

THE RISE, CONSOLIDATION AND DISINTEGRATION OF DLAMINI POWER  
IN SWAZILAND BETWEEN 1820 AND 1889.

A study in the relationship of foreign affairs  
to internal political development.

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ABSTRACT

The Swazi kingdom grew out of the pressures associated with competition for trade and for the rich resources of Shiselweni. While centred on this area it acquired some of its characteristic features - notably a regimental system, and the dominance of a Dlamini aristocracy. Around 1815 the Swazi came under pressure from the South, and were forced to colonise the land lying north of the Lusutfu. Here they remained for some years a nation under arms, as they plundered local peoples, and were themselves swept about by the currents of the Mfecane.

In time a more settled administration emerged, as the aristocracy spread out from the royal centres at Ezulwini, and this process accelerated under Mswati as he subdued recalcitrant chiefdoms, and restructured the regiments. Consequently, by the time Mswati died in 1865, Dlamini power was sufficiently entrenched for there to be no serious disturbance, and for a regency to function smoothly for the following decade.

Externally the dominant influence was the Zulu, who continually threatened the kingdom's stability. The Swazi were forced by these attacks to look for allies in the Boers, and to make several territorial cessions from 1846. Nevertheless, the relations they established were not markedly unequal, since the Republic were dependent on the Swazi in various ways. Consequently, the Swazi were able to take charge of the lowveld in the north, and by the 1860s reached the pinnacle of their power.

The consolidation of the South African Republic following the British annexation, and the discovery of gold, meant that this freedom was gradually lost, and in the 1880s pressure mounted on Swaziland itself. The clearest index of this lies in the country's conquest by concessions, which eventually so eroded the social fabric of the country that a pretext was given for the Republic and Britain to intervene.

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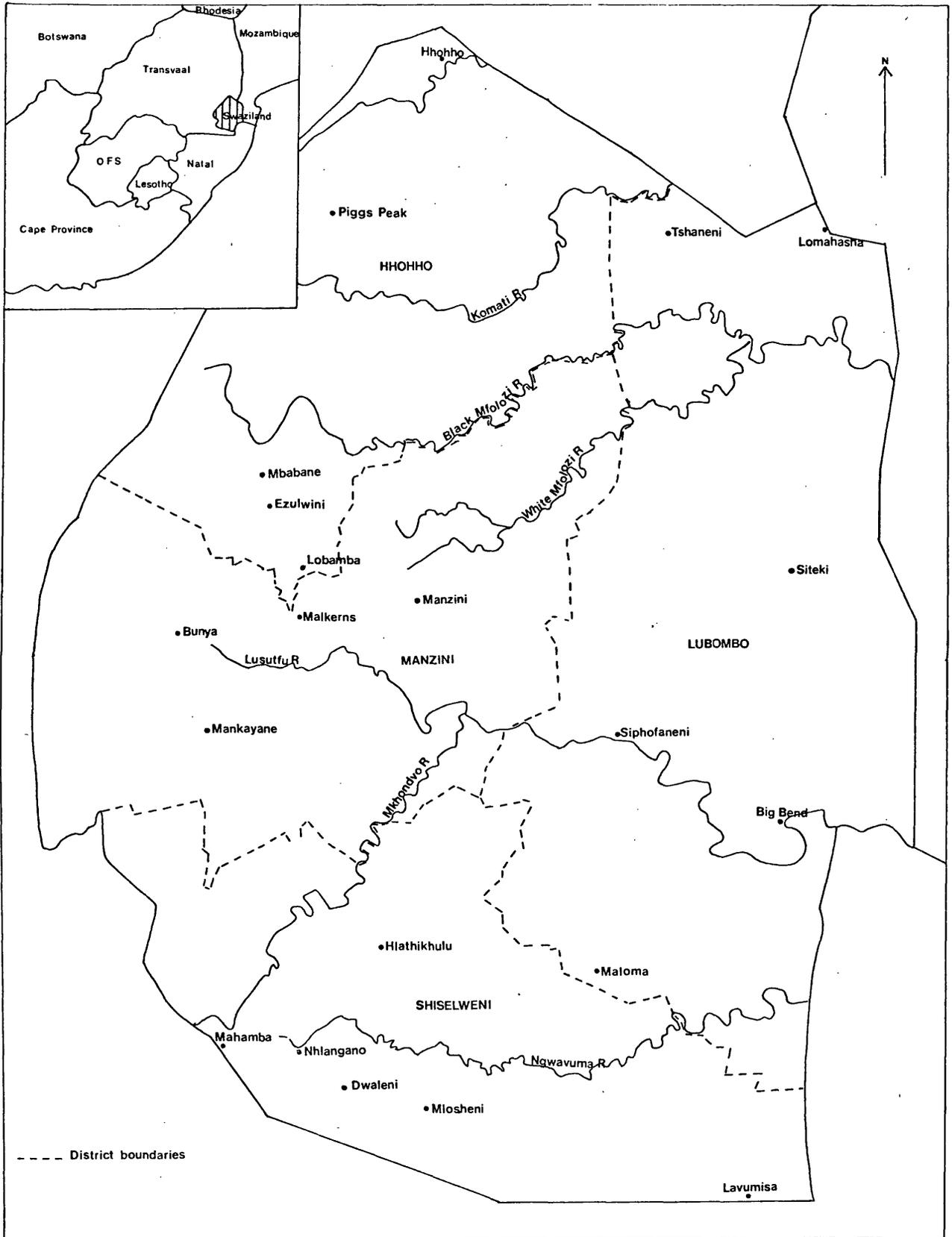
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2.	Marriage to classificatory mother's brother's daughter	51

## ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.B.	Albasini Brieweboek.
A.H.M.	Arquivo Historico de Moçambique.
A.Y.B.	<u>Archives Year Book of South African History.</u>
C.L.	Cory Library for Historical Research.
C.O.	Colonial Office.
Cod.	Codices.
E.C.A.	Executive Council Archive, Natal.
E.V.R.	Eerste Volksraad Notules.
F.C.	Forbes Collection.
F.P.	Fynn Papers.
G.H.N.	Government House Records, Natal.
G.H.Z.	Government House Records, Zululand.
G.P.	Garden Papers.
H.C.	High Commissioner.
K.C.L.	Killie Campbell Africana Library.
L.	Lydenburg Argief.
L.L.	Lydenburg Landdrost Argief.
Mac.P.	Macleod Papers.
M.P.	Miller Papers.
N.A.	Natal Archives.
P.A.	Transvaalse Staatsargief, Pretoria.
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers.
P.R.O.	Public Records Office.
S.A.R.	South African Republic.
S.A.A.R.	<u>South African Archival Records.</u>
S.C.	Soutter Versameling (Collection).

S.N.	Superintendent van Naturelle.
S.N.A.	Secretary for Native Affairs, Natal.
S.P.	James Stuart Papers.
S.P.G.	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.
S.S.	Argief Staatsekretaris.
S.St.	Secretary of State.
S.S.A.	<u>The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries.</u>
Sw.A.	Swaziland Government Archives.
T.S.C.	Sir Theophilus Shepstone Collection.
U.A.	Utrecht Landdrost Argief.
U.R.	Argief Uitvoerende Raad.
U.W.A.	University of the Witwatersrand Archives.
Wa.A.	Wakkerstroom Landdrost Argief.
W.M.M.S.	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

MODERN SWAZILAND



## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The historiography of pre-colonial Swaziland is not especially strong. There are a number of studies which touch on the subject, but in one way or another these are all limited in scope. Until recently, for example, there has been a mainly albocentric bias, and comparatively little has been written on the Swazi themselves; Symington and Van Rooyen concentrate on the relations of the Boer republics with the Swazi (1), Watson and Boyce focus on concessions (2), Garson confines himself primarily to the diplomatic manoeuvring between the South African Republic and Britain over the status of Swaziland (3), and Perkins looks at missions (4). Only Matsebula gives an account centred firmly on the Swazi themselves, and his is more of a survey than a detailed analysis, which only partly explores the data available from the archives and from oral tradition (5).

