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a History

John Wright and Andrew Manson

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February 1983

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Map 1. Showing places and geographical features mentioned in the text. The broken rectangle indicates the area shown in Map 2.

Map 2. Showing the approximate position of the Hlubi location established in 1849 and deproclaimed in 1873.

Chapter 1

Early Traditions
(to c.1819)

1. ORIGINS AND MIGRATIONS

The recorded oral history of the Hlubi goes back to an unspecified, semi-mythical time when, it is said, their ancestral chiefs lived near the Lubombo mountains, which lie along the eastern border of present-day Swaziland. About these chiefs nothing else is known, not even their names. Bryant, Stuart, and other researchers of the early 20th century recorded lists — some of them of great length — of supposed Hlubi chiefs (see Appendix), but none of these is reliable for the period before about the mid-18th century, when the Hlubi were already living on the upper Mzinyathi (Buffalo) river in what is now north-west Natal. The earliest recorded praises of their chiefs probably date from about the same period. For knowledge of the remoter Hlubi past, the historian has to turn from oral traditions to the findings of archaeology.

Very few areas in southern Africa have been investigated by archaeologists intensively enough to reveal the history of specific peoples before the time covered by human memory and by written records. In terms of a broad regional perspective, though, there is now general agreement among students of the subject that the distant ancestors of the black peoples who historically have inhabited southern Africa were establishing themselves in the sub-continent from about AD 200-300 onwards. The more immediate ancestors of the southern African societies known to history were emerging by perhaps the beginning of the second millennium. The once-common idea that these societies 'migrated' as ready-formed 'tribes' into southern Africa within the last three or four hundred years is no longer tenable.

Hlubi society, it is safe to assert, evolved in south-eastern Africa sometime before, say, the 18th century. How and when the Hlubi came to be so called has long since been forgotten. The name was perhaps that of one of their ancestral chiefs, but it does not appear on any of the recorded chief-lists. The first people to use it as a name for themselves may have been related to some of the Sotho peoples of the interior of southern Africa, and, more possibly, to some of the peoples who now call themselves Swazi. In past times, it seems, the Hlubi spoke the same kind of *tekela* dialect that the Swazi do today. 'We are all closely associated with the Swazis', the Hlubi oral historian Mabhonsa

kaSidlayi told James Stuart. 'We are one with the Swazis as well as the Basutos.'[1]

The first great event recorded in Hlubi tradition is the separation of the Hlubi from what must be regarded as an unidentifiable parent group, and their migration from the region about the Lubombo to the country on the upper Mzinyathi. Like so many tales of origin among peoples without writing, this one may well have been a myth that served as a 'founding charter'. It served to emphasize the unity of the people, to obscure the fact that they were of diverse origins, and to legitimize their occupation of the territories which they had come to inhabit. If there is any historical truth in it, it probably refers to the migration not of the Hlubi people as a whole, but of a nuclear group comprising what came to be the Hlubi ruling house, together with a number of adherents. Tradition does not explain why or when they settled near the upper Mzinyathi, but it does claim that on their arrival they found the country empty. Statements of this sort are common among pre-literate peoples with traditions of migration; in the case of the Hlubi, archeological evidence would suggest that the tradition is misleading. 'Iron Age' farmers are known to have been settled in the high grasslands to the west, south and south-east of the upper Mzinyathi valley by about the middle of the present millennium, if not before. It is highly likely that similar communities lived about the upper Mzinyathi well before the people who, perhaps, already called themselves Hlubi arrived and proceeded to establish their political supremacy over the region.

Fairly certainly the pre-existing population of the area was not a large one, for the open plains of the upper Mzinyathi country, with their lack of timber, their shallow and sometimes poor soils, and their mediocre grazing, would not have been as favourable for the settlement of peoples practising simple agricultural and stockkeeping techniques as were the ridges and valleys of the more broken country further to the east. There is no record of the relationships that came into existence between the established peoples and the intruders who subordinated them. Over time the former were probably absorbed into the relatively homogeneous society that, for reasons unknown, came to have the name Hlubi. In the process, the traditional histories of the original inhabitants were gradually forgotten, or displaced by the 'official' version of the emergent society's history as propagated by the Hlubi ruling lineage. The people who historically called themselves Hlubi were thus the descendants not only of the nuclear group which may or may not have originated at the Lubombo, but also of the now unknown peoples whom this group subordinated and with whom its members intermarried in their new homeland.

2. THE EXPANSION OF THE HLUBI CHIEFDOM

Traditions do not record who the first Hlubi chief was to rule in the Mzinyathi country. The earliest figure whose position in the line of chiefs is broadly agreed on is Dlomo, who, if he is not a mythical personage altogether, may have ruled sometime in or before the middle of the 18th century. There is no agreement in the sources as to the order, or even the names, of the chiefs who came before him, though certain names appear more often than others in the variant recorded chief-lists. Thus the names Mhlanga (Muhlanga), Mthimkhulu, Musi, Ncobo/Ngcobo, and Ndlovu are given in five of the eight lists reproduced in the Appendix to this study, and Dlamini, Hadebe and Mhuhu in four.

Very little is remembered of Dlomo, although he is pictured in one surviving tradition as a great hunter and a strong ruler who lived to an advanced age. Another tradition seems to indicate that he was borne into a junior branch of the chiefly house, and seized the chiefship by force. Two lines of his praises as recorded by Henry Masilo Ndawo would bear this out:

> *UDlom' akabunikwang' ubukhosi,*
> *Wabuzuza ngenyanda yemikhonto.*[2]
>
> Dlomo was not given the chiefship,
> He seized it by means of a bundle of spears.

Elsewhere in his praises he is described as a raider of cattle from other chiefs, and it may be that in the time of this vigorous leader the Hlubi began expanding at the expense of their neighbours into a strong chiefdom.

According to one tradition, Dlomo was followed as chief by his son Mashiyi (Mashiya), or Zikode, whose mother is given as a daughter of Zwana of the Mbambo people. A different account of the succession is given in a tradition recounted by members of a section of the Hlubi which, in the 20th century, was living in East Griqualand, under a descendant of one Ngwekazi, supposedly one of Dlomo's grandsons. Their claim was that Dlomo had been followed as chief not by his son Mashiyi, but by a son of the latter name Ngwekazi, who was shortly deposed by another son of Mashiyi name Nsele. This account is not supported in any of the other sources, and it may well be a tradition invented by people who had a direct interest in making out that Ngwekazi was in the direct line of Hlubi chiefs.

Mashiyi probably ruled in about the middle of the 18th century. In tradition, he is said to have suffered from a deformity of the leg which

affected his gait, and is not cast as a warrior-chief like his father. But he is remembered as having waged at least one successful war against the Dlambulo people, who are said to have provoked a quarrel with him. In the fighting the Dlambulo were defeated, and their chief and cattle captured by the Hlubi. The chief was later released, and some of his cattle given back to him, for in these times wars were not so savagely fought as they were a generation or two later.

Mashiyi had taken as one of his wives a woman of the Swazi people. On his death this woman's son, Nsele, is said to have succeeded him as chief. Like his grandfather Dlomo, Nsele is remembered as a warrior and raider of cattle. Among the peoples who suffered from his attacks were the neighbouring amaNgwane under their chief Tshani.

Ubuyis' abafazi bakaTshani ekuthezeni,
Ngumsozisel' owaziwayo ngesibili,
Wasozisel' amabandla kaTshani,
Kanye nendodana yakh' uMasumpa.[3]

He caused the wives of Tshani to return to gathering firewood,
He is the bringer of destitution, the one who is known indeed,
He brought destitution to the assemblies of Tshani,
And also to his son Masumpa.

So, in his praises, the Hlubi boasted about the victories of their leader. By the time of his death, probably sometime in the later 18th century, it seems that the Hlubi were on the way to becoming one of the more powerful peoples of south-east Africa.

3. THE CHIEFSHIP OF BHUNGANE kaNSELE

Bhungane (also known as Busobengwe and Mlotsha) is said to have been the son of a wife, variously named as Mnxanga and Bele, obtained by his father Nsele from the Mazibuko section of the neighbouring amaNgwe people. His reign spanned the last years of the 18th century and the first few years of the 19th, and it was at this time that the Hlubi chiefdom reached the height of its power. 'Nsele was a great king', one author recounts, 'yet far mightier and better known is his son Bhungane'.[4] By now the Hlubi country extended over an area of some 5 000 square kilometres from the mountains at the sources of the Mzinyathi south to the Biggarsberg, south-east to the vicinity of the Ncome (Blood) river, and east towards what is now Vryheid. In this territory lived, at a guess, between 10 000 and 15 000 people. To the north, their neighbours were a number of small Sotho-Swazi chiefdoms; to the east were the Ngwane,

amaNgwe, and Khumalo; further down the Mzinyathi were the Mabaso, Thembu, Sithole and Chunu; and to the south were the Bhele, Zizi and Dlamini.

With these peoples, the Hlubi intermarried and traded. Virtually nothing is known of the details of their commercial activities, though traditions recorded by Stuart indicate that they used to buy tobacco from the Dlamini, and that they had acquired a certain reputation as traders *(abahwebi)* of *ikhathazo* medicine. Later historians have suggested that the Hlubi chiefdom may also have had indirect trading links with Portuguese and other European traders who visited Delagoa Bay, where commerce was expanding rapidly in the second half of the 18th century. From the African chiefdoms on the shores of the bay the Europeans bought increasing quantities of ivory and, later, cattle. In return the Africans bought beads, cloth, brass and copper. Goods from Delagoa Bay that reached the Hlubi country would have passed through several 'middleman' communities. They were presumably paid for with cattle and perhaps small stock, for the open plains of the upper Mzinyathi were not a major ivory-producing region. Judging by practices elsewhere in Africa, the Hlubi chiefly house would have made every effort to keep as much as possible of the trade in its own hands; wealth so acquired may perhaps have been one of the sources of its power in the time of Bhungane.

The Hlubi were distinguished from the peoples of what later became Zululand by their *tekela* speech and by certain of their customs. The men did not at this time wear headrings, but instead twisted their hair into tassels which hung down all round the head. These were known as *iziyendane*, a word which was used as a nickname for the Hlubi and related peoples by the inhabitants of Zululand. A distinctive feature of Hlubi men's dress, one which reflected the influence of their Sotho neighbours, was the *umsubelo*. This was a piece of soft skin passed between the legs and bound round the waist, and contrasted with the *umutsha* or girdle of skin strips, worn in Zululand. Hlubi women wore leather skirts — of cattle hide for the rich, of goatskin for the poor — much longer than those worn by women in Zululand.

The Hlubi did not follow the practices, then common among certain peoples in Natal, of making cuts on the face, or of cutting or amputating fingers. They did however pierce the ears for decorative purposes. In Bhungane's time Hlubi boys still underwent circumcision, a practice which then seems to have been universal in Natal and Zululand, although in some chiefdoms it was already dying out.

Hlubi chiefs, writes Magema Fuze, did not eat curds *(amasi)*.[5] When they died they were buried not in graves dug in the ground by human

hands but in crevices in broken, rocky places. In earlier days, according to one of James Stuart's informants, the chief's favourite wife, together with one of his attendants, would have their eyes taken out and be buried alive with him.

Bhungane's principal *umuzi* or homestead, known as kwaMagoloza or eNgolozini, was situated to the south-east of present-day Newcastle in the Alcockspruit area. Among his brothers were Jozi, Maphanga, Mpelehwana and Sondezi; among his sons were Mabona, Mahwanqa (Mahanqa, also known as Vezi), Makhanda, Makhonza, Manyaza, Monakali, Mpangazitha, Mthimkhulu (Ngwadlazibomvu), Ngalonkulu, Sidlayi, and Zingelwayo. His chief wife was Ngiwe kaNdawonde of the Shabalala people who lived near what is now Wakkerstroom; by her, Bhungane had Mthimkhulu and Mahwanqa. The senior wife in his left-hand house was Mahambehlala, who is variously given as a daughter of Mdlini of the Khesa (Kheswa) people, or as a daughter of Khesa kaMakhathini of the Mcumane section of the Chunu people. The chief son in this house was Mpangazitha. (Soga gives Mpangazitha as of the right-hand house, but Colenso and Mabhonsa, who were better informed, both give him as of the left-hand house.)

Unlike some of the other powerful chiefs north of the Thukela at this time, Bhungane did not have an *isigodlo*. (The *isigodlo* — plural: *izigodlo* — was an establishment of girls given as tribute to the chief by his more important subjects. They lived in the chief's enclosure at his main homesteads, were regarded as his 'sisters' or 'daughters', and were married off to wealthy men of his choosing. In return he received the *ilobolo*, or bride-wealth, for them.) Nor did he gather the men of his chiefdom into age-regiments *(amabutho)* as some other chiefs were beginning to do at this time. Hlubi fighting forces were still organized into *amabandla*, or local assemblies of men of all ages.

The *izigodlo* and *amabutho* can both be seen as institutions through which chiefs tried to control their subjects more closely. Given that they did not exist in the Hlubi chiefdom, it would seem that even at the height of his power, Bhungane did not exercise as much authority over his subjects as did certain other contemporary chiefs in Zululand. (Among those who were developing more centralized systems of government through the age-regiment system were Dingiswayo kaJobe of the Mthethwa, and Zwide kaLanga of the Ndwandwe, both of whom feature later in this account.) Although Bhungane is said to have had a special knowledge of the medicines of chiefship, and although his rule extended over a comparatively large territory, his subordinate chiefs seem to have retained a considerable degree of autonomy.

Every year, at a time corresponding to late December or early January on the European calendar, Bhungane would hold the chiefdom's most important ceremony, the *umkhosi* or 'first fruits' ceremony. On this occasion he would be ritually strengthened with the medicines of chiefship, and would give permission for his people to eat the season's new crops. In later years, after Shaka had conquered the country, this ceremony came to be known as the *igagane*, as then only the Zulu king was allowed to hold an *umkhosi*. Another major ceremony of the Hlubi was, according Mabhonsa, the *ingodwane* dance festival, held when the sorghum were about two feet high. Other important rituals conducted by the chief concerned rainmaking. It is not known whether previous Hlubi chiefs had had a reputation in this field, but by one account Bhungane had a special knowledge of the medicines used in it.

It is commonly supposed that before the coming of the Europeans, the black peoples of southern Africa were 'nomadic pastoralists' whose chief concern was for their cattle, with crops being of secondary importance. This is in fact a myth. While cattle were certainly of great importance, especially in the minds of the menfolk, whose prestige was largely dependant on the size of their herds, the community's main investment of labour was in the production of cereal crops. Agriculture may have been looked on by men as 'women's work', but the bulk of the people's food staples came not from the labour of the men but from the labour of the women in their gardens.

In the time of Bhungane, according to Sivivi kaMaqungo, the main crop grown by the Hlubi was sorghum *(amabele.)* They stored their grain not in pits dung in the ground as was done by many people in Zululand, but in large baskets *(izilulu.)* Other crops which they cultivated were *izindlubu* groundnuts, *izindumbu* beans, *amabhece* melons, *amaselwa* gourds, and *amaphuzi* pumpkins. Maize, though known to them, was not yet grown in the upland country which they inhabited; rather, it was a luxury which was fetched long distances from peoples like the Mthethwa, who lived in the lower-lying regions near the coast. It was only during the 19th century, probably after the Hlubi had moved to Natal, that maize began to displace sorghum at their staple crop. The first maize that they grew was of the reddish, quick-growing type; after the coming of the Europeans to Natal they began to cultivate the white, slow-growing commercial variety.

Living as they did in a part of the country where trees were scarce, the Hlubi built their cattle kraals of stones or sods. Cattle were important not so much as a source of food but as a form of wealth and as a means for men to obtain wives through the *ukulobola* system. Most of

the cattle in the Hlubi country would have been owned by a class of rich people consisting of the chief and other notables. The rich would no doubt have eaten beef and curdled milk *(amasi)* as part of their regular diet, but for the common people, i.e. those with fewer cattle, these foods would have been something of a luxury. Most of what meat they ate would have come from wild animals killed in the hunt.

An important specialized productive activity would have been the making of iron for hoes and axes and spears, for this was long before the days when imported iron was easily and cheaply available. Mabhonsa states that there were many iron-workers in the country, two of whom he names as Diba (who lived on the site of present-day Utrecht) and Lutshaba. One hoe, he says, could be bought with a goat, while three could be bought with a beast. Iron-working would presumably have been confined to those areas of the chiefdom where there was plentiful timber for smelting and forging purposes.

Of political events during Bhungane's time, very little is known. Several accounts relate that he once gave refuge to a young man named Godongwana or Ngodongwana, who turned out to be a son of the Mthethwa chief, Jobe. Godongwana later succeeded in making himself chief of the Mthethwa, and, having in the meantime changed his name to Dingiswayo, began a career of conquest that within a short time made him one of the most powerful rulers in south-eastern Africa. With the Hlubi he seems to have remained on good terms, perhaps because of the friendship with Bhungane that had sprung up during his period of exile. A variant of this tradition given by Mabhonsa states that Dingiswayo came to the Hlubi country not to seek refuge but to learn from Bhungane about the medicines of chiefship. Other accounts do not support this claim, nor Mabhonsa's assertion that Dingiswayo was accompanied on his visit by Shaka. Another tradition, to the effect that it was Shaka who came to ask for the medicines of chiefship, is likewise not borne out by other sources. Yet another version of the story is that the chief of the Hlubi at the time of Godongwana's visit was not Bhungane but his son Mthimkhulu.

A linked tradition, that also occurs in variant forms, tells of how, at about the time of Godongwana's coming, Bhungane was visited by a mysterious white man, the first the Hlubi had ever seen. One version of the story is that the people proceeded to kill him out of fear; another, that he stayed for a time with Bhungane and doctored the chief's knee, which had an abscess *(intumbane)* growing in it, and finally went off with Godongwana when the latter left to return to the Mthethwa country. A third version claims that Bhungane was visited not by one but by several white men, who were called *izinkawu* (albinos) by the people because

they did not know what white men were. A fourth claims that these *izinkawu* came to the Hlubi country in the time of Bhungane's son, Mthimkhulu. The identity of these men, if they ever in fact existed, is not known: possibly they were white or 'coloured' travellers who were trying to make their way from the Cape Colony to Delagoa Bay, or they were traders from Delagoa Bay itself; or else they were an invention of Hlubi tradition.

More important in Hlubi history that these semi-mythical visitations were the tensions which by now were beginning to surface in the chiefdom's political life. Every African chief faced real or potential threats to his position from close relations and from powerful sub-chiefs; and as the Hlubi chiefdom grew larger, so did the possibility of internal conflict. 'Though the tribe retained a semblance of unity', Soga writes of the Hlubi at the time of Bhungane, 'it had no real cohesion'.[6] The judgement is apt, for during Bhungane's reign the chiefdom began to divide into a number of jealously opposed factions. The most serious split took place among the chief's own sons, with at least three rival groups forming in the last years of his reign. These were led respectively by Mthimkhulu, Bhungane's chief son; by Mahwanqa (Mahanqa), a brother of Mthimkhulu by the same mother; and by Mpangazitha, the eldest son in Bhungane's left-hand house. By the time of the chief's death, Mthimkhulu and his following had established themselves in what is now the Utrecht area, while Mpangazitha and his adherents occupied territory near present-day Newcastle. Although it is not known where he set himself up, the third brother, Mahwanqa, also attracted a large body of supporters.

Other quarrels are known to have taken place at this time within the Hadebe ruling clan, with the main house facing opposition from certain junior houses whose members occupied territory on the borders of the chiefdom. In his old age, Bhungane fought with Mvelase kaGobizembe, who lived near Dundee and who, the chief felt, was becoming too independent. This quarrel brought about the intervention of Thulisa kaNqondo, who lived near Nquthu and was head of another section of the Hadebe clan. In turn he was attacked by Bhungane and defeated, the result being the creation of a lasting grudge among his people against the main house.

Bhungane's praises mention others of his subjects with whom he fought. He is described as having killed a man named Mafu, who may have been Mafu kaDwala of the Hadebe clan, and as having burnt the homesteads of Jabanqa kaMpila of the amaVimbele people. Not for nothing was he known as

UMlawuzi kamkhont' osand' ukulolwa,
UMvuni wabantu njengamabele.[7]

The sharpener of the spear that has just been sharpened,
The one who reaps people as he would reap sorghum.

These attacks can perhaps be seen as the result of Bhungane's determination to maintain his authority within his chiefdom. That he was not always able to do so, especially over outlying ares of his chiefdom, is illustrated by his inability to restrain Mkhungela kaPitsholo, head of the Gumbi section of the Hadebe clan, who lived near the Ncome river in the eastern border region, and carried on a running quarrel on his own account with the neighbouring Ngwane.

Bhungane died in the early years of the 19th century, and was buried in his home territory near what is now Alcockspruit. Such was his renown among his people that a hundred years later their descendants still remembered him in the expression, uttered especially when good rains fell, *'UBhungane wenza ngakuningi'*, 'Bhungane creates an abundance'.[8] But though the chiefdom which he ruled was one of the largest in south-east Africa, by the time of his death it had become seriously weakened by internal dissensions. In spite of Bhungane's vigorous efforts to assert his authority over dissident relatives and subordinate chiefs, their quarrels with him and with one another had become endemic.

4. THE CHIEFSHIP OF MTHIMKHULU kaBHUNGANE

On the death of Bhungane, the rivalry between his senior sons burst out into the open. From his homestead near Newcastle, Mpangazitha hurried to his father's homestead at kwaMagoloza to claim the chiefship for himself. But, as a member of the left-hand house, he had no generally recognized right to it, and when the proclaimed heir, Mthimkhulu, in turn reached kwaMagoloza, he was able to mobilize enough support from the senior men of the chiefdom to win the chiefship and drive his rival away. But Mpangazitha was not crushed, and from his Mahambehlala homestead he continued to rule over a large tract of Hlubi territory round what is now Newcastle in a state of semi-independence. For his part, Mthimkhulu proceeded to move the Hlubi capital from kwaMagoloza to his own oDidini homestead on the other side of the Mzinyathi near Utrecht, and to try to rebuild chiefly authority as far as he could.

In this he seems to have had a measure of success. One tradition records that 'he ruled with a strong hand, and also compelled to obedience that section which endeavoured to make uNgwekazi's heir

ruler',[9] thus managing to contain a conflict which seems to have had its roots in the time of his great-great-grandfather, Dlomo (see above, p. 3). He was also able to strengthen his position as chief through new institutional devices. Particularly important was his establishment of age-regiments, or *amabutho*, such as were being effectively developed at this time by other chiefs. Three of Mthimkhulu's are known by name — the iziTsheleha men's regiment, and the amaPhucula and amaGangafana women's regiments. Through these *amabutho* the chief was able to exert a measure of centralized control over the marriages of young men and women of his chiefdom, and also to some extent over their labour.

Other Hlubi social practices were also changing at this time, a symptom, perhaps, of the deep-seated political shifts that seem to have been taking place in many societies north of the Thukela in the early 19th century. Mabhonsa states that the wearing of headrings by married men began in Mthimkhulu's period of rule; this practice may perhaps be seen as an indication that the social distinction between older, married men and younger, unmarried men was becoming more important, as the chief, with the support of the former, moved to exert more direct control over the latter. Also at this time Mthimkhulu discontinued the Hlubi practice of wearing the *umsubelo* in favour of wearing the *umutsha*, as was done in other major chiefdoms north of the Thukela.

Of Mthimkhulu's wives, two are known by name. They were Mntambose, a daughter of Mashoba, chief of a section of the amaNgwe people; and Njomose or Nkonjwase, a daughter of a man named Sibenya. The former was the mother of Dlomo and of Langalibalele (also known as Mthethwa, or Mdingi), and the latter the mother of Duba (Ngobe). Mthimkhulu is also known to have married a daughter of Ngxabani of the amaNgwe, who bore Luzipho (Masindizwe); and a woman of the Ndlazi people, who bore Magadla.

Of Mthimkhulu's children, Mabhonsa gives the names of fifteen sons and one daughter. The eldest son was Mahele, while the designated chief son was Dlomo. Other sons not so far mentioned were Gilikidi, Jijila, Ludidi, Mananga, Mcagwe, Mhlambiso, Mndebele, Ntambama, and Phakathwayo, while the one girl known was Sijama or Mkhwamide.

Like his father before him, Mthimkhulu was a strong enough ruler to hold together a chiefdom which was threatening to fragment into rival segments. So long as they remained even loosely united, the Hlubi were powerful among the peoples of south-east Africa. But in about 1819 they were engulfed in a series of wars which split the chiefdom in pieces and permanently destroyed Hlubi independence.

