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Title: The matter of "a blunt knife made of brass" and "a sharp knife made of iron".[p1]

Date: 14 October 1985

Interviewed at: Ngudzeniⁱ

Narrators: Logwaja Mambaⁱⁱ(LM)
Phetfwayini Dlaminiⁱⁱⁱ(PD)

Interviewers: John Dlamini (JD) | (Q)^{iv}
Carolyn Hamilton (CH) | (Q)

Transcriber and
Translator:

pp.3-5 **

[oo] Tell us the story of Dlamini^v and Hlubi^{vi}, and how they separated.

(LM)I was told that they [oo] came from one mother. This Hlubi and this Dlamini were the sons of Langa^{vii}, [oo] born while we were at Butfonga, kaTembe. Yes, the elder was Dlamini, followed by Hlubi. [oo] The children were raised by Langa who [oo] watched them keenly. He realized that the elder one, D|amini, lacked wisdom, and was [oo] filled with anger and jealousy. [oo] A plan was then sought to deprive him of the kingship and to give to the younger one, Hlubi.

[oo] Langa gave them each a following of their own, saying, "Here are your people, Dlamini", "Here are your people, Hlubi". Then he slaughtered two cattle, [oo] and said, "Here are the cattle; the one who finishes skinning his carcass first ** [oo] will be my heir". He was, however, [oo] plotting to deprive his elder son [oo] of the kingship. There were no knives at that time. [oo] It was a rare thing to have something like a
pp.5-6knife at that time - [oo] even when we were boys we would cut only one stick for the whole week. [oo] Langa then took a blunt knife made of brass and gave it to Dlamini. [oo] He then took a sharp knife made of iron and gave it to Hlubi. Then he said, "Here are the cattle! Skin them!"

As it is said, we Mamba people, we are patient. We^{viii} skinned the cow with the thumb^{ix} [oo] we tried with the blunt knife. But the Hlubi skinned quickly, and the cow was finished! Smoke rose [oo] on his side^x. Some of Dlamini's people frequented that side [oo]. The people shouted, "*hhule*^{xi}, Hlubi reigns!".

[oo] Then together, they left the east, coming to this place. The two of them left, each accompanied by his own people; the elder one, under the rule of the younger one, [oo] the younger one already a king, this Hlubi!

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(Q)[oo] We have developed an interest in you, *Nkhosi*. We would like to know more about you.

(LM) *Wena wekunene*^{xii}! I am Logwaja of Bhokweni^{xiii}. [oo] I know the history of the Mamba people [oo] because I grew up under my father Bhokweni. [oo] As a boy, cooking for my father, I would listen to the elders. [oo] I would listen to the *emakhahla*^{xiv} when they discussed things. It stuck in my mind [oo] I even learnt the praises of pp.9-16the Mamba *tinkhosi*^{xv}.

(Q) * * [oo] Do the praises change over time, Ntfulini^{xvi}? * *

(LM)No, they don't change.

* *

(Q)Are thing added?

(LM)Yes, they are added because the praises of a person depends on the talents of someone. The praises of the *inkhosi* are made, [oo] but nobody knows how they are started. It just [oo] takes a man with talent to praise [oo] the *inkhosi* for what he has done.

* *

When you praise the *tinkhosi* you start from the front, [oo] from the young one, going backwards.

* * <praises omitted>

(Q)How did you learn to praise, *Nkhosi*?

(LM)You don't praise when you are still young * * but when you are grown, the thing gets in your mind. yes, i did not praise during the time of my father. [oo] Only when my brother was installed was I free to praise. [oo] Thus when I would arrive at the home of the *inkhosi* to listen to the *libandla*, I would enter the cattle byre and praise. [oo] I would praise for the thing is here in my head. I stored it * * .

(Q)Did you practice beforehand, *Nkhosi*, perhaps in the forest?[oo] * *

(LM) Which *tinkhosi* can you praise in the forest? because we pp.16-21 praise in the cattle-byre.

(Q) Does that mean that you start in the cattle-byre?

(LM) Yes!

(Q) Were you not afraid that you might praise wrongly?

(LM) It was then in my blood!

(Q) ** Where have you spent most of your time, *Nkhosi*? Here at Ngudzeni, at the *umphakatsi*, or did you stay outside of Swaziland somewhere, or at kaNgwane^{xvii}

(LM) ** When I was still well I used to go to eGoli^{xviii} [oo] on a work contract. ** I went to the compound at Crown Mines^{xix} - but I started at Evander^{xx}. From Evander I went to Brakpan^{xxi}, and from there to Simmer and Jack^{xxii}, and finally to Crown Mines. then i became weak. and since then I have stayed at home. ** I stopped in 1940. ** I went to Evander for 6 months, and came back home. I went to Simmer and Jack for 6 months and came back. I went to Brakpan on a 9 months contract. Crown Mines was my last contract. ** I went to school a little, but stopped before I achieved much. I know Zulu - although I am failing now because I have palsy. I know to write [oo] but now my hand shakes too much.

