

MMA Hlubi Oral History Project: summary index

Name of the location& date: Ha Belo (Butha Buthe)

Name of the interviewer: Missing (In this interview, there are no questions asked at all)

Name of the interviewee: Mzamane Nhlapho

Name of Interlocutor 1. Johanne Ndlovu (A Ndlovu man who also added on the history)

Summary index prepared by: Mojalefa Koloko

Date of summary index: 5th September 2025

Summary of interviewee: My name is Mzamane Nhlapho, I come from Ha Belo in Butha-Buthe. My clan name is Nhlapho (Then he goes on to recite his clan name) The Nhlaphos come from Natal in a place known as Pietermarizburg. There is a village nearby where they used to live near the biggest city of Natal known as Pietermarizburg. However, due to the wars that were caused by one section of the Zulu people led by a chief known as Matiwane, they ended up relocating to the east in a place known as Mpumalanga in the modern day. In Mpumalanga they settled in a place near the city of Emelo upon which they came across the Swati. It is a well known fact that Mpumalanga is a place with many Swati people. There is a chief known as Dlamini who welcomed the Nhlaphos and they settled there and lived alongside each in peace.

The Nhlaphos and the Swatis lived in peace until a clash arose between the Nhlapho boys and the Swazi boys who had refused the Nhlapho boys access to the greener grazing pastures for their cattle. The Nhlapho boys then decided to graze their cattle forcefully which led to war between the two groups. During this war, the Swati boys were getting defeated until older Swati men decided to join in and defended them. In the same way, the Nhlapho men also joined in to help their Nhlapho boys. Ultimately, the Swati got defeated and ended up relocating to the modern day place known as Eswatini. Then the place known as Mpizekazi which is found in close proximity to the city of Emelo in Mpumalanga ended up becoming the territory of the Nhlaphos. The Nhlaphos lived for some time in peace until the 1840s. There was a Nhlapho Chief who was installed in those days known as Mlambo. Mlambo had several wives – His first wife with whom he had a number of children and then his second wife who was married solely for the purposes of bearing the heir to the throne.

The second wife gave birth to a child known as Mohlakala who was relatively younger than the other sons of Mlambo from the first wife. As initially planned the time came for Mohlakala to succeed Mlambo and be installed as the rightful heir to the throne by virtue of being born as the heir to the throne. However, conflict erupted between Mohlakala and his older brothers as they argued that Mohlakala is younger than them and thus could not rule them despite the fact that his mother was married for the purposes of bearing the heir to the throne. Thus, Chief Mohlakala decided to leave Mpizekazi along with a section of his supporters who became his people and decided to relocate to the modern day Lesotho in Moshoeshoe's territory. His main reason for coming to Lesotho was because Chief Moshoeshoe was friends with his father Mlambo. The friendship was established when Mlambo advised Moshoeshoe on how he could establish diplomatic relations with Shaka so that he could never attack him in the future.

Moshoeshoe had learned that Shaka was a powerful chief who defeated many tribes and was aggressively expanding his chiefdom by destroying neighbouring chiefdoms, capturing their cattle and taking over their territories. Moshoeshoe was not willing to go to war with Shaka hence he befriended Mlambo to advise him. Mlambo advised Moshoeshoe to send Shaka a series of expensive gifts and presents that included among others; ostrich feathers and feathers of rare birds such as the Blue Crane which were quite prestigious in those times. Mlambo also advised Moshoeshoe to send over animal skins in an attempt to impress Shaka. We will recall that in pictures we have seen of Shaka that he always had beautiful feathers on his head and also we do know that Zulu people love animal skins. Thus, Moshoeshoe provided the above and became friends with Shaka.

Later on Moshoeshoe extended an invitation to Mlambo to "come and enjoy the milk of his cow" which was a form of decorative speech in which Moshoeshoe thanked Mlambo for the invaluable advise he had provided to him that protected him against Shaka. Moshoeshoe was referring to the land that he wanted to give to Mlambo. He invited him to come and live with him when he gets tired of the Lifaqane. Then Mlambo informed his son Mohlakala that he had been promised the land and was given permission to live in the modern day Lesotho. Upon being attacked by his older brothers, Mohlakala then decided to relocate to Lesotho to inherit the land that was promised to his father Mlambo by Moshoeshoe. He then decided to travel to the modern day Lesotho, passing along several towns on his way to Lesotho until he settled in Mashaeng near the modern day Ficksburg around 1858.