Chapter 2

The Scattering of the People
(c.1819-c.1827)

1. *IZWEKUFA* — THE DESTRUCTION OF THE NATION

By the second decade of the 19th century, two powerful kingdoms were beginning to dominate the region between the Thukela and Phongolo rivers. In the south, from their homeland between the Mhlathuze and Mfolozi rivers, the Mthethwa of Dingiswayo kaJobe were extending their domination over the peoples of the White Mfolozi valley. In the north, the Ndwandwe of Zwide kaLanga were expanding southward from their nuclear area near Magudu. Unlike Dingiswayo, who often allowed the chiefs whom he defeated to remain as rulers of their people so long as they acknowledged his overall authority, Zwide seems to have enlarged the territory under his control through a process of frequently violent conquest, and to have consolidated his power by executing defeated chiefs.

As the Mthethwa and Ndwandwe kingdoms grew in size and power, so relations between them became increasingly tense. The story of their rivalry does not concern this study; what is important here is the effect that it had on the course of Hlubi history. As already stated, Bhungane and Dingiswayo had been on good terms, and cordial relations persisted between the Mthethwa king and Bhungane's successor, Mthimkhulu. Dingiswayo was no doubt glad to have the Hlubi as allies, strategically situated as they were near the western border of Ndwandwe territory, and until the final period of his reign he held back from penetrating the Hlubi sphere of influence to the north-west of his own kingdom. According to Bryant, he carried his initial conquests up the White Mfolozi valley only as far as the chiefdoms of the Buthelezi and Khumalo in the Babanango-isiPhezi area, and does not seem to have pressed into the territories of peoples like the Mabaso who lived further to the west on the borders of Hlubi country.

Nothing is known about the relations that existed between the Hlubi and Ndwandwe at this time, but as a result of the Mthethwa-Ndwandwe rivalry, the country on the eastern borders of the Hlubi chiefdom, round the souces of the White and Black Mfolozi rivers, was becoming politically a more and more sensitive area. In about the year 1816 both Zwide and Dingiswayo sent armies into it, Zwide against the Ntshali people, and Dingiswayo against the amaNgwane, who were

neighbours to the Hlubi. The Ntshali were overcome and their chief killed, while the Ngwane chief, Matiwane, was forced to submit, at least nominally, to the authority of Dingiswayo, and to hand over several hundred cattle as tribute. According to some traditions, the Mthethwa were assisted in their attacks on the Ngwane by the Vezi people, a sub-group of the Hlubi; if this was so, it would not have improved the already poor relations between Matiwane and Mthimkhulu.

The Mthethwa and Ndwandwe were now facing each other across a frontier that stretched from the present-day Vryheid area to the sea near the mouth of the Mfolozi. The Ndwandwe king could see himself gradually being encircled by enemies, for the Mthethwa on the southern border of his kingdom were now threatening to establish a more permanent foothold in its western marches, and perhaps to form close ties with the powerful Hlubi chiefdom; while to the north the Ndwandwe were in conflict with the emerging Swazi kingdom of Ndvungunye and his son Sobhuza (Somhlolo). In these circumstances it was only a matter of time before war broke out between the Ndwandwe and Mthethwa. Conflict was sparked off in about 1817, when Dingiswayo used what he took to be a personal insult from Zwide as a pretext for invading the Ndwandwe country. In a way that has not yet been satisfactory explained, Zwide was able to capture Dingiswayo, whom he promptly had put to death. Deprived of its leader, the Mthethwa army was unable to withstand a Ndwandwe counterattack, and was driven back across the Mfolozi almost as far as the Thukela river.

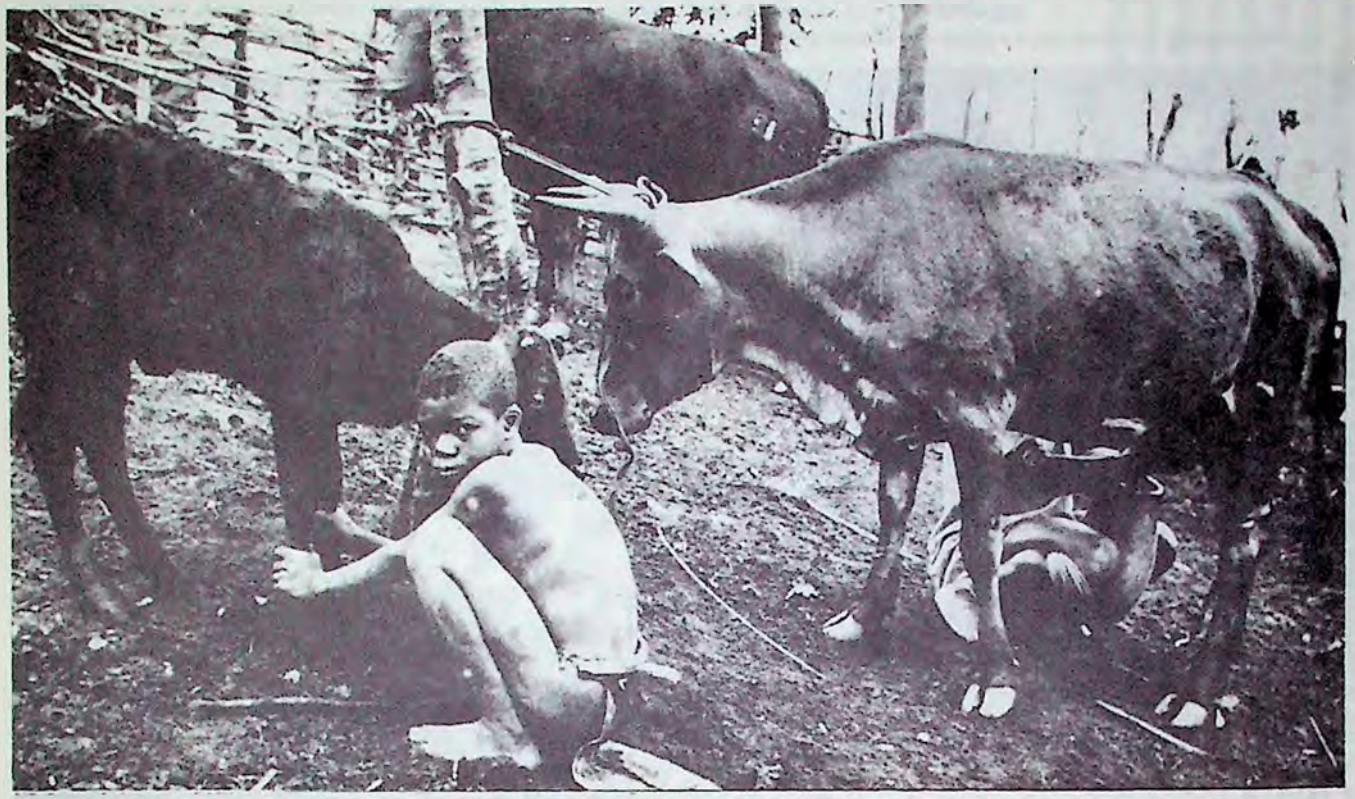
After this victory Zwide was the most powerful leader in the whole region from the Thukela to the Phongolo, but Dingiswayo's army, though defeated, was by no means destroyed. Under the forceful leadership of Shaka kaSenzangakhona, head of the small Zulu chiefdom and one of Dingiswayo's military commanders, it was reorganized and strengthened. Within a short space of a time Shaka's army was strong enough to beat off two further Ndwandwe invasions of the country south of the White Mfolozi. Then, in 1819 or so, Zwide launched yet another attack southward, with the object of once and for all wiping out the final remaining obstacle to his supremacy north of the Thukela. In a bloody battle on the banks of the Mhlathuze, Shaka's army met the Ndwandwe forces head-on, and defeated them. He at once followed up his victory by invading the Ndwandwe kingdom, seizing cattle, burning homesteads, and killing men, women, and children.

This was total war such as the Ndwandwe themselves had previously practised it. With his cattle gone and his grain stores destroyed, Zwide had no option but to flee. Gathering as many of his

people as he could, he made off along the only avenue of escape open to him, the corridor between the Hlubi to the west and the Swazi to the north. Directly in his path lay the Ngwane, who had been defeated and nominally subordinated by Dingiswayo some two or three years before. Desperate for food, and for the cattle which played a crucial role in maintaining social and political continuity, the Ndwandwe horde fell upon the Ngwane, seized their herds, and drove the people headlong from their homes. Then, veering to the north, the Ndwandwe crossed the Phongolo and headed into the present-day eastern Transvaal, where they finally came to rest near the upper Nkomati river.

Behind them they left a scene of bloodshed and chaos. Twice in the space of two or three years the Ngwane had been attacked and defeated, first by Dingiswayo, then by Zwide. Though Dingiswayo had taken many of their cattle, he had left the people in their homes and in possession of enough cattle to maintain their social existence. But the attack made by Zwide was of a very different order, for of necessity his adherents had driven the inhabitants out and pillaged all the cattle and food stocks that they could find. Faced with the threat of starvation, the Ngwane could only follow a similar course of action. Ahead of them as they fled westwards from the Ndwandwe were the fields and cattle of their old enemies, the Hlubi. Gathering his forces together, Matiwane advanced on Mthimkhulu's capital at oDidini, and in a surprise attack killed the Hlubi chief and destroyed his homestead. So sudden was the Ngwane invasion that the Hlubi leaders were unable to organize effective resistance. Abandoning their homes, the people fled in all directions, leaving the Ngwane to seize their cattle and their crops.

Several Hlubi traditions as to why they were attacked by the Ngwane have been recorded. According to Mabhonsa, Matiwane was incited to kill Mthimkhulu by a Hlubi diviner named Zulu kaMafu Hadebe. This man had formerly been one of Mthimkhulu's doctors, but had left him to join Matiwane because he felt that the Hlubi chief was not giving him enough cattle for his services. Once he had become established among the Ngwane, Zulu kaMafu plotted with Matiwane to kill Mthimkhulu. As part of their plan, an attractive Ngwane girl was presented by Matiwane to Mthimkhulu. After sleeping with the Hlubi chief, the girl returned to the Ngwane country with some of his semen; this was used by Zulu kaMafu to make medicine which put Mthimkhulu in Matiwane's power. Under the influence of the evil forces produced by the medicine, Mthimkhulu one day in the autumn left his homestead accompanied only by a few boys, and went off to inspect the crops ripening in his fields. Meanwhile a force of Ngwane warriors had secretly made their way into Hlubi country and hidden in the fields, and



1. Milking-time. One small boy prevents the calf from suckling, while another milks the cow into a wooden bucket held between his knees. The photograph was taken in Natal in the early 20th century, but illustrates a local practice that was many centuries old.

2. Women weeding their gardens. The hoes which they are using are of the type sold in large numbers by white traders in Natal in the 19th century. Then, as for centuries previously, grain formed the staple food of most of Natal's population.

when Mthimkhulu arrived they suddenly emerged and killed him. The Ngwane then attacked other Hlubi leaders, and the chiefdom fell apart, with the people scattering far and wide under their own minor chiefs.

A rather different tradition was published by Scully in 1909, and subsequently republished by Ayliff and Whiteside and by Bryant, from whose works it has since gained wide currency. According to this story, when the Mthethwa chief Dingiswayo attacked the Ngwane, Matiwane had asked Mthimkhulu to take charge of the Ngwane cattle and hide them in the mountains which bordered his country until the danger had passed. This Mthimkhulu had agreed to do. After Matiwane had made peace with Dingiswayo, and the Mthethwa army had gone home, the Ngwane had asked for the return of their cattle. But the Hlubi had refused to give them up. The angry Ngwane then prepared for war, and soon afterwards, possibly after being expelled from their own country by Zwide, had attacked the Hlubi in order to get back their cattle. As already described, Mthimkhulu was killed and the Hlubi driven from their land.

These stories were probably made up by Hlubi oral historians after the events they describe in order to provide an explanation of what was to them the otherwise inexplicable victory of the Ngwane, although both may contain some element of fact. Whatever the pretext for it, the Ngwane attack saw the powerful Hlubi chiefdom destroyed at one stroke. Though the Hlubi were more numerous than the Ngwane, they were a less united people. As described above, since at least the time of Bhungane rival factions had been developing in their chiefly house, factions which neither Bhungane nor Mthimkhulu had been able properly to control. Under the hammer blow of the Ngwane attack, the chiefdom fragmented into several sections, each under a member of the chiefly house. 'The whole tribe collapsed like the breaking of a bottle to atoms,' Mabhonsa told James Stuart long afterwards.[1] This was the event known to the Hlubi as the *izwekufa* — the destruction of the nation.

2. THE FLIGHT OF THE HLUBI

Through their attack on the Hlubi, the Ngwane had come into possession of enough cattle and grain to be able to reconstitute themselves as a people, but they did not long remain in the Hlubi country. After his two defeats at the hands of powerful invaders from the east, Matiwane probably wanted to put as great a distance as possible between his people and the new Zulu kingdom which Shaka, fresh from his victory over Zwide, was busy consolidating between the Thukela and Phongolo. Accordingly, after ravaging the Hlubi country, the Ngwane swung to the south and swept into the present-day Ladysmith-Bergville

area, which at that time was occupied by the Bhele and Zizi peoples. Once again the Ngwane passage was marked by pillaging and killing. By the time the invaders had come to rest in the upper Thukela area, the Bhele and Zizi had been broken up and had fled south across the Mzimkhulu into East Griqualand and beyond. The whole of upland Natal, from the Thukela to the Phongolo, was by now virtually empty of people. In the more broken and forested regions, small groups of fugitives eked out a precarious existence, often as cannibals, but, apart from the Ngwane, no organized social groups survived.

On the death of Mthimkhulu, formal leadership of the Hlubi passed to Mahwanqa, the dead chief's full brother and the senior surviving son of Bhungane. Mthimkhulu's designated heir was his son Dlomo, but as the latter was still a boy, Mahwanqa assumed authority as regent. If Mthimkhulu, as rightful chief, had had difficulty in keeping his brothers under his control in time of peace, then a mere regent had even less chance of being able to do so in time of war. With the Hlubi fleeing in all directions from the Ngwane, any effort to reunite their various rival factions would have been hopeless, so, abandoning their homeland as the rest of the people were doing, Mahwanqa and his adherents fled northward over the upper Phongolo river. Possibly Mahwanqa was hoping to find refuge with his mother's people, the Shabalala, who lived in the present day Wakkerstroom area. But instead he met a hostile reception from his mother's father, the chief Mathe kaNdawonde, and fighting broke out between their followings. Though Mahwanqa's men were victorious, he left the Shabalala and made off to the west, where oral tradition for a time loses sight of him.

In his flight northward from the Hlubi country, Mahwanqa may possibly have taken with him the boy chief, Dlomo, and his younger full-brother, Langalibalele, who was still a small child, with a view to leaving them in the care of their mother's people. These were the amaNgwe, who had previously lived to the east of Vryheid, but who had recently been expIled by the new Zulu king, Shaka, and had taken refuge in the mountains at the sources of the Phongolo. Tradition records that, after the break-up of the Hlubi, Dlomo and Langalibalele went with their mother, Mntambose, to her brother, Phuthini kaMashoba, chief of these remaining amaNgwe; it may well have been Mahwanqa who took them there. In Phuthini's homestead, kwaNkomokazi, they were able to find a safe retreat.

Besides Mahwanqa, a number of other members of the Hlubi chiefly house led small parties of adherents over the Drakensberg into the northern highveld. One of them was Sondezi, a brother of Bhungane, who, according to Mabhonsa, fled into the country near the iGwa (Vaal)

river, where his people were still to be found a century later. Another who made his way along the iGwa, perhaps in company with Sondezi, was Ngalonkulu, a brother of Mthimkhulu. A third Hlubi prince to seek refuge in this area was one of Mthimkhulu's sons, Luzipho. According to Bryant, he was killed in an attack on the Phuthing people in the present-day Standerton area.

Others of the Hlubi fled eastward into the territory that had recently come to be dominated by Shaka Zulu. Among them were three of Mthimhulu's brothers, Mananga, Mndebele, and Ntambama. Shaka seems to have welcomed them, and within a short while numbers of Hlubi refugees had accumulated in the Zulu kingdom. From the Mzinyathi country, numbers of Hlubi also made their way south into the largely unoccupied country that is today East Griqualand. From there, many moved still further south to find food and protection in the country of the Gcaleka Xhosa, who at that time were ruled by the chief Hintsa. Among these Hlubi were at least three of Mthimkhulu's sons, Mhlambiso, Magadla, and Ludidi. Many minor branches of the Hlubi chiefly house were also represented among the parties of fugitives that eventually made their way to Xhosa country.

3. THE FATE OF MPANGAZITHA'S HOUSE

As has been described above, on the death of Bhungane, his senior left-hand son, Mpangazitha, had tried to seize the Hlubi chiefship from the rightful heir, Mthimkhulu. Failing in this, Mpangazitha had retired to his homestead near present-day Newcastle, from which for some years he ruled a large part of Hlubi territory in virtual independence. The Ngwane attack on the Hlubi in c.1819, the death of Mthimkhulu, and the collapse of centralised authority in the Hlubi chiefdom, gave Mpangazitha the opportunity to strike out on his own. Tradition records that at first he tried to organize resistance to the Ngwane invasion, but the attempt soon proved hopeless. At the head of a large body of adherents — men, women, and children — Mpangazitha fled over the Drakensberg onto the highveld in the present-day Harrismith area.

At that time what is now the north-eastern Orange Free State was inhabited by the Tlokwa Sotho people under their queen regent, MaNthatisi, who was acting for her young son Sekonyela (Sigonyela). Some years before, tradition records, Mpangizitha had quarrelled with the Tlokwa after the latter had killed one of his kinsmen. Now, in dire need of food and cattle, he did not hesitate to lead his forces in a devastating attack on them. Driven out of their homes, the Tlokwa in turn were forced to fall on the Sotho chiefdoms to the west and south,

killing people, and seizing cattle and grain. Within a short time the whole of the northern and eastern Orange Free State ws in a state of chaos, as marauding bands of Hlubi and Tlokwa swept across it, and as displaced peoples fought one another for the resources necessary for survival. This was the beginning of the devastating wars known as the Difaqane, when nearly all the communities of the highveld were broken up, and much of the surviving population forced to take refuge in foreign lands.

Meanwhile, far to the east, Shaka Zulu had made himself master of the region from the Thukela to the Phongolo, and was beginning to launch his armies against the peoples to the south and west. One of his first targets was Matiwane, who, after destroying the Hlubi chiefdom, had gone on to settle under the Drakensberg near the upper Thukela. In about 1821 a Zulu army attacked the Ngwane, and drove them over the Drakensberg onto the highveld, where their old enemies, the Hlubi, were locked in struggle with the Tlokwa. Over the next few years the plains of the southern highveld were virtually emptied of population as the Hlubi, Tlokwa and Ngwane struggled for supremacy. After several bloody encounters with each other, the Hlubi and Ngwane met in c.1825 in a great battle near present-day Ladybrand. After five days of fierce fighting, the Ngwane were finally victorious. Mpangazitha was killed and his people scattered far and wide. Some, in desperation, joined their conquerors. Others fled to Moshweshwe, leader of the newly emerging Sotho chiefdom at Thaba Bosiu. Another group, including several of Mpangazitha's sons, fled southwards across the Orange river to seek refuge with the Thembu and Xhosa people, who were already harbouring numbers of Hlubi displaced from the Mzinyathi country half a dozen years before.

Thus was Mpangazitha's house broken up by the Ngwane as Mthimkhulu's had been. As Mthimkhulu's chief son, Dlomo, had survived the first Ngwane victory, so now Mpangazitha's son, Sidinane, was also able to escape with his life. Together with his brother Mehlomakhulu (also known as Sondaba and Luhlonga) and a few followers, he fled northwards on a course that eventually took his party over the iGwa (Vaal) river. The territory that they now entered was at this time under the rule of Mzilikazi kaMashobana Khumalo, who had fled from Shaka's Zulu kingdom some years before, and was busy establishing what came to be the Ndebele kingdom in the present-day southern and central Transvaal. As Mehlomakhulu told the story many years later, after the party of Hlubi had crossed the iGwa, it was attacked and broken up a force of Ndebele. Mehlomakhulu himself then sought protection from Mzilikazi at his capital in the Magaliesberg near

present-day Pretoria, while his brother Sidinane, with nowhere else to turn to, made his way eastward to Shaka's country.

According to Mehlomakhulu's account, Shaka refused to receive Sidinane, probably because he was of such high rank among the Hlubi. As the Zulu proverb puts it, 'A chief does not find protection from another chief'. A tradition recorded by Scully recounts that Shaka tried to humiliate Sidinane by ordering him to skin an ox that had been slaughtered for him. This the Hlubi prince refused to do, after which, surprisingly, Shaka allowed him to leave the Zulu country. As a final resort, Sidinane now decided to throw himself on the mercy of the conqueror of the Hlubi, Matiwane. Once more he climbed the Drakensberg and made his way to Matiwane's great place near the Mhulugwane (Caledon) river. But Matiwane could not allow so important an enemy to survive, and Sidinane was promptly put to death.

His brother Mehlomakhulu was meanwhile still living in the Ndebele country. Rumours began to circulate among his followers that Mzilikazi was planning to kill him because he was a chief, so, secretly gathering his people, Mehlomakhulu one night made off from Mzilikazi's, and fled southwards. His party had to beat off two attacks by a pursuing force before it could make its escape, and, once across the iGwa, it was attacked yet again by a force of Matiwane's Ngwane. On this occasion the Hlubi were victorious, but, fearing a second attack, Mehlomakhulu turned to the eastward, and led his party down the Drakensberg back to their old homeland at the Mzinyathi. But they did not remain for long, probably because they were fearful of Shaka. Leading his adherents southward, Mehlomakhulu passed through Natal and crossed the Mzimkhulu into East Griqualand. Here the Hlubi encountered a group of Bhele, people who had been their neighbours in northern Natal until Matiwane's attack of c.1819. Joining forces, the Hlubi and Bhele proceeded to make an attack on the nearby Bhaca of Ngcaphayi kaMadikane, drive them away, and seize their cattle. But their success was short-lived, for soon afterwards Ngcaphayi made a surprise counter-attack, defeated the Hlubi-Bhele alliance, and recaptured his cattle. The Bhele now fled southwards to seek protection from the Xhosa, while for their part Mehlomakhulu and the defeated Hlubi retraced their steps yet again to the Mzinyathi country.

Here Mehlomakhulu was joined by one of his father's brothers but still there was to be no peace for him. He had been back in the Hlubi homeland for only a short while when he was attacked by Shaka who, it can be surmised, did not want to see the Hlubi regrouping on his vulnerable north-western borders. Once again Mehlomakhulu made off, again crossed the Drakensberg into the country of the Tlokwa, and asked

for protection from their chief, Sekonyela.

By this time (c.1827-8), a measure of peace was returning to the southern highveld for, in 1827, after suffering an attack by the Ndebele, Matiwane had led his Ngwane south and east over the Orange into the country of the Thembu. The following year his army was destroyed by a combined force of Thembu, Xhosa, and British troops and Boer commandos from the Cape colony, and the Ngwane power was broken. Matiwane's people scattered to find protection among the peoples of the eastern Cape and Lesotho, while the chief himself, now virtually alone, returned to the Zulu country, where he was put to death by Shaka's successor, Dingane. The destruction of the Ngwane left Sekonyela as the dominant figure on the southern highveld, although he faced increasing rivalry from Moshweshwe's rising Sotho kingdom on his southern border. It may have been in a bid to increase the size of his following, as all chiefs were concerned to do, that Sekonyela allowed Mehlomakhulu to settle in his country. After nearly ten years of fighting and migration, the remnants of the Hlubi left-hand house had at last found a place of refuge.

For some twenty-five years Mehlomakhulu and his people remained in Sekonyela's country, until in 1853 the Tlokwa chief quarrelled with Moshweshwe, and was attacked by the Sotho and driven from his territory. Once again Mehlomakhulu, now well on in years, was forced to move. Through the agency of Wesleyan missionaries, he obtained permission from the British authorities in the Cape to move into the newly formed Herschel reserve south of the Orange river, and there he remained until his death at a great age.

Chapter 3

Tributaries of the Zulu Kings
(c.1819-1848)

1. THE HLUBI IN THE TIME OF SHAKA

After the break-up of the Hlubi chiefdom in c.1819, most of the people had made off westwards over the Drakensberg or southwards over the Mzimkhulu river. Some, though, fled eastwards to the newly emerged Zulu kingdom to give their allegiance to Shaka. Some of these were Hlubi who welcomed the opportunity of throwing off their allegiance to the house of Mthimkhulu; among them were the Malunga people under Nkweba, whose father, Thulisa, had quarrelled with the Hlubi chief Bhungane years before. To avoid being killed by Shaka, Nkweba concealed the fact that he was a man of rank, and his people scattered and lived under other chiefs in the Zulu kingdom.