Indeed, with the exception of this and two other much narrower

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- (1) F.C. Symington, 'Swaziland tot 1890', (M.A. Thesis, University of South Africa, 1941); T.S. Van Rooyen, 'Die Verhouding tussen die Boere, Engelse en Naturelle in die Geskiedenis van die Oos-Transvaal Tot 1882', A.Y.B., 1951, I, (Cape Town, 1951).
  - (2) E. Watson, 'The History of the Little Free State and Swaziland affairs relating thereto', (M.A. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1941); A.N. Boyce, 'The Swaziland Concessions and their Political Consequences 1876-1908', (M.A. Thesis, University of South Africa, 1947).
  - (3) N.G. Garson, 'The Swaziland Question and the Road to the Sea. 1887-1895', A.Y.B., 1957, II, (Parow, 1957).
  - (4) F.J. Perkins, 'A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland to 1910', (Ph.D Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1974).
  - (5) J.S.M. Matsebula, A History of Swaziland, (Cape Town, 1972).

studies by Swazi historians (6), it is usually more rewarding to turn to the writings of social anthropologists (7). Hilda Kuper, in particular, provides an unrivalled insight into the functioning of Swazi politics, which is neither as synchronic or Dlamini orientated as one might be led to suppose (8). In addition to its introductory chapters it is exceptionally rich in historical allusions, as a glance at the following footnotes will readily confirm, besides drawing on extensive regional data from the south and north-east. Nevertheless, An African Aristocracy does not purport to be an historical text. It contains no systematic exposition of the evolution of centre-regional relations, still less of their interaction with pressures from outside, and tends to view them for the most part from the perspective of the ruling group. For all these reasons there is room for a more broadly based historical contribution, and it is hoped that this study will partly meet that need.

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- (6) A.M. Dlamini, 'Expansion and Survival Policy of the Swazi Nation', (mimeo n.d. Luyengo, Swaziland): A.B. Nxumalo 'Oral Tradition concerning Mswati II', Occasional Paper No. I of the School of Education, University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, (Swaziland, April 1976).
- (7) H. Beemer, 'Notes on the Diet of the Swazi in the Protectorate', African Studies, XIII, (1939); H. Kuper, 'A Ritual of Kingship among the Swazi', Africa, XIV, 5, (1944); H. Kuper, An African Aristocracy: Rank Among the Swazi, (London, 1947); H. Kuper, The Swazi, (London, 1952); A.J.B. Hughes, Swazi Land Tenure, (Institute for Social Research, University of Natal, Durban, 1964); H. Kuper, 'Kinship among the Swazi', in A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde (eds.), African Systems of Kinship and Marriage, (London, 1950); B.A. Marwick, The Swazi, (Cambridge, 1940); A.C. Myburgh, The Tribes of the Barberton District, Union of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, Ethnological Publications No. 25, (Pretoria, 1949); A.C. Myburgh, Die Stamme van die Distrik Carolina, Unie Van Suid-Afrika, Department van Naturellesake, Etnologiese Reeks Nr. 34, (Pretoria, 1956).
- (8) Kuper, Aristocracy.

Our current state of knowledge on pre-colonial Swaziland is at least partly a reflection of the dearth of published primary material. Compared with the Zulu or Southern Sotho, or a number of other southern African chiefdoms, Swaziland has little in the way of traveller, or settler or missionary accounts (9).

Similarly, as far as British Blue Books are concerned, or other official compilations, Swaziland figures only briefly and intermittently in the published account. Still more significantly, Swazi history has had no Bryant or MacGregor to make a systematic collection of its oral traditions (10). Both Honey and Miller have gathered useful information, as did Stuart more briefly in his early Swaziland days, but for the most part these are unpublished or not readily accessible, and are not remotely as comprehensive as the other studies just named (11).

The main sources for this thesis are therefore archival and oral.

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- (9) The only significant ones are E.P. Mathers, Golden South Africa, or the Gold Fields revisited; being further glimpses of the gold fields of South Africa (London, 1888); P. Hope, 'Journey from Natal via the South African Republic, and across the Lebombo Mountains to Lorenzo Marques or Delagoa Bay, and thence to the Gold-Fields near Leydenberg', Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, XLIV (1874); G.R. Von Wielligh, Langs Die Lebombo, (Pretoria, 1928), (travellers); D. Forbes, My Life in South Africa, (London, 1938); K.C.L. M.P., MS 1478, A.M. Miller, 'A Short History of Swazieland' from the Times of Swazieland, V.I, Nos. 1-3, 6-12, Bremersdorp, June 5 - Aug. 21, 1897 (settlers); T. Wangemann, Maléo en Sekoekoeni, (Cape Town, 1957); C.C. Watts, Dawn in Swaziland, (London, 1922), (missionaries). Even periodical missionary publications are scanty, comprising The Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society; Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Notices, both 1844-1847, 1881 ff; and The Net, 1875 ff.
- (10) A.T. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, (London 1929); J.C. MacGregor, Basutu Traditions. (Cape Town, 1905).
- (11) Sw.A., de S.G.M. Honey, (Mss.), 'A History of Swaziland'; K.C.L., M.P., and in particular MS 1478, 'Short History'; K.C.L., Stuart Papers.

Archival sources have been used in the main to document Swaziland's external relations; the Natal Archives for Swaziland's relations with Natal and the Zulu; the Transvaal Archives for relations with the Boers and the North Sotho; the Maputo Archives for relations with the Shangane, Tsonga and the Portuguese; and the Colonial Office and Swaziland Archives for Swaziland's conquest by concessions. Oral sources on the other hand have been of mainly domestic significance, illuminating such areas as the incorporation of lesser chiefdoms in the expanding Swazi state, and the subsequent development of their relations with the Dlamini ruling group. Two points should, however, be made in this regard. First, although I have made extensive use of oral sources in this study, I make no claim to having adequately tapped Swazi traditions. In the absence of any earlier studies of Swazi traditional histories, the principle I adopted in conducting my fieldwork was to collect the dominant traditions of the principal chiefdoms in Swaziland, and more sophisticated analyses are now needed both by region and by chiefdom. Second, this modus operandi has tended to yield a certain type of information with an emphasis on the chiefdoms at times when their status was in flux. In practice what this means is an emphasis on the years up to the death of Mswati, after which a more dominant royal tradition reflects a more integrated Swazi state.

As indicated in the title to this thesis, its main purpose is to trace the evolution of the Swazi kingdom from its establishment to its subjugation, and to demonstrate the dynamic interaction of internal and external forces that is manifest throughout. Within that general framework a number of sub-themes are examined; the

specific variant of the Nguni polity that the Swazi kingdom represents (Chapters I, II and III); the interaction of Boer and Swazi communities in the frontier zone of the eastern 'Trans-vaal' (Chapters III and IV); the continuities of Zulu policy towards Swaziland, and its enduring impact on Swazi politics (Chapters II, III, V and VI); the implications of Swaziland's collaboration with the Transvaal in the late 1860s and 1870s in their relations with other black groups (Chapters VI and VII); and the role of concessions in the underdevelopment and political enfeeblement of the Swazi state (Chapters VIII and IX). The span of time with which the thesis is concerned is from 1820 to 1890. 1890 marks the end of effective Swazi autonomy, 1820, as I shall now argue, the effective beginning of the Swazi state.

#### Ngwane and Dlamini Origins

Swazi history, in one sense, begins in 1820, as it was then that the nation's principal elements combined. Eswatini, it is true, had existed much earlier, but without ever assuming a lasting character or shape (12). From roughly 1770 to 1815 it had comprised the modern district of Shiselweni, while before that it had shifted gradually south from Delagoa Bay, and it was only with Sobhuza's expansion into the north in the years after 1820 that modern Swaziland emerged in recognisable form. It is with the foundations of the Swazi state in the two decades after 1820 that the second chapter is primarily concerned, but since much of what happened then was conditioned by what went before, a background to these developments will be given first.

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(12) Meaning 'Swaziland', Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 15; S.P., 29392, File 91, 'Preliminary notes on the effect of European Influence on the natives of Swaziland', 2, 3 Jan. 1899; Sw.A., R.C.S. 115/14, Encl. 'Historical Notes', by A.M. Marwick.

The history of the Ngwane, or at any rate their royal line the Dlamini, stretches back far into the past. According to genealogies collected by Stuart at the end of the nineteenth century, the Dlamini were able to trace their line of succession back some forty generations (13). Calculating on a basis of twenty-five years per generation, this would take us back well into the tenth century, and even making generous allowance for distortion through the inclusion of the names of regents and the subsidiary names of kings, we are still projected five or six hundred years back into the past; surely the most illustrious pedigree boasted by any South African 'group' (14).

