mother who was very jealous of her son, and succeeded so far in causing a split between them, the majority siding with Mpefu but among the minority were two of the late Magato's principal indunas. These then separated themselves and followed Situmuli, who took up his residence some distance from Magato's stronghold, close to the Brak River. He was joined by a younger brother of Mpefu named Malisa, who had greater right to the throne than Situmuli. During Mpefu's absence there was constant friction between the members of the tribe, which led to a good deal of ill feeling amongst the smaller chieftainship: One chieftain in particular who was a great favourite of the late king joined Situmuli and took away with him all the late king's treasure. Mpefu states that this money was handed over to the Transvaal Government by Situmuli to further his cause: When Mpefu returned he called a meeting of all the principal men of the tribe, including Situmuli: at the time he sent a message to the government informing them of his return, and requesting a representative of the Government to be present. The messengers returned with the reply that the President had heard of the dispute of the chieftainship, but that, as Mpefu had been unable to control his people he must abide by the consequences. Situmuli refused to attend the meeting, but sent a

message to Mpefu, that he was an usurper, to the throne, and he must abdicate in favour of him who was the rightful heir. The meeting was eventually held and the ceremony of appointing a new king was performed after which, a council was held to discuss the attitude taken up by Situmuli and his younger brother Malisa. The majority of the natives were in favour of attacking Situmuli and wiping him out at once but Mpefu decided that the better course was to represent the matter to the Transvaal Government, asking their assistance in having the matter amicably settled. The reply from the Government was to the effect that Mpefu must at once pay his taxes, which were then due. Mpefu replied: "How can you expect me to pay the taxes, when you will not recognise me as chief of the Mavetsha. When you bring Situmuli and his people before me and make them recognise me, I will pay the taxes and until this is done, I must ask you to wait." A further reply was received from the Government to the effect that they would not call up the taxes until the Nation was at peace. It appears that the friction between the two parties continued for some considerable time, extending over two years, Mpefu states that Situmuli's people were constantly raiding cattle from the kraals of his people near to the latter's stronghold, and last year went so far as to attack some of his chieftains kraals not far from his own stronghold, where they killed several natives and took all the cattle away with them. Mpefu states that during this raid, all Situmuli's people were armed with rifles, which they had obtained from the Boer Government. Although he was being constantly urged by his people to wipe out Situmuli he refrained from doing so, but in order to keep his position with his people after the raid referred to had been committed by Situmuli, he was obliged to send an impi after Situmuli, where he drove them against the Brak River, meeting with little resistance and recapturing the cattle.

His people did not cross the river as he was afraid of incurring the wrath of the Government. Shortly after this he was surprised to hear that the Boer Government were sending an army to fight him, and that they (the Boers) were massing at Pietersburg. He at once called a meeting of his councillors together to discuss the position. This lasted some days and he was on the point of sending messengers to the President to ask the meaning of it, when a message was received from the President, informing that his not having paid up his taxes was having a bad effect on the neighbouring tribes and unless he paid up the whole amount of the money due to the Government, they would send an impi to wipe him out. He told the messengers to return and he would reply to it later on. A few days elapsed, and after discussing the purport of the message with his councillors it was decided to send a message to the President requesting him to send an official to Mpefu's stronghold in order to discuss the matter, and arrive at an amicable settlement, as he had no wish to fight the Boers...

X

Magato's Stam.

Mpefu Parmantig en Opstandig.