Within a short space of time the Hlubi and other up-country refugees in Shaka's country were numerous enough for him to gather the men among them into a body which he called the iziYendane, after the Hlubi manner of doing the hair. As its chief *induna* he appointed Makhatha kaNdlukazi of the Shabalala people. Mabhonsa describes the iziYendane as a regiment, but it was not an age-regiment like those that constituted Shaka's fighting forces; rather it seems to have been a body of men of all ages whose main function was to guard the king's cattle-posts in the outlying areas of his kingdom. For reasons that tradition does not record, the iziYendane apparently received the special patronage and protection of the king's mother, Nandi.

Soon after the formation of this body, Shaka stationed some of its members, under an *induna* named Nonzama, on the Mvothi river in the coastlands of what is now Natal. It is possible that he was deliberately placing them far from their old homes in up-country Natal to prevent a revival of Hlubi power on his kingdom's exposed western borderlands. In their new location the iziYendane had the duty of guarding the southern borders of the Zulu kingdom. From time to time Shaka sent them to raid what cattle they could from the broken and terrorized peoples who were by now the only other inhabitants of the region from the Thukela to the Mzimkhulu. While engaged on these raids, states Maziyana kaMahlabeni, another of Stuart's informants, the iziYendane would break out into Zulu war-songs; as a result they came to be regarded as Zulu by the peoples whom they attacked. Captured cattle

would be sent on to Shaka, although, on occasions when they felt that they could avoid detection, the *izinduna* of the iziYendane kept back some of the beasts for themselves. After a while Shaka came to hear of this practice, and in 1824, while returning through Natal from a raid against the Mpondo, he attacked the iziYendane and killed a number of them. Many of the survivors fled, some going south to join their kinsmen who had taken refuge several years before in the Xhosa country, while others made their way over the Drakensberg to the Hlubi who had settled among the Sotho peoples.

It was not only as border guards and cattle herders that the iziYendane were employed by Shaka; on some occasions they also went on campaign with his armies. In c.1821 they fought against their old enemies, the Ngwane, when Shaka attacked Matiwane in the upper Thukela region and drove him over the mountains (see p. 18 above). They also accompanied Shaka on his expedition to the Mpondo country in 1824, and possibly fought in the great battle between the Zulu and the Ndwandwe army under Sikhunyana kaZwide near the upper Phongolo river in 1826. But, as was the case for most of Shaka's subjects, the position which the iziYendane occupied in the Zulu kingdom was a precarious one, and, on the death of their protector Nandi in 1827, many of them deserted for fear that they would be killed.

In the early years of Shaka's reign a few Hlubi had continued to eke out a living — some of them as cannibals — in the mountains and forests of their old territory on the upper Mzinyathi. As time passed, others began to trickle back to this region from their places of refuge, and to re-establish their homesteads. They no doubt took care to live close to hiding places, and to avoid accumulating cattle in numbers that would attract the attention of the Zulu. Who their chief was is not known. It may have been a son of Mpangazitha, for long afterwards Mehlomakhulu kaMpangazitha stated that a brother of his who lived at the Mzinyathi had been killed by Shaka. Or it may have been Mahwanqa kaBhungane, who is known to have returned to the Mzinyathi country from his exile on the highveld either late in the reign of Shaka or early in that of his successor Dingane. It is not known whether the Hlubi leader, whoever he was, ever personally visited Shaka to tender his formal allegiance, but it is certain that he would regularly have sent the king tribute to acknowledge his authority and to keep in favour with him. He would also have avoided holding the annual *umkhosi* ceremony, for now only the Zulu king might do so. It was at this time, according to Mabhonsa, that the Hlubi *umkhosi* ceremony was modified into a ceremony known as the *igagane* (see p. 7 above).

Situated as they were in the north-western corner of Shaka's

kingdom, the Hlubi occupied a strategic position, and would have been carefully watched by Shaka to see that they maintained their allegiance to him. To the north-east of the Hlubi country was the Swazi kingdom; to the north, until their final defeat and dispersal in 1826, were the displaced Ndwandwe, successively under Zwide and his son Sikhunyana; to the north-west was the emergent Ndebele kingdom under Mzilikazi kaMashobana Khumalo who had seceded from the Zulu kingdom in the early 1820s; to the south-west were the Tlokwa under Sekonyela, and the rising Sotho kingdom of Moshweshwe. Of all the borders of Shaka's kingdom, this north-western one was the most vulnerable to external attack, as was recognised by the king when, in the early 1820s, he established a body of his personal followers north-east of present-day Vryheid in territory until then occupied by the amaNgwe. The homestead from which this following was ruled was called ebaQulusini, 'the place of those who display their buttocks', the reference being to the amaNgwe and Hlubi habit of wearing the *umsubelo* rather than the *umutsha*. With the ebaQulusini people as near neighbours, the Hlubi were no doubt concerned to keep themselves as inconspicuous as possible.

From the latter part of Shaka's reign dates the first written description of the Hlubi in Natal. Its author was the Port Natal trader, Henry Fynn, who accompanied Shaka's army on its campaign against Sikhunyana's Ndwandwe in 1826. On its march the Zulu force passed through the present-day Vryheid area, and camped for a night at some Hlubi homesteads, where Shaka pressed the men into his service as guides and spies. Of the once-powerful iziYendane nation, Fynn wrote, only 150 or 200 people still remained.[1]

2. THE REVIVAL OF THE HLUBI CHIEFDOM

Shaka was assassinated in September 1828 by his brothers Dingane and Mhlangana at his Dukuza homestead near present-day Stanger. At the time the whole Zulu army was away on campaign far to the north. To protect the royal cattle in Natal until its return, and to provide themselves with a police force for getting rid of dissidents, the two assassins hastily proceeded to form a new regiment from the iziYendane — among them a number of Hlubi — who were serving as cattle-herders at the various royal homesteads. They called it the Hlomendlini (the Home Guards), and over the next few months it played a part of some significance in the events which finally saw Dingane established as Shaka's successor. During the first few years of Dingane's reign the Hlomendlini was stationed in two sections at the Nonothi and Mhlali rivers south of the Thukela, then, after 1832, on the north bank of the

Thukela. Here it kept watch over the route from the Zulu country to the settlement which white traders had established at Port Natal in 1824.

Meanwhile, in the upper Mzinyathi country, the number of Hlubi who had returned from their various places of exile was slowly growing. Some time in the late 1820s they were rejoined by Mahwanqa and his followers. As the senior surviving son of Bhungane, he was able to establish himself as leader of these Hlubi, and, from his eNdlalweni homestead, to begin working to revive something of the power of the chiefly house. In law, Mahwanqa was acting as regent for his nephew Dlomo, who, now a boy in his teens, was still too young to rule; in fact, Mahwanqa came to exercise the powers of a chief in his own right. He rebuilt his brother Mthimkhulu's old Nobamba homestead and, the better to prevent the emergence of an opposition party, fetched back Dlomo and his younger brother Langalibalele from their place of refuge in the amaNgwe country, where they had been living since the death of their father some twelve years before. Henceforth both lived at Nobamba where Mahwanqa could keep an eye on them.

Another move made by Mahwanqa to rebuild the power of the chiefly house was to revive the practice, begun by Mthimkhulu, of forming young men into age-regiments. The first which he established was the umZimane, which he apparently hoped to turn into a personal following. The next, which was formed probably in the early or mid-1830s, was the umSonganyathi, to which both Dlomo and Langalibalele belonged.

The fact that Mahwanqa was allowed by Dingane to form his own age-regiments indicated that he ruled with a certain degree of autonomy, as did other chiefs who lived on the peripheries of the Zulu kingdom. It would therefore be more accurate to describe the Hlubi at this time as tributaries rather than as subjects of the Zulu king. But, like every other chief who recognised his paramountcy, Mahwanqa would regularly have sent tribute in cattle for Dingane's herds, girls for his *isigodlo* (see p. 6 above), and young men for his armies. Numbers of iziYendane, still under the command of the *induna* Makhatha, continued to serve the Zulu royal house during Dingane's reign.

The problem of keeping in favour with the Zulu monarch would have been one of Mahwanqa's chief preoccupations during the early years of his regency, but by the mid-1830s his prime concern had become how best to deal with the opposition to his rule that was building up among some sections of the Hlubi. By now Dlomo was old enough to be able to rule in his own right, but Mahwanqa was understandably reluctant to give up the chiefship that he had been instrumental in resuscitating. To try to offset the growing power of Dlomo's party of

supporters, Mahwanqa seems deliberately to have shown favour to Langalibalele, whom he had made one of his personal attendants. The result was the emergence of two distinct factions among the Hlubi, one supporting Dlomo and the other Langalibalele. From the Swazi country King Sobhuza put pressure on Mahwanqa to give up the chiefship in favour of Dlomo, but this the regent refused to do, and before long the tensions between the two parties began to break out into open fighting.

The outcome of the quarrel was decided when the umZimane regiment deserted Mahwanqa's cause and went over to his young rival. In the fighting that followed, Mahwanqa was killed, and Dlomo's party emerged victorious. There is some evidence that in this conflict Dlomo received assistance from Dingane; if so, it was presumably because the king was becoming suspicious of Mahwanqa's growing power, and took the opportunity provided by the internal quarrels of the Hlubi to intervene in their succession dispute to his own advantage. These events probably took place in the latter half of 1835 or in 1836, for, according to the missionary Allen Gardiner, the Hlubi chief in June 1835 was still 'Amahuangwa', i.e. Mahwanqa.[2]

The way was now open for Dlomo to become chief. But first the Zulu king had to be told of what had transpired in the Hlubi country, so messengers were sent to Makhatha, chief *induna* of the izi Yendane in the Zulu kingdom, to instruct him to report the death of Mahwanqa to Dingane. Makhatha sent back word that it would be better if Dlomo came and did so in person, so the young heir duly made the 150-kilometre journey to Dingane's capital at Mgungundlovu. According to one account, after making his report, Dlomo went on to request that he should be allowed to appropriate Mahwanqa's cattle and become the great chief of the Hlubi. But Dingane had his own ideas about the Hlubi chiefly succession, and instead of allowing Dlomo to become chief, he had him put to death. The cattle of the Hlubi chiefly house were confiscated and added to the Zulu royal herds, and a short while later the *induna* Makhatha, who had originally been appointed by Shaka, was also killed by order of the king.

Dingane was presumably led to act as he did by the fear that the reviving Hlubi chiefdom was becoming too independent of his authority and hence liable to try to escape it altogether. Living where they did, the Hlubi were particularly well placed to hive off from the Zulu kingdom and give their allegiance to a rival leader. A related consideration in Dingane's mind was no doubt the fact that the Zulu army no longer held sway over as great an extent of territory as it had done in Shaka's reign. The possibility of coming into conflict with British interests in the Cape frontier region limited Dingane's freedom

to send his forces on cattle raids southwards over the Mzimkhulu, while the presence of a party of British hunter-traders at Port Natal similarly restricted his exercise of authority in the region south of the Thukela. On the highveld, his armies had proved unable to destroy the power of the formidable Ndebele kingdom, which remained a rival focus of allegiance throughout Dingane's reign. The Zulu king would have been particularly sensitive to aspirations towards autonomy on the part of his border chiefs, and his inclinations to curb their powers would have been reinforced by a number of successful secessions that had taken place in the early part of his reign. The most important of these was the flight southwards of a large body of Qwabe under Nqetho kaKhondlo in 1829. The king could well have seen the revival of a measure of Hlubi power under Mahwanqa as a prelude to a similar break-away movement, and accordingly have taken steps to forestall it by wiping out the Hlubi leadership.

3. LANGALIBALELE'S PATH TO THE CHIEFSHIP

Whatever his motives, the effect of Dingane's intervention was virtually to destroy the authority of the Hlubi chiefly house, and once again to throw the whole chiefdom into turmoil. The death of Dlomo without issue left his brother Langalibalele, then about 21 years old, with the strongest genealogical claim to the Hlubi chiefship, but he very soon found himself facing a determined challenge for the succession from another son of Mthimkhulu, named Duba. Langalibalele's ability to assert his claims against those of his rivals had been seriously weakened by the defeat and death of his patron Mahwanqa, so, to avoid a confrontation which at that stage he could not hope to win, he left Nobamba and withdrew into the mountains near present-day Utrecht. Here, at the residence of Matshwatshwa kaSibekebula of the Mnculwana people on the Mpongo stream, he found a refuge and a base from which he and his advisers could attempt to rebuild a following.

Meanwhile, at his mother's eZilanjeni residence near the Mzinyathi river, Duba was organizing support for his cause among her kinsfolk under their chief Mahlaphahlapha (variously given as belonging to the Hadebe section of the Hlubi, and to the Bhele people). With a body of men provided by the chief, Duba went after Langalibalele, succeeded in capturing him, and brought him back in triumph across the Mzinyathi. Tradition has it that some of Mahlaphahlapha's people were cannibals, and that Duba planned to have them put Langalibalele to death and eat him. But through the agency of two of his half-sisters who lived at Duba's, Langalibalele was warned in time and managed to escape. Pursued by Mahlaphahlapha's people, he managed to shake them off by

swimming the flooded Mzinyathi river, and made his way back to Matshwatshwa's residence in the mountains.

Langalibalele's fortunes were now at a low ebb, but his position as the senior surviving son of Mthimkhulu gave him an unshakeable claim to the chiefship and, with it, the loyalty of a small core of supporters of the Hlubi main house. A body of displaced persons who had lost their kin in the wars of the 1820s began to gather round him, and after a time he had accumulated enough adherents to build his own homestead, which he named ePhangweni. Numbers of Hlubi who had supported the cause of his brother Dlomo now came to give him their allegiance. The deciding factor in his struggle with Duba was the intervention of the men of the umZimane age-regiment. As they had previously supported Mthimkhulu's rightful heir, Dlomo, against the regent Mahwanqa, so now they again supported the representative of the main house, Langalibalele, against his rival. What happened to Duba tradition does not recount, but Langalibalele and a number of his age-mates were now taken off by the umZimane and conducted through the rituals of circumcision. Only after he had been circumcised would Langalibalele have been regarded as a man, and it was probably soon after this that the senior men among his people formally installed him as chief.

This event probably took place in late 1836 or early 1837, when Langalibalele would have been about 22 years of age. After his installation his next step was presumably to tender his formal allegiance to Dingane, although it is not known if he travelled to Mgungundlovu in person to do so. The young chief then proceeded to begin enlarging his personal house by taking wives and producing sons. His first wife was a daughter of a man named Msimanga, and within a short while, as befitted a chief, he had married three other women. More marriages followed, with the result that Langalibalele's house expanded rapidly and the prestige of the Hlubi chiefship once again began to revive. Within a short while of his becoming chief, Langalibalele felt secure enough in his office to leave the shelter of the mountains and to rebuild his ePhangweni residence in his father's old country near present-day Utrecht.

But the young chief was not allowed to live in peace for long. Having fought off Duba's challenge for the succession, he now faced the first serious test of his authority when a party of dissidents from the neighbouring amaNgwe chiefdom settled themselves in part of what the Hlubi regarded as their own territory. The leader of this group was Siwela, a son of the amaNgwe chief Phuthini and a cousin of Langalibalele on his mother's side. According to Mabhonsa's account,

Siwela wished his father to nominate him as his heir, but this Phuthini refused to do. Upon this Siwela left the amaNgwe country, presumably in a bid to find land where he could set himself up as an independent chief, and proceeded to build homesteads in an area claimed by the Hlubi. Fighting took place between his and Langalibalele's people, with each side gaining a victory. Langalibalele's mother attempted to intervene in the quarrel, but to no avail. After gathering reinforcements, Langalibalele launched a second attack on Siwela, defeated him, and drove his people out of the disputed territory. Siwela himself took refuge in the country of Mathe, chief of the Shabalala living to the north of the Phongolo.

After his victory, Langalibele sent messengers to report events to his overlord Dingane. The Zulu king's response gives a significant indication of the relationship between the Hlubi and Zulu reigning houses at this time, for, on receiving Langalibalele's message, Dingane sent out a force with orders to track down Siwela in his place of refuge and kill him. This was duly done, and Siwela's cattle were taken to be added to the Zulu royal herds. From this it would seem that Dingane saw Langalibalele as a subordinate who posed no threat to the authority of the monarchy, and to whom he was prepared to lend active support so as to maintain the security of his north-western border. For his part Langalibalele was probably only too pleased to have so powerful a backer as the Zulu king for his still shaky chiefship, the more so as he soon found himself facing yet another challenge to his position.

This time the threat to the chiefly house came from another leading Hlubi house, that headed by Mini, son of the late regent Mahwanqa. The basis of Mini's claim to the chiefship was that on his father's return to the Hlubi country from his years of exile he had found the chiefship unclaimed, and, as brother of the previous chief, Mthimkhulu, had therefore taken it for himself. In Mini's view, it was the descendants of Mahwanqa, not those of Mthimkhulu, who had the most legitimate claim to the Hlubi chiefship. Fighting followed between the adherents of Langalibalele and those of Mini. The latter's forces were defeated, upon which he made off over the Drakensberg to seek sanctuary and support from an old enemy of the Hlubi chiefly house, Sekonyela of the Tlokwa.

There is no knowing whether at this stage Mini still hoped to dislodge Langalibalele from the chiefship, but, at a time (mid-1837) when the Zulu army was away on campaign against the Ndebele in the present-day western Transvaal, it seems to have taken little inducement on his part to persuade Sekonyela to make a raid on the Hlubi herds. By this time the Tlokwa chief disposed of a number of men mounted on

3. *A wagon crossing the Amanzimtoti river on the south coast of Natal. African men, including numbers of Hlubi, played a key role in the colony's transport system as drivers, brakemen, herdsmen, and leaders of teams of oxen. A photograph taken possibly in the 1860s.*

4. Outspan-time. In the 1850s and 1860s numbers of Hlubi men were taking service with white settlers all over Natal and even in the Cape colony. Many of them would have worked for traders who transported goods from Durban and Pietermaritzburg north to the Zulu kingdom, south as far as the Mpondo country, and inland to the Orange Free State and Transvaal. A photograph taken possibly in the 1860s.

horses and armed with guns, and in September 1837 (the date is fixed by missionary and Voortrekker records) he sent it down the passes of the Drakensberg.[3] The Hlubi and their neighbours were caught by surprise. Raiding far down the Mzinyathi, the Tlokwa horsemen killed numbers of people and swept off several hundred cattle. Then, driving their booty before them, they disappeared back over the mountains as swiftly as they had come.

News of the raid was at once carried to Dingane. It was not only the inhabitants of the up-country region that had suffered, for a number of the king's cattle had been seized from the royal cattle posts near iLenge mountain (Job's Kop). But the implications of the incursion for the Zulu monarchy went far beyond the loss of a few hundred cattle. Not since the attempted Ndwandwe invasion in 1826 had there been so bold an attack on the Zulu kingdom. The military implications of the Tlokwa raid were serious enough, for they showed for the first time that the Zulu kingdom was vulnerable to invasion by a comparatively small body of mounted men carrying firearms. But more far-reaching were the political implications, for if the monarchy showed itself unable to defend the outlying areas of the kingdom, it was liable very rapidly to lose the allegiance of the border chiefs, and perhaps that of powerful leaders in the kingdom's heartland as well.

All this and much more was no doubt pondered by Dingane and his advisers in the aftermath of the raid as they debated what retaliatory action to take against the Tlokwa. Langalibalele and his neighbouring chiefs, too, presumably gave much thought to how best to deal with possible further raids, for a chief who could not adequately protect his people would soon find himself without a following. But, whatever the lines of counter-action which Dingane and his chiefs were contemplating, in October 1837 their attentions were suddenly diverted to a completely different set of issues. In that month the first party of Voortrekkers came down the Drakensberg from the highveld into Natal, and the affairs of the Zulu kingdom took a new turn.

4. YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY

The events that took place in Natal-Zululand after the arrival of the Boer leader Piet Retief in Natal in October 1837 are too well known to need detailing here. Of more direct concern to this study is the history of the Hlubi in the period that saw the killing of Retief and his party by Dingane in February 1838; the subsequent war between the Zulu and Boers which culminated in the defeat of the Zulu at the Ncome (Blood) river in December 1838; the flight of Mpande, a brother of Dingane, to the Boers in September 1839; the defeat of Dingane's forces by those of

the Mpande-Boer alliance in January 1840; and the succession of Mpande to the Zulu kingship in February 1840. But neither recorded tradition nor documentary evidence have more than a few words to say about the Hlubi at this time, and the points that follow are based largely on speculation.

The initial success of the Zulu armies against the Boers in the fighting of 1838 no doubt served to keep Langalibalele firm in his allegiance to the Zulu monarchy, but the Boer victory at the Ncome river in December of that year may well have caused his commitment to waver. The battle had been fought on the edges of the old Hlubi territory only sixty kilometres or so from Langalibalele's own homestead, and had given numbers of Hlubi men in the iziYendane regiment direct experience of the military power of the Boers. If the young Hlubi chief had doubts about the wisdom of continuing to support Dingane's cause, he would not have been alone, for the defeat of the Zulu army had been a serious blow to the king's authority. In the months that followed, numbers of his subordinates, including his brother Mpande, were edging away from too close a commitment to his cause. When civil war broke out in September 1839 between Dingane and Mpande, these chiefs would in many cases have tried to follow the strategy of lying low and awaiting the outcome of the struggle before committing themselves to the winning side. In Langalibalele's case, the fact that his territory lay exposed to Boer attacks from three sides, and was close to the line of the eventual Boer advance into Zululand, was no doubt more than enough to encourage him to take no action likely to rouse their hostility.

If Langalibalele and his advisers had thought it politic, they could probably have done as other tributaries of the Zulu king did during the civil war of 1839-40, and taken advantage of the breakdown of central authority in the kingdom to flee with as many of their people as would follow them. But to men who had already experienced years of refugee life, the uncertainties entailed in remaining in their own lands, which they had only recently regained, were preferable to the prospects of further exile, the more especially as, at this time, few regions of south-east Africa could have presented themselves as secure havens. To the east were the Zulu, while to the south, west, and north, Boer communities were in the process of occupying wide tracts of country and, in the process, trying to expell or subordinate the black peoples whom they found in occupation. A possible refuge within reach of the Hlubi was the Swazi kingdom, but the death of King Sobhuza in mid-1839, together with an almost simultaneous invasion by Dingane's army, had thrown the Swazi country into a state of turmoil. In these circumstances the Hlubi leaders probably felt that the safest course of action was to remain where they were, and let the struggle for power between Dingane and

Mpande, and between Boers and Zulu, work itself out.

Once Mpande was firmly in power, Langalibalele would have proceeded to give the new king his allegiance, though as a chief who had won a measure of favour from Dingane he may well have been suspect in Mpande's eyes from the very start of his reign. But while the king was still busy consolidating his position he was little inclined to take steps that might encourage secessionist movements in the border areas of his kingdom that abutted on Boer-controlled territory, and for some time Langalibalele and his neighbouring chiefs were left in peace.

The British occupation of Port Natal in 1842 and annexation of the colony of Natal in 1843 injected a new element into the Zulu-Boer manoeuverings for supremacy in south-east Africa. To local African chiefs, the British were largely an unknown quantity, and though they had defeated the Boers in Natal it did not become clear for some years which was the predominant power east of the Drakensberg. Meanwhile Langalibalele, like other chiefs on the borders of the Zulu kingdom, was no doubt constantly weighing up in his mind the relative strengths of Zulu, Boers, and British, and the pros and cons of remaining under Mpande's rule and of defecting to one or other of the neighbouring white-dominated communities.

An outcome of the British annexation of Natal that directly affected the Hlubi was the Zulu-British agreement in 1843 to recognise the Thukela and Mzinyathi rivers as the boundary line between their respective territories. The new boundary cut straight through the old Hlubi country on the upper Mzinyathi; the effect of the agreement was thus to make Hlubi living south of the river subjects of the British queen, while those north of the river under Langalibalele remained tributaries of the Zulu king. There is no evidence as to the geographical extent of Langalibalele's chiefdom at this time, and it may well be that there had been no Hlubi, except a few scattered refugees, living south of the river since the destruction of the chiefdom in c.1819. But from 1843 onward, though they were now in smaller numbers than before, the Hlubi were confined to less than half the territory which they had occupied in the heyday of their power under Bhungane and Mthimkhulu.