Exactly who and where the Dlamini were in this period is less easy to say. For Bryant, they emerge briefly into the light of history as the Amankomazis and Vambes, recorded in Portuguese documents of the sixteenth century, having been led by Dlamini II from the upper Komati River to that part of the Lebombo mountains nearest Delagoa Bay (15). In associating the Dlamini with the Vambe Bryant is probably correct. Both the Dlamini and a large number of other northern Nguni groups trace their origins to this Mbo nucleus, and the term Vambe is, as Bryant points out, almost unmistakably the prefix 'Va' and 'Mbo'. Bryant may even be right in associating the Mbo with the Makomatees (Amakomatis).

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(13) S.P., File 74, 126, John Gama, 17 Dec. 1898.

(14) Bryant calculates on eighteen years per generation, but more recent scholarship has tended to take twenty-five to thirty years as a fairer average. See S. Marks, 'The traditions of the Natal 'Nguni': a second look at the work of A.T. Bryant', in L. Thompson (ed.), African Societies in southern Africa, (California, 1969), 128.

(15) Bryant, Olden Times, 288-90, 313-4.

Komati, as he notes, is the tekela form of the Ntungwa Komanzi, and Mbo traditions point to the Komati River as their earliest point of dispersal. Where Bryant probably errs however, is in equating the Langa/Dlamini with the Mbo, and in seeing Dlamini as the leader of a single Mbo migration to the coast. There are indications, as Marks points out, of Mbo occupation of the south-eastern coastlands long before Bryant's supposed migrations, as well as of substantially earlier differentiation among its component groups. Similarly, there is little evidence to support the idea of Dlamini leading this movement, besides the recurrence of his name in Mbo genealogies and address names (izi Thakazelo), and it is more likely that Dlamini and his namesakes were the leaders of various minor movements of various separate groups (16).

Whatever the sequence and leadership of these migrations, Bryant pictures the Mbo as staying in the vicinity of Delagoa Bay for some considerable time, where they split into various sub-groupings of the Emalangeneni, the Mkize, the Natal Dlamini and so on, before eventually 'quarrelling' and spreading south into Natal. Bryant places this movement between 1680 and 1730, but also accepts Mbandzeni's statement that this period of disruption coincided with the reign of the Ngwane leader, Dlamini III (17). Since on his own reckoning Dlamini III reigned from about 1760, Bryant clearly has a problem, and it is likely that what he has done is to conflate a number of entirely separate movements, spread over a considerable period of time. One part of these took place in the seventeenth century or before when groups like the Natal

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(16) Marks, 'Traditions', 137-40; Bryant, Olden Times, 315-6.

(17) Ibid, 316-7.

Dlamini and the Hlubi split off from the Mbo nucleus and moved south (18). A further and quite distinct series of secessions followed in the reign of Dlamini III, coinciding in this case with a sudden upsurge in trade (19). Smith talks of a rapid expansion in the volume of trade handled by Delagoa Bay, taking place in the three decades after 1750, and there are various indications of simultaneous political dislocations (20). The Ngwane were rent by a series of dynastic feuds in these years, during which Magudlela and Hlubi were both excluded from power, while the Ndwandwe, with whom the Swazi had hitherto been associated, seem to have sheared off at roughly the same time (21).

On this last point my interpretation differs materially from Bryant's. Bryant sees the Ngwane and Ndwandwe migrating together down the Lebombo before cutting inland to Magudu in the reigns of Langa and Ngwane, the Ndwandwe and Ngwane leaders respectively. Here they separated, the Ngwane doubling back across the Pongola River and the Ndwandwe gradually drifting south to the basins of the Mkuze and Black Mfolozi (22). A number of objections can be raised to Bryant's account. By 1810, as I have argued elsewhere, the Ngwane and Ndwandwe parties had diverged to such an extent that it is difficult to see them separating such a short

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(18) Marks, 'Traditions', 140-1.

(19) Ibid, 141.

(20) A. Smith, 'The trade of Delagoa Bay as a factor in Nguni politics 1750-1835', in Thompson, African Societies, 173-4, 179-80.

(21) P.L. Bonner, 'Early State Formation among the Nguni: The relevance of the Swazi Case', paper presented to a Conference on African History, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, September 1975, 8-9.

(22) Bryant, Olden Times, 158-9, 316-7. A partial separation had taken place on the Lebombo, with Ngwane and Ndwandwe marching down the northern and southern banks of the Pongola River respectively.

while before (23). The early proliferation of Ngwane cadet branches and their simultaneous settlement in northern Zululand lends further weight to this argument. The Nxumalo, emaNcwangeni and iKohlo branches each have genealogies going back three or four generations before Zwide, while Gaza, the grandfather of Soshangane, was reputedly established at Etshaneni mountain just south of the Mkuze River by 1750 (24). Lastly, one may cite the lapsing of the marriage connection between the Ngwane and the Ndwandwe. Between the reign of Dlamini III and Sobhuza I no marriages were contracted between the Ngwane and Ndwandwe royal houses, despite their apparently preferred nature, which once again suggests the idea of a rupture in the reign of Ludvonga I or Dlamini III, which was only healed two or three generations later (25).

Once they had separated from the Ngwane the Ndwandwe moved hurriedly southwards. Their iKohlo branch established itself at Etshaneni mountain around 1750, and their main line probably arrived at Magudu at roughly the same time. The Ngwane moved down the Lebombo at a more leisurely pace, and only spread out into southern Swaziland in the latter part of Dlamini III's reign.

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(23) Bonner, 'State Formation', 3-6.

(24) Bryant, Olden Times, 276-7, 448. In addition Luzipo Ka Nomageje, one of Stuart's few Ndwandwe informants, claimed there were a number of former Ndwandwe kings buried at Magudu. C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright (eds), The James Stuart Archive of recorded oral evidence relating to the history of the Zulu and neighbouring peoples Vol. I, (Durban 1976), Evidence of Luzipo ka Nomageje 21 Nov. 1904.

(25) Matsebula, History, 6; interview Maboya Fakudze, 23 May 1970, Lobamba, Swaziland; interview Makhathi and Mnkonkolote Mkhathshwa and others, 12 April 1970, Elwandle, Swaziland.

It is unlikely that this migration took place in any single decisive movement in the sense that Bryant seems to suggest. Tembe desires to dominate trade to the south probably underlay the conflict, and it was only after a protracted struggle that the Ngwane allowed themselves to be squeezed out to the west. Dlamini's heir Ngwane was hidden at Godlwako in southern Swaziland, while Dlamini resisted Tembe pressures, and the latter's burial on the Lebombo suggests a certain measure of success (26). Indeed even Ngwane retained an interest on the east side of the Lebombo in the early part of his reign, as can be seen in the phrase "Ngwane wamahlabatshi", which links his name to the sandy places on the east side of the Lebombo (27). In time however the Ngwane were gradually pushed out. By the end of the eighteenth century the Tembe are supposed to have extended their control two hundred miles inland from Delagoa Bay and a hundred miles along the coast, and it was probably in the boom years from 1750 to the 1770s that they tightened their grip over the area and expelled dissident elements like the Ngwane (28).

As these pressures grew, the Ngwane threw off outriders into the country below the Lebombo. Ngwane's brother Ndlela seems to have moved into the vicinity of modern Mlosheni, and his uncle Shabalala (Dlamini's brother) settled a little further

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(26) Interview Joseph Dlamini, 8 May 1970, Lucolweni, Swaziland; interview Tigodvo and Mbali Hlophe, Jubela Malinga, Gugwanyane Dlundlu, Nkambule, 1 April 1970, Godlwako, Swaziland; interview Simahla Msane and various Nxumalo informants, 18 March 1970, Esikhotheni, Swaziland; Matsebula, History, 5.

(27) Interview Simahla Msane, 18 March 1970.