(Q) When you stopped working, *Nkhosi*, what did you do at home, how did you make a living? pp.21-26

(LM) I used to plough, to plough and get food to feed my children. ** I became involved at the Mamba court after the death of my father. We were taken by the *umntfwanenkhozi*^{xxiii}, Ngculu^{xxiv} to help him rule as regent. He was the regent because the *inkhosi* was still young. Ngculu ruled on behalf of the *mntfwana*^{xxv}. That is how I came to this home. ** I cannot remember which year he was enthroned - because I am somebody who is not educated.
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(Q) Why do the Swazi's have *tinanatelo*?

(LM) I don't know what causes that.

(PD) Aren't *tinanatelo* caused by the acts of a person? ** *Tibongo* come by the acts of a person that he has pleased in this way, then come *tibongo*. I think that the same thing applies to these *tinanatelo* - after something pleasurable come the *tinanatelo*.

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(Q) ** That means that in [oo] one way *tinanatelo* can be historical, giving the history of a person or of a *sibongo*, according to your view.

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(PD)The history of a person, *Nkhosi*, comes from the acts of that person. They say to so an so, 'We got that and that'. It comes by the act of a person.

(Q)Oh, thank-you *Nkhosi*!

- i. Ngudzeni: the Mamba *umphakatsi* in the Ngudze hills, lying between the Mbulongwane - Maloma road junction and the Mhlathuze River, approximately 25km east of modern Hlathikulu in southern Swaziland.
- ii. Logwaja Mamba: son of the Mamba *inkhosi*, Bhokweni, who died in 1940.
- iii. Phetfwayini Dlamini (variant Phetfayini): daughter of Sobhuza II, and chief wife of the late Mamba *inkhosi*, Mbatjane II.
- iv. Q: this symbol is used whenever the question asked emanated from both interviewers, either as a result of prior discussion or through the act of translation.
- v. Dlamini: a putative ancestor of the Swazi and Mamba royal houses.
- vi. Hlubi: a putative ancestor of the Swazi royal house.
- vii. Langa: Generally considered to be an early figure in the royal kinglist, although his name does not appear in the royal genealogy compiled by Matsebula (*History* (new edition), chart opposite p.18). Matsebula claims that Hlubi and Dlamini were the sons of Ludvonga, and gives Dlamini as the heir and successor. In yet another version (testimony of Simbimba Ndlela) it is claimed that there were three brothers, Mamba, Hlubi and Dlamini. Hlubi, the rightful heir, was deprived of the kingship when his right hand was deliberately burnt, and the kingship went to Dlamini, the followers of Hlubi becoming the Ndlela people.
- viii. In this case, the 'we' refers to Dlamini from whom the Mamba people claim descent.
- ix. 'skinning with the thumb': using the thumb to press the skin away from the flesh instead of slashing at it with a knife.
- x. 'Smoke rose in his side': smoke of the fires prepared for cooking the meat ie. the sign that Hlubi had won.
- xi. *hhule*: equivalent to the English 'hurrah!'
- xii. *Wena wekunene*: literally you of the right hand; a common Dlamini salutation shared by the Mamba's but also used as a polite form of address more widely.
- xiii. Bhokweni: the Mamba *inkhosi* who died in 1940.

xiv.*emakhahla*: married men who wear head rings.

xv.*tinkhosi* (inkhosi): usually translated as kings, but in the Mamba context, the ruler is not an equal of the Swazi king, but enjoy certain of the prerogatives of a king

xvi.Ntfulini: the name of an early Mamba ancestor used as a polite form of address.

xvii.kaNgwane: can refer to the whole of Swaziland or to the heart of the country where the king's main royal residence is situated.

xviii.eGoli: Johannesburg.

xix.Crown Mines: situated in south-west Johannesburg.

xx.Evander: [colliery]situated about 120km east of Johannesburg.

xxi.Brakpan: [industrial suburb to the]situated just east of Johannesburg

xxii.Simmer and Jack: a mine in Johannesburg [more info]

xxiii.*umntfwanenkhosi*: literally child of the king; equivalent of the titles prince and princess.

xxiv.Ngculu:

xxv.*mntfwana*: literally child, this title is reserved for a 'crown prince', ie. heir, waiting to be installed.