From these early years of Mpande's reign dates the first written description of Langalibelele and his chiefdom. In May 1844 the Wesleyan missionary James Allison passed through the Hlubi country on his way from his mission among Sekonyela's Tlokwa to the Swazi kingdom. He and his party rested for several days at Langalibalele's residence, where, he noted, the grass was very high as there were no cattle to eat it down, all, he was told, having been taken off by the Zulu. This

was probably a deliberate exaggeration; a more likely picture is that the Hlubi had lost some proportion of their cattle to Zulu depredations and had dispersed the remainder in the remoter corners of their territory the better to conceal them in the event of further raids. Either way, it seems that Mpande had by this time begun to press more heavily on his Hlubi tributaries, to the point where he was periodically sending forces to seize cattle from them.

Langalibalele himself was described by Allison as a 'fine-looking young man' of about thirty.[4] In conversation with his visitor he expressed a desire to have a missionary permanently stationed in his country. Like many other African chiefs of the time, he was increasingly feeling the need for a knowledgeable adviser to guide him in his dealings with his new British and Boer neighbours, and he probably also felt that a missionary living in his territory would provide some sort of safeguard against further Zulu attacks. Allison seems to have encouraged the Hlubi chief to pursue his wish, for later that year Langalibalele apparently sent a party of envoys on the 1 000-kilometre journey to Grahamstown to ask the Wesleyan missionaries who were active in the eastern Cape and in the Xhosa and Mpondo countries to send one of their number to work among the Hlubi. But the resources of the Wesleyan mission in South Africa were already overstretched, and the envoys had to return with nothing more than assurances that the Hlubi would not be forgotten in the planning of future mission enterprises.

Whether Langalibalele had felt it necessary to request permission from Mpande to send his embassy to the Wesleyans is not known, but it seems unlikely. Since the early 1840s the Zulu king had refused to allow missionaries to operate in his kingdom, and it is hardly likely that he would have permitted subordinate chiefs independently to take initiatives aimed at establishing missions in their own territories. Langalibalele's actions in this case could only have been seen by Mpande as an assertion of his independence, and must have contributed substantially to increasing already-rising Zulu-Hlubi tensions.

5. THE CLASH WITH THE ZULU

In the years after the overthrow of Dingane, Langalibalele, like other tributary chiefs, seems to have been able to establish a considerable degree of autonomy from the Zulu monarchy, whose power had been seriously weakened by the civil war of 1839-40. At the same time his adherents were increasing steadily in numbers and prosperity, while the chief himself, like his grandfather Bhungane before him, came to earn a widespread reputation as a successful rainmaker. From the perspective of the Zulu royal house, Langalibalele was beginning to emerge as a

figure whose power in the upper Mzinyathi-upper Phongolo borderlands rivalled that of the king himself. This was not a development which Mpande was likely to tolerate for long if he could help it, the more especially as Langalibalele had originally been assisted to the Hlubi succession by Dingane. But for some years after his own accession in 1840, Mpande had more pressing matters to deal with — consolidation of his power in the core of his kingdom; relations with the Boers and the British; relations with the Swazi kingdom — and he took no active steps to contain the growth of Langalibalele's power beyond periodically raiding his people for cattle. These forays were in themselves an implicit recognition of Langalibalele's semi-independent status, for if his chiefdom had been one fully incorporated into the Zulu kingdom, Mpande would have been able to use non-violent institutionalized means of extracting wealth from it.

By the later 1840s the Mzinyathi-Phongolo marches of the Zulu kingdom were starting to figure more prominently in Mpande's political calculations. After the Boer occupation of the territory south of the Thukela in the late 1830s had effectively prevented the Zulu armies from raiding for cattle in that direction, his predecessor Dingane had attempted to compensate by directing raids and colonization efforts into the territories to the north. A decade later, with the British now blocking access to the south, Mpande also found himself forced into this line of policy. It January 1847 his armies launched an attack on the Swazi, pushed them northwards, and proceeded to occupy much of their territory. In July of that year, however, a combined force of Swazi and Boers from the Transvaal counter-attacked and drove the Zulu out.

The failure of Mpande's thrust into Swazi territory meant that the only remaining outlet for Zulu expansionism lay north-westwards acress the upper Phongolo into territories occupied by small chiefdoms like those of the Magonondo, amaNgwe, and Shabalala. Directly between these territories and the Zulu heartland lay the Hlubi chiefdom, the revival of whose power was already becoming of concern to the Zulu king. Given Mpande's new-found determination to expand his authority in these regions, it was only a matter of time before the Zulu and Hlubi came into conflict. In the latter part of 1847 Mpande proceeded to pick a quarrel with the amaNgwe chief Phuthini, and, when he failed to obtain the compensation that he demanded, in February 1848 he sent a raiding party hurrying up-country to seize the amaNgwe cattle. Fortunately for Phuthini's people they were forewarned of the attack, and managed to get their cattle away through Langalibalele's country across the Mzinyathi into Natal, where, they calculated, the Zulu would not follow. Knowing full well that Mpande's

force would not scruple to seize any Hlubi cattle it could find, Langalibalele also thought it prudent to send some of his stock across the river. In the event, the Zulu troops followed the tracks of the amaNgwe cattle through the Hlubi country all the way to the Mzinyathi, but, finding the river in flood, they turned back to try and drive Phuthini's people out of the forests where they had taken refuge.

On this occasion the Hlubi themselves do not seem to have been attacked, but they remained on the alert for further incursions. In spite of their watchfulness, a Zulu attack a month later nearly succeeded in catching them by surprise. This time the Zulu force crossed the Mzinyathi to the Natal side well below the Hlubi country and made a rapid night march along the south bank of the river to attack the Hlubi from the rear. Long afterwards, Mabhonsa described the attack in these words:

> 'The *impi* came and bivouacked on the south side of the Mzinyathi. A certain two men of our tribe, Mangobe and Mganukiso, were driving goats, having come from Chief Jobe of the Sithole people at iLenge. They got to a precipice, and some way below, heard the Zulus calling to one another in the dark. They grasped the position at once, and made straight off to our kraals, giving the alarm everywhere. Fires were lit in every direction; the whole country was ablaze. I was ordered to drive the cattle, together with some old men. We got away before dawn, and rushed the cattle up northwards. The Zulus were too late. There was a certain amount of fighting. I remember this affair well, for I was a boy who had reached the age of puberty. The Zulus got quite tired out, and many of them were killed by our people. Only two of our people were wounded, and none killed. A few of our cattle were seized, including Langalibalele's oxen that had no horns *(izitulu)*, 100 of them.'[5]

Thanks to the timely warning they had received, the Hlubi managed to save most of their cattle, although, according to an account given by Langalibalele many years later, Mpande's forces were left in possession of nearly 2 000 head. Before withdrawing, the Zulu burnt many Hlubi homesteads and destroyed their ripening crops. Knowing that it was only a matter of time before they attacked again in greater strength, in mid-March 1848 Langalibalele followed Phuthini's example and sent an urgent message to the Natal government to plead for permission to be allowed to move his people into the colony. By now he and his advisers had decided that removal from the Zulu kingdom was

the only possible step if Hlubi society was to survive, and that British rule in Natal was preferable to Boer rule across the Drakensberg. (The territory that was to become the Orange River Sovereignty had in fact been annexed to Britain only a month before, but if the Hlubi leaders had heard of this development, it is highly unlikely that they had yet been able to grasp its full implications.)

For its part, the Natal government was alarmed and angered by the Zulu incursion over the Mzinyathi and promptly sent envoys to warn Mpande against making further attacks on the Hlubi and amaNgwe. Beyond that, it seems to have made no positive response to the messages sent by Langalibalele and Phuthini. At this time the Natal authorities were facing considerable problems in settling large numbers of returning refugees who were flowing into the colony from north and south, and were far from inclined to encourage the Hlubi and amaNgwe to swell their number.

At the beginning of May the Natal government's messengers returned from their embassy to the Zulu country and reported that Mpande claimed to have no quarrel with Langalibalele, although he was determined to avenge himself on Phuthini. But the Zulu king seems already to have been planning a second attack on the Hlubi, and early in May four of his envoys arrived at Langalibalele's residence to warn him to prepare for his destruction. 'Plait yourself a rope that will raise you from the earth to avoid the king's vengeance,' they told the chief, 'but so long as you remain on its surface you cannot avoid him. You may think of assistance from the frogs' (meaning the British) 'but this hope is also a vain one, as you will find to your cost. Your destruction is inevitable. Your rocks and caves will not save you. Your cattle which you have sent away for safety shall become the inheritance of those to whose care they are entrusted when you shall be no more.'[6]

On the departure of the Zulu envoys, Langalibalele sent another appeal for asylum to the Natal authorities. With their crops destroyed, their cattle weakening in the poor winter pastures of the mountains, the women and children eking out an existence in caves and among the rocks, and a second Zulu attack imminent, the Hlubi were facing disaster. For another two months or so Langalibalele and his advisers clung on in the Mzinyathi country in the hope that their pleas would be answered. But when, by the middle of July, no reply had been received from the Natal government, they made up their minds to force the issue. The people made ready to abandon their homesteads, and orders went out to the herdsmen in the mountains to drive the Hlubi cattle to Natal. For fear of the Zulu, they were to avoid the direct route across the Mzinyathi; instead, the cattle were to be taken round through the

present-day Harrismith district and down the Drakensberg into the northern regions of the colony. At the end of July or the beginning of August 1848, Langalibalele gathered his people and crossed the Mzinyathi into Natal. A few weeks later they were followed by the amaNgwe. On the upper Mnambithi river, the two peoples established themselves in temporary shelters, and saw to the depasturing of their cattle.

For the second time in thirty years the Hlubi had fled from their territory on the upper Mzinyathi to escape an enemy who threatened their total destruction. This time they did so as a cohesive group; though they had lost their homes and their crops, they still had many of their cattle, and they remained united under their established leaders. Their prospects for social survival were considerably stronger than they had been in 1819: much, however, would depend on the reaction to their arrival of the Natal government.

Chapter 4

Subjects of the White Queen
(1848-1873)

1. RESISTANCE AND REMOVAL

The Hlubi and amaNgwe arrived in Natal at a time when the government of the colony was still struggling to find its feet. Though Natal had been annexed by Britain in 1843, it was not until 1845-6 that a Lieutenant-Governor was appointed and the basics of a civil administration were set up. For the first few years of its existence the government had to make do with minimal financial and administrative resources in trying to cope with the problems that faced it. Its most immediate concerns were, externally, to maintain peaceful relations with Mpande's Zulu kingdom, and, internally, to resolve the host of competing claims for land that had arisen since the coming of the Voortrekkers in the late 1830s.

In 1848 there were in Natal perhaps 100 000 Africans, mostly previous inhabitants who had returned to their old homes after the overthrow of Dingane, but also numbers of new immigrants. The white population numbered between one and two thousand. Apart from the handful of government officials, most of these were traders or graziers, with many of the latter laying claim to farms in areas where African communities had recently established or re-established themselves. The government's response to the problems raised by conflicts over land was to implement a policy of demarcating certain areas for exclusive African occupation, and surveying much of the rest of the colony into farms for occupation by white settlers. By 1848 some half-dozen African reserves, or locations as they were called, had been established, and into these the government was proceeding to move the bulk of the colony's black inhabitants.

The sudden irruption of Langalibalele and his people into northern Natal in mid-1848 posed a serious problem for the colonial administration under Lieutenant-Governor Martin West, for the land in which they settled themselves had officially been recognized as belonging to Boer farmers. The government was not prepared to allow the Hlubi to remain where they were, but it did not have the strength to expel the newly arrived refugees from the colony, especially as such a course of action might well have provoked resistance on the part of the Hlubi, and perhaps have occasioned alarm and unrest among other

African refugee communities in the colony. West's decision was to allow the Hlubi to remain in Natal, but to require them to move to unoccupied territory between the upper Mpofana (Mooi) and Mkhomazi rivers. Here, it seems, the government planned to set up a new location under the Drakensberg to serve as a buffer against Bushmen who, since about 1840, had periodically been coming down from the mountains and raiding cattle from white farmers in the Natal midlands.

The Hlubi leaders' decision to take their people into Natal without waiting for permission from the colonial authorities thus turned out to have been based on a correct assessment of the likely consequences. They knew that the government was not in a position easily to expel them, and that numerous other parties of refugees had previously been allowed to settle in the colony. Through their unsanctioned move across the colonial border they had in effect forced the government's hand. In a departure from its usual policy of sending back the cattle of refugees from the Zulu kingdom, the Natal government also allowed the Hlubi to retain their herds. The official policy was based on the theory that all cattle in the Zulu country were the property of the king; the reason for its reversal in the case of the Hlubi was presumably that the authorities regarded Langalibalele as having ruled autonomously of him.

Although it had little option but to allow the Hlubi to remain in the colony, the Natal government was determined to move them out of the Mnambithi country. Soon after Langalibalele's arrival in Natal he was visited by Theophilus Shepstone (Somsewu), the Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes in Natal, and instructed to move his people to the designated area south of the Mpofana. In the event, the chief refused to move. His people were reluctant to go and live in a part of the country which they did not know, and they were also beginning to prepare for the new planting season. Pre-occupied as it then was with other problems, the Natal government was for the time being forced to let the matter drop, and the Hlubi were allowed to remain in the Mnambithi country for another season.

By early 1849 the colonial authorities had dropped their original plan of settling Langalibalele and his people south of the Mpofana, and had decided to establish them in a new location between the upper Mtshezi (Bushmans) and Msuluzi (Bloukrans) rivers. This region had formerly been inhabited by Zizi peoples, but had stood empty since the upheavals of the late 1810s and early 1820s. The government's change of mind seems to have been occasioned by an increase in Bushman raids on white farms in the district; as previously resolved, the Hlubi were to be allowed to remain in Natal but at the price of performing an important role in the defence of the white settlers' interests.

In April 1849, together with a force of African police, Shepstone once again travelled up-country to order Langalibalele and his people, who had now gathered in their harvest, to move to their new location. But once again the chief was unwilling to move, this time because a senior woman relative was ill (she died soon afterwards), and because his people wished to reap a second and larger harvest before embarking on yet another migration. A show of force by Shepstone and the police caused the chief to back down, and within a few days his people had begun to drive their cattle towards the new location. But once Shepstone and his men had begun their return march to Pietermaritzburg, the Hlubi brought their cattle back, for, they complained, at that time of year the animals could not find grazing in the high country of the Drakensberg foothills. Because of the lateness of the season, the government again delayed taking further action, and once again the Hlubi had managed to avoid removal.

The respite was, however, of only brief duration, for early in the spring of 1849 the Natal authorities prepared once and for all to force Langalibalele and his people to move to their designated location. In September, Shepstone travelled for the third time to the Mnambithi, where he issued orders to Chiefs Jobe of the Sithole, Nodada of the Thembu, Phakade of the Chunu, and Zikhali of the Ngwane to send contingents of armed men to support his force of ninety police in the action planned against the Hlubi. With 2 000 men from these four chiefs, Shepstone and the police marched through the Mnambithi country, forcibly expelling from their homesteads all the Hlubi whom they encountered. Many of Langalibalele's people had already moved off towards the mountains, and from the Hlubi Shepstone encountered virtually no resistance. Phuthini's amaNgwe people, who had accompanied them into Natal, had, however, taken refuge in fortified caves on Mbulwane hill near present-day Ladysmith, and a certain amount of skirmishing took place before they were dislodged and forced to follow the Hlubi. But the middle of October 1849, a little over a year after their flight from the Zulu kingdom, both peoples were established in their new locations, the Hlubi round the sources of the Msuluzi (Bloukrans) west of what is now Estcourt, and the amaNgwe several kilometres further west on the upper Njesuthi.

2. ADJUSTMENT TO THE COLONIAL ORDER

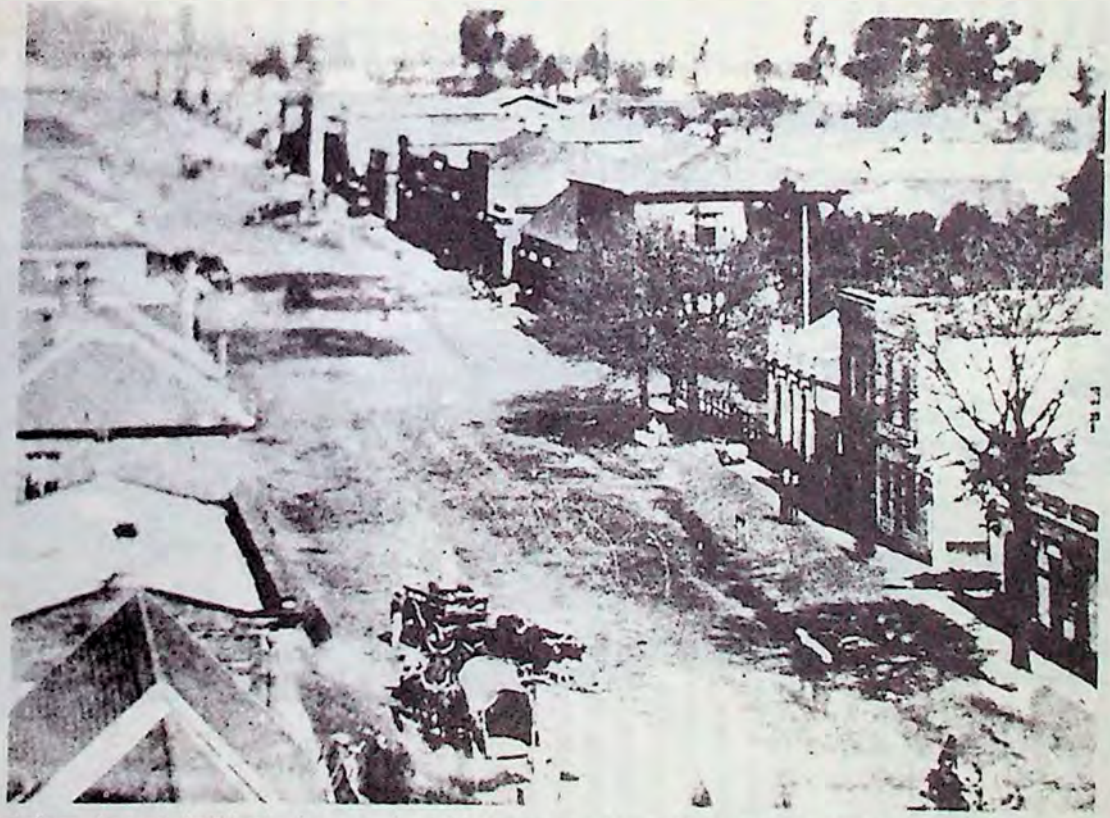
The country where the Hlubi now found themselves was similar in many respects to the country they had left on the upper Mzinyathi, ranging from open grasslands of mixed veld to plateaux and ridges of sourveld in the foothills of the Drakensberg. The bulk of the people

probably settled and built their homesteads in the flatter, lower-lying regions where they could grow crops for a longer season than in the mountains. As they had done in the Mzinyathi country, they grazed their cattle near their homesteads during the colder months of the year, and moved them to herding posts in the higher country with the onset of the spring rains. Langalibalele himself established two homesteads near the sources of the Msuluzi, and in time built twelve or fifteen more in various parts of his territory. His chief homestead was ePhangweni (situated near present-day Draycott), which was built for the spirit of his brother Dlomo. The two next most important were kwaNobamba and kwaMahambehlala (emaHendeni), built respectively for the spirits of his father Mthimkhulu and of his father's brother Mpangazitha, and both situated in the higher-lying parts of the country.

As originally envisaged by the colonial authorities, the Hlubi location was some 350 square kilometres in extent, but its boundaries were not defined until many years later, and from the beginning, in the view of several contemporary observers, it was too small for Langalibalele's following of some 7 000 people. In the Mzinyathi country they had occupied perhaps 2 000 square kilometres, and virtually from the time of their arrival in the location, numbers of Hlubi proceeded to set up their homesteads on unoccupied settler farms and state land. The main direction of their encroachment was, it seems, southwards towards Ntabamhlophe and the valley of the upper Mtshezi. By the mid-1860s, by which time they numbered over 8 000, Langalibalele's people had spread out over an area of close to 600 square kilometres.

If shortage of land was something of a problem for the Hlubi in their first years of settling into their location, then so, for some of them, was the loss of cattle sustained during the flight from the Zulu kingdom. Although the Hlubi had brought some 8 000 head with them to Natal, between 2 000 and 3 000 had been lost, and until their herds had regenerated, numbers of families would have lived on the edge of poverty. Their lives would not have been made easier by the occurrence of poor seasons, such as that of 1853-54, and by a serious lungsickness epidemic which killed off many cattle in Natal in 1855.

Besides the problems they faced in having to make a living in a new environment, the Hlubi encountered difficulties in coming to terms with new neighbours, in the persons of white settlers. At much the same time as the Hlubi were establishing themselves in their new homes, several thousand British immigrants were arriving in Natal. Unlike the Hlubi, they came with the encouragement of the colonial government. Most of these new arrivals soon settled in the growing towns and villages



5. ***Pietermaritzburg**, the capital of Natal colony, much as Chief Langalibalele would have known it. A view up Church Street in 1875, the year after the Hlubi chief had been tried and sent into exile.*

6. Estcourt, the seat of the magistrate of Weenen county, much as Chief Langalibalele and his people would have known it. A photograph taken some years after the Hlubi chiefdom had been broken up.

of Natal, but a number bought or leased farms in the up-country districts where hitherto the only white occupants had been Boer graziers. In the early 1850s some of them were taking up claims to land on the eastern and northern borders of the Hlubi location, and in the process coming into conflict with Hlubi whom they found already living there. Not unnaturally the Hlubi resisted being ordered to move off land where they had been established for several years, or to pay rent or provide labour for the farm-owners; and not unnaturally the farmers were quick to complain to the local magistrate, then stationed at Weenen, about Hlubi unwillingness to comply with their demands. Tensions between white farmers and Hlubi tenants remained high until the second half of the 1850s, by which time their conflicting claims appear mostly to have been resolved.

Another source of difficulties in these early years, especially for the Hlubi leaders, were the problems involved in adjusting to the demands, often not immediately understood, of their new overlords in Pietermaritzburg. Although Africans in Natal colony were governed largely according to customary law, the colonial administration frequently applied the law in ways that roused deep suspicions and fears among chiefs and their people. Like other Africans in the colony, the Hlubi seem quickly to have accepted the imposition of a hut tax in 1849, but when in 1850 the colonial government tried to make a count of African-owned cattle in the colony, most chiefs, including Langalibalele, refused point-blank to co-operate, and the idea was dropped.

A more lasting source of irritation was the system of *isibhalo*, or forced labour, in terms of which magistrates were empowered to order chiefs to provide men for work on public projects, particularly road-building. The system was deeply disliked both by chiefs, who found themselves having to coerce their adherents into government work parties, and by commoners, who resented having to work away from their homes for weeks at a time for what were usually very low wages. On several occasions during his period of chiefship, Langalibalele refused to provide labourers when called upon to do so by the local magistrate, and the system remained a potential source of friction between the Hlubi and the colonial government.

Another kind of forced labour system operated by the Natal government was the military levy. This, too, soon brought about a confrontation between the Hlubi and the authorities. In 1851 Langalibalele was called on to send a contingent of men to join a force being sent from Natal against Moshweshwe's Sotho, who were then at war with the British in the Orange River Sovereignty. At first

Langalibalele refused, and reluctantly complied only when ordered to do so by Shepstone. Perhaps two hundred Hlubi men took part in the expedition, which eventually returned to Natal without having been engaged in fighting, and was disbanded. No remuneration was made to the expedition's members, who also included men from Phuthini's amaNgwe and Zikhali's Ngwane people. In 1852, after several requests for payment had been ignored by the Natal government, the amaNgwe refused to pay their taxes, and the following year the Hlubi and Ngwane followed suit. Faced with concerted opposition, the government finally gave way, and in 1854 the men who had joined the expedition were paid for their services. In 1855 all three chiefdoms paid up the arrears on their taxes. Three years later Langalibalele supplied, apparently without demur a contingent of men for a force sent by the government to act against another of its subject chiefs, Matshana kaMondise of the Sithole people.

