

24.5.70

INFORMANT: HLOPHE : LONCAYI HLOPHE

AREA: LAMGABHI

REGIMENT: MASOTSHENI

INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM : GRANDFATHER, VIA FATHER MVEMVE.

QUESTION :

You have for a long time played ~~an~~ a certain vital role in this nation and it is known that you have, so to say, been the foundation stone of this nation from the time of your great grandfather, Sokhukhuza's time up to this day. Tell us all about this role and about yourselves.

CHIEF'S BROTHER

Our place and community is actually the royal one compared to all other places or communities in this country. It has given birth to the King's salute viz. "Bayethe".(1) It is, so to say, the headquarters of all other places or communities in this country and has been so since Sokhukhuza's time through that of Moya, Mnyani, Mrukwa ( Mbede's senior brother), to that of Mabhedla, also called Mvumevu, our present chief. We are still playing this role for the King, actually doing this job for him, and this has been so since Somhlolo's time. (2)

LONCAYI HLOPHE

I start from the time Somhlolo was moving north from eShiselwená as a result of olden days wars. His guardian was Sokhukhuza, who saw him safely through dangerous places and difficult times such as hiding the King at a safe place while he himself went on ahead to spy out enemies and make sure it was safe for them to move on. They were close friends, comrades in spite of the fact that Somhlolo was his King. This went on until both men reached this part of the country. This was a time of wars among black peoples only, and the people of this country had constant troubles with the Zulus, the latter now and then coming over to the former to fight with them. The Swazis then decided to move out of reach of these Zulus (from Embilaneni). On the way Somhlolo was pricked by a stick (stem of a fern-like plant), near the mountain called eMampondweni. He was with Sokhukhuza at this time also. Sokhukhuza then used his assegai to cut off a long thorn to get the stick out of the King's flesh. This done, both men proceeded and descended to the Ngame forest/which, as they approached, Sokhukhuza was planning to <sup>hide</sup> his King and friend, to protect him from his enemies as usual. ~~Due~~ <sup>To</sup> his disappointment he found that this bush was not thick enough to cover the King; moreover the King here contracted a fever, which was in fact an ~~ag~~ after effect from his having been pricked by the stick. Sokhukhuza then carried the King on his back and climbed <sup>to</sup> the top of Mdlanku hill, where he found a cave. Here they sat ~~xxxx~~ and started rubbing sticks together to produce fire by friction, for there were no matches yet. The King helped Sokhukhuza make this fire, for he was still well enough to rub sticks together.

(1) "Your Royal Highness."

(2) This group of ~~Hlophes~~ Hlophes perform a secret function for the King.

At this time Sokhukhuza bore two burdens on his shoulders, viz. taking care of and protecting the King, and looking after the kingly head-rest (royal pillow, so to say). Every new King used this same head-rest which Sokhukhuza looked after, and only the Hlophes looked after it and still do.(1)

We came with Somhlolo and he gave us this place to settle in, i.e. when he said to Sokhukhuza when they were at Mabeleka, "This is a good place for you to settle in because there are lots of hares, the sort of things you like for your meat". From that time on this has been our place.

#### Sokhukhuza Continues.

After Somhlolo died Sokhukhuza took his body to a hiding place near Dlangeni, where a Basuto man, one Mabaleka Mncina, had his kraal. Sokhukhuza then went to steal a hide from Mncina's kraal, wetted it and wrapped the King's body in it. But he hid the King's death from the regiments in order not to lower their morale. He continued to boost their moral telling them he had the King at a safe place, and they may do their planting (crop). So did the regiments, planting all along the river banks in the area. The planting finished, Sokhukhuza then broke the sad news to the regiments, knowing that a king's burial takes place only in winter (and winter was still a long way off). He ~~xxxx~~ broke the news to the princes and the leaders of regiments, for at the time there were no chiefs, not during this "great trek". They asked him to show them the body, which he did. When winter set in the king's body was taken out of the hiding place, (Sokhukhuza showed them where the king was pricked by a stick, the bush he had intended to hide him in and the place where he hid his body) and carried back to Embilaneni for burial.