(28) W. White, Journal of a voyage performed in the Lion extra Indiaman, (London, 1800), 41.

west (29). An Ngwane presence was spreading, but it was not until Ngwane III's reign that the kingdom's centre of gravity shifted decisively west, coinciding in all probability with the expulsion from the Lebombo. It was then that the Swazi made their first sally across the Pongola River. Having settled in depth as far as Mkwakweni hill, they then made an attempt to occupy the region between the southern bank of the Pongola and the Magudu hills. This, of course, was Ndwandwe territory, and it is far from clear in what capacity they made their move. One Swazi account talks of the Ngwane finding the area blocked by the 'Zulu', and retreating back across the Pongola River, while others imply a more protracted stay. Two possible conclusions can be drawn from these accounts. Either the Ndwandwe had already centred themselves on the Mfolozi, and now roused themselves to expel the Ngwane from an outlying part of their territory, or the Ngwane came to them as supplicants under pressure from Tembe attacks... Whichever was the case the result was much the same; either sooner or later the Ngwane evacuated Magudu, and then retraced their steps across the Pongola River, to settle as some sort of junior partner in the region of modern Shiselweni (30). Thus we find Tigodvo, the Hlophe chief whom Ngwane incorporated at this time, being praised as "he who fought for two kings, Langa and Zwide", and there must have been others who shared in that dual position (31). At the same time, whatever the initial

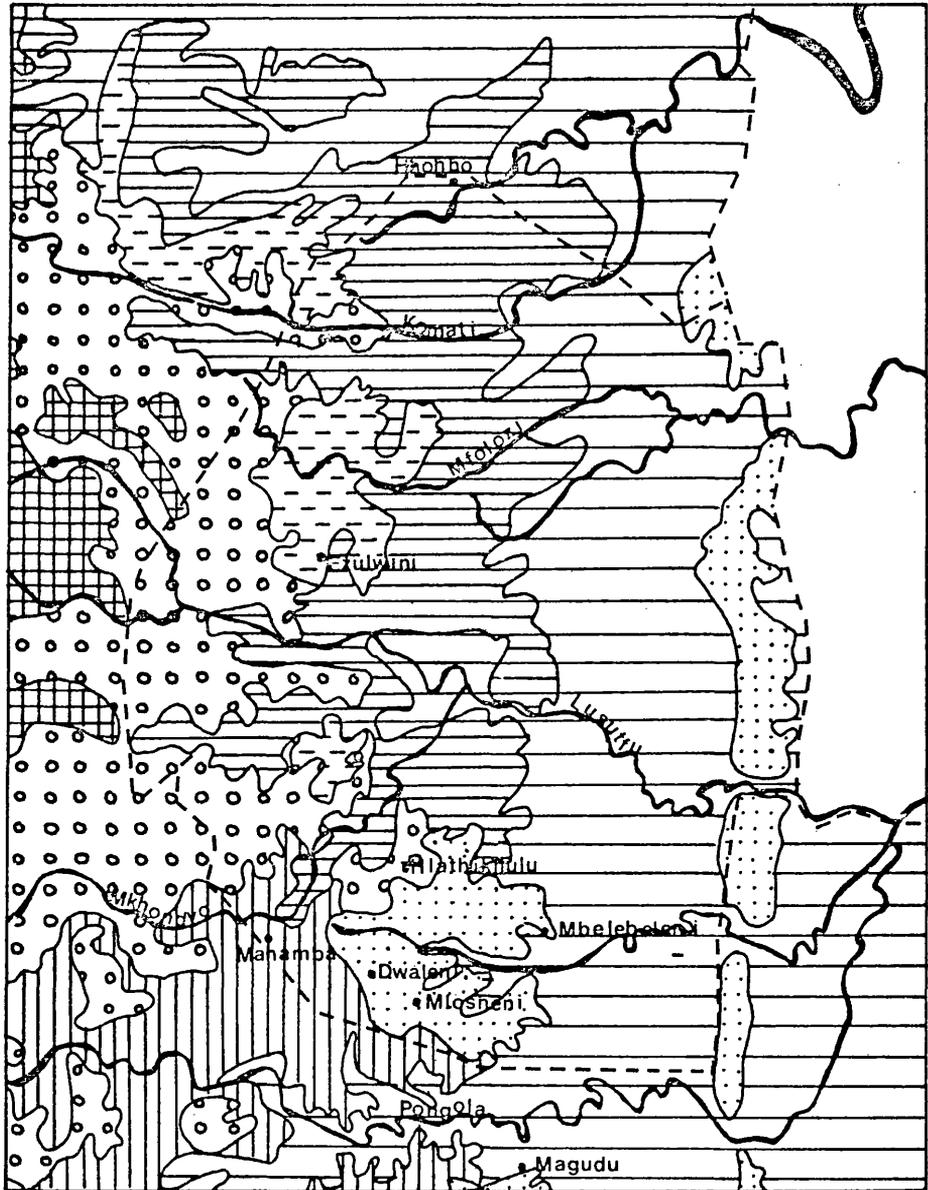
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(29) S.P., Mss., 30096, p.r, John Gama, 18 Dec. 1898.

(30) Interview Nyanda Nhlabatsi and Tomonye Dlamini, 6 July 1970, Phekamgenkhosi, Swaziland; interview Mandlabovu Fakudze and Mgudwa Masonge, 29 June 1970, Macetsheni, Swaziland; interview Maboya Fakudze; Bryant, Olden Times, 159.

(31) Interview Tigodvo Hlophe.

SWAZILAND - VEGETATION TYPES



-  Zululand Thornveld
-  Lowveld
-  Lowveld sour Bushveld
-  N Eastern Mountain Sourveld
-  Northern Tall Grassland
-  Piet Retief Sourveld
-  N Eastern Sandy Highveld
-  --- Modern Boundary

(Adapted from J.P.H. Acocks, 'Veld Types of South Africa', (Pretoria, 1951).)

relationship, it is likely that the Ngwane sought from that moment to prise themselves loose of Ndwandwe control, producing tensions which in the long run would lead to confrontation and war.

The country which the Ngwane now entered was ideally suited to their agricultural and pastoral needs. (Map 2) Its heartland lay between the royal burial grounds of Mhlokotfwa and Mbilaneni in which all the royal capitals were situated. Ngwane built his national headquarters (Zombodze) in the vicinity of modern Dwaleni, and his own administrative capital (Hhohho) near modern Mlosheni, while Ndvungunye and Sobhuza subsequently sited their respective capitals a little south of Mlosheni (32). It was