In these early years of colonial rule, before a strong bureaucratic administration had emerged in Natal, the individual personalities of chiefs on the one hand, and magistrates on the other, were often important in shaping the day-to-day relationships between the government and its African subjects. As the hereditary leader of a chiefdom which, in his own childhood, had been one of the most powerful polities in south-east Africa, Langalibalele was not inclined to be submissive to an authority which he sensed as weak, and his experience in the business of survival in the turbulent times of the late 1830s and 1840s had endowed him with political skills which he used to good effect in facing up to the demands of the colonial government. Though described as 'genial and good-natured' by Bishop Colenso, who visited him in 1854,[1] he was nevertheless a proud leader, with a strong sense of his position. As early as 1851, when only in his mid-thirties, Langalibalele sent an envoy to Pietermaritzburg to remind Shepstone that he was a 'a great and influential chief' who resented having to put up with threats from the local magistrate. Several times in these years he clashed with successive magistrates of Weenen, and in 1855 the appointment of an unsympathetic new incumbent served to heighten the tension that had come to exist between the Hlubi chief and the administration. The new magistrate was John Macfarlane, who owned land in the Weenen area and, like the farmers among whom he lived, strongly favoured a policy of weakening the powers of African chiefs in the colony.

Almost immediately on his arrival, Macfarlane became involved in a clash with the Hlubi and their chief. The occasion was the outbreak of lungsickness previously mentioned. The epidemic had begun in the

lower regions of Natal, but by the middle of 1855 had spread to the up-country districts, including the Hlubi location. In accordance with the measures taken by the government to try to contain the epidemic, Macfarlane instructed Langalibalele to move those of his people's cattle that had been affected by the disease to a particular place, but this the chief refused to do. To enforce his obedience, Macfarlane travelled in person to the Hlubi great place, but in the face of hostility and threats from some of the men present he was obliged to beat a retreat. The magistrate was not one to take such loss of face lying down, and on his return to Weenen he at once called up a commando of local farmers to help him arrest those Hlubi who had refused to lay down their arms in his presence. With a party of thirty armed and mounted men, Macfarlane returned to the location and proceeded to arrest the offenders, who were then tried on the spot, found guilty, and sentenced, some to flogging and others to three months' imprisonment. The diseased cattle were either destroyed or driven off to the place appointed for them.

Macfarlane's summary actions were heavy-handed enough to bring him an official rebuke from the acting Lieutenant-Governor, who expressed concern that a local magistrate could call out a commando without first obtaining the government's permission. In these years of the colony's history, operating as it was with minimal military and police resources to back up its authority, the Natal administration was highly sensitive to arbitrary acts on the part of its officials that threatened to rupture peaceful relations between government and chiefs. As it happened, on this occasion the Hlubi had not reacted with further hostility to the arrival of the commando, possibly because Langalibalele had accepted that the men arrested had committed an offence and was prepared to allow Macfarlane to punish them. So the affair blew over, but not, it seems, before it had wakened lasting suspicion between the Hlubi chief and the magistrate.

3. LEARNING NEW LIVELIHOODS

The early 1850s, when they were establishing themselves in their new homes, and were feeling their way towards working relationships with their white settler neighbours and with the administration, were difficult years for the Hlubi. After 1855, however, their fortunes seem to have taken a turn for the better, and over the next fifteen years or so little occurred in the Hlubi location that demanded the attentions of the administration in Pietermaritzburg. But nevertheless, during these times, important changes were taking place in Hlubi patterns of living, in the structure of their society, and in the nature of their relationships with their white neighbours.

Perhaps the first way in which social change made itself felt was through the gradual entry of numbers of Hlubi into the colonial labour force. From the beginning of Natal's colonial history, its white settlers had been short of labour, and the farming element was perennially calling on the government to take effective measures to force Africans out of the locations to seek work as wage-labourers. In the full knowledge that any concerted move to do this would provoke widespread African resistance and even rebellion, the administration consistently refused to bow to the more extreme demands of the settlers for it to break up the locations altogether; nevertheless it remained concerned to use more indirect methods to pressure Natal Africans into becoming wage-workers. To this end, as well as to try to fill the colonial coffers, in 1849 it imposed a tax of seven shillings per year on every African-owned hut in the colony. This meant that an African family head might have to pay £1 or more in tax every year. To raise this amount there were in the 1850s two courses of action open to him: either he could sell a beast on the colonial market, where cattle fetched from £2 to £2 10s a head, or he could work — or send his unmarried sons to work — for white farmers or town-dwellers at the current wage-rate of five to ten shillings a month. Given the losses of cattle suffered by the Hlubi in the period 1848-55, it seems likely that few families at this time would have possessed surplus beasts to sell on the market. For many men therefore, the only alternative was to enter the service of white employers for part of each year, and this, it seems, some were already doing by the early 1850s.

If the need to earn money with which to pay these taxes was one factor that pushed numbers of Hlubi men into the wage-labour force, another was the need to raise cash with which to buy necessary or desired goods from white traders. These ranged from consumer articles such as metal hoes, blankets, beads and European-type clothing, to goods which only the more wealthy could afford, such as horses, saddlery, alcohol and, by the 1860s, ploughs and firearms. A third factor was the preference on the part of some families for living on white-owned farms rather than in the location under the rule of chiefs and headmen. In return they were expected to pay rent to the farmers, or work for them. By 1858 some 1 500 to 2 000 Hlubi, or over a fifth of the total Hlubi population in Natal, were living on farms, and others were migrating from the location for longer or shorter periods to find work.

By this time many Hlubi were travelling long distances in search of wages higher than those paid by the up-country farmers. 'Considerable numbers', according to the magistrate Macfarlane, found work in the coastal districts of Natal, and even as far off as the Cape colony. Some, at least, of these men must have become migrant labourers on a

discretionary basis rather than through being compelled to do so by economic necessity, for by this time the Hlubi were beginning to recover from the losses of cattle which they had suffered in the first half of the 1850s. By the late 1850s their herds had increased to the point where some owners were prepared to sell surplus beasts to traders and butchers who travelled to the up-country districts from Pietermaritzburg and Durban, and even from the Cape. And by the early 1860s some Hlubi were also beginning to produce a surplus of maize for sale to traders and to travellers on the nearby route to the interior.

The entry of the numbers of African producers into the agricultural market was one of the most significant features of Natal history in the 1850s and 1860s. The arrival of several thousand British settlers in the period 1849-51, and the subsequent expansion of the colony's towns and villages, created a market for locally produced foodstuffs which African agriculturalists were well positioned to supply. In contrast to white would-be commercial farmers, who at this time were chronically short of the capital and labour which they needed if they were to be able to farm profitably on an extensive scale, African producers, whether on mission stations, on white-owned farms, on state land, or in the locations, usually had ready access to plots of land which they were able to work with their own family labour. Until the late 19th century white farmers were unable to compete effectively with African producers in rearing cattle and in growing crops, particularly maize, for the local market; they concentrated instead on trying to develop products for the export market in the form of sugar in the coastlands and wool in the up-country districts.

For the Hlubi, market opportunities first began to open with the growth of small villages at Estcourt and Ladysmith in the 1850s, and the simultaneous development of a trade route between Natal and the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Initially foodstuffs sold to these outlets would have come from whatever surplus was left over from normal subsistence production, but by the first half of the 1860s the local demand for grain seems to have been large enough and stable enough to encourage some Hlubi families — presumably wealthier ones — to invest in ploughs, and to begin producing deliberately for the market.

The development of commercial agriculture among the Hlubi probably received a certain amount of stimulus from the arrival among them of a missionary in 1863. As previously mentioned (p. 32), Langalibalele had requested Wesleyan missionaries to establish a station in his territory as far back as 1844, when he was still subordinate to Mpande. In 1857 German missionaries from the Berlin Missionary Society had asked to be allowed to work among his people, but the chief

had demurred, for the reason that he would have preferred to have English missionaries, who were more likely to have the ear of the government. In 1862 the Hlubi chief made overtures to the American Congregationalists and to the Anglicans to send him a missionary, but was unsuccessful, so when the Hermannsburg Missionary Society applied to him for permission to establish a mission in his location he decided to grant it. In 1863 J.R. Hansen was appointed to the post and proceeded to set up his station in the vicinity of ePhangweni.

To begin with, the Hlubi responded to Hansen's arrival with curiosity. He drew large congregations, often including Langalibalele himself, to his Sunday services, and obtained the chief's promise that he would send one of his sons to be educated at the mission school. But when, a year or two after he had begun work, he baptized his first convert, the attitude of the Hlubi began to change. As happened in many other parts of Africa where missionaries were active, once the chief and his people had understood that converts to Christianity were required to give their first loyalty to their church, curiosity turned to suspicion and even hostility. Hansen's audiences dwindled away, and though Langalibalele continued to act with personal courtesy towards the missionary, the chief ceased to attend services, withheld his sons from the mission school, and ordered one of his brothers who had expressed an interest in baptism to move his homestead away from the vicinity of the mission. It was ten years before Hansen was able to make another conversion; in the meantime, perhaps the most important aspect of his work was to encourage the adoption of European-type agricultural practices among the Hlubi who had come to live on the mission lands. In the mid-1860s these people numbered about ninety, and, while very little is known about them, it is probable that they were among the first of the Hlubi to take to ploughing and more intensive cultivation of the land in order to raise produce for the market.

4. PROSPERITY AND POWER

In 1865, after a long period of growth, the economy of Natal suddenly slumped. For many of the white up-country farmers the effects of the decline, which lasted for four years, were ruinous. After the lung-sickness epidemic of 1855 had killed off large numbers of their cattle, and in the face of stiff competition from Africans in the cattle market, more and more farmers had switched to the accumulation of flocks of sheep and the production of wool for export. Between 1855 and 1862 the number of sheep in the colony increased from 10 000 to 120 000, with the number in Weenen county increasing from 8 000 to 60 000, the great majority of which were owned by white farmers. Then in 1865, the year

of the slump, a severe outbreak of blue tongue disease among their flocks caused heavy financial losses to many farmers. The economic climate made it impossible to raise loans for buying replacement stock, and some farmers were brought to the edge of bankruptcy. Three years later there was a sharp drop in the price of wool, and in desperation numbers of farmers began to talk of selling off their remaining flocks at a loss and quitting the colony.

By contrast with the white sheep farmers, African producers were not seriously affected by the depression. The greater degree of diversification in their agriculture, coupled with the fact that they were not nearly so closely tied to an unstable export market as were white commercial farmers, allowed them to weather the depression with comparative ease. The effect of the slump was thus to place African producers in an even better position to compete with white farmers for local markets than they had been before. In the second half of the 1860s, as several contemporary commentators remarked, Africans in the upland districts were rapidly expanding their use of ploughs to increase their production of maize, while the area of land cultivated by white farmers was actually decreasing. By the time the economy began recovering in 1869, Africans in the Weenen district were well placed to profit from the demand for grain that came from the Kimberley diamond fields that were just then being opened. By 1873, the missionary Hansen recorded, the Hlubi were using ploughs as against hoes in three-quarters of the lands which they cultivated. In these same years there was also a great increase in the number of their cattle, which, according to Hansen, totalled some 15 000 in 1873.

By the early 1870s then, the position of many white farmers in Natal was being seriously threatened by competition from their African neighbours. At the same time, the labour shortage in Natal, which was becoming more keenly felt now that the economy had taken an upturn, was exacerbated by the expansion of mining operations at Kimberley. Wages on the diamond fields were two or three times higher than in Natal, and young men from the locations were increasingly drawn to walk the 500 or 600 kilometres to Griqualand West to find work rather than labour for a pittance for the local farmers. Inevitably the effect was drive up wages in Natal, to the further concern of local employers.

The reaction of white farmers in up-country Natal to thse developments was one of resentment mixed with fear. As Manson's recent study has documented, in the early 1870s they were becoming louder than ever in their complaints to one another and to the government about the shortage of labour, and looked with envious eyes at the growing herds and what seemed to them the plentiful land in the

African locations. Increasingly, too, it seemed to them, Africans were showing the white man disrespect.

At the same time that hostility on the part of the up-country farmers towards Africans in the neighbouring locations was increasing, there took place the first serious confrontation between the Hlubi and the administration since the mid-1850s. The occasion was the administration's decision in 1869 to impose a marriage tax on Africans, and to fix a scale for the payment of *lobolo*. These measures, known to Africans as the *umbidli kaSomsewu* (the multitudes of Somsewu), proved to be deeply unpopular, and not unnaturally parents hastened to get sons and daughters married before the new law came into force. John Macfarlane, who was still magistrate of Weenen district (the seat of the magistracy had been moved to Estcourt in 1859), reported that a number of these rushed marriages had taken place among the Hlubi, upon which Shepstone summoned Langalibalele to appear before him at Estcourt and fined him for having failed to prevent them. An altercation broke out between the two men, which apparently did not end before Shepstone had called the chief an old woman and had declared to those present, 'People of the amaHlubi, you had better warn that man, or some day he will get you into trouble.'[2]

Relations between the Hlubi and the administration were soured, and it may be that suspicions roused by this incident contributed to the spread of a rumour among Africans in the up-country districts the following year to the effect that the government intended to confiscate cattle from them. The reaction of the Hlubi and the neighbouring Ngwane under Zikhali was apparently to prepare to fight in defence of their property. The situation was tense enough for Shepstone to travel up-country to reassure the chiefs that no such action was being contemplated, but the ill-feeling towards the government did not entirely subside. In 1871 some of Langalibalele's people demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the marriage regulations by refusing to pay their taxes, the first time that this had occurred since 1854.

The years which saw the re-emergence of tensions between the Hlubi on the one hand, and farmers and administration on the other, also seem to have brought an increase in tensions that were inherent in Hlubi society itself. Though Langalibalele was always able to wield considerable authority over his people, his power, together with that of the older men of his chiefdom — the family-heads who looked to the chief to uphold the laws which subordinated women to men, and younger people to older — must to some extent have been undermined by migration of numbers of younger men to seek work outside the location. The cash which they could accumulate from wage-labour

would have given them a certain degree of independence from their kin in the location, and from chiefly authority, even if ultimately they needed the sanction of the traditional authorities in order to be able to marry and set up their own homesteads. Tensions between older and younger men probably increased markedly after the opening of the Kimberley diamond fields, when numbers of young Hlubi went off to work for the comparatively high wages to be earned there. Certainly this was the opinion of one contemporary observer, T.J. Lucas, who wrote that the exodus to the diamond fields had 'revolutionized the ideas and feelings of all the native race', and that it had 'undermined the political influence of the elder chiefs, such as Langalibalele himself'.[3]

As was the case for all African chiefs, one of Langalibalele's most abiding political concerns was to hold together the people who were the basis of his power, and throughout his period of chiefship he was highly sensitive to developments which threatened to undermine his authority over them. As far back as 1851 he had objected to the migration of some of his adherents out of the location onto white-owned farms and state land, and had been warned by the magistrate, J.M. Struben, not to interfere with the white farmers' labour supply. The following year he had refused to allow six of his men to go and work in the Ladysmith district, and was fined twenty-five head of cattle as a result. To build up the numbers of his people, the Hlubi chief welcomed the settlement of outsiders in his location. On several occasions in the 1850s he was summoned before the Weenen magistrate for failing to report the arrival of 'refugees'. Many of these people were probably Hlubi who had been scattered far and wide in the troubles of the 1820s, and who, now that the main house had found a more secure basis for its continued existence than it had had under the Zulu kings, were regrouping round it.

If, in the long run, Langalibalele was unable to prevent the erosion of the traditional bases of his power, he was not slow to seek new ways of trying to maintain it, for under his chiefship the Hlubi ruling hierarchy was nothing if not adaptable. One such method was to acquire from the white man's world items that served at once to enhance his prestige in the eyes of his people and to increase the coercive power at his disposal. Early in the 1850s he and his headmen had become the owners of good horses, and in time the chief and some of his senior men were given official permission to possess firearms. Another method was actively to develop new sources of wealth for the chiefship. Langalibalele was among the first of the Hlubi to buy a plough, and he employed his own expert ploughman, a Sotho named Stoffel. The assumption is that like other Hlubi he had seen the advantages to himself of expanding agricultural output for commercial purposes. Trade brought wealth,

and wealth, for the chief, brought powers of patronage.

Through means such as these the Hlubi chief was able partially to offset the weakening of his control of the younger men of his chiefdom. In addition, he sought to maintain his authority through more traditional means. With the permission of the colonial authorities, he continued the practice initiated by his father of forming the young men and, apparently, the young women of his chiefdom into *amabutho* or age-regiments, the better to keep control of them by regulating the age at which they might marry. The first of his men's *amabutho* was the iziNtaka or amaHende; others whose names are known were the iNtabayezwe, umSingaphansi, imPhumangingene, iziTsheleha, imiHosho, iziNkonjane, iNguboyenkosi, and amaNgwane. Langalibalele's chief wife, Mzamose, is reputed to have sent a force of men to work for her at the diamond fields; if so, they may have been organized on a regimental basis. A similar practice had for years been followed by the Pedi chiefs of what is now the eastern Transvaal in sending young men to work in the Cape Colony.

Every year, as his predecessors had done, Langalibalele held the *umkhosi*, or festival of the first fruits, again with government permission. His reputation as a rainmaker had spread throughout south-east Africa, and from great distances other chiefs sent to him to ask for rain. Even the Zulu king Mpande was not deterred by their conflict of 1848 from sending to him. As befitted an important chief, Langalibalele took some forty wives, the daughters of notables from other powerful clans. His chief wife, whom he married in 1857, was a daughter of King Sobhuza of the Swazi and a grandaughter, through her mother, of Zwide, chief of the Ndwandwe and arch-rival of Shaka (see p.13 above). By 1874, according to an estimate made by a Cape official, the Hlubi chief had fathered over a hundred children, many of whom had made influential marriages among clans scattered from the Swazi kingdom to the eastern Cape.

By the early 1870s, twenty-five years after their flight from the Zulu country, the Hlubi under Langalibele had increased in number from about 7 000 to between 9 000 and 10 000. They had extended the area covered by their location to over 700 square kilometres; their cattle numbered some 15 000; and they had earned a reputation in the colony and on the diamond fields as 'a working tribe'. In spite of the tensions that had recently re-emerged between them and their white neighbours, and in spite of the internal stresses that were beginning to affect the cohesion of their society, they were more powerful and prosperous a people than at any time since the destruction of the old Hlubi chiefdom in c.1819.

Chapter 5

The Breaking of Allegiance
(March-November 1873)

1. A CONFLICT WITH AUTHORITY

In late 1872 or early 1873, shortly before the annual *umkhosi* ceremony was due to be held at Langalibalele's great place, one of his surviving elder brothers, Ncwane kaMthimkhulu, died unexpectedly after a short illness. The causes of his death were not apparent, and by the alarmed Hlubi it was seen as an event which presaged the coming of misfortune. For fear that some harm would befall his people if they assembled before being ritually strengthened, Langalibalele abandoned arrangements for the *umkhosi* and set about organizing the doctoring of the men of his chiefdom. The first of what was intended to be a series of 'sprinkling' ceremonies was held in the low country at ePhangweni at the end of February 1873, with a second due to follow in the high country of Nobamba.

At this juncture a completely different matter was suddenly forced on the Hlubi chief's attention. Early in March a messenger came from John Macfarlane, magistrate at Estcourt, with instructions for Langalibalele to send all unlicensed firearms in the possession of his people to be registered at the magistracy. Preoccupied as he was with what was to him more pressing business, the chief's response was to make the excuse that he could do nothing about the matter as he was ill. To him the magistrate's order must have seemed impossible to implement, for, as he later claimed, he was hardly to know which of the nearly two thousand men of his chiefdom owned firearms. Even if he had, it is unlikely that his authority over them would have extended to the point of his being able to enforce registration, despite the official fiction that African chiefs in general were, if they chose, able to wield despotic power over their subjects.

In failing to respond positively to Macfarlane's order, Langalibalele was making a serious error of political judgement. If the issue of firearms registration was to him a matter of minor importance, to the colonial authorities it was the very opposite, for, since early the previous year the government had been engaged in renewed efforts to enforce the laws on ownership of firearms as they affected its African subjects. In terms of an Act of 1859, Africans who wanted to own

firearms had to obtain written permission to do so from the magistrate, but the law had proved difficult to enforce, and over the years numbers of African men in Natal had been able to acquire guns with impunity. In the late 1860s their opportunities for doing so had been greatly extended by the growth of a virtually uncontrolled traffic in firearms on the Kimberley diamond fields, where white traders imported large numbers of firearms specifically for sale to the thousands of African workers at the diggings. By the early 1870s it was common knowledge in Natal that many of these guns were being brought into the colony illegally. Fears of an African 'uprising' were never far from the minds of white settlers and legislators in the colony, and by February 1872 the government had become concerned enough to instruct all magistrates in the colony to enforce the firearms law more strictly.

In terms of the official regulations, chiefs were responsible for ensuring that firearms in possession of their adherents were registered: hence Macfarlane's message to Langalibalele in March 1873. It is not clear why the magistrate had waited a full year before acting on the government's instructions, nor why, when he did, his order was addressed to Langalibalele alone of the chiefs in his magistracy. Macfarlane knew well enough that guns were illegally held by members of other chiefdoms in the district, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he was singling out for administrative attention a chief who was regarded by the authorities as an 'over-mighty subject' and troublemaker who needed to be brought to heel. To the magistrate, Langalibalele's failure to respond to his instructions was another in a long list of acts of insubordination. At the end of March or beginning of April, possibly in response to a previous directive from the government to communicate any sign of disobedience to the firearms law on the part of the Hlubi chief, he reported Langalibalele's 'contumacy' to the authorities with a request that firm measures be taken to discipline him. To the Hlubi chief he sent a message to the effect that 'the vessel in which he kept his offences was full to overflowing',[1] and that the matter was being referred to the colonial government.

These words seem to have decided Langalibalele that it would be politic to pay a visit to the magistrate and explain his reaction to the latter's instructions. Some time before the middle of April he travelled to Estcourt for this purpose, only to find Macfarlane absent. A quarrel broke out between the chief and the magistrate's interpreter, Gert Rudolph, who scolded Langalibalele for insubordination and for neglecting to pay his taxes on time. The upshot of the chief's attempt at conciliation was thus the further straining of his already bad relations with the local authorities. He returned to the location to await, in some

7. Chief Langalibalele and seven of his sons in captivity in Pietermaritzburg in 1874. In the back row (left to right) are Ngungwana, Manaba, Malambule, who was sent into exile with his father, and Mango. In the front row with their father are Mazwi, Siyephu (Langalibalele's heir), and Mageba.

8. Theophilus Shepstone (Somsewu), successively Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes and Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal from 1845 to 1876. It was he who was primarily responsible for developing the system of indirect rule through chiefs by means of which the Natal colonial government administered its African subjects.

9. John William Colenso, Anglican bishop of Natal from 1853 until his death in 1883. For twenty years Colenso was a close friend of Theophilus Shepstone's, but their friendship was permanently broken in 1874 when the Bishop learnt of Shepstone's role in the destruction of the Hlubi chiefdom. It was Colenso who was primarily responsible for exposing the injustices of Chief Langalibalele's trial.

10. James Stuart, who was a magistrate in Natal in the late 1890s and early 1900s, and Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs in the colony from 1909 to 1910. In 1909, the year in which this photograph was taken, he interviewed Mabhonsa kaSidlayi, chief oral historian of the Hlubi, and obtained the information on which the first three chapters of the present study are based.

trepidation, the message that he knew must come from Shepstone in Pietermaritzburg.

Like Macfarlane, the Secretary for Native Affairs had long been wanting an opportunity to let the Hlubi chief feel the full weight of the government's authority. In the system of administration over the development of which he had presided for nearly thirty years, chiefs had an essential role to play in helping to maintain the subordination of the African population of Natal to colonial rule, but it was a role in which their performance was judged in terms of their usefulness to the government, and not in terms of the qualities expected of them by their adherents. In this view a 'good' chief was one who was willing to implement government policies; a 'bad' chief was one who sought to establish a degree of independence from government control. A chief who tried to evade the responsibilities thrust upon him by the colonial administration was one to be swiftly disciplined, the more especially when, as in the case of Langalibalele, he was rich and influential, and, moreover, was a hereditary chief in his own right and not a government appointee. Hence, on the receipt of Macfarlane's report, Shepstone seems to have resolved not merely to punish the Hlubi chief but to diminish his status by ordering him to proceed to Pietermaritzburg to explain his conduct. As Shepstone well knew, in terms of traditional practices it was unusual — and degrading — for a chief so to be summoned in person to the seat of government; normally he would be allowed to use one of his senior *izinduna* as an intermediary. Towards the end of April a government envoy named Myembe arrived at Nobamba, where Langalibalele then was, with an order for him to present himself before Shepstone in the capital.