Hoort eens wat de Zoutpansberg Boeren vriend (een blad te Piersburg uitgeven) segt. Na er op gewezen te hebben hoe Mpefu geen gelegenheid laat voorbijgaan om meer grond en kaffers onder zijn gezag te krijgen en hoe hij zijn grenslijn van Doornrivier een aanzienlijk eind aan deze zijde van de rivier had verschoven, vervolgt het blad:- Uit andere bronnen hebben wij ook vernomen dat Mpefu de witte Winkeliers in zijn gebied kennis heeft gegeven, om te vertrekken daar hij geen witte menschen in zijn land

wil hebben. Dit alles toont aan dat de stam van Magato een staand gevaar is, niet alleen voor de Spelonken die geheel zonder protectie is maar wel voor Pietersburg en geheel Zoutpansberg. Mpefu en zijne barbaren kunnen in 24 uuren geheel Zoutpansberg woest leggen, want lang eer onze burgers kunnen weten dat de vijand aan het komen is, is die alreeds onder hem, moordende en plunderende. Wij meenen dus dat de tijd aangekomen is dat de H.Ed. Regeering tot eene verstandhouding komt met Mpefu en hem de optie geeft of alle achterstalige belastingen te betalen of te vechten, en op deze wijze hem uit het land te drijven. Het is alom bekend dat het schoonste en vruchtbaarste gedeelte van ons district in handen van Magato's stam is, en daar zij voor den voorrecht dit te bewonen niet willen betalen, beschouwen wij dat het tijd is dat zij daar uitgeroeid worden. Wij vertrouwen dus dat de H.Ed. Regeering binne kort zulke stappen zal nemen om Mpefu en zijn stam tot hunverstand zullen brengen.

Land en Volk 1 October 1898.

XI

MAKHADO'S ACCOUNT ON 13 JULY 1971

She is Mphephu's younger sister. Her mother was Mphephu's mother's younger sister and at the time of the war she was staying at the royal kraal. Her name was given by Makhado, Mphephu's father. Her age at the time of the interview was about 85 years. She told what she saw and experienced.

Sinthumule called in the help of the Whites. They brought with them a cannon which was stationed at Louis Trichardt, Tshirululuni. Mphephu's

people had their fortifications at Maguni. These can still be seen today. The army was stationed there. Food used to be sent from the royal kraal. The Boers used the cannon and maxim. The cannon resounded in the mountains. Mphephu's men used to go out to meet them. When we left Dzanani, there was a fog. Our people were driven away. Matshingammbi intended to capture my brother (Mphephu). He came to my uncle's (Khakhu) kraal who was still in the fighting. Matshingammbi entered the royal kraal with a big container containing Mufhoho beer. This was done in order to have the chief captured while he was still drinking beer. This would be the end of the war. My uncle, rushed to the place and broke down the container and called out, Mphephu, Tshinavhe, my sister's son, why are you still here, stand up the Boers are on us. Thereafter the chief got hold of his belongings and left. We left by way of Mathoho pass. The moment we reached Sunguzwi, and passed over to Musindoni, the chief was at Sangali. When the fog cleared we saw Boer horses approaching Sangali. We disappeared into Luvhundini mountains. We then reached Tshakhonda, Matshema and later on passed through Milambwana. All the people were in flight over the mountains, through the valleys and across the rivers. The chief was escorted by his uncle Khakhu. They eventually crossed Nzhelele river and pitched their tents at Mamuhoi's at Mirondoni. Two weeks thereafter the Boers arrived from the east and down Mavhunga's hill. When we saw them we rushed into Mamuhoi's valley and we had to climb the mountain by means of the hanging roots of a tree called Muumo. The older ones had to pull us through these roots. From Mirondoni we went to Tshirundu's. On the way we had to go from mountain to mountain as the Boers were behind us. The moment they arrived, they found we had left. Sinthumule was pointing the way. When we arrived at Dohe, my brother

