

## NDABANKULU KA QUBABANYE

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- 4 Ndabankulu ka Qubabanye ka Nomfihlela ka Nomndulukana of the Emayakeni people, of the Gumedede people of Cibi, near the Cunu people. My chief is Manzekofi ka Matshana ka Mondise.<sup>1</sup> I pay taxes at Nka-ndhla magistracy (Empandhleni). I was born at the time of the Sidoyi expedition [1857].<sup>2</sup>

My father was one of Mpande's great warriors. He was of the Mdhlenevú regiment.<sup>3</sup> My grandfather was one of Tshaka's great warriors. I do not know the name of his regiment, but he used to say that he stayed at eSiklebeni.<sup>4</sup>

My father's flight from the Zulu country. [This might go into chapter re marrying-off of girls.]<sup>5</sup>

- 5 Two of the girls in the isigodhlo at Nodwengu,<sup>6</sup> who had accepted my father as a lover, told him, 'We are pregnant. It is you who are responsible.' They said, 'Let us run away then, and cross over [i.e. go to Natal], for we shall be killed, together with you.' He agreed, and went off with them. But on the way he found out that they had been speaking falsely, that they were still menstruating. He turned back, made for the place of the king, and asked the izinduna to take him to the king. Some of them refused, saying, 'We don't want to see you put to death before our eyes. We would rather that we learnt indirectly of your death,' for they liked my father. He passed them, and proceeded on his own to the isigodhlo. Those there tried to drive him away, for they knew him. He began giyaing there, crying out, 'Where's it off to? Where's it off to? Nkomiyapi ka Nomfihlela!'<sup>7</sup> One of the izinduna then went forward and told the king, 'Your warrior has returned. He was deceived by the girls, who told him that they were pregnant. That is why he ran away. When he found out that it was false, he remembered his king.'

When they told him this, the king, Mpande, was glad, and said, 'I am happy, for my warrior has returned.' That was the end of the matter. A person who ran away and was caught on the road would be put to death.

My father remained a while, and then fled with my mother, who had a very young son, Nsokana. [For story of this boy see next page.] I had not yet been born. My father abandoned those two girls.

- 6 My mother was a girl of the isigodhlo. Her father was Lufico (alias Memane) of the amaNcube people. [Not amaCube, quite distinct.] She is now dead.

The heroism of my father, Qubabanye. (Throws a firebrand across a river in flood.)

Mpande ordered an impi to take up arms and go to the Swazi country.<sup>8</sup> It was to destroy everything; nothing should remain, only the grindstones and hearthstones. When they came to the Swazi country, my father was the first to kill a Swazi carrying a war-shield. He killed the man by hitting him on the head with his fighting-stick. He began by firing at him with a single-barrelled gun. Upon seeing that my father had expended his shot, the Swazi then brought him to bay. My father then drew out his fighting-stick and hit the man, splitting open his head and killing him. On account of this my father was given the praise, 'The one who strikes a man with a heavy stick'.<sup>9</sup>

At this point there appeared a woman of the household of the Swazi whom my father had killed. She was running away, carrying a child on her back. He ran after her. The woman tore off her carrying-skin and the child fell to the ground. A youth who was with my father came up and stabbed the woman. My father picked up the child - it was a boy - and carried it on his back. When the impi bivouacked, some of the men said to my father, 'Why are you carrying the child, when the order was that we should destroy everything? Put it down and we'll rip it open!' My father refused, saying 'Don't you dare!' <sup>10</sup> [Notice the idiom.] He said that the child would serve as an indication to the king of how fiercely he had fought.

The impi then set out on its return march. When it reached the Mkondo river, the skies opened and the river rose up in flood.<sup>11</sup> The impi was split in two sections, one on each bank of the river. When this happened, one section set about making fires, but the section on the other bank had no fire. The izinduna ordered, 'Throw firebrands across to them so that they too can kindle fires and roast meat to eat.' The men of the impi did as they were ordered, but the firebrands fell into the water, every one of them! Then my father cried out, 'What are you doing, throwing all the firebrands into the water?' They said, 'Au! Who are you to talk, you who carry a child on your back? Let's see you throw.' He threw a firebrand; he threw it high! It landed on the opposite bank. The men of the impi all used it to light fires. When the weather cleared, the two impis rewited. The question was asked, 'Who was it who threw the firebrand?' The reply was, 'It was Qubabanye!'

The impi then set off back to Mpande, driving the cattle which it had 'eaten up' in the Swazi country. It arrived back at Mpande's. It was reported to him that a child had been brought, the one that had been carried on the back. Mpande then asked my father, 'Why did you do it?' He replied, 'Nkosi, I did it because I surpassed the whole Zulu army in killing with my fighting-stick. Then I again excelled in the matter of the firebrand, after the whole of the Zulu had failed!' Mpande rose and said, 'Is this how it was, Zulu people?' They replied, 'Yes, Nkosi!' All of them agreed. He then said to my father, 'Take it! It is yours!'

My father named the child Nsokana. Nsokana is now dead.

[Note. This man Ndabankulu was one of those in charge of Gundersen's store on Qudeni mountain when I passed there in April 1906, accompanied by Funizwe, Kafula, Magwegwana, and Ngemuka.<sup>12</sup> He says I was very near being killed on that occasion, and parts of me

distributed among my murderers to be worn by them as charms and ornaments.]

Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Manzekhofi was chief of the Sithole people in the Nkandla and Nqutu divisions.
- <sup>2</sup>Sidoyi kaBaleni, chief of a section of the Nhlanguwini people, fell foul of the Natal colonial authorities in 1857. A military force was sent to arrest him, whereupon he fled over the colony's southern border.
- <sup>3</sup>The *umDlenevu ibutho* was formed in the mid-1840s of youths born some twenty years earlier.
- <sup>4</sup>EsiKlebhene was a Zulu royal *umuzi*.
- <sup>5</sup>The note in parentheses appears in the original as a marginal insertion. It seems to indicate that Stuart was already preparing material for the Zulu readers which he published in the mid-1920s.
- <sup>6</sup>KwaNodwengu was Mpande's principal *umuzi*.
- <sup>7</sup>The informant's father was here making a play on the name (presumably his own) Nkomiyaphi, which translates literally as 'Where is the beast off to?'
- <sup>8</sup>A Zulu version of the account that follows was published by Stuart in 1923 in his reader, *uTulasizwe*, ch. 6. Mpande sent expeditions against the Swazi in 1847, 1848, and 1852.
- <sup>9</sup>The original reads, '*uGongod' umuntu ngo mqweleba*'.
- <sup>10</sup>The original reads, '*Impi yake!*'
- <sup>11</sup>The Mkhondvo river, which is marked on many maps as the Assegai, rises north of present-day Wakkerstroom and flows north-east to join the Lusutfu in Swaziland.
- <sup>12</sup>Qudeni mountain overlooks the confluence of the Thukela and Mzi-nyathi rivers from the north-east. Stuart is here referring to a mission which he performed while on service with the colonial forces during the rebellion of 1906: see his *Zulu Rebellion*, p. 258. Funizwe was a brother of Bhambatha, who was chief of the Zondi and one of the rebel leaders.