Though Langalibalele had been expecting a communication from the authorities in Pietermaritzburg, the arrival of a summons of this nature seems to have come to him as something of a shock. In twenty years only two chiefs — Sidoyi kaBaleni of the Nhlangwini people in 1857, and Matshana kaMondise of the Sithole in 1858 — had been ordered to appear before the government in Pietermaritzburg, and in each case, as was well known to Africans in Natal, the order had served as a prelude to the 'eating-up' of the chief and his people by government forces. As the Hlubi chief and his advisers pondered over Shepstone's injunction, they were also mindful of the fate of the chief's brother Dlomo, who, some thirty-seven years before, had been summoned to the capital of his overlord, Dingane, and there put to death. It seems to have been fears for his personal safety that made Langalibalele temporize, for he at first refused, then finally agreed, to make the journey to Pietermaritzburg. But a few days after Myembe had left, the chief sent

one of his senior *izinduna* to report to Shepstone that he could not travel as he was troubled by an old leg injury.

On this occasion the chief's excuse was apparently accepted, for Shepstone was aware that Langalibalele had for years been averse to travelling long distances because of an old injury to his knee. But, the *induna* was told, the matter in connection with which the chief had been summoned was an important one, and he must make his way to the capital as soon as he was well enough to travel. It was clear that Shepstone would not long rest content with Langalibalele's evasions, but the chief's suspicions of the Secretary's motives in ordering him to report in Pietermaritzburg overrode his political sense. Rather than yield himself to unknown dangers, he preferred to wait on events, no doubt in the hope that, as in previous brushes with the authorities, he would be able to escape with no more than a fine.

But Langalibalele was reckoning without Shepstone's determination to make an issue of what the latter chose to cast as the chief's latest flouting of government authority. In May, Myembe came a second time to the Hlubi country with a summons for him. At first, Langalibalele, who was then in the upper part of his location at emaHendeni, tried to avoid receiving the government envoy by pretending that he was ill. When he finally consented to do so, it was to hear the same insistent message as before: the chief was to proceed to Pietermaritzburg forthwith, if necessary on horseback or by wagon. If he persisted in his refusal, Myembe made known, it would lead to the dismemberment of his chiefdom. The threat was no doubt intended to galvanize Langalibalele into obeying the summons, but it failed to achieve its purpose. By now thoroughly apprehensive, he again pleaded illness as the reason for his inability to travel, and the envoy departed, once more to carry back the chief's excuse to the government.

2. THE HLUBI TAKE ALARM

Once again Langalibalele had chosen to follow a course of action which he knew would be regarded by the colonial authorities as an act of defiance. The issue at stake was now becoming not so much the registration of illegally held firearms as the disobedience of a chief to a government order. Langalibalele and his advisers could have had no doubts that retribution would follow if he failed to obey Shepstone's summons, but the chief's fear of his placing himself at the mercy of a man who, as he later stated, he felt to be planning to do him harm, held him back. It may well be that he was encouraged to persist in his disobedience by the knowledge that if his attempts to conciliate the government failed, another possible course of action lay in flight from

the colony. This was a tactic that he had used successfully once before in his life to escape from an authority that he regarded as oppressive. It had also been the course followed fifteen years before by another important up-country chief, Matshana ka Mondise of the Sithole, when the government had sent a force, which included a contingent of Langalibalele's Hlubi, to arrest him. After escaping over the Mzinyathi to the Zulu kingdom, Matshana had been allotted territory on the east bank of the river by Mpande. Over time he had been able to re-establish a sizeable following and become a chief of some consequence in the kingdom, and it seems likely that Langalibalele would have had Matshana's example in mind as he considered the possible consequences of his own continued refusal to go to Pietermaritzburg.

An important factor in Matshana's ability to make good his escape had been the proximity of his territory in Natal to the colonial border. For Langalibalele too the geographical conditions for flight were favourable. Immediately to the west of his location lay the Drakensberg mountains and the virtually uninhabited highlands of what is now eastern Lesotho. A day's ride from ePhangweni, and considerably less from the higher parts of the location, the Bushman's Pass (as the whites marked it on their maps) near the source of the Mtshezi river gave comparatively easy access to a great wilderness of broken country where large bodies of people and — in the spring and summer when grazing was available — of cattle could remain concealed for weeks and months at a time. Since 1868, when Britain had annexed Moshweshwe's Sotho kingdom, this region had, as Langalibalele must have known, nominally been under British rule, but in fact it remained a political no-man's-land beyond the sway of effective authority. Though too inhospitable for permanent agricultural settlement, it lay open to the Hlubi chief as a line of retreat north and west towards the Sotho, or south towards the heterogeneous peoples, including other groups of Hlubi, who were then in the process of establishing themselves in what is now East Griqualand.

There is no evidence as to exactly when Langalibalele first began to turn over in his mind the possibility of removing from the colony altogether as a means of escaping from the increasing likelihood of his being punished, perhaps even 'eaten up', by the Natal government, but it may well have been after Myembe's second embassy had shown the authorities to be in earnest in requiring his presence in Pietermaritzburg. Certainly by July 1873 rumours were circulating among the Sotho to the effect that the Hlubi chief had been in touch with Masopha and Molapo, both of them sons of Moshweshwe and both influential chiefs in Lesotho. Langalibalele, so the stories went, had

inquired if they would receive his people and cattle if he was forced to flee from Natal. Whether these accounts had a firm basis in fact is impossible to say, although the course of later events suggests that they might have had. There is also a certain amount of evidence, although it did not emerge until months afterwards, that Langalibalele was in touch at this time with Adam Kok and other leaders in East Griqualand.

If, by the middle of 1873, Langalibalele's suspicions of the Natal government's intentions towards him had risen to the point where he was contemplating the possibility of flight from the colony with his people, it was not a step for him to consider lightly. At the age of 58 or so, and after twenty-five years of relatively secure and, latterly, increasingly prosperous life in Natal, he would hardly have been anxious once again to uproot himself and his people and lead them through the period of social and economic disruptions and uncertainties that would in all likelihood have followed their removal. He could not expect easily to find a new home among peoples who were likely to fear and resent the sudden irruption of a large and powerful body of newcomers into territories to which they themselves had prior claims. Nor, for that matter, could he expect that his own people would all necessarily be prepared to follow him, especially as the new planting season was about to begin. For these reasons the chief's prime concern in mid-1873 was still to find some means of inducing the government, in effect Shepstone, to modify the demands that it was making of him.

At the end of June or beginning of July, Langalibalele sent three men to Macfarlane to pay his overdue taxes and to intimate that he was willing to meet the magistrate in Estcourt, though saw no reason for having to go to Pietermaritzburg. But Macfarlane had long since determined to make no concessions to the chief. 'Signal punishment it must be', he wrote to Shepstone.[2] So the door was closing on Langalibalele's attempts at conciliation. For the time being, however, the Natal authorities forebore from taking more forceful measures against him. The impending arrival of a new Lieutenant-Governor was one factor in causing the delay; another was Shepstone's intention of first proceeding with what he regarded as more pressing business — the mounting of an official embassy to convey to the new Zulu king, Cetshwayo kaMpande, the Natal government's recognition of his accession.

At this juncture, another development served to heighten Langalibalele's fears. In the second week of July it was reported to him that a body of soldiers a hundred or so strong was assembling at Estcourt. Though it soon enough became clear that the force consisted of local volunteer units mustered for nothing more than one of their regular

training camps, its proximity caused a certain amount of panic in the Hlubi location. 'Balele's men (are) in an awful stir about our camp', Macfarlane reported to Shepstone.[3] The volunteers, too, seem to have been on edge: two Hlubi found at the camp one night were arrested as spies, court-martialled the next day, and fined.

It was probably these events which prompted Langalibalele once again to make an approach to Macfarlane, this time requesting one of the magistrate's *izinduna* to intercede for him. Again the magistrate was uncompromising. 'It would never do to give way now', he wrote to Shepstone on 18 July, 'as the whole population in this country is watching for the result'.[4] In Macfarlane's mind, at least, Langalibalele's fate was already settled: the chief should be arrested, fined and imprisoned, and removed from his position. The magistrate did not expect resistance, he wrote, but, divining what by then was probably passing through the chief's mind, he expressed his opinion to Shepstone that Langalibalele might try to flee into Lesotho, and recommended the blockading of the mountain passes to prevent it.

In the middle of July the new Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, Sir Benjamin Pine, arrived in the colony. He took the oaths of office on the 22nd, and on the last day of the month Shepstone left on his long-delayed embassy to the Zulu country. Before his departure, according to one account, he sent a message to Langalibalele to warn him that he intended to take up the matter of the chief's disobedience on his return. As might have been expected, this caused considerable unease in the chief's circle of advisers, and as the weeks of August and September went by, nervousness began to show itself among his people. In mounting alarm that they were going to be attacked by government forces, some Hlubi began gathering stores of grain into caves and other hiding places, and took to spending the nights in the bushes away from their homesteads. Among the Hlubi in Pietermaritzburg and Durban and on the far-off diamond fields, rumours began to spread that their families and property were in danger, and numbers of young men began leaving their places of work to return to the location. At beer-drinks, boasts began to be heard from hot-heads about the prospects of fighting the government's soldiers.

In this atmosphere of growing fear and excitement, firm leadership on the part of the Hlubi chief might have helped maintain calm, but Langalibalele remained torn by indecision over his best course of action. His advisers were deeply divided between an unpopular minority who urged him to avoid a confrontation with the government by obeying Shepstone's summons, and a vociferous majority, increasingly dominated by the younger men, who refused to countenance the chief's

going to Pietermaritzburg for fear he might be harmed. The divisions in the leadership were reflected among the people, with tensions beginning to emerge between the more militant supporters of the chief, and moderates who were fearful of bringing charges of disloyalty to the government upon their heads.

Caught between conflicting opinions, Langalibalele wavered, unable to make up his mind what to do. To get a mandate from his people, and also possibly to try to preserve their weakening unity, the chief held a series of public meetings in the location at which the issue of his going to Pietermaritzburg was discussed. In each case the over-riding opinion was that as the chief was physically unable to make the journey, he should not attempt to do so. No doubt Langalibalele was glad to be guided by these expressions, but he realized that he would have to make some positive move if he was to avert a reckoning with the government. To this end he set about raising money from his people to pay a propitiatory fine, but this the authorities apparently refused to accept. The chief at this time also sent frequent requests for advice to the missionary Hansen, who, he felt, was in a position to intercede with the government on his behalf. But, as a foreigner, Hansen did not have the same degree of access to the authorities that British missionaries did, and he was in any case unsympathetic to the plight of the chief, who had, in his opinion, for years obstructed his efforts at evangelizing the Hlubi. All Hansen could or would do was to advise Langalibalele to obey the government's order and go to Pietermaritzburg. A similar recommendation came from Albert Neizel, the missionary to the neighbouring amaNgwe.

In the middle of October, no doubt spurred on by the news of Shepstone's return to Pietermaritzburg some weeks before, Langalibalele again tried to propitiate Macfarlane, this time sending to say that he was collecting a fine to pay to the government. But the magistrate was adamant: the chief must go to Pietermaritzburg. Macfarlane was still sanguine enough about the outcome of the affair to report to Shepstone that he anticipated no resistance from Langalibalele to measures that the government might take against him. But just at this juncture the whole Hlubi country was thrown into turmoil by the arrival of a government messenger with another summons for the chief.

3. PANIC AND FLIGHT

Shepstone had arrived back in Pietermaritzburg on 19 September, after an absence of seven weeks, to find that Langalibalele had still made no move to obey his summons. To compound his offence from the administration's point of view, reports had in the meanwhile been

received from the Cape government that the Hlubi chief had made requests to certain Sotho chiefs for them to receive his cattle if he was forced to leave Natal. Shepstone now decided on an ultimatum. Early in October, with the agreement of Lieutenant-Governor Pine, he instructed a government *induna* named Mahoyiza to carry a message to the Hlubi chief to the effect that the government had learnt of his communications to the Sotho chiefs, and that he was to come and give an explanation in Pietermaritzburg within fourteen days of receiving the message. On 11 October Mahoyiza left on his mission with his entourage, and, after reporting to the magistrate at Estcourt, arrived at ePhangweni on about the 18th of the month.

At this time Langalibalele was apparently in the upper part of his location, probably at emaHendeni. The news of the government envoy's arrival, though no doubt long anticipated, seems to have alarmed him to the point where he began to take active steps to prepare for flight into Lesotho. He apparently gave orders for his cattle to be driven towards the mountains, and summoned his men, under a senior *induna*, Mabuhle, to emaHendeni to receive his instructions. If the soldiers came and fired on them, the chief told them, they were on no account to resist, but to run away. Langalibalele himself then seems to have retreated to Ntabathabeni, another of his homesteads closer to the mountains, and to have given instructions for Mahoyiza to be told that the chief was too ill to receive him. But the envoy refused to be fobbed off, and, though in some fear of his life, insisted on remaining in the Hlubi country until the chief was ready to see him.

Among the Hlubi at large, Mahoyiza's arrival caused consternation. Rumours spread rapidly that the soldiers were coming, and that those whose allegiance was to the government should stand aside if they wanted to avoid punishment. Numbers of men began to move their cattle up to the mountains so as to hide them or to have them ready to drive over Bushman's Pass into Lesotho. Others, anxious to be identified as siding with the government, drove their livestock in the opposite direction towards Estcourt, where they were issued with 'tickets of loyalty' by the magistrate. Women, children, and old people abandoned their homes and went into hiding in the caves and forests of the high country, and bodies of armed men crossed the countryside to assemble into their age-regiments.

The sudden and large-scale movement of people and cattle in and about the Hlubi location touched off panic among the white settlers of the area. Already nervous about the prospects of a confrontation between the government and the Hlubi, they mistook the latter's preparations for flight as the preliminaries to an attack on themselves. Farming

operations were suspended, livestock driven to places of safety, and women and children sent off to Pietermaritzburg and Mooi River. Some outlying farmers went into lager on the lower Njesuthi river. Others fell back on Estcourt, where, at a public meeting on 23 October, they arranged for the local church to be used as a lager if hostilities broke out.

Though the fears of most of the settlers were genuine enough, it is clear that some among them were actively fostering panic in a deliberate attempt to bring about a military intervention by the government. Prominent among the scaremongers was F.W. Moor, a local Justice of the Peace. Even Macfarlane and Captain Lucas, the magistrate of Ladysmith, became annoyed by his activities. 'I found yesterday from all sorts of sources that Mr Moor, J.P., has been the cause of the panic', Lucas wrote to Macfarlane on 24 or 25 October. 'It appers to me that it is the wish of Moor and others who sail in the same boat to force the hand of the Governor and oblige him to take action in the field, in fact "shoot some d---d niggers" '.[5]

The fears of the whites, whether genuine or simulated, communicated themselves to Africans throughout the up-country districts, and officials reported that numbers of men were taking up arms to defend themselves in case of war. In the space of a few days Macfarlane's view of the prospects for a peaceful resolution of Langalibalele's case went through a complete turn-about. On 28 October he communicated to Shepstone his feeling that widespread unrest was becoming increasingly likely, and urged that troops be sent to the northern districts to restore order. Langalibalele, he said, had had a long enough period of grace, and to avoid a recurrence of the panic which he had been instrumental in causing, his people must be broken up.

In the atmosphere of growing crisis in and outside the Hlubi reserve, Langalibalele must have sensed that the forebearance of the colonial authorities was running out, but he could not bring himself to make the only move that would have stayed the government's hand, and go to Pietermaritzburg. Instead, in one more attempt at conciliation, he despatched one of his senior men, Mbombo, to the seat of government with a small bag of gold coins as a token of his willingness to pay a fine for his transgressions. At the same time, on about 28 October, he braced himself to receive Mahoyiza, and came down to Nobamba for that purpose. On the afternoon of 29 October the envoy was summoned to meet him.

Before being taken into the chief's presence, Mahoyiza was, by Langalibalele's orders, made to remove his coat in case he had arms concealed beneath it. As was later to emerge, the chief's nervousness on

this occasion stemmed from an incident that had taken place in 1858 when John Shepstone, brother of Theophilus, was attempting to make the arrest of Chief Matshana kaMondise of the Sithole (see p. 55 above). After agreeing to hold an unarmed parley with the chief, Shepstone had, it seems, suddenly ordered him to be seized, drawn a pistol from his clothing, and fired at him. Though Matshana was unhurt, and had succeeded in escaping, Shepstone's apparent treachery had come to be known far and wide among the Africans of the colony. The incident had left a lasting impression on local chiefs, among them Langalibalele. Fifteen years later, with the Hlubi chief now in a situation similar to the one Matshana had faced, his suspicions of the Shepstones were strong enough for him to go so far as having an official envoy searched for hidden arms — an act that could, if misrepresented, be taken as a grave insult to the colonial authorities.

When Mahoyiza was finally able to deliver his message, the burden of it was what Myembe had told the Hlubi chief months before: he was to make his way to the capital in whatever manner suited him best, and there report to the colonial authorities. He would hear from them what charges the government had against him. One of these charges, Mahoyiza stated, was that Langalibalele had been in contact with Molapo and other chiefs outside the colony about the possibility of receiving his cattle. In reply, Langalibalele once again refused to agree to travel to Pietermaritzburg. He was afraid, he said, of being harmed by Shepstone, who he felt had a grudge against him. Instead, he would be willing to pay a fine. This, Mahoyiza replied, he was not empowered to accept, and shortly afterwards the interview ended.

That same evening Langalibalele left Nobamba on horseback, presumably to return to emaHendeni. Mahoyiza's words had confirmed his fears that Shepstone was bent on destroying him. In desperation, the chief sent off another message to Hansen, saying that he was in danger of being killed by the whites, and begging the missionary to come immediately to advise him on how to avoid destruction. Again Hansen temporized, but finally told the messenger that he would go at once to Estcourt to try to obtain a guarantee for Langalibalele's personal safety. His efforts were fruitless. Macfarlane made clear that no concessions would be made to the chief, and Hansen returned home to find that Langalibalele's messengers had fled on hearing a report that soldiers were arriving in Estcourt.

One faint hope remained for the chief. His envoy Mbombo had still not returned from Pietermaritzburg, where he had been sent to attempt to negotiate directly with Shepstone. But the hope that he might somehow succeed in warding off government action against

Langalibalele was dashed when, on 31 October, his two young attendants came scurrying back with the news that the envoy had been held by the authorities. At an excited gathering at emaHendeni some Hlubi spoke of cutting their way through the colony with their families and livestock, with the aim of returning to their old territory across the Mzinyathi. Others planned to take their cattle into fastnesses in the mountains and there defend them against the soldiers. But such ideas were scuttled by Mbombo's return late on 1 November with the news that his mission had failed and the soldiers were coming. Early next day Mbombo sent a message to this effect to Langalibalele, who had by then moved up to Ntabathabeni, and later in the day went to make his report in person. He had arrived, he said, at the seat of government on 29 October and had had an interview with Shepstone, who had told him that a full-scale military operation to capture the chief was under way and that Langalibalele had no choice but to surrender to the mercies of the government. Mbombo had apparently been required to remain a night near Pietermaritzburg with a senior government *induna* to prevent him from prematurely carrying back news of the government's preparations, but had been allowed to depart the following morning. The soldiers, he told the chief, were due to arrive that very day.

To Langalibalele, the worst that he had feared for many months seemed now about to happen. He could still have taken Shepstone's advice and surrendered to the government forces, but it was a prospect that he could not face. Even if his life was spared, there was now little doubt that he would suffer the humiliation of being deposed from his chiefship, perhaps imprisoned, and forced to live out the rest of his life under the surveillance of government *izinduna* of lesser rank than he. The only alternative was flight. That same afternoon he issued final instructions for his cattle to be brought after him, and then, accompanied by a number of his sons and *izinduna,* rode off towards the mountains. That night he slept at the foot of Bushman's Pass, and early the following day, 3 November, made the ascent of the Drakensberg and pressed on into Lesotho. Over the next few days he was followed by numbers of his men with their cattle, while in the location the entire population of women and children left their homes and went into hiding.

Chapter 6

The Destruction of the Chiefdom
(1873-1875)

1. THE GOVERNMENT PREPARES FOR WAR

At very much the same time that Langalibalele, away up at Ntabathabeni, was coming to the conclusion that there was no way to avoid meeting Mahoyiza, the colonial authorities in Pietermaritzburg were making the decision that the chief must finally be brought to book. Three weeks had passed since Shepstone had instructed Mahoyiza to carry the government's ultimatum to him, and there was no indication that the Hlubi chief was minded to obey it. On 27 October Lieutenant-Governor Pine informed the colony's Executive Council of what he called Langalibalele's 'treasonable' conduct, and obtained its formal permission to put into operation a plan of action to arrest the chief and bring him to trial. In reporting the Council's decision to the Colonial Secretary in London, Pine made clear that the basis of the charges against the chief would be his repeated disregard of official orders, and what the Lieutenant-Governor called his preparations to fight the government, as supposedly evinced in his communications to the Sotho chiefs.

The government's plan, which had presumably been drawn up some time before in anticipation of Langalibalele's refusal to obey the summons conveyed by Mahoyiza, was for Langalibalele to be arrested by the civil authorities, aided by African levies acting as police. To back them up in case of resistance or flight on the part of the chief and his people, a strong military force was to be mobilized. On 29 October, the day that Langalibalele and Mahoyiza had their meeting at Nobamba, three hundred Volunteers from the midlands and up-country districts were called out, and the following day two hundred regulars marched from Pietermaritzburg. On 1 November these forces rendezvoused at Fort Nottingham. At the same time, magistrates in the Pietermaritzburg region and the up-country districts were sending messages to the chiefs under their jurisdiction to turn out men to join the government expedition. Within a few days several thousand levies were on their way to their allotted positions round the Hlubi location.

The scale of what was ostensibly a police operation can perhaps be seen as an indication of intentions that remained unspoken by

government officials. The authorities had no doubt planned for the mobilization of so large a force partly because they anticipated a certain amount of resistance to the arrest of a chief of Langalibalele's standing, but it is likely that Shepstone and Pine, the two leading figures in the government, had already made up their minds to use Langalibalele's 'treason', though as yet unproved, as a pretext for breaking up his chiefdom and destroying its wealth and power. Given Shepstone's long-standing — if seldom articulated — policy of reducing the powers of the colony's African chiefs, and given what seems to have been his particular antipathy towards Langalibalele, it is probable that he had for months previously been inclining to this course of action.

For his part, Pine, newly arrived in the colony, seems to have been ready to accept without demur the gloss put on its 'native affairs' by Shepstone. Though the two men had quarrelled fiercely over matters of policy during Pine's previous term of office in the early 1850s, in dealing with Langalibalele they were united by common objectives. Apart from being anxious to put down what seems to have been represented to him by his advisers as a serious threat to the peace of the colony, Pine was no doubt glad to have the opportunity of earning popularity for his administration with the white settlers, among whom forceful action against the Hlubi was bound to win support. Since the establishment of Natal as a British colony, officials and settlers had frequently been at loggerheads over 'native policy': the breaking of Langalibalele's power would indicate to the settlers that the new Lieutenant-Governor was sympathetic to their interests, and, from his point of view, perhaps pave the way for a successful term of office.

The settlers seem to have responded to Pine's call to arms with alacrity. The opportunity of striking an officially sanctioned blow at a people whom deep down they feared as a threat to their livelihoods, and even to their very existence, was one to be seized with both hands. The Volunteers, young men for the most part, no doubt also looked forward to some good riding, with the chance of a bit of skirmishing to add spice to it. Large numbers of African men, too, were prompt in coming forward in response to the government's orders. The chiefs who sent in contingents of men for the levy knew that they would face severe punishment if they refused, but they and their adherents would also have been motivated by the prospect of reward in the form of cattle confiscated from the Hlubi. As always in such operations, the government's intention was for the levies to bear the brunt of what fighting there might be. In political terms, it would cause far less excitement in the colony if blacks, rather than whites, were to lose their lives; and at the same time the setting of black against black had the advantage for the

11. A Hlubi youth with his hair done in the iziyendane *style.*

12. Tetelegu kaNobanda, chief of the Mpumuza people in Swartkop location in the later 19th century. A staunch supporter of the colonial government, Chief Tetelegu was an assessor at Langalibalele's trial in 1874, and was appointed as his custodian when the former Hlubi chief returned to Natal from exile in 1887. Tetelegu died in 1899.

administration of promoting divisions within the colony's African population. Similar operations had been successful against Fodo kaNombewu of the Nhlangwini in 1847, Mdushane kaSonyangwe of the Bhaca in 1855, Sidoyi kaBaleni of the Nhlangwini in 1857, and Matshana kaMondise of the Sithole in 1858. There was every prospect that the operations planned against Langalibalele would also succeed.