told us that we had been defeated and that he did not know where he was going to. Uncle Khakhu said, we have been defeated, my sister's son. All senior headmen Nilubi, Tshivhasa, Tshishonga and others accepted defeat and sprang on their horsebacks. We reached Vhembe river but were stopped from crossing and told to wait until tomorrow morning. At day-break, the chief said he had no alternative but to cross. We all followed him as the Boers were approaching. They were prevented from crossing by the British who told them to persecute those who had been left behind. As a result of this they together with Sinthumule returned. We spent the whole day swimming with Scottish young men. All the guns were collected near a baobab tree and set alight. We were given other guns by Scots. From the Vhembe river we went to Musimbi, ruled by Mathalise. We found a camp and were given Mifhoho, mielies by the Whites. After three months we proceeded and arrived at Tshamagota. There was nobody. We had all Vhalaudzi clan of Mahadulula, Phahwe as well as the Tshikotas, Ndadzas. We were told to proceed further and only Funyufunyu remained. We left Funyufunyu at Tshamagota and arrived at Vhuxwa. A camp was pitched in this bushy place and the chief shot a lion. We had not seen a lion before and we gathered in order to see this monster. The older people informed us that that was the lion which devoured people. As the lions continued to murder our beasts, Tshoga the owner of lions was called and he established a god in the form of a bull. It was a black bull which was brought back to Milambwana with us. After this the lions did not worry us any longer. When they came in the morning, they just moved around and thereafter disappeared. I am not sure about the number of years we spent at Vhuxwa. We were brought back by the Rhodesians, and re-established the old royal kraal. After a short while my brother together with his uncle Khakhu were detained and sent back to Rhodesia. In his absence

Rammbiyana held a circumcision ceremony. After some time, a witchdoctor Lishivha was called and doctored the whole land. Thereafter Mphephu returned. The boys who were circumcised by Rammbiyana were called Malatwangakhosi. After a few years we were told to remove to Nzhelele where a circumcision ceremony was held for Mphephu's oldest son, Mmbulaheni. He changed the name Malatwa to Mauxu and called the other age-group Dzithahamirivha.

XII

CHIEF L. NESENGANI'S ACCOUNT ON 14 JUNE 1971

He was a young man at the time of Makhado's death and he is the oldest Venda chief. In 1971 and even now he could still relate the events as if they happened yesterday. He took part in the First World War and he went as far as France. His grandfather Davhana was Makhado's elder brother. His age may be about 95 years.

Mphephu ascended the throne in 1897. He had gone to Kimberley while the younger brother Sinthumule had been in Rhodesia. After Davhana's death, Makhado wanted to remove his remains to Sunguzwi. Meanwhile Rasivhetshele, Makhokha, Makhethekhethe went to a bottle store at Sundani's and said that the Malimuwa inhabitants were troubled by leopards which were devouring calves. They asked for a poison. Together with Nwaphunga they gave Makhado the poisoned brandy. He drank and died. They installed Maemu. Sinthumule came back and drove him away. Sinthumule was given Tshifhefhe and all headmen in the vicinity were ordered to submit their cases to him. He later clashed with Mphephu over inheritance. After

he was driven from Tshifhefhe, he went to Luvhola to solicit assistance from Nesengani who declined. From here he went to Manavhela where he fought with Mphephu. Sinthumule's followers were all wiped out. One of the slain was Mulayo, Mabalanganya's elder brother. The Boers arrived in 1898 and drove Mphephu to Mashonaland. This was followed by the Anglo-Boer war between 1899-1902. In 1903 our guns were collected and set alight. Taxation was introduced. Before the war broke out Nyamita was invited to Pretoria where he was shown weapons. They inquired from him whether Mphephu could withstand these and he said he could not. Nyamita went to Dzanani and told Mphephu all he had seen. They replied that he was a Muphani who knew nothing about warfare for they were Mavhoi of Mammbadane Takata, Mavhegwa and Mangoma, the Boer would not cross. When the Boers came, they sent for Mphephu who refused to come down. They established their laager at the spot where the Dutch Reformed Church was later built. As they were there, the Takata, Mavhegwa and Mangoma defiled the waters of Litshovhu. The Boers did not retaliate. The war started after Funyufunyu fired a shot under the influence of liquor. The shot was fired at Tshitopeni. Those from Makhavhani rushed in order to capture horses. The Boers acted swiftly and said: "Skiet hom, Skiet hom, Skiet hom, Skiet hom". Mphephu's people were driven away and terrified by the sound of a cannon which they called "Makhulu Masindi". Maduguma's sons were all slain as a result of the sound of "Makhulu Masindi".