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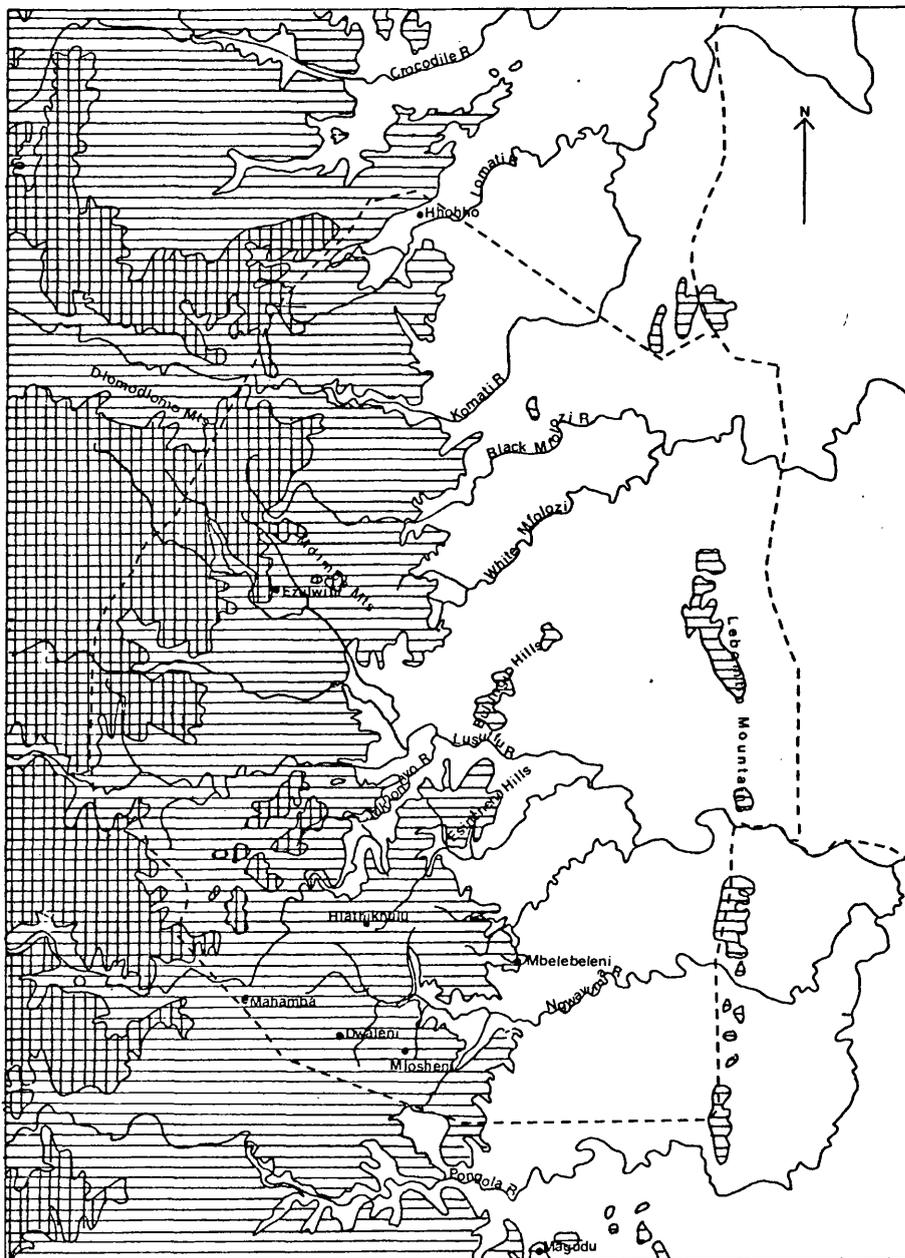
(32) In explanation of the system of twin capitals Matsebula writes, "The Swazi tradition provides that the King and his mother must reign together over their people. Hence it will be noted in what follows that there must always be two royal headquarters, or residences. The King's residence is the administrative headquarters, known in siSwati as lilawu. It is here that the King's day-to-day business is carried out. ...The Queen Mother's residence, known as umphakatsi, is the national capital and the spiritual and ceremonial home of the nation. It is where all important national events such as the ceremony of the eating of the first fruit (iNcwala) take place. The Queen Mother, or iNdllovukazi, normally exercises a restraining influence on her son, the King", (History, 5-6). For the sites of these capitals see Sw.A., R.C.S. 115/14, Encl. Marwick to Honey, 15 Dec. 1916, encl. W.E. Dawson, Minister S.A. Mission, to Marwick, 11 Dec. 1916, reporting a discussion with chief 'Baimbai' (Mbayimbayi) Dlamini; interview Simahla Msane, 18 March 1970; Matsebula, History, 6-7. Some disagreement exists however over the names of the capitals associated with individual kings. Matsebula (History, 6-8) writes that Shiselweni was the capital of both Ndvungunye and Sobhuza, which on the face of it is anomalous. H. Kuper (An African Aristocracy: Rank among the Swazi, (London 1947), 12 note 2) says that it was Sobhuza whose capital was Shiselweni and that it referred to the huge quantities of ash that were seen on the site. Both these sources are contradicted by two of Stuart's informants, who claimed that Shiselweni was originally called Lobamba, and was only renamed when Sobhuza reoccupied after it had been burnt by Zwide. Sobhuza's building of another Lobamba for his mother when he established himself at Mdimba seems to support this idea, S.P., 30091, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 26 Nov. 1898.

this latter region which was particularly suited to the Ngwane economic needs. Situated on the water-shed of the Ngwavuma River, it also lay in the transitional zone between the middleveld and the lowveld. (Map 3) The importance of this latter division arose from the access it gave to different types of grazing land. In the Ngwane economy cattle occupied a central role. Apart from the multifarious uses to which their hides and horns could be put, or their role in Ngwane society as the principal store of wealth, virtually all the protein in the Ngwane diet was derived from milk. Of this, under ideal conditions, Ngwane cattle could be fairly prolific producers, often giving as much as two to three gallons a day (33). Ideal conditions however meant access to nutritious and healthy pasturage throughout the year, and this neither the middleveld nor the lowveld by themselves could provide. During the summer months the grass on the middleveld was sweet and nutritious, but in the winter it dried up and lost its power to sustain. In the lowveld on the other hand the low bush and the grass were nutritious all the year round, but

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(33) Union of South Africa, Department of Agriculture (Agricultural Research Institute Series No. 22), Bulletin No. 311, 'Nguni Cattle, Report on Indigeous [sic] Cattle in South Africa', (Pretoria, 1950), 13; Beemer however estimates about one gallon a day in summer, see Beemer 'Diet', 208, 218-20. Barnard cites figures fluctuating from 2-3 lbs a day to 20 lbs a day depending on the cow and on the grazing. W.G. Barnard, The Cattle of the Swazi, Mpisi series No. II (Mbabane, 1951), 9; W.G. Barnard, The Cattle of the Swazi, Mpisi series No. III (Mbabane, 1952), 30.

SWAZILAND - RELIEF



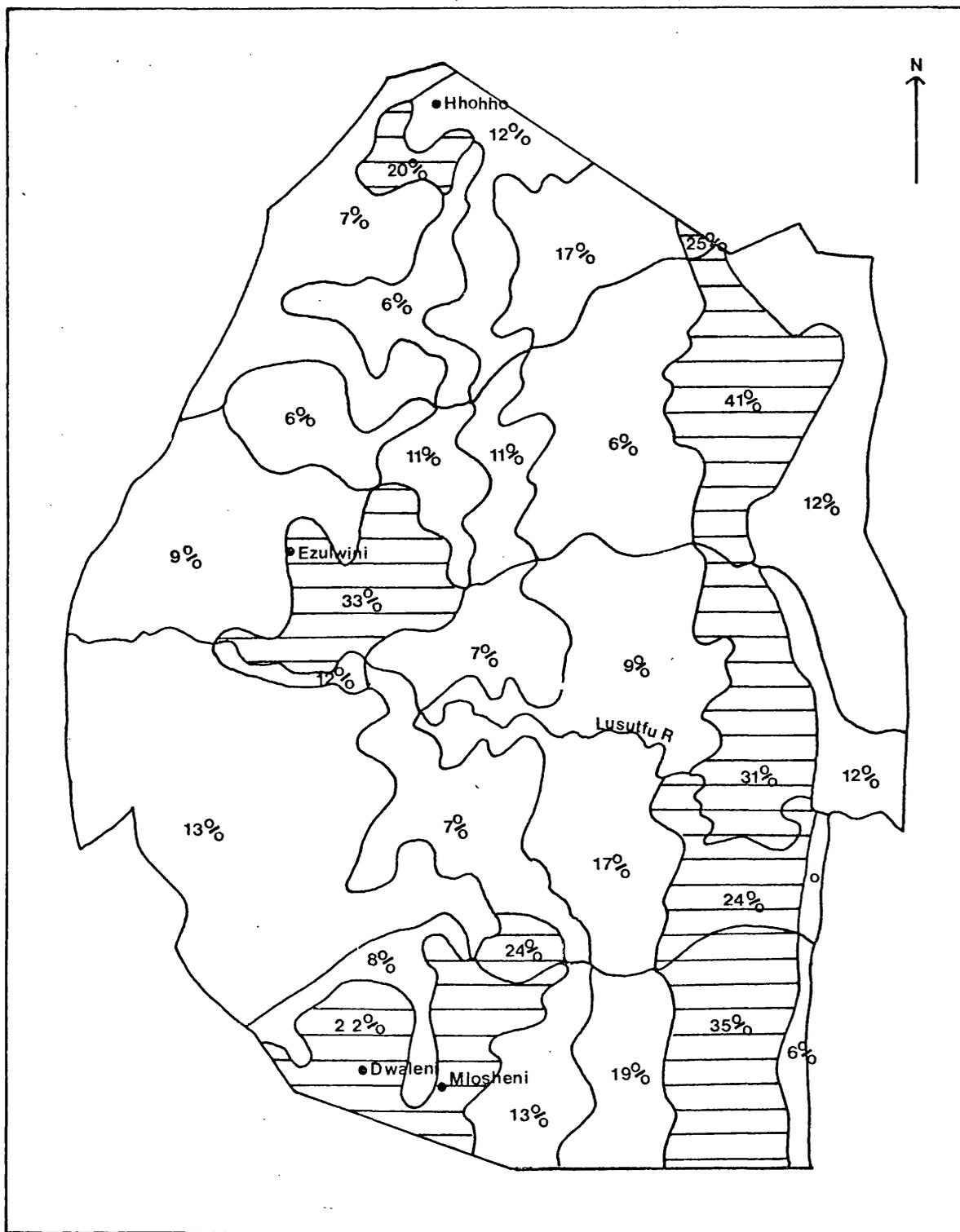
 Land over 4000 ft - Highveld  
 2 000-4 000 ft - Middleveld  
 Below 2 000 ft - Lowveld  
 - - - - Modern boundary

were plagued by nagana and other diseases throughout the summer months (34). Mlosheni, therefore, combined the best of both worlds and allowed year round grazing to the Ngwane's hardy Nguni herds.