Thus were forces beyond the vision of the Hlubi and their chief slowly closing in on them. Through his successive failures to respond to government summonses, Langalibalele had in effect been playing into the hands of interests more hostile to him, and more powerful, than he, from his perspective, could have realized. With his enemies looking for a chance to destroy him, even minor transgressions on his part were likely to be seized on as examples of deliberate intransigence. Thus did the authorities choose to represent his overtures to Molapo and other Sotho chiefs. In asking them to receive his cattle and people, Langalibalele may or may not have committed an offence in terms of 'native law' as administered by the colonial authorities in Natal, but there is no evidence that he had made this request, as alleged by Pine, as a preliminary to fighting the government. Pine may well have believed otherwise, but it seems clear that he was predisposed to do so, else he would hardly have accused the chief of 'treasonable conduct' merely on the basis of two vague and unsubstantiated reports from the Cape government.

Thus too did the authorities choose to represent Langalibalele's treatment of Mahoyiza. After his interview with the Hlubi chief, the envoy had made his way back to Estcourt, where, on 1 November, he reported on his mission to Shepstone, who had arrived to supervise the call-up and disposition of the levies from the up-country districts. Shepstone was probably prepared for another temporizing reply from the Hlubi chief, but he was quick to see that Mahoyiza's account of how he had been made to remove some of his clothes on Langalibalele's orders provided him with a weapon to use against the chief. Although, on a later occasion, an account of the incident given by Mahoyiza was shown to be highly exaggerated, Shepstone does not seem to have queried what the envoy told him. Langalibalele's conduct towards the government envoy was a deliberate insult to the authorities, he wrote to Pine the next day. It made even more clear that the chief was in rebellion, and had to be put down with a strong hand. Thereafter his people must be broken up. 'The whole tribe, it seems to me,' Shepstone wrote, 'must be removed from where it is, and dispersed among the farmers.'[1]

It was a rare moment of self-revelation on the part of Shepstone. Even before the Hlubi chief had been arrested, let alone put on trial, his

fate, and that of his people, was already being decided. From describing Langalibalele as committing acts of 'contumacy', senior colonial officials were now, on the basis of untested evidence, moving to the point of prejudging him as guilty of 'treason' and 'rebellion'. For the interests represented by Shepstone and Pine, the incident involving Mahoyiza could not have come at a better time.

In the first days of November, in accordance with the government's plan of operations, 2 000 African levies were positioned in a long cordon round the Hlubi location. At the same time, messages were sent out to Hlubi living on state-owned land and farms in the vicinity that they would not be harmed if they remained quietly at their homes. On the evening of 2 November, a flying column of Volunteers and Sotho guides left their camp at Fort Nottingham to ascend the Drakensberg and block off the passes from the Hlubi location. The arrival earlier that day of the news that Langalibalele was preparing to escape over the mountains (he had in fact set out from Ntabathabeni that same afternoon) added urgency to their mission. On the 4th and 5th, as a preliminary to a sweep in search of the chief which was due to begin on the 6th, two government heralds proceeded through the by now virtually deserted Hlubi location. To the few fearful and suspicious stragglers they encountered, they proclaimed that 'loyal' Hlubi must give themselves up to the government forces at once if they did not want to be treated as rebels. There was little, if any, positive response to their announcements; by this stage most of the able-bodied men had left the location and passed over the mountains, and those of their families that learnt of the proclamation preferred the uncertainties of remaining in hiding to the uncertainties of handing themselves over to the government forces.

2. THE BREAKING OF HLUBI POWER

At this juncture, there arrived at Pine's headquarters news that transformed the nature of the government's operations, and sealed the fate of the Hlubi and their chief. Early on 5 November a message reached the Lieutenant-Governor to the effect that the flying column had met with a severe reverse. The previous morning it had clashed with a force of Hlubi at the top of Bushman's Pass, lost three Volunteers and two African auxiliaries killed, and retreated in disorder down the mountain. The news sent a shock of fear and rage through the camp, and, as it burst upon the colony, through the whole settler community. For the first time in the colony's history, whites had been killed in war with blacks. All the settlers' long-nurtured fears of a black uprising seemed about to be confirmed.

If there had been any prospect of judicious treatment of Langalibalele and his people by the government, it was now gone. Pine at once sent the military and Volunteers to join the sweep of the location that began on the 6th, with orders for all Hlubi found in the location to be brought in as prisoners, and for any with arms in their hands to be shot. What had been intended primarily as a search for Langalibalele and his advisers turned into a mission of revenge as the Volunteers set about their work. Women, children and old people were smoked out of their hiding places, men found in possession of arms were shot, and any pockets of resistance ruthlessly destroyed. Taking their cue from their white officers, the African levies joined in the hunt with zest. A number of incidents of rape, and killing of fugitives and disarmed prisoners took place. It was not only people in the location who suffered: despite the government's assurance that they would not be harmed, Hlubi living on neighbouring farms outside the jurisdiction of their chief were also treated as rebels and brought in as prisoners. The same fate befell individual Hlubi who had been working outside the colony and were found making their way back to the location.

On 11 November Pine declared martial law, and issued a proclamation outlawing Langalibalele and those with him, deposing him from his chiefship, and dispossessing his people of their land. Officially the Hlubi chiefdom had ceased to exist. The men so far brought in were held as prisoners, while plans were made for allotting some of the women and children captives as labourers to white farmers. The others were placed in the charge of chiefs in the Pietermaritzburg region. By the middle of November the colonial authorities were confident enough that there was no further likelihood of resistance from the Hlubi for the Volunteer units to be sent home. Contingents of African levies remained to guard the mountain passes, and to continue the search for fugitive Hlubi, including Langalibalele, who, it was thought, might still be in the colony.

It was not only the Hlubi who were the victims of the government's harsh measures. By the middle of November the authorities had found an excuse for turning on the amaNgwe as well, some 5 000 of whom, under their young chief Mbalo, lived in the Njesuthi valey close to the Hlubi location. Earlier in the month the amaNgwe had earned Macfarlane's displeasure when they were slow in producing the large number of cattle which he demanded from them to feed the government forces in that sector. Then on 15 November it was reported to the magistrate that Hlubi cattle were hidden among the herds of the amaNgwe. In the view of the authorities, this was enough to implicate the latter in the Hlubi 'rebellion', and on 18 November Pine ordered the

whole population to be taken into custody. The next day a force of levies marched into the location, and seized people, cattle and moveable property. The women and children captured were placed in the charge of chiefs living in the up-country districts, while the men were taken down to Pietermaritzburg and put under the surveillance of local chiefs preparatory to being tried for complicity in the so-called rebellion. A small offshoot group of amaNgwe that lived near Ladysmith, and was in no way implicated in the flight of the Hlubi, was also taken into captivity, and their property plundered by the magistrate's *izinduna*.

The amaNgwe offered no resistance to the attack on them by the government forces, and on 22 November Pine was able to revoke his declaration of martial law with effect from 24th. On 30 November, in pursuance of the government's policies of completely clearing out the Hlubi and amaNgwe locations and rendering them unfit for habitation by returning stragglers, all huts in the two locations were burnt down. On 17 December, as a kind of afterthought, Pine declared the amaNgwe, too, officially dispossessed of their land. Meanwhile parties of Volunteers and African levies continued with winkling out fugitives, or 'rabbit-hunting' as the Volunteers called it, in and about the locations. No mercy was shown to any who offered resistance, and in some cases prisoners were killed in cold blood. It was mostly the African levies who were responsible for these brutalities, but, as gleeful letters written by Volunteers to the local newspapers made clear, it was often with the connivance of their white officers. Major Anthony Durnford, who had commanded the flying column on its ill-fated march, described what he had witnessed in the locations to the Bishop of Natal, John Colenso:

> 'There have been sad sights — women and children butchered by *our* black allies (too often, unhappily, by the permission and encouragement of the white leaders...), old men too... The burnt villages — dead women — it was all horrible.'[2]

A semi-official estimate was that between 150 and 200 Hlubi were killed in the process of clearing the location. In January 1874 the Natal Legislative Council passed an Act, promptly assented to by Pine, to indemnify the colonial forces for acts committed during the period when martial law had been in force.

Until the middle of November the Natal authorities believed that Langalibalele might still be hiding out somewhere in the colony. Only at the end of the month, when it was clear that he had fled over the mountains, were two columns of Volunteers and African levies sent in pursuit of him. One went southwards under the Drakensberg to head

him off in case he was making for East Griqualand. The other ascended Bushman's Pass and set out on the spoor left by the fugitive Hlubi and their cattle nearly a month before. To encourage the pursuing parties, the Natal government offered a reward of £1 for every man captured, and 100 cattle for the capture or killing of Langalibalele.

By this time the Hlubi chief and his followers were deep in the mountains of Lesotho. After crossing the Drakensberg on 3 November, Langalibalele seems to have made for the valley of the Senqu (Orange) river forty or fifty kilometres to the west, and there waited for his men and their cattle to join him. In the next few days several hundred men, with some 7 000 cattle, assembled under his immediate command. The chief seems to have had no fixed plans, although, according to one account, his hope was to try to establish contact with the Natal authorities from an asylum in the mountains, and negotiate peace with them. It is not known whether at any stage he contemplated making for East Griqualand or the inhabited parts of Lesotho: in the event he and his following seem to have remained in the Senqu valley, depasturing their cattle and maintaining themselves as best they could at what was the height of the rainy season in a country largely bare of shelter and wood.

News of the skirmish at Bushman's Pass on 4 November had reached Langalibalele from the *induna* Mabuhle two days later: his reaction to it is not recorded, although he must have come to realize that, if it had ever existed, any hope of making terms with the Natal government was now gone. For some days after his flight the chief sent scouts back on his trail to watch for signs of pursuit, and to keep him informed of events in the location. He would presumably have learnt of the clearing out of the women and children by government forces, but thereafter he and his party seem to have lost contact with developments in Natal. It was not until some days after the pursuing columns from the colony had started out that Langalibalele learnt of their approach.

Meanwhile, unknown to the Hlubi chief, the shock waves caused by the incident at Bushman's Pass were spreading all over southern Africa. Among the white communities of the sub-continent, the news of the deaths of three whites in the 'rebellion' of an influential chief triggered off alarms about a general black uprising. In the South African Republic, the Orange Free State, and the eastern Cape, as well as in Natal, relations between white masters and black subjects were at this time still far from being settled in favour of the former, and white colonists and officials were bound to react fiercely to any threat, whether real or apparent, to the uncertain overlordship which they exercised over blacks. Their concerns were all the more acute in that, in Lesotho, the

very heartland of South Africa, annexed by the British in 1868, ruled by a new king since 1870, and annexed to the Cape in 1871, political conditions were unstable. Fears were raised in many quarters that the advent of Langalibalele with a large body of armed men would touch off unrest which might spread to neighbouring territories.

The extent and force of the white reaction to Langalibalele's apparent rebellion was much greater than he could ever have anticipated when weighing up the pros and cons of flight from Natal. Though in part it was accounted for by the accident of the skirmish at Bushman's Pass where three whites had been killed, the reaction was much more the product of deep-seated fears within the white settler communities, fears of which the chief, isolated as he was in his location, had probably known little. Though unsanctioned removal from the colony was a tactic which might have succeeded twenty years before, it was unlikely to do so in the conditions of 1873. From the Cape, military reinforcements were sent to Natal by sea in case the 'rebellion' spread further in the colony, while a strong force of police advanced into Lesotho from the Cape's eastern forntier region. In East Griqualand, Cape officials mobilized another force of police, supported by a large party of Griqua, to block Langalibalele's passage if he came southward. In the South African Republic, a commando of burgers was called out to guard the south-eastern border areas in case the Hlubi chief should attempt to reach the Zulu country. In Lesotho itself, officials warned the new king, Letsie, and his subordinate chiefs not to lend assistance to Langalibalele's party, and instructed them to send patrols into the mountains to try to locate the fugitive Hlubi.

In early December, some five weeks after Langalibalele had crossed into Lesotho, he and his followers were encountered by a group of Molapo's men in the upper Senqu valley. The Sotho adopted a friendly attitude, and warned the Hlubi that pursuing columns from Natal were on their track. It may well have been this news that decided Langalibalele to accept an invitation to accompany Molapo's men back to their chief's territory. He may still have had some hope of being able to find asylum there; otherwise, better to surrender to the Lesotho authorities than to the vengeful pursuing forces from Natal. The news of the Hlubi's coming was carried back to Molapo, and from him, on 9 December, to the magistrate at Leribe, Major Charles Bell. The latter at once mobilized a force of police and of Molapo's men, and sent word to Langalibalele, whose party was now close at hand, for him and his men to lay down their arms and surrender. By this time the Hlubi chief had realized that further flight was impossible, but even now his pride — and his fear of white officials — did not desert him. On 10 December he sent

back to Bell to say that he was ashamed and afraid to surrender directly to him, but would give himself up to Molapo. On the 11th, he and ninety or so of his men rode into the chief's village, and surrendered to the officials and police who awaited them there.

Most of Langalibalele's men had remained in the mountains to guard their cattle against Sotho depredations, and refused to give themselves up. On 12 December they were attacked by the police and a mounted force sent out by Molapo, and dispersed with the loss of ten killed. Many were subsequently captured and brought into Leribe; others succeeded in escaping back into the mountains. Their cattle all fell into the hands of the government forces. On 13 December the two pursuing columns from Natal, which had joined forces in the mountains, arrived at Leribe. The following day the commanding officer, Captain Albert Allison, took charge of Langalibalele, five of his sons, and twelve *izinduna* as prisoners. Over the next few days Allison was involved in negotiating with the Lesotho authorities for the handing-over of the Hlubi cattle, the capture of which, to Molapo and his adherents, was far more important than the capture of Langalibalele and any number of his men. It was finally agreed that of the 7 000 cattle taken from the Hlubi, 2 000 would be given to Molapo as reward for his services; the rest were handed over to Allison. On 21 December the Natal column began its return march to Pietermaritzburg via Oliviershoek Pass. On the last day of the year the force arrived in the Natal capital with its captives and booty, and Langalibalele, his sons, and a large group of his men were imprisoned in the town jail.

3. THE DISMANTLING OF THE CHIEFDOM

Even before the pursuit of Langalibalele had begun, the Natal government was taking steps to dismantle the chiefdom that he had ruled for some thirty-seven years. The whole process was carried out in terms of fiats issued by the Lieutenant-Governor acting as Supreme Chief and using powers accorded to him by the administration's version of 'native law'. It was only afterwards that some 230 of the 9 000 or 10 000 Hlubi uprooted from their homes in and about the location were charged in court for offences they had allegedly committed against the government. Though by the middle of November the Hlubi had been dispersed and were either in captivity or in hiding, though they had formally been dispossessed of their land, and though their chief had been deposed, the authorities were determined to ensure that a semi-autonomous Hlubi chiefdom could never again revive, as it had revived once before. In this, the interests of the administration co-incided closely with those of the settlers. But it was not simply the breaking of Hlubi

power that the settlers wanted to see, nor was it only revenge for the deaths of three of their number at Bushman's Pass that they were seeking; they also pressed for the land and labour and livestock of the Hlubi to be made available to them.

The Hlubi location had been deproclaimed by Pine on 11 November: within a week up-country farmers were urging the administration to open the land for white settlement. 'There is no location in the colony so suitably situated for occupation by white settlers', the Natal Witness commented on 18 November.[3] Once the amaNgwe had also been removed from their location, the settlers lost no time in suggesting that it too should be made available for white occupation. At the end of November the Legislative Council considered a petition from fifty-four farmers in the Weenen and Ladysmith districts, calling for the division of both the locations into freehold farms. Their demand anticipated the intentions of the government: two days later Pine informed the Colonial Office in London that 'we intend to clear the two locations... and to re-people them entirely by white settlers'.[4] In the middle of December the Lieutenant-Governor gave instructions for the two locations to be surveyed into farms of between 2 000 and 3 000 acres each, and called for applications to be made direct to his office. Priority would be given to applications from settlers who had volunteered to join the expedition sent in pursuit of Langalibalele. The settlers were quick to respond: by early the following year some 160 applications had been lodged, mostly by up-country farmers, but also by personages like the magistrate of Weenen, John Macfarlane, who applied on behalf of his son.

It was not only the land of the Hlubi and amaNgwe that the settlers were after: it was also their labour. Low wages and poor working conditions had made for a perpetual shortage of farm labour since the foundation of the colony, and it may well be that one of the motives for the dispossession of both peoples was to force them into a position where they had little option but to take employment with farmers, or starve. The government took a direct hand in setting to work some of the several thousand captives with whom it was burdened, for by the middle of November Hlubi women and children were being allotted to white farmers pending the trial of their menfolk. In the first half of January 1874, the Legislative Council passed a law (No. 18 of 1874) empowering the Lieutenant-Governor to assign convicts to work for private individuals and companies for the duration of their sentences. 'The labour (problem) will progress remarkably, after the great importation of "slaves", Langalibalelians and Putinians', the Natal Witness remarked cheerfully at the end of January.[5] During the next few months

some 530 Hlubi of both sexes were put into forced labour in the Pietermaritzburg and Weenen districts.

Linked with the removal of the Hlubi and amaNgwe from their lands was the confiscation of their livestock and other moveable property. Nothing was to remain in their possession which could enable them to re-establish independent livelihoods and a viable social organization. At official sales held in the Pietermaritzburg and up-country districts from December 1873 into the early months of 1874, cattle, horses, sheep, grain, hides and other property taken from the two peoples were auctioned off to settler buyers. The £25 000 so raised went towards defraying the costs of the government's military operations against the Hlubi and amaNgwe, which were reckoned at over £50 000. Thus were the two chiefdoms required in part to subsidize their own destruction.

At the same time as the Natal authorities were ejecting the Hlubi from their lands, and confiscating their material means of maintaining an independent social existence, they were also acting to destroy the chiefdom's leadership structures and remove any focus of allegiance round which the people might reconsolidate. In late December or early January, Pine applied to Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of the Cape, for permission to have Langalibalele imprisoned on Robben Island off Cape Town after his impending trial. The nature of the request made clear that the Natal authorities had already decided the chief's fate, but for propriety's sake it was necessary to secure his conviction and sentence in a court of law. On 16 January, after two and a half weeks' isolation in jail, Langalibalele was taken before a specially constituted court and charged with treason and rebellion. His alleged crimes were to have left the colony with an armed force; to have removed his cattle from the colony without permission; to have conspired with his people to obtain firearms for the purpose of resisting authority; to have entered into treasonable communication with others unknown; to have disobeyed the magistrate placed in authority over him; to have insulted messengers sent to him by the government; and to have caused the deaths of Queen's subjects sent against him.

The chief's trial was held over six days of the period 16 January to 9 February. As was pointed out by critics at the time, and as has been repeated by most commentators since, it was a mockery of justice. In the short time that the trial lasted, one legal authority has recently written, 'the court which tried him compiled what must still be a record in substantive and procedural irregularities'.[6] The chief was tried by customary law as interpreted to its own advantage by the prosecution. The court which heard the case consisted of the Lieutenant-Governor as

Supreme Chief, and a total of seventeen assessors, all of them closely associated in one way or other with the colonial administration. The prosecutor was John Shepstone, who was indirectly implicated in Langalibalele's flight through his role in the Matshana affair. Contrary to custom, the accused was required to plead at the start of the trial: his pleas having been entered as guilty, the court then proceeded to hear carefully selected witnesses for the prosecution in order to determine the degree of his guilt. Langalibalele was not allowed to call witnesses, nor, until the indignant intervention of Bishop Colenso, was he allowed counsel. The conditions placed by Pine on the latter's handling of the defence were so restrictive that he withdrew from the case without having had access to his client or appeared in court.

The chief witness against Langalibalele was Mahoyiza, who described in detail how, at his interview with the Hlubi chief at Nobamba, he had been stripped and searched. Through a second intervention on the part of Bishop Colenso, his evidence was revealed to be a tissue of lies, but this was regarded by the court as not affecting the accused's plea of guilty, and therefore as irrelevant to the case. On 4 February final evidence was heard, and on the 9th, the sentence already decided on before the trial had begun was pronounced: Langalibalele was to be banished from the colony for life.

Even before the chief's trial was over, nine members of the court which was trying him met under the presidency of Theophilus Shepstone, and with John Shepstone again as prosecutor, to hear charges against seven of his sons and two of his *izinduna*. The case against them was that they had illegally removed themselves and their cattle from the colony, and had resisted the forces of the government. On 27 February eight of the accused were found guilty. Seven were sentenced to hard labour for periods ranging from six months to two and a half years, while one of Langalibalele's senior sons, Malambule, was sentenced to five years' banishment. Soon afterwards the same court began hearing similar charges against some 220 Hlubi men who had been captured outside the colony. On 31 March most of them were found guilty and sentenced. One man, who had killed an African levy, was sentenced to twenty years in prison; the others, to periods of imprisonment ranging from two to seven years. It was presumably these men, along with their families, who were assigned by the Lieutenant-Governor as farm labourers in terms of Law 18 as passed in January (see p. 72 above).

By the end of March 1874 the Hlubi chiefdom effectively no longer existed. The people had been dispersed, and had lost their land, their livestock, and their leaders. Many family heads were beginning

sentences of several years' hard labour. The government's aim of destroying a dangerous obstacle to the establishment of closer control over its African subjects had been successfully achieved. An added bonus for the administration was the improvement of its relations with the white settlers in the colony. From the latter's point of view, a major threat to their security and livelihoods had been removed, large tracts of good land were about to be opened up to them, a windfall of cheap labour had become available, and thousands of cattle had suddenly been thrown on the market, all at very little cost to themselves. Officials and settlers together had every reason to be satisfied with the outcome of what they — and apologist writers subsequently — termed the Langalibalele rebellion.

4. THE TRIUMPH OF MASTERS' INTERESTS

Though the great majority of settlers in Natal were solidly behind the government in its treatment of the Hlubi and amaNgwe, a small minority were vociferous in their condemnation. Most active among them was Bishop Colenso, who, virtually alone among the clergy and missionaries in the colony, was prepared to raise his voice in the defence of Langalibalele and his people. It was he who was primarily responsible for the fact that the 'Langalibalele affair' did not fade into historical obscurity, as other similar incidents in the colony's short life had already done. As a long-standing friend of Shepstone's, he had at first accepted government propaganda about the necessity of putting down the Hlubi 'rebellion' with a strong hand, but by the middle of December 1873 his views were rapidly changing. Outraged at what he had heard and read about atrocities committed by the government forces, he wrote to his contacts in the Aborigines Protection Society in Britain, urging them to press the Imperial government for an official inquiry. The blatant injustice of Langalibalele's trial in January and February 1874 shocked Colenso still further, and permanently ruptured his friendship with Shepstone. He sent off more reports to the APS, and, to the chagrin of the colonial authorities, who wanted Langalibalele out of the way as quickly as possible, he threw himself into the business of arranging an appeal on behalf of the chief to the Natal Executive Council.

Though the autorities at first tried to obstruct Colenso's efforts, in April Pine finally decided to allow the appeal to go on. The chief factor influencing his decision was probably the realization that a refusal might well result in the intervention of the Imperial government. This would certainly have brought about an unusually close scrutiny of Natal's public affairs by the Colonial Office, an eventuality which, in

Pine's view, was very much to be avoided. As chairman of the Executive Council, the Lieutenant-Governor seems in any case to have been confident of his ability to ensure that the appeal failed. Certainly this was the outcome he anticipated, for at the end of April, before the appeal had yet been heard, he hurried off to Cape Town to urge the Cape government to pass legislation that would permit the imprisonment of Langalibalele on Robben Island.

Before his departure, Pine arranged for the announcement of a general amnesty for Hlubi and amaNgwe 'rebels' still at large. In terms of a proclamation of 2 May, fugitives returning to Natal would no longer be treated as outlaws but would be sent with their families to live at places specified by the authorities, in other words, on white-owned farms. The government probably made this move as a means of avoiding further disturbances in the area bordering the mountains, where, in the early months of 1874, numbers of homeless Hlubi and amaNgwe were hiding out and periodically robbing livestock from the local inhabitants. Final pacification of the countryside was also desirable if awkward questions from the Colonial Office were to be avoided.

In the first few months of 1874, news of the disturbed state of affairs in Natal was starting to percolate through to London. A general election and a consequent change of government in Britain in February delayed the reaction of the Colonial Office, but by April the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon was concerned enough about reports reaching him from the colony to call for fuller information from Pine. He made clear to the Lieutenant-Governor his misgivings about the assignment of captured women and children as labourers, the conduct of Langalibalele's trial and the legality of his sentence, and Pine's plans to break up the Hlubi and amaNgwe locations into farms for white settlement. At the end of May Carnarvon was made yet more anxious by receipt of Pine's report on the passing of Law 18. On 12 June he issued firm instructions to Pine that no further assignments of captives were to be made.