At sunset Sinthumule went round Makwatambani and in the morning he showed them the palace which they set alight. As they saw the royal kraal in flames, the inhabitants were terrified and fled to Nzhelele. Only old men and women remained. Rev. Wessmann of Tshakhuma planted white flags at

Mauluma, Lwamondo, Tshakhuma and Tshivhase's area indicating that the inhabitants were under the government. When the Boers reached Tshivhase's area he gave them £100 and told them that Mphephu was robbing him of his land. He showed them the path to Nzhelele through Thathe. They then met at Nzhelele where the Boers made use of Swazis. Mphephu was ultimately driven into Rhodesia. This was the battle of Mandiwana. The Boers were assisted by Swazis, Tsongas and Vhavenda followers of Tshivhase and Sinthumule. Mphephu's followers were disarmed in Rhodesia. They came back in 1903. He re-established himself at Luatame again. He was arrested by the Rhodesian authorities in 1904 for his failure to defray the food costs, and that he did not tell them when he left. He came back with Bulala (Captain J.H. Taylor). Rammbiyana who was a headman was left in charge of the kraal. They preferred him to relatives, in order to avoid complications which might follow. Mphephu was released in 1905 and came back home. In Rhodesia, he was in prison. Sinthumule was in the plains. Bulala murdered people at Mr. Brixton's farm. Sinthumule fled to a local missionary Guruni. When the English were looking for the Boers, they went as far as Mahebe River. Captain Schiel had established himself at Magobo's. He was one of the leaders. Mavhoi, Takata, Mavhegwa and Mangoma were Mphephu's age-groups of war. They were served meat according to these groups. They are fighters. With the exception of Kutama's the war did not take the whole day. Kutama resisted for the whole week. Sinthumule had to call out that Mphephu was already arrested, and that many people would lose their lives as a result of his actions. He was then arrested together with Ravele, Makatu and Matidze. They died in prison except Kutama and Ravele who were released by the British. Ravele nearly cut his throat but the Boers prevented him from doing so. The

people of Tshivhase did not help as they were complaining that Mphephu was robbing him of his land. His followers arrested many people from Dzanani and robbed them of their belongings.

They were robbed of clothes, property etc. Even Ramaremisa, Tshivhase's son did not help. Many of Mphephu's followers were arrested in their attempts to flee. A few Boers were killed, but Mphephu lost many people. The Whites were not allowed to cross Luvuvhu - Muhohodi rivers as they were forbidden by Makhado and Mphephu. The Vhavenda south of these rivers were the subjects of the Republic. The Whites who were in the north were mainly business people. When Maemu and Sinthumule went to invite the Boers, Sinthumule advised Maemu to cry before the Whites because Mphephu had usurped chieftainship whereas he was the only heir. Sinthumule assisted Mphephu when he drove away Maemu. Makhado was murdered by Rasivhetshele when he was intending to bring back to Sunguzwi the remains of Davhana. When Mphephu was in Rhodesia he openly declared that he could not see Rasivhetshele face to face as he was responsible for his father's death. After Mphephu had come back in 1903, the Whites called Rasivhetshele and Mutheiwana in order to find out about the death of the chief. Mutheiwana's reply was, he was the son of my sister, I found him dead and buried him. As Rasivhetshele could not come out with the truth he was shot dead.

XIII

TSHIVHIDZO MUSEKWA'S ACCOUNT

This old man was interviewed on 12 July 1971. At the death of Makhado he was a young man who could handle a rifle. He was circumcised by

Rammbiyana. He related the story so well. He did not have enough information about conditions at the royal kraal as he was staying at Tshihanane. His father Mavhasa Musekwa was Mphephu's most senior headman. He was about 90 at the time of the interview.