The other principal element in the Ngwane diet was millet, prepared either as porridge or as beer, and once again the area south of Mlosheni was well suited to its needs (35). Murdoch, in his analysis of Swazi soils, lists three areas in Swaziland with the largest concentrations of good soils, each of which became successively the centre of the expanding Swazi state (Map 4). Shiselweni was not itself located on the most fertile portion of the southern bloc, but on a slightly inferior tract a little to the south-east. The superior grazing of this area presumably accounts for the drift, which suggests the greater importance of cattle in the early economy of the south. Nevertheless even here the soil was of superior worth, and its continuous cultivation since then has led to its present exhausted state (36).

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- (34) Beemer, 'Diet', 220, note 2; D.M. Doveton, The Human Geography of Swaziland, (London, 1937), 42, 47, 49; Union of South Africa, Department of Agriculture Entomology Memoirs, Memoir No. I, C. Fuller, Tsetse in the Transvaal and surrounding Territories. An Historical Review, (Pretoria, 1923), 26, Appendix F.12, 57; P. Hope, 'Journey from Natal via the South African Republic and across the Lebombo Mountains to Lorenzo Marques or Delagoa Bay, and thence to the Gold-Fields near Leydenberg', Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, XLIV (1874), 207; S.S. 133, No.475, 129.
- (35) Beemer 'Diet', 203-7, 217-19; Doveton, Geography, 88. Maize seems to have made a fairly late appearance, being introduced according to John Gama by the Ndzinisa clan during Sobhuza's reign S.P. 30096 's', John Gama, 18 Dec. 1898; see also, M.P., MS 1748, Miller, 'Short History', 13.
- (36) G. Murdoch, Soils and Land capability in Swaziland, Swaziland Ministry of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 23, (3 Vols, Mbabane, 1968), 315, 326, 381, 384, 408.

SWAZILAND - % BETTER ARABLE LAND BY SUBCATCHMENTS



 Boundaries of subcatchments

 Areas with 20% or more Better Arable Land

adapted from Murdoch, *Soils*, II, 315, Map 18, 'Land Classes AS + BS by Subcatchments'.)

A further advantage of Shiselweni was a relatively low incidence of drought, with a 40% risk as compared to 60% or 80% further east (37). (Map 5) However, even a 40% risk meant a fairly precarious existence and gave the rivers of the Ngwavuma watershed a central economic role. Their alluvial banks were planted during droughts and during winter, and they provided perennial water for cattle when lesser streams had dried up (38). As a result their distribution was a major influence on the pattern of Ngwane settlement. Ngwane villages clustered on river valleys stretching north from the Pongola along the middleveld/lowveld divide, and had reached as far as the Mkhondvo River and Esincneni hills by the beginning of Sobhuza's reign. Ngwane territory, on the other hand was something different again. Bounded by the Pongola in the south, it also stretched as far as the Lebombo in the east and the fringes of the highveld in the west, giving access in the latter case to yet another type of pasture. Barring certain strategic limitations, it was a near perfect environment.

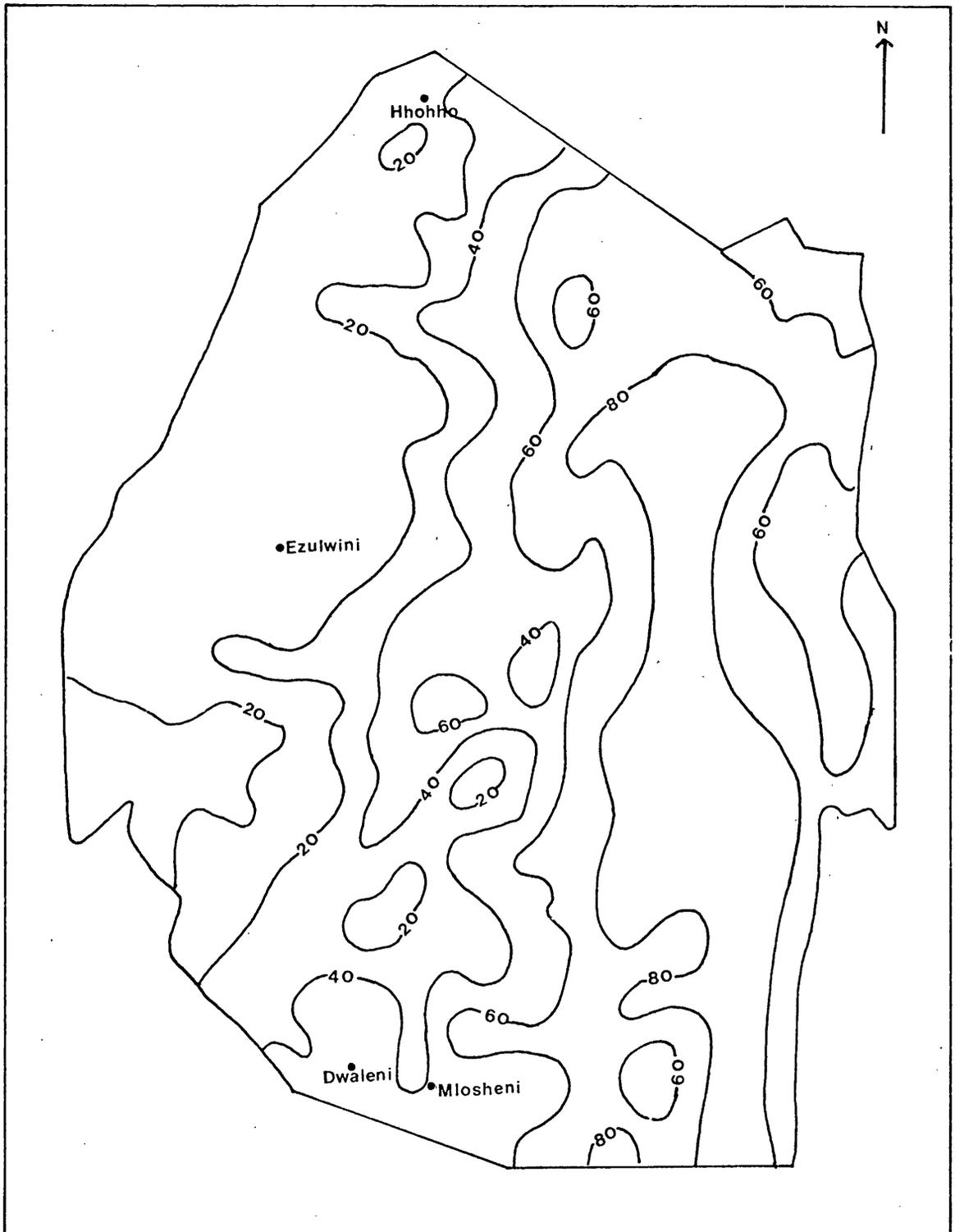
In all these respects the Ngwane heartland bore a close resemblance to the centres of the Ndwandwe and Mthethwa empires at Magudu, kwa-Dlovunga and Oyengweni. Like the Ngwane, these were situated on or near the highly prized Zululand thornveld. Like the Ngwane, they commanded access to the lowveld and at least one other veld type; and like the Ngwane they were situated in

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(37) Ibid, 33, 325.