However, Mohlakala's journey to Lesotho was not easy. At some point along the way Mohlakala got attacked by the Kholokoe people and ended up sending a message to Molapo the son of Moshoeshoe in which he asked for protection. Molapo was ruling the area of the modern day Leribe district although it was not yet called Leribe in those times. Upon receiving the message from Mohlakala seeking for protection, Molapo acted promptly as he had been informed earlier on by Moshoeshoe that Chief Mlambo and the Nhlapho people are very esteemed people that needed to be treated in high regard. Molapo then sent an army of his men who protected the Nhlaphos until they arrived safely in Mashaeng.

Infact, the name "Molapo" which was given to the son of Moshoeshoe was actually named after "Mlambo" which shows how much Moshoeshoe valued Mlambo. This means that the name Molapo is the name that actually comes from the Nhlapho people. I hope you can all understand ladies and gentlemen how important the Nhlapho people are in Lesotho. As I said earlier, Chief Molapo ensured that the Nhlapho people were protected until they arrived at Mashaeng in Foursiesburg. As I said, Mashaeng was still a part of Lesotho during those times, Mohokare had not yet been established as the boundary between Lesotho and South Africa.

All parts of Mashaeng, all the way up to Ficksburg, Leribe, Hlotse, from Hlotse to here and places such as Ha Mopeli, Matlakeng and Qalo were all part of the territory which was given to the Nhlapho people to live there peacefully. Around 1860 if I am not mistaken, during the time when Mohokare (The Caledon river) was established as the boundary between Lesotho and South Africa through the treaty of Aliwal North, the Nhlapho people decided not to allow themselves to be ruled by the white oppressors (The boers) and therefore, crossed over to the Lesotho side. The treaty of Aliwal North was instituted due to constant several attacks that used to take place between the Sotho and the Boers of Free State. Then they crossed over to places such as Matlakeng, Nqechane, Qalo and many other places in the modern

day Leribe. The Nhlaphos had lots of cattle as they practiced the habit of taking their cattle back to the cattle posts after using them for farming which led to their cattle being well fed and thus able to multiply.

There are places such as Sheshele and Motete which were mainly inhabited by the Nhlaphos. As we can see, the Nhlaphos had access to a very wide territory as they also shared the border with the Khoakhoa people. The significance of this history I am sharing is to shed light as to how the Nhlapho people ended up arriving in Lesotho. There is a false narrative that the Nhlapho people arrived in Lesotho to seek refuge while running away from lifaqane wars. No! That is not the case. The Nhlapho people came here because they were invited by Moshoeshoe as a way of thanking Mlambo for advising him on how to befriend Shaka. Upon our arrival here in Lesotho, the Nhlapho carried long shields and consequently were referred to as "Mathebe-Telele" which means those that carry long shields as you will recall from the pictures that the shields of the Zulus were relatively longer than those of the Sotho. A Zulu man's shield was intended to be long in order to protect him from the head to the toe. However, one of the reasons our shields were longer is because they overcompensated for the relatively short spears that the Zulus carried. The reason Shaka advised Zulu men to carry short spears was so that they could be able to stab their opponents and re use the spears instead of throwing the spears after which one would be left with nothing more to fight.

Over the years the name "Mathebe-Telele" ended up being changed to "Matebele" as language developed. In actual facts we are Zulus that come from Natal. Even our dress code is that of Zulu people as they are normally seen on televisions. The only difference is that we are poorer Zulus who have suffered and are not able to live up to the same standard as our brothers in Natal. Upon our arrival here we came in many clans, I think there is about 50 of them if I am not mistaken. It is just unfortunate that I do not have my own book which has listed all these clans. Among these clans we have; the Ngwane's who recently claim to be the most senior group of Ndebele in Lesotho. No they are wrong, It is the Nhlaphos that are senior. These are the same Ngwane's that were ruled by Matiwane who was always attacking Moshoeshoe. The Ngwane's are related to the Swati people, such as the Dlamini's, the Sibekos. We also have Hlubi people among us. From what we have gathered, it seems that the Hlubi came to Lesotho fleeing from the wars of Lifaqane. One of the reasons that made them comfortable in settling in Lesotho was because upon their arrival in Lesotho, they discovered that there were already people that speak the same language as them which are the Nhlaphos and this made them feel welcome. That is why we have the Mbheles, they are the grandchildren of Langalibalele. They are Hlubis.