The war started after misunderstandings. This was caused by Rasivhetshele, Makhokha and Liswe. They started troubles when they murdered Ramabulana by means of poisoned brandy. Their intention was to have Maemu installed chief. My father Mavhasa Musekwa immediately refused to accept the young Maemu as chief. He questioned the wisdom of installing a chief in the absence of Makhado's older sons. These sons should have come back first. Sinthumule had gone to Rhodesia on his father's wagon. When he came back he sent people to bring back Mphephu. Maemu's group had already established themselves at the royal kraal. My father was joined by Ravele in opposing Maemu's installation. Ravele felt strengthened and said we better fight. They went to Raliphaswa who also supported them. He said nothing could be done in the absence of Makhado's sons. My father warned that should they come to his land, he would drive them away. Mphephu should first come back. When news of Mphephu's coming was heard, Sinthumule went out of the royal kraal. He attacked Malimuwa the whole night, our people offered help. Maemu's group fled out of reach of Sinthumule's hail of bullets from the mountain. They fled to Swobani and it was decided to give Sinthumule a tract of land. This was Tshifhefhe. Sinthumule refused the offer as he wanted Malimuwa. The elders refused and eventually forced him to Tshifhefhe as Malimuwa was not ruled by men. My father advised him to go to Tshifhefhe as he was picked out of other brothers. He did not like the offer and then started troubles. People

said Sinthumule was rebellious and matters became worse when he wanted to marry Matoro, Ramudzagi's sister. She refused as she was already married to Mphephu. He rebelled and was driven out and crossed into Tshabwa. He went to invite the Boers. He went to Manavhela who helped him. War started. When they arrived they found the kraal in flames after Tshilamulela's invasion. Sinthumule had already fled. He narrowly escaped. Mphephu warned his followers not to kill him but advised them to arrest him. He crossed the river into a few Whites who had prepared themselves to protect him. Sinthumule thereafter joined Maemu. Rasivhetshele and Makhokha, Maemu's supporters advised him to go to invite the Boers from Pretoria. He together with Maemu came back with the Boers to kill us. They pitched up a tent. The war was started by Funyufunyu. There were fortifications all over. A White from Rhodesia had advised them not to start the war but Funyufunyu fired under the influence of liquor. The Boers retaliated by means of a cannon and maxim. Mphephu's men fled into the mountain. The war lasted for a week and in the second week they entered the kraal. They wanted to prevent the chief from escaping but he was taken out in the night. They went to Nzhelele thinking that the gods would help. Tshiendeulu would help. We had settled at Tshipange mountains. The people from Dzanani followed a different way. They passed through Mabirimisa, others through Tshivhodza. When the Boers arrived we just heard the cannon bombarding. My father felt unease as he thought that they might have arrested the chief. He left the mountain with four men - Khaphatha, Gemeli, Nemukula etc. When they arrived at Matsa they met Goroso who was sent by Mphephu to inform Musekwa that the war had become intensified and they should meet at Vhembe river. The same night we put up at Lunde Mountains and the following day we proceeded to Xaxare. From here we went to Bome near the river. The following day when we were

about to cross we saw Boer horses coming. We were already in the middle of the river. Goats had already crossed. The B.S.A. police stopped them from pursuing us. We had nothing to eat on the way. We had temporarily settled at Makakaule's baobab. We ate vegetables, horses droppings, a few grains. We then proceeded to Muzhambi with our flocks. After two days Mphephu crossed. He went to Buluwayo. At Buluwayo Musekwa was advised to go back to look after the people. From Buluwayo Tshilamulela went to Vhuxwa Where he put up a large kraal. Musekwa stayed near the border in order to stop the enemies from crossing. In this way we settled at Muzhambi for about three years and thereafter came back. Makongoza, Kutama etc. were arrested.

XIV

NELUVHOLA'S ACCOUNT

At the time of the interview on 31 August 1971, he was about 88 years old. When Makhado died he was a young man. The events were still clear to him. His original home was at Tshidzivhani. He is the only one among the informants who had an idea about the killing of the 22 knobnoses by Ratombo.