(38) W.G. Barnard, Cattle, II, 10; ibid, III, 8. In both of these reports Barnard emphasises that losses of cattle during drought are mainly due to lack of access to water rather than a deterioration of pasturage. Beemer, 'Diet', 203-7, 217-19; Doveton, Geography, 88. For a passing reference see also interview Loncayi Hlophe, 24 May 1970, Langabhi, Swaziland.

## SWAZILAND - DROUGHT HAZARD



Percentage of summers (October-March) receiving less than 25 inches rainfall

20% drought risk coincides approximately with 40 inches mean annual rainfall; 40% with 35 inches; 60% with 30 inches; and 80% with 25 inches rain

(Adapted from Murdoch, Soils, I, 33, Map 4, 'Drought Hazard').

areas with rainfall of 700 mm or more, and within ten kilometres of a major watershed (39). The similarities between these environments have prompted Webb to hypothesise that it was competition for these particularly scarce combinations of resources which underlay the growth of the great empires among the northern Nguni towards the end of the eighteenth century. Mounting pressures of population, he suggests, led to increasing conflict over these areas, which came to a climax during the great droughts and famines at the end of the eighteenth century (40). Guy draws similar conclusions, but with a somewhat different emphasis. The high relief of parts of Zululand, he argues, creates an environment for cattle unrivalled in southern Africa, with pockets of thornveld in close association with both other veld types and water supplies. In such uniquely favourable conditions, human and cattle population increased rapidly, leading to a deterioration of pasture and growing intercommunal strife. These reached flashpoint with the late eighteenth century famines, producing massive dislocations and an attempt to rationalise access to grazing, which gave rise to the growth of the great states (41).

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(39) J.B.McI. Daniel, 'A Geographical Study of Pre-Shakan Zululand', The South African Geographical Journal, (July 1973), 55, No. 1, 23-31.

(40) C. de B. Webb, 'Environment and History: the Northern Nguni Example', paper presented to a Conference on the History of the Transkei and Ciskei, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, February, 1973; Daniel, 'Pre-Shakan Zululand', 23-31; C. de B. Webb, 'Of Orthodoxy, Heresy and the Difaqane', paper presented to a Teacher Conference on African History, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, May 1974, 9-10.

(41) J.J. Guy, 'Cattle-keeping in Zululand', paper presented to the Language and History in Africa Seminar, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 8.

Taken together Webb and Guy's analyses provide a far more satisfactory explanation for the growth of states among the northern Nguni, and have recently been supported by dendroclimatological evidence (42). By their single focus however, and by their concentration on similarities between these societies to the virtual exclusion of what set them apart, they do still present a somewhat distorted picture of their development. These differences were often substantial and had an important bearing on events in Zululand and beyond. As compared with the Ndwandwe, for instance, the Ngwane were substantially less militarised and less destructive, and so eventually succumbed under the weight of Ndwandwe attacks. As against the Mthethwa on the other hand, they embarked on their career of expansion a good deal earlier, and were more firmly rooted in the areas they occupied than the ephemeral Mthethwa empire. Still more significantly perhaps, they were appreciably smaller than both, and might in some respects be compared more appropriately with the quasi confederacies of the Qwabe and Drakensburg Ngwane (43).

These differences obviously have to be explained, and can be attributed, in my view, to the varying significance of trading and grazing rivalries in their political development; to the

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(42) M. Hall, 'Dendroclimatology, Rainfall and Human Adaptation in the later Iron Age of Natal and Zululand', Annals of the Natal Museum, (1976) (forthcoming). Hall's findings based on tree ring evidence show an unprecedented increase in rainfall levels, which is likely to have been accompanied by an increase in cattle and human population, from about 1745 to 1790, followed by the worst period of drought for the previous 300 years. This culminated in about 1802 - i.e. the Madlatule famine referred to by Bryant and Stuart. The reliability of Hall's findings are borne out by his ability to plot from the same evidence other known droughts in the nineteenth century (i.e. 1822, 1848-9, 1868).

(43) This point is treated more fully in Bonner, 'State Formation', 3-6.

different points in time at which those rivalries themselves felt; and to the distinctive social structures and economic formations of the areas they occupied. My argument on these points has been elaborated elsewhere (44), and I will confine myself here to the question of social structures and economic formations, since these were to have a major bearing on later Swazi development. Of late, in particular, there has been a tendency to forget that northern Nguniland contained not just a range of environments but a variety of economies and societies as well. The latter, it is true, constantly tend to assimilate to the former, but cultural factors nevertheless retain a sufficient degree of autonomy to affect the individual patterns of political power. The influences operating on the Ndwandwe and Ngwane in this regard are strikingly different. Where the Ndwandwe were assimilated into a society which was predominantly Ntungwa in composition, the Ngwane were as strongly permeated by Sotho influences. In each case the extent of this penetration is hard to exaggerate. So intense was the acculturation that took place between the Ndwandwe and Ntungwa that it is difficult to decide who absorbed whom. Bryant for instance was thoroughly confused and could only come up with the erroneous conclusion that the Ndwandwe were probably Ntungwa in origin (45). The Ngwane became equally assimilated into the groups they conquered. One of the surprising things about conventional historiography is the way that they are so confidently classified among the Nguni, when their culture is literally cluttered with Sotho borrowings. At a superficial level this can be seen in things

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(44) Ibid .

(45) A.T. Bryant, A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes,  
(Cape Town, 1964), 12.

like hair styles and patterns of speech, but it has also penetrated much deeper than that. It is an anthropological commonplace that systems of kinship lie at the heart of African societies, and it is precisely here that Sotho influence is most marked. Where the Nguni have generally practised a form of exogamy, which places all people from the clans of grandparents within the prohibited degrees, the Swazi have ignored this taboo completely and have adopted the Sotho practice of preferential cross cousin marriage (46). As an index of Sotho influence this is particularly striking, and was to have a profound influence on the second phase of Swazi state formation, but still more important for our purposes is Sotho penetration of Swazi politics and economy. Here, the greater democratisation of Swazi politics as compared with for example the Zulu may owe itself directly to Sotho influence. The Swazi libandla, which is a national council representing all shades of Swazi opinion, finds no close parallel among the Zulu, and may well be an adaptation of its Sotho counterpart, the pitso (47). So too may be the unique position accorded by the Swazi to the queen mother. Kuper characterises the Swazi kingdom as a dual monarchy, with the queen mother wielding powers almost equal to those of the king, and Ziervogel regards this as an explicitly

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(46) Bryant, Olden Times, 147; D. Ziervogel, 'A Swazi Translation of 1846', African Studies, 9 (1950), 183, note 1; Kuper Aristocracy, 83, 95-6.

(47) As suggested by J.D. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Bantu Africa, (London, 1966), 51. A national council of sorts existed among the Zulu but does not seem to have played the same part in political life. A.T. Bryant, The Zulu People as they were before the White man came, (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 464.

Sotho borrowing (48). His evidence is admittedly tenuous, but it is indirectly supported by Swazi tradition. Somnjalose Simelane, who was the first queen mother to exercise these powers, is supposed to have done so to check the growing arbitrariness of Ndvungunye and Sobhuza, and it was in recognition of her services that these powers were later institutionalised (49). Beneath this rather personalised description however, it is possible to glimpse deeper forces at work: on the one hand the increasing violence which went with state formation, particularly as it affected subject groups; on the other the gradual penetration of Sotho influence after the first trauma of incorporation, as a means of counteracting that trend.

The point of all this is that institutions of Sotho origin seem to have acted to check the accumulation and exercise of centralised power in a way that did not happen among the Ndwandwe, and a parallel argument can be developed for their respective economies. Here I speak more cautiously. Economies obviously adapt to environment, and it would be dangerous to credit them with too much autonomy. Nevertheless, there do seem to be sufficient differences between the economies of the societies into which the Ngwane and Ndwandwe intruded to affect their respective political development. The Ntungwa, with whom the Ndwandwe assimilated, were the most highly pastoral Nguni group, and this must inevitably have lent an extra edge to competition for grazing in the area even before the Ndwandwe entered, besides catching

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(48) D. Ziervogel, The Eastern Sotho, (Pretoria, 1954), 5; Kuper, Aristocracy, 54-6.