At that time despatches between London and Natal took an average of six weeks to reach their destination. Pine would not have become aware of Carnarvon's concern over events in Natal until his return from the Cape at the end of May. His immediate objective now became to get Langalibalele out of the colony before the Imperial government could intervene to prevent it. A further incentive was the Natal government's fear of the influence that the chief continued to exert in Natal even though in captivity. Many local Africans believed that it was he who had caused an eclipse and a violent hailstorm that had occurred in Pietermaritzburg in April; and from King Cetshwayo had come a

request that Langalibalele might be set free on condition that he went to live in the Zulu kingdom.

From trying to obstruct Colenso, who had had difficulty in getting permission to visit Langalibalele (in May the chief had been moved to Durban partly to make it more difficult for the Bishop to see him), the authorities now moved to pressure him into speeding up his preparation of the chief's appeal. On 24 June Colenso finally forwarded the documents that he had been drawing up, but his efforts — predictably — were in vain. Only 13 July the Executive Council rejected the appeal. Colenso immediately applied to the Natal Supreme Court for an interdict to prevent Pine from implementing the sentence passed on Langalibalele on the grounds that banishment from one colony to another was illegal in terms of a British statute. The court rejected his application on 14 July. The way was now open for Langalibalele to be deported, for, a week previously, the Cape parliament had obligingly passed a law empowering the Governor to imprison him on Robben Island as Pine had requested. When the news arrived in Natal, Langalibalele and his son Malambule were secretly hustled aboard a ship in Durban harbour, and on 5 August it sailed for Cape Town.

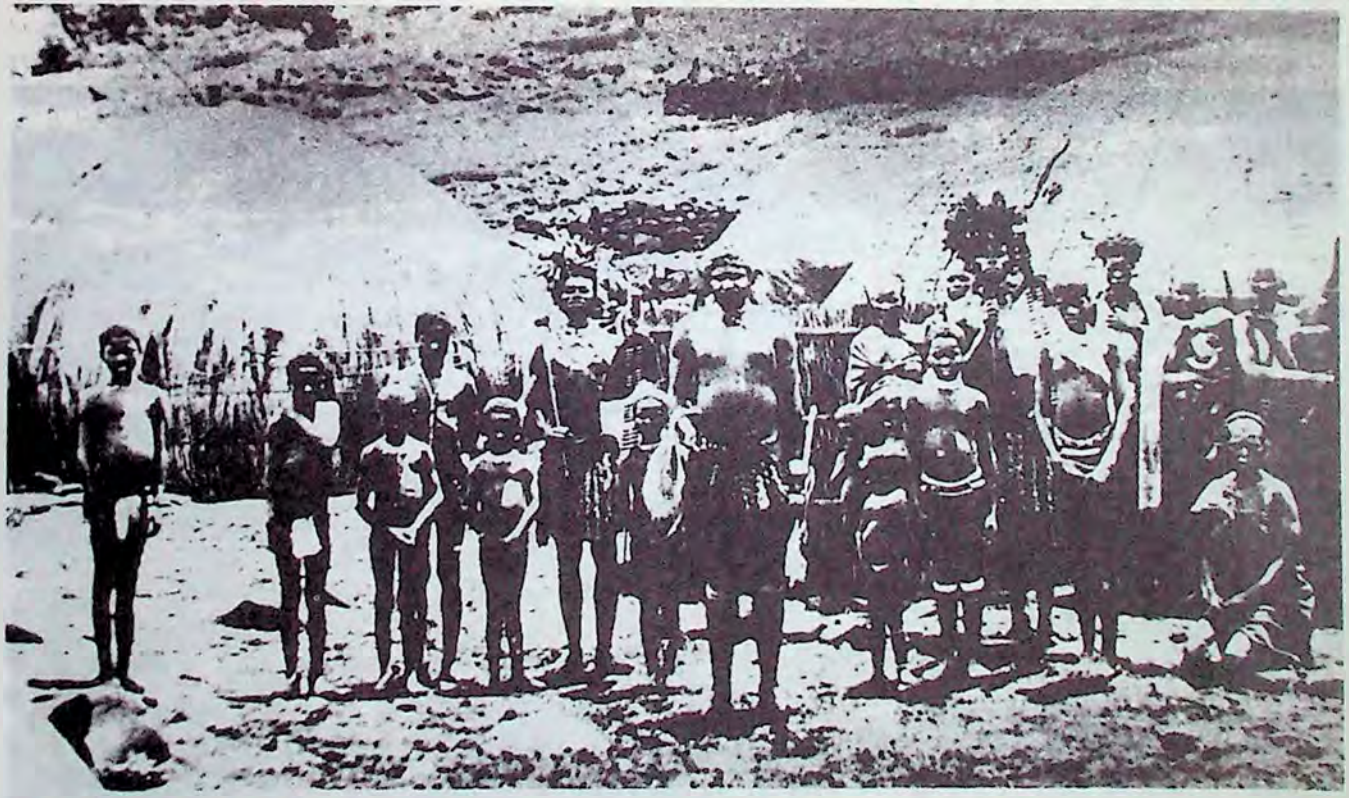
The Natal authorities had achieved a *fait accompli*, but by this time Pine and Shepstone were becoming anxious about the possible reactions of the Imperial government. Sometime in July they seem to have decided between them that Shepstone should go to London to discuss the affairs of Natal and its neighbouring territories in person with the Colonial Secretary. At the same time the two men seem to have reached the conclusion that, once the facts were fully known, the Natal government's treatment of the amaNgwe would prove unacceptable to the British government. On 3 August Pine reported to Carnarvon that he intended allowing the amaNgwe to return to their old location under the direct authority of a magistrate, and on 11 August, in a deliberately vaguely worded declaration, he absolved them from complicity in the so-called Hlubi rebellion.

The position of the Hlubi, though, for the time being remained unchanged. The 200 or so men who, in March, had been convicted of fleeing from the colony, were serving out their sentences as labourers on settler-owned farms. In most cases they would have had their families with them. Numbers of other Hlubi — probably the majority — were living dispersed among the African population of Natal, while others had taken service with white farmers. Yet others remained in newly found refuges in the Orange Free State, Lesotho, and East Griqualand. It was not until Pine's receipt of Carnarvon's despatch of 12 June, in which the Colonial Secretary came out strongly against the practice of private

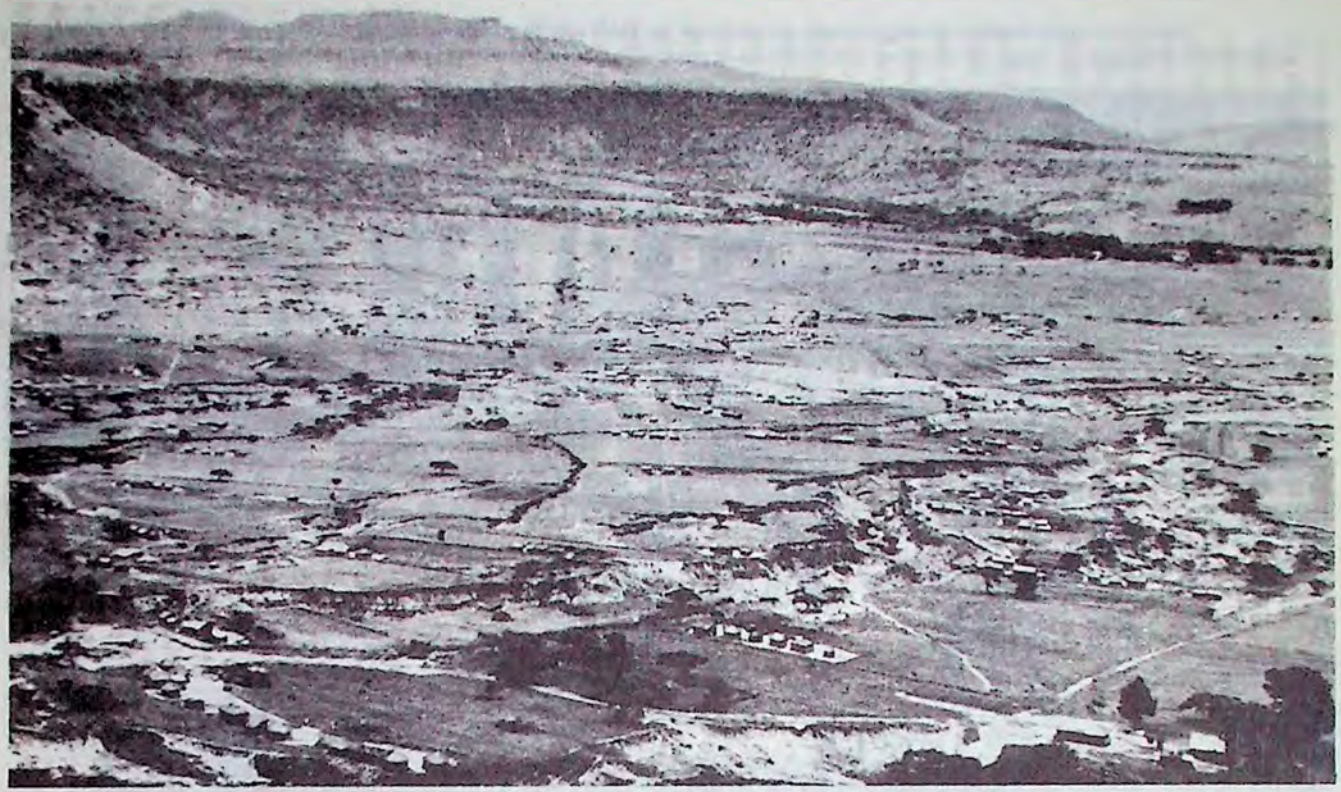
employment of forced labour, that the Lieutenant-Governor was galvanized into reconsidering the measures he had adopted with respect to the Hlubi. In mid-October he decided to commute the sentences of all but five of the men who had been convicted in March, and allow them to take up employment on designated farms. In effect this probably meant that convicts working on farms now become 'free' wage-labourers on the same farms. At the same time Pine released those Hlubi women, children, and old men who had been placed in the charge of African chiefs: his intention again seems to have been to induce the able-bodied among them to seek employment with white settlers.

In the meanwhile Carnarvon had been digesting the reports he had been receiving on events in Natal, and consulting with Shepstone, who had arrived in London at the end of August, and with Bishop Colenso, who had arrived at the end of September to put the case for Langalibalele, the Hlubi, and the amaNgwe to the British government. By now, if he had ever been one, the Colonial Secretary had ceased to be a disinterested observer of the Natal scene. As the facts about the disturbances in the colony gradually emerged, he had begun to realize that he could turn the 'Langalibalele affair' to his own advantage in pursuit of the plans which he was then developing for the formation of a single, confederal white-ruled state in southern Africa. As Carnarvon saw it, the Natal government had mishandled the Hlubi and amaNgwe 'rebellion'; the opportunity was ripe for him to intervene in order to reform the colony's administration in ways that would strengthen the authority of the Imperial government and diminish the influence of the settlers. In this way the colony could the more effectively be prepared for entry into the proposed confederation.

The disposition which Carnarvon was forming in the latter half of 1874 to intervene in the governance of Natal in the cause of his confederation scheme was reinforced by the growth of his reservations about the justice of Langalibalele's trial and sentence. He was also under strong pressure from Colenso and his allies in Britain to take positive steps to rehabilitate the Hlubi and amaNgwe and modify the chief's punishment. On the other hand Carnarvon was reluctant to go too far in reversing the measures taken by the colonial government: to do so would certainly be to alienate settler opinion in Natal, and thus to undermine his plans for confederation. Carnarvon had found, too, in Shepstone, a man whose ideas on the need for confederation co-incided closely with his own: to seek to overturn a dispensation in Natal which Shepstone had been instrumental in creating would be to lose a potentially valuable agent in the implementation of the Colonial Secretary's designs for southern Africa.



13. A farm labourer and members of his family pose outside their homestead in the Ladysmith district in the 1880s. After the destruction of the Hlubi chiefdom in 1873, many Hlubi were forced to seek work on white-owned farms in the up-country districts of Natal.



14. A view over part of the old Hlubi location as it was in 1980. The site of Langalibalele's ePhangweni homestead is off to the right of the photograph.

The form that Carnarvon's intervention finally took represented an attempt to reconcile the interests of justice with the demands of *realpolitik*. In a series of despatches written at the end of November and beginning of December 1874, he instructed Pine to allow the amaNgwe to move back to their old location without further delay, and to compensate them as far as possible for their losses of livestock and other property. Hlubi serving minor sentences were to be released, and, as it was now impossible to re-establish them in their old location, they were to be provided with the means of taking up settled occupations. Their employment in forced labour was to be ended. Langalibalele's trial, Carnarvon noted, had been unjust, and, even if the chief deserved punishment for his disobedience and his illegal exit from the colony, his sentence had been too severe. He was therefore to be removed from Robben Island to the Cape mainland, though still to be prevented from returning to Natal. Instructions to this effect were sent at the same time to the Governor of the Cape.

For the amaNgwe, Carnarvon's orders that they were to be compensated for the property confiscated from them represented a major step toward their rehabilitation. For the Hlubi though, there was little comfort to be derived from the measures he ordered to be implemented. Forced labour on white-owned farms was formally to be ended, but the likelihood was that it would continue in new guise, as few Hlubi would by now have had the means of re-establishing themselves and their families on an independent footing. The removal of the people from their former lands was given recognition by the Colonial Secretary as an established fact, as was the confiscation of their livestock and the destruction of their homes: there was to be no compensation for the Hlubi as there was for the amaNgwe. The injunction that they should be helped to take up settled occupations was so vaguely worded that it could easily be evaded by the Natal authorities. And as far as the Hlubi chief was concerned, Carnarvon was in effect conniving at his banishment, even if under slightly improved conditions. Gone was any further mention of the Colonial Secretary's doubts about the legality of his sentence.

As Bishop Colenso later commented, Carnarvon had sacrificed the Hlubi to the 'mere policy' of confederation.[7] Another victim of the Colonial Secretary's designs was Lieutenant-Governor Pine, who was made the scapegoat for the failure of measures that were largely of Shepstone's devising, and recalled from the colony to make way for Carnarvon's appointed agent, Sir Garnet Wolseley. Before his departure, a bitter Pine gave effect to Carnarvon's instructions to end the employment of Hlubi in forced labour. A proclamation of February

1875 released all Hlubi who were in such employment from the conditions that bound them; henceforth they were to be employed on the same conditions as any other African work-seekers. All other restrictions which had been placed on the Hlubi were lifted, with one important exception: they were not to be allowed to regroup as a people anywhere in the colony.

In the autumn of 1875 numbers of newly freed Hlubi made their way back to their old location to try to re-establish a livelihood for themselves, but it was to be under very different conditions from the ones they had known before. In terms of a scheme drawn up by Shepstone in April 1875, and accepted, with some modifications, by Wolseley, the old Hlubi location was to be subdivided, and repopulated by selected groups of other Africans. Each group was to be under a government-appointed headman, as distinct from a hereditary chief, and returning Hlubi were to be dispersed among them. A white magistrate would be in overall charge of the location, and between it and the amaNgwe location a buffer belt of farms was to be surveyed for white occupation. In July 1875 the scheme was accepted as it stood by Carnarvon.

A year and a half after Bishop Colenso had first brought their treatment at the hands of the colonial authorities to the notice of the Imperial government, some Hlubi were beginning to pick up the threads of their lives in their old location. Large numbers of others, perhaps the majority, remained living outside the location, either under other chiefs, or as labourers or squatters on white-owned farms. Some no doubt did so because they preferred to remain where the events of late 1873 and early 1874 had carried them, others because they lacked the means to re-establish themselves in their former homes. The effects of the Imperial government's intervention had thus been formally to release the Hlubi from captivity and forced labour, and to restore some of them to part of their former lands. It had not restored their cattle — one of the main bases of their previous mode of social existence — nor their former leaders. In effect it had allowed the interests of the government and colonists of Natal to triumph over those of the Hlubi chiefly house and its adherents, and a prosperous emerging peasantry to be destroyed.

5. POSTSCRIPT

Langalibalele and Malambule were transferred from Robben Island to the mainland in June 1875, and were settled on a farm outside Cape Town where they could be kept under official surveillance. In August, in a last attempt to have the chief's punishment modified, the Aborigines Protection Society requested Carnarvon to allow them to return to Natal, but this the Colonial Secretary refused to do. Malambule came

back to the colony after serving out his five-year sentence, but it was not until 1887 that the Natal authorities felt confident enough to permit the ageing Langalibalele to return. Even then he was required to live in Swartkop location just outside Pietermaritzburg, under the eye of Chief Tetelegu kaNobanda, who had been one of the assessors at his trial in 1874. He died two years after his return, at the age of about 74, and was buried by his people in the hills of his old location.

In 1897 Langalibalele's son and heir, Siyephu, was appointed as a chief in the Klip River district by the Natal government, and permitted to gather a number of his father's people under his authority. Separate groups of Hlubi also became established under their own chiefs in the Ixopo area and in northern Natal. All of these were government-created 'tribes': the hereditary Hlubi chiefdom had come to an end in 1873.

Notes to the Text

CHAPTER 1

[1]Evidence of Mabhonsa kaSidlayi in C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright, eds., *The James Stuart Archive*, vol. 2, Pietermaritzburg, 1979, pp. 12, 28.
[2]H.M. Ndawo, *Izibongo Zenkosi zama-Hlubi nezama-Baca*, Mariannhill, 1928, p. 7.
[3]Ibid., p. 9.
[4]W. von Fintel, 'Traditions and history of the Amahlubi tribe', *Native Teachers' Journal*, vol. 11 (1932), p. 231.
[5]M.M. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, transl. H.C. Lugg, ed. A.T. Cope, Pietermaritzburg, 1979 (1st publ. in Zulu, 1922), p. 22.
[6]J.H. Soga, *The South-eastern Bantu*, Johannesburg, 1930, p. 409.
[7]Ndawo, *Izibongo*, p. 11.
[8]Mabhonsa in *James Stuart Archive*, vol. 2, p. 14.
[9]Von Fintel, 'Traditions and history', p. 232.

CHAPTER 2

[1]Mabhonsa in *James Stuart Archive*, vol. 2, p. 16.

CHAPTER 3

[1]H.F. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, ed. J. Stuart and D. Mck. Malcolm, Pietermaritzburg, 1950, p. 124.
[2]A.F. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country*, London, 1836 (repr. Cape Town, 1966), p. 186.
[3]D.J. Kotzé, *Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838*, Cape Town, 1950, pp. 231-2; E. Smit, *The Diary of Erasmus Smit*, ed. H.F. Schoon, Cape Town, 1972, pp. 57, 183-4.
[4]Cited in F.J. Perkins, 'A history of Christian missions in Swaziland to 1910', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1974, p. 76.
[5]Mabhonsa in *James Stuart Archive*, vol. 2, p. 33.
[6]Adapted from *Records of the Natal Executive Council 1846-1848*, South African Archival Records, Natal no. 2. Cape Town, 1960, p. 302.

CHAPTER 4

[1]J.W. Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal*, Cambridge, 1855, p. 124.
[2]British Parliamentary Papers, C.-1141, *Langalibalele and the Amahlubi Tribe*, 1875, p. 7.
[3]T.J. Lucas, *The Zulus and the British Frontiers*, London, 1887, p. 159.

CHAPTER 5

[1]Keith and Co., *The Kafir Revolt in Natal in the Year 1873*, Pietermaritzburg, 1874, p. x.
[2]Cited in A.H. Manson, 'The Hlubi and Ngwe in a colonial society, 1848-1877', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, p. 119.
[3]Ibid., p. 118.
[4]Ibid., p. 119.
[5]Ibid., p. 122; N.A. Etherington, 'Why Langalibalele ran away', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, vol. 1 (1978), pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER 6

[1]British Parliamentary Papers, C.-1025, *Papers Relating to the Late Kafir Outbreak in Natal*, London, 1874, p. 34.
[2]Cited in N. Herd, *The Bent Pine: the Trial of Chief Langalibalele*, Johannesburg, 1976, p. 37.
[3]Cited in Manson, 'The Hlubi and Ngwe', p. 127.
[4]Ibid., p. 130.
[5]Ibid., p. 134.
[6]J.G. Riekert, 'The state and the law: the trial of Langalibalele', unpublished seminar paper, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1979, p. 1.
[7]Cited in N.A. Etherington, 'Labour supply and the genesis of South African confederation in the 1870s', *Journal of African History*, vol. 20 (1979), p. 248.

Appendix

Lists of Hlubi Chiefs

Eight variant lists of successive rulers or supposed rulers of the Hlubi are given below. All were originally recorded or published in the earlier 20th century. Orthography has been modernized.

1. Sivivi kaMaqungo (1907)

Mntungwa
Ndlovu
Dlomo
Mashiya
Busobengwe
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthimkhulu
Langalibalele

2. Theal (1908)

Malunga
Dlamini
Mthimkhulu
Ncobo
Dlomo
Mashiya
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthimkhulu
Langalibalele

3. Ngwenya (1908)

Mhuhu
Ndlovu
Muhlanga
Musi
Mthumkhulu
Hadebe
Ngcobo
Dlomo
Mashiyi
Ngwekazi
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthumkhulu
Mpangazitha
Dlomo
Langalibalele

4. Mabhonsa kaSidlayi (1909)

Mhuhu
Ndlovu
Muhlanga
Musi
Mthimkhulu
Hadebe
Dlomo
Mashiyi
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthimkhulu
Langalibalele

5. Bryant (1911)

Dlamini
Mhlanga
Musi
Mthimkhulu
Buswebengwe
Mashwabada
Mlotsha
Hadebe
Mashiyi
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthimkhulu
Langalibalele

6. Ayliff & Whiteside (1912)

Diwu
Fulathelilanga
Bhele
Lufelelwenja
Sidwabasenkomo
Mhuhu
Mhlanga
Musi
Masoka (Mzimkhulu)
Ndlovu
Malunga
Dlamini
Mthimkhulu
Ncobo
Dlomo
Mashiyi
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthimkhulu
Langalibalele

7. Soga (1930)

Ludiwu
Sidwaba
Lufelelwenja
Mini
Fulathelilanga
Nguni
Mzimkhulu
Masoka
Mhuhu
Mhlanga
Musi
Mntungwa
Ndlovu
Dlamini
Mthimkhulu
Ncobo
Dlomo
Mashiyi
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthimkhulu
Langalibalele

8. Von Fintel (1932)

Ngcobo
Hadebe
Dlomo
Ngwekazi
Nsele
Bhungane
Mthimkhulu
Langalibalele

SOURCES

1. Evidence of Sivivi kaMaqungo in James Stuart Collection (Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban), File 62, notebook 83, p. 6.
2. G.M. Theal, *History of South Africa since 1795*, vol. 1, London, 1908, p. 380.
3. Paul Ngwenya, 'List of Hlubi chiefs', in C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright, eds., *The James Stuart Archive*, vol. 2, Pietermaritzburg, 1979, p. 308.
4. Evidence of Mabhonsa kaSidlayi in Webb and Wright, eds., *James Stuart Archive*, vol. 2. p. 11.
5. A.T. Bryant, 'The Emahlutjini. I', *Izindaba Zabantu*, vol. 1, no. 8, 15 April 1911, p. 4; also in *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, London, 1929, pp. 157, opp. p. 314; and in *History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes*, Cape Town, 1964, pp. 24-5.
6. J. Ayliff and J. Whiteside, *History of the Abambo*, Butterworth, 1912 (repr. Cape Town, 1962), p. 93.
7. J.H. Soga, *The South-eastern Bantu*, Johannesburg, 1930, opp. p. 403.
8. Culled from W. von Fintel, 'Traditions and history of the Amahlubi tribe', *Native Teachers' Journal*, vol. 11 (1932), pp. 229-33.

Notes on Sources

The first three chapters of this study, particularly chapter 3, draw heavily on statements made by Mabhonsa kaSidlayi to James Stuart in 1909, and published in C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright, eds., *The James Stuart Archive*, vol. 2, Pietermaritzburg, 1979, pp. 11-35.

The second three chapters draw on an unpublished M.A. thesis by A.H. Manson, 'The Hlubi and Ngwe in a colonial society, 1848-1877', University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1979. Its main arguments are summarized in A. Manson, 'A people in transition: the Hlubi in Natal 1848-1877', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, vol. 2 (1979), pp. 13-26.

The other most important sources used are set out below.

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