Makhado passed away and Maemu was installed by Makhokha, Mutheiwana and Rasivhetshele when Mphephu was in Kimberley. Other indunas did not understand why a chief was installed when the heir was there. They were joined by Sinthumule in their opposition. Mphephu came back and Maemu was driven away. He fled to Malimuwa and they followed him. Mphephu was then installed and beasts were slaughtered. They decided to send Sinthumule to Malimuwa, others suspected troubles. It was finally

decided to send him to Tshifhefhe where Nagwedzha was the ruler. After a while he differed with Mphephu and crossed into Luvhola, in order to solicit Davhana's assistance but the latter replied that he had played with Makhado his brother and he could not continue this with the children. He went to Manavhela who agreed to accommodate him. He established himself there. The people informed Mphephu that Sinthumule was intending to attack him, and therefore he should make himself ready. Mphephu gathered his indunas at Dzanani and they told him that Sinthumule was about to launch an offensive. They wanted to know his opinion and he told them that they should meet at Manavhela, Ratombo, Nemauluma and Makaulule should attack Mutheiwana at Nwandzinginya, he should be driven away. He fixed a day for the attack on Mutheiwana and Manavhela. He emphasized that Mutheiwana should disappear from Nwandzinginya, he would greet his brother at Manavhela. Indeed they greeted each other, people perished at Manavhela and Nwandzinginya. Nwandzinginya's place of residence was next to Tshitungulu. The chief reigned while Sinthumule was across Muhohodi. The Boers came and demanded Mphephu to pay them homage. The chief gathered his indunas and passed this information and the indunas wanted to hear his opinion and he told them that he informed the Boers that he was ready to subjugate himself. The indunas said how could you arrive at that when your father had driven the Boers from Schoemansdal? If you want to subjugate yourself, we are going to instal another chief as you are a coward. He then told the Boers that they should tell Paul that Mphephu was not ready to subjugate himself, if they come he would fight. The information was passed over to the government. They then fought for the whole week. The army stretched as far as Tshidzivhani and went through Hafolo and Valdezia. The other indunas like Nemauluma were not involved. We fled to Tshiendeulu, Mandiwana and Tshagunwa. They found us at Mandiwana

and constructed tents and fortifications out of tree branches and stones. They drove us to Vhukalanga through Gonwe where we found the English in a camp. They gave us food, fish and corned meat. Gonwe is situated below Messina while Tshirundu's is further east. The British knew about our coming. The Boers arrived and stated that they were tracking their game and the British wanted to know whom they wanted, the reply was Mphephu. They were told to go back. On our way to Vhuxwa we passed through Thudwi river, Mamanda's and Tshitaudzi's areas. After two years we came back home and re-established our kraals. The chief complained that Rasivhetshele, Makholha and Nwaphunga had killed his father. Rasivhetshele was killed. Sinthumule lodged complaint and consequently Mphephu was arrested. In his absence Rammbiyana held a circumcision ceremony and on its last day, the circumcised boys were known as Malatwa. Mphephu came back and he was ordered to go to Nzhelele where he was given a location.

XV

NWANAKHADO'S ACCOUNT ON 31 AUGUST 1971

At the time of the interview, she was probably the only surviving daughter of Makhado. When her father passed away in 1895, she was already a matured girl. She related what she saw and heard.

It was Nwaphunga's and our father's wish that Maemu should succeed. He was installed and driven away by Sinthumule. Mphephu was then installed. Sinthumule was sent to Tshifhefhe and Kutama to Vhulorwa. As a result of Rasivhetshele's influence, Sinthumule rebelled and fled to Manavhela. He complained that Kutama had been given Muungadi while he was given Tshifhefhe (monkey-nut plot). Why should I be given a monkey-nut plot,

Kutama ought to have been given Tshilata. Why should you give me a monkey-nut plot and gave Kutama the large area of Muungadi? Trouble then started. Sinthumule's followers were killed but his life was spared as Mphephu warned that he should not be killed. After the war Sinthumule went to invite the Boers. When the Boers arrived we fled to Rhodesia.