Upon arrival of the Hlubis, they settled in our areas and were ruled by the Nhlaphos along with the Ngwanes of Matiwane. I am not sure if I am right by saying that the Sotho are not aware but we do have our customs and traditions which make us unique and distinguish us from the Sotho. I was born in 1960 right here in Lesotho. The musical instruments that I came across being used while growing up included; Sekhankula, Mamokhorong and Lesiba. I do not know if our grandparents used different instruments. However, according to my knowledge, these are the instruments we use and we use them the same way as the Sotho. The only difference I see is that the Nhlaphos use the goat in performing their traditional ceremonies as opposed to the Sotho who prefer using the Sheep. As for the rest of everything, we seem to be doing things more or less the same way. We plough and harvest the same way, we intermarry and so on.

Zulu people are normally very fashionable people. Women tend to wear hats that are a bit long and seem to prefer the bright colors such as red including the leopard print. They also wear long dresses. The leopard print is also preferred by men. As for sports, men participate in "Ndlamo" which is a bit different from "Mohobelo" which is done by the Sotho men. In "Ndlamo", the Nhlapho men beat themselves under the armpits and usually have a song going along with it as opposed to Mohobelo in which the movement is mainly concentrated on their feed and not necessarily moving the hands. To prove that there is a difference between the two, Chief Leabua used to invite the Nhlaphos to come and perform Ndlamo in Maseru in commemoration of Independence Day by sending a bus or a truck. As for the game known as "Moraba raba", I suspect we did not have it as one of our games. I believe that it is one of the games that we adopted as the time went on.

My name is Johanne Ndlovu (Then he went on to recite his clan). My clan is Ndlovu. As Mr. Mzamani has already pointed out that there could be about fifty clans we have, these include; Nhlapho, Tjeles, Khumalos, Dlamini, Mashinini, Xindi, Ndlovu, Shabalala, Maseko and I will recall others as we go along. However, as for my family in particular as the history is narrated, I hear that we first arrived in Qalo at the French Missionary. Apparently there was a French Missionary who was deployed in Natal but failed to settle properly until he decided to relocate to Lesotho. He ended up leaving with some people (The Ndlovus) who served as his translators and that is how our family of the Ndlovus ended up arriving in Lesotho. I understand that there could have been other Ndlovus who came here differently.

Then later on the French Missionary went to Ha Mopeli Mission, and then, Hleoheng Mission still accompanied by the Ndlovus and that is how we ended up spreading across those areas. Initiation is for the women in our culture and not necessarily for the men. The only reason that some Ndlovus end up performing initiation is because they have now been integrated into the Sotho culture. I think as recently as 2018, we had initiated a group of girls in our village. When it comes to our dress code, it is just a pity that you did not alert us on time that you were coming, otherwise we could have dressed up for you. A Ndlovu man wears "Umqhele", and then there is also "Isnene" which is only meant for the married men and not for the boys, then we have "Ipeshu" and then you put "imqhenye" below and then we also carry a spear. However, this dress code is reserved for certain vacations. We need to make a distinction between "ismanjemanje" and "Isintu" or "Isizulu". "Ismanjemanje" is when a Zulu man wears a decorative clothing as we often see them in recent days whereas Isizulu is our traditional dress code from ancient times.

As for women, they used to wear more or less the same dress code as men. However, the only difference is that when they are married they wear longer animal skins that cover their front all the way to the toes. If only my wife was not in this state, I would ask her to wear it for you for exhibition purposes. When it comes to sports, one particular instrument we have is the drum. We are famous for playing "Indlamo" a lot and usually this "Ndlamo" goes along with the playing of the drum in the background. Then other games we have include; "Moraba-raba" and "Ukugalela" as Mr. Mzamane has already explained. I just wanted to add on ontop of everything he has said.