Mswati was then made king after his father. But still there were constant reports of imminent attacks by Zulus, and in response to these Sokhukhuza went back to the man he had been stealing cattle from viz. Mabaleka Mncina, near the Komati River, to seek information about people who could ward off the attack by using charms (war-doctors). Mncina directed Sokhukhuza to one Mantsholo Mnisi, near Mbabane. Mnisi would direct him to the people he had been told were coming down from Mlambo's area and chasing a wild animal called Impofu. These people were carrying a stick which, when they became tired in the chase, they used to point at the animal to make it lie down. Mnisi directed Sokhukhuza to the Maseko people in the Luhleko area, and these in turn directed him to Mawelawela area where the charmers were now. Unfortunately Sokhukhuza thought he was straying too far afield alone, and so he returned home and took another man, Mfundza, a prince from Vusweni area, to go with him to the Charmer's ~~of~~ the impofu for help. These two men actually got the help (keeping off the attack by Zulu) from the charmers, i.e. people of Dlangeni who had come down from Mlambo's area. These were brought to King Mswati, who was however suspicious about them. Asked what help they could give they showed their miracle stick and said they had some powders etc. as well. Then Mswati instructed Sokhukhuza to go with these people so that they should doctor all strategic places at which the Zulus might cross the Pongolo River when attacking the Swazis. This they did at least at four strategic

(1) "The head rest or royal pillow is looked after by The Hlophes" ~~M~~ - means that the king found rest at the hands of Sokhukhuza, as much as to say that Sokhukhuza carried in his own hands the king's head-rest, for at his hands only did the king find rest and protection on his hazardous migration to the north.

points along the Pongola River, and their charms literally made it impossible for the Zulus to come further than the Pongola River, because they then ran out of provision and became exhausted and turned back, even at the very points where the charms had been placed. (They actually crossed the river, but turned back ~~at~~ at the charmed points, hungry and exhausted). In the meantime the Swazis were busy ploughing and planting their crops; finally harvesting them undisturbed.

for  
It was/this performance that the Gamas (the charmers) gained the King's trust, and were given a place to settle in as doctors of the King.

Shortly after this reports came again of Zulus preparing to attack the Swazis once more. The Gamas had to be brought from their place to keep off these attacks by means of their charms. When they arrived they were entrusted to Sokhukhuza, who now gave them a new place near the King. Here they settled and effectively kept Zulu attacks off by means of their charms.

At this stage Sokhukhuza approached Mswati to complain that he now had too much responsibility on himself - looking after the king's personal affairs i.e. as his executive; looking after the King's safety (in case of attacks); looking after Somhlolo's burial place and protecting it from fires etc. Asked by Mswati what could be done to lessen his burden Sokhukhuza suggested that ~~the~~ the Gamas be given the responsibility of looking after Somhlolo's burial place in order to keep it respected. Mswati accepted this but instructed Sokhukhuza not to disclose to these Basuto people, the Gama, that this was the burial place of Somhlolo, because he felt they could not be trusted with ~~such~~ such a thing yet. He should merely instruct them to protect the place from fires or they would be killed. This order they obeyed very strictly.

So the Gamas had no commissioner to the King out of their own clan; their commissioner was Sokhukhuza Hlophe. Later on Sokhukhuza moved the Gamas from near himself ~~at~~ (at the burial place) to Dlangeni and gave them freedom to look after their own affairs there. He warned them however not to be frightened when they saw large birds called Emablanga descending upon them from the hill above their settlement, for these were harmless birds catching grasshoppers - it is after these birds that their place is called Dlangeni. This mountain is called Ntfhubeni because Sokhukhuza managed to carry Somhlolo to it after he had died. (To hide his body there)

How Macaleka Mncina was moved away from eDlangeni after the arrival of the Gamas.

It happened this way;  
The Gamas, after settling at eDlangeni, suffered from starvation and then approached Sokhukhuza about it, telling him they had spotted where Mncina kept his grain under rocks, but they did not know how to get at it. Sokhukhuza instructed them to come back to him the following night. When they arrived he sent his sons with the Gamas to invade Mncina, chase him away but not kill him, and take the grain for the Gamas. This was done in the evening. The reason why Mncina's family was not to be stabbed and killed was that Sokhukhuza said the invasion was not ordered by the King. Sokhukhuza's sons chased Mncina and group as far as the Komati River, which when they reached it Sokhukhuza shouted to them

6

- 4 -

not to ~~run~~ run away any further but to sit down and build their home there. This is how they came to be there. Sokhukhuza gave them their place, not the King. So far as we, the Hlophes, are concerned, no-one was ~~sent~~ sent by Somhlolo to give us a place to settle in, but he himself gave us our place.