They had established fortifications at Tshitandani and Muhovha. The people fled to Gaza and went down to Nzhelele through Matshema, Malale, Mabirimisa. Rasivhetshele showed them the way. They followed by way of Phiphidi. After fighting we struggled climbing the mountains to be out of reach of the Boers. The Tsongas killed many people and the place later became known as a place of bones. They pulled the people from the trees and stabbed them. Accompanied by Tshikota, Milubi, Mamuha and Ramakhadwana, Mphephu fled to Rhodesia. We crossed through Beitbridge. At home Kutama was arrested. We came back to the mountain and later removed to Nzhelele.

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E. ORAL SOURCES

1. Makhado

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. She stays at Mauluma, Beaconsfield. She was born during Makhado's reign and named after him. She was Mphephu's niece and at the outbreak of hostilities, she was a young girl staying at the royal kraal. She related

what she saw and experienced. She travelled with Mphephu to Vhuxwa and at the time of the interview she was about 85 years old. As Mphephu's close relative, she revealed some of his inner thoughts. She was so sincere in her narrative that she refused to relate what she did not see.

2. Matamela George

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. He was about 88 in 1971 and was staying at Tshiswenda. He related what he saw and experienced. He belongs to the Mauxu age-group which was circumcised when Mphephu was still in Rhodesia.

3. Matse (Headman)

Interviewed on 12 July 1971. At the time of the interview he was about 78. He belonged to Thahamirivha age-group which was circumcised when Mphephu had finally settled at Nzhelele. His father welcomed Mphephu after he had evacuated his royal kraal. At the time of the war he was a young child but he could remember some of the events.

4. Matse Mamidze

Interviewed on 12 July 1971. He was Headman Matse's younger brother. Although he did not witness the events, as he was not yet born, he intelligently related the underlying causes of the struggle for succession between Makhado's sons. In 1971 he was about 68.

5. Mavhunga (Headman)

Interviewed on 13 July 1971, At the time of the war he was a young man who could handle a fire-arm. His age at the time of the interview was about 95 years. He remembered a few events during the time of Makhado. His sense of hearing was no longer satisfactory. He has experienced the events he related. His age-group was Mauxu.

6. Mavhunga (Makhadzi)

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. At the time of the interview she was the only surviving prisoner of war. When the war broke out she had already reached the stage of maturity. Her account centred around the battle of Mirondoni and her arrest. She was Headman Mavhunga's elder sister.

7. Mavhunga Nyaphophi

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. She is the wife of Headman Mavhunga of Tshiomvani. At the time of the interview she was about 86 and she crossed Vhembe river with the refugees into Musimbi. She gave a clear exposition of what she experienced in their flight over the mountains.

8. Mmbadaliga Martha

Interviewed on 20 March 1973. As a young girl she accompanied her nephew Sinthumule to Tshifhefhe and Tshabwa. She exposed the inner feelings of Sinthumule towards his brother Mphephu. She related what she saw and experienced. At the

time of the interview she was about 86.

9. Mphephu Patrick Ramaano (Chief Minister)

Interviewed on 21 May 1971. He is the grandson of Mphephu and although he was not yet born, he has collected a lot of information about his predecessors.

10. Mphephu Thonga

Interviewed on 9 September 1971. At the time of the interview, she was the only surviving wife of Mphephu. When the war broke out in 1898, she was already a married woman. She narrated the struggle between the two brothers, the coming of the Commando and the flight to Rhodesia so well. She was about 95 at the time of the interview.

11. Mudau Frans

Interviewed on 10 September 1971. He was still young when the war broke out but he could still remember the passing of the Commando through Tshakhuma.

12. Muntswu Mathew

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. He was a young man at the time of the war and his age-group is Dzithahamirivha.

13. Musekwa Tshivhidzo

Interviewed on 12 July 1971. When the war broke out he could handle a rifle. He was staying at Tshipange. His father Mavhasa was a strong supporter of Mphephu. His

narrative was so clear that one easily followed. He had no doubt himself about the accuracy of his account. His age-group is Mauxu.

14. Negululuni

Interviewed on 15 April 1965. He was a Munyai and he knew a great deal about Vhanyai. At the time of interview he was about 90 years old.

15. Nelulovhola

Interviewed on 31 August 1971. He was a young man during the campaign. His residence was at Tshidzivhani. At the time of the interview he was about 88. He is the only informant who related the attack on the Knobnoses at Mwandzinginya in 1896. His information of the whole campaign is very valuable. He belongs to the Mauxu age-group.

16. Nemauluma Tshivhuyahuvhi

Interviewed on 13 June 1971. He was born at Mauluma and he was the younger brother of Headman Ravele who played an active role in the installation of Mphephu. He belonged to the Mauxu age-group. His narrative covered the whole campaign. His age at the time of the interview was about 92. He witnessed the events.

17. Nendouvhada Maifhani (Headman)

Interviewed on 31 August 1971. At the time of the campaign he was a young boy but he could remember the attack on Kutama

and Ndouvhada. His father was a great supporter of Mphephu. He belonged to Dzithahamirivha age-group.

18. Nesengani Lukingi (Chief)

Interviewed on 14 June 1971. He is the oldest Venda Chief and when he was interviewed he was about 95. His account of the campaign is very vivid and he speaks much about the last years of the South African Republic and President Kruger in particular. He possesses a lot of material for research workers on Venda history.

19. Netshiendeulu Nthangeni (Headman)

Interviewed on 30 March 1973. He was probably the oldest informant. He succeeded his father in 1899. His ancestors welcomed the Vhasenzi and Vhalemba groups at Mount Lwandali towards the end of the 17th century. He was the only Ngomakhosi age-group available as the others had passed away. This group was circumcised during the days of Makhado. His account of the events was very clear and systematic.

20. Nwamakhado

Interviewed on 31 August 1971. At the time of the interview she was probably the only surviving daughter of Makhado. Mphephu and Sinthumule were her brothers. She contributed a great deal in connection with the family feud between her two brothers. At the time of interview she was about 88 years old.

21. Nwatshikota

Interviewed on 31 August 1971. She was the daughter of Headman Tshikota in charge of the Tshitandani area (Louis Trichardt area). She too, witnessed the campaign as a young girl. At the time of the interview, she could not relate properly what she experienced.

22. Phosiwa Khorommbi

Interviewed on 20 May 1972. He belongs to the Dzithahamirivha age-group. At the time of the interview he was about 82. He witnessed some of the events which he very clearly narrated.

23. Radzilani Nyatema (Headman)

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. His father was one of the headmen taken prisoners after the war. His age-group was Mauxu. He witnessed the events as a young man and he related very clearly the death of Makhado and the trouble between Mphephu and Sinthumule.

24. Ramatsitsi Jack

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. When the war broke out, he had already gone to town twice which means he was a man at the time. He was a fiery speaker with much confidence as the events were still vibrating in his mind. He belongs to the Mauxu age-group.

25. Ramushwana

Interviewed on 2 February 1973. He belonged to the Mauxu age-group. He witnessed the events as he was staying near Mphephu's royal kraal. His account was very clear.

26. Ravele Frank Ndwakhulu (Minister of Education)

Interviewed on 21 May 1971. He was responsible for arranging interviews between the informants and me. He is the grandson of Headman Ravele who was one of the prisoners. He related what he heard.

27. Sitholimela Madzinge

Interviewed on 13 July 1971. He belonged to the Mauxu age-group. He was a young man when the war broke out and consequently related what he experienced. His exposition was clear.

28. Tshirundu (Headman)

Interviewed on 12 July 1971. He belonged to the Mauxu age-group. He saw Mphephu crossing into Rhodesia as this happened through his land. His account was clear.

29. Tshivhase Nyadenga

Interviewed on 15 May 1963. At the time of interview she was about 80. She was one of the surviving wives of Chief Ramaremisa Tshivhase.

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