(49) H. Kuper, Aristocracy, 13.

them up in it once they arrived (50). For many Sotho, cattle did not have the same overwhelming significance. They were important, but not the linchpin of economic life, and this must likewise have confined the scale of conflict in the area, before and after Ngwane intrusion, and made their imposition of control that much more easy and peaceable (51).

This argument must however be qualified by another. The Sotho were by no means the only groups incorporated by the Ngwane, and several of the chiefdoms occupying the choicest pasturage in southern Swaziland were in fact of Mbo Nguni stock (the Hlophe, Mkhabela, Mndzebele, and Kunene, for example) (52). The factors just cited would obviously not apply to them, but the ease with which they were subordinated can, I feel, be accounted for in other terms. The Ngwane, as we have seen, did not arrive in the Shiselweni area for a generation after the Ndwandwe, and then in all probability as some sort of junior partner, having fled initially to Magudu before being allocated the tract north of the Pongola. In the meantime the Ndwandwe had broken the resistance of at least some of the groups that the Ngwane were to incorporate, the Hlophe of Tigodvo being a specific case in point (53). From this perspective the conflict that subsequently

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(50) S. Marks and A. Atmore, 'The Problem of the Nguni: An examination of the ethnic and linguistic situation in South Africa before the Mfecane', in D. Dalby (ed.), Language and History in Africa: a volume of collected papers presented to the London seminar on language and history in Africa (held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, 1967-69), (London, 1970), 127, 129.

(51) B. Sansom, 'Traditional Economic Systems', in W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed), The Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa, (London, 1974), 150-3.

(52) See the classification in Bryant, Olden Times, 681-697 and H. Kuper, The Swazi, (London, 1952), 61-81.

(53) Above, 11.

blew up between Sobhuza and Zwide makes much more sense. In the years that followed the Ngwane must have gradually detached themselves from the Ndwandwe, and may even have come to challenge their overall hegemony south of the Pongola. Groups like the Hlophe fell more firmly under Ngwane control, while others like the Ntungwa Simelane, who fled from Zwide to Ndvungunye, further swelled Ngwane power (54). Under Sobhuza the situation deteriorated further, until Sobhuza was eventually obliged to try and defuse the situation by proposing that a daughter of Zwide should become his own chief wife. Zwide grudgingly agreed, but warned that, "this would not stop him attacking Sobhuza if he wanted to in the future", and on that gloomy note his daughter Thandile journeyed north to meet her prospective spouse (55). Zwide did not in fact desist for long. A new dispute soon blew up over grain fields on the south side of the Pongola River, which served to crystallise earlier rivalries, and Zwide struck out to destroy Ngwane power once and for all (56).

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- (54) Ibid; Sw.A., R.C.S. 115/14, Encl. Marwick to Honey, 15 Dec. 1916, encl. Dawson to Marwick, 11 Dec. 1916; interview Simelane Simelane and Jozi Simelane, 6 May 1970, Kontjingila, Swaziland.
- (55) Matsebula, History, 11; interview Maboya Fakudze; one of Sobhuza's sisters named Posile was also married to Zwide, S.P. 30091, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 26 Nov. 1898, 86.
- (56) Kuper, Aristocracy, 13; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 17; Bryant, Older Times, 318; M.P., MS 1478, Miller, 'Short History', 7-8. This conflict may well have been brought to a head by drought. William Beinart shows how the Mpondo fell back on a more intensive sort of agriculture when their cattle had been plundered by Zulu raiders, (W. Beinart, 'Economic Change in Pondoland in the Nineteenth Century', paper presented to the University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Postgraduate Seminar, The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, Nov. 1975, 2), and the ravages of drought are likely to have had the same effect. Cattle would have died and people would have fallen back on more intensive agricultural production in the only places that it was possible i.e. the irrigable river banks.

## CHAPTER II

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SWAZI STATE

Zwide's invasions very nearly obliterated the Ngwane state. Sobhuza is usually pictured in Swazi historiography as executing a tactical withdrawal to a sanctuary in the north, from the security of which he quickly reconstructed the Ngwane state (1). Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather than resuming a barely interrupted career of expansion, he was obliged to abandon the bulk of his followers to Zwide, and to lead the life of a rootless refugee whom Zwide hounded further and further north. The only point at which these wanderings resemble traditional historiography is in the first phase of his evacuation. According to Matsebula, this was undertaken well before the burning of Shiselweni, by which time his new capital of Ephungalegazi had been built (2). Other sources put it a few hours before Zwide's attack, and have Sobhuza beating a hasty retreat towards Hlathikhulu, but either way Sobhuza's intentions were presumably the same; Zwide was on the rampage and he needed to get out of his reach (3). Zwide however was not so easily put off. No sooner had Sobhuza settled himself at his new capital near Hlathikhulu than a fresh Ndwandwe army took the field and Sobhuza had to resume his journey north (4).

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(1) Kuper, Aristocracy, 13-14; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 20-22; Bryant, Olden Times, 318; Matsebula, History, 8-11; M.P. Miller, 'Short History', 8-9.

(2) Matsebula, History, 8-9.

(3) Matsebula gives the location of Ephungalegazi as in the Sinceni area north of Hlathikhulu (ibid). Other sources place it at Mbulungwane hill, a little to the south-west of Hlathikhulu, interview Simahla Msane, 23 April, 1970; interview Ndambi Mkhonta and four others, 15 May, 1970, Ezulwini, Swaziland.

(4) Matsebula, History, 8-9.

Sobhuza's first stop, in some accounts, was among the Nkambule of Buseleni, at a rocky fortress situated just south of the Mkhondvo River (5). Even here, on the outer edges of his previous domains, he felt insecure, and pressed on again across the Lusutfu River to the Nqabaneni fortresses of the Maseko. Two considerations probably dictated this choice of refuge. First, there was the strength of the strongholds themselves, and second, the greater sense of kinship the Ngwane seemed to have felt for the Maseko as compared with the other Sotho-speaking groups of the area. Not only were the Maseko of Ntungwa - Ngune origin, belonging to the same stock as Sobhuza's mother Somnjalose Simelane, but they were also somehow connected with the Ngwane themselves through an early marriage to the Dlamini. The Maseko leader, Mgazi, therefore welcomed Sobhuza, and allowed his followers sanctuary (6).

By this stage Sobhuza's following was reduced to a remnant; a tiny band of devoted followers like Sonyezane Dlamini, Dambuza Lukhele and Sokhukhusa Hlophe, who scouted his way forward, or close kinsmen like Malunge Dlamini, who lent moral support and much needed advice (7). Forbes, in his manuscript, talks of only a few hundred soldiers accompanying Sobhuza on this leg of his journey, and it is clear that many chiefdoms

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- (5) Dlamini, 'Expansion', 3; interview Simahla Msane, 23 April, 1970; interview Maphoyisa and Ngoti Manana, 24 April, 1970, Ka-Manana, Swaziland.
- (6) The Gule, Mthimkhulu, Maseko and Simelane apparently do not intermarry, Dlamini, 'Expansion', 3-4; Bryant, History, 3; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 18; interview Maloba Maseko, 19 March, 1970, Nqabaneni, Swaziland.
- (7) Interview Nyanda Nhlabatsi; interview Lukhele and Ngota Nkambule, 21 June 1970, Phunga, Swaziland; interview Loncayi Hlophe; Sw.A., R.C.S. 454/40, Encl. P. Seme, 'Petition of the Swazi tribes of the Eastern Transvaal to the Union Parliament', 25 March, 1932, 4.

like the Mamba, the Ngcamphalala and the Khumalo stayed almost entirely behind (8). Once Sobhuza's refuge became known a steady trickle of supporters began to make their way north, and they might ultimately have swelled to more substantial proportions had it not been for yet another attack by the Ndwandwe. This time it was not only Sobhuza's Ngwane that suffered, but Mgazi's Maseko as well, as both were driven from the protection of Nqabaneni. Whether the Maseko threw in their lot with Sobhuza at this point is not clear, but if they did it is unlikely that they stuck with him for long. Sobhuza had become a pariah whom it was advisable to shun, as was made abundantly clear a short while after, when Zwide attacked him for a fourth time at his new resting place in the Ezulwini Valley. Thereafter, it seems, Sobhuza journeyed on alone (9).

Sobhuza's future was now looking increasingly bleak. Battered and buffeted by Zwide, he had been driven further and further from his bases of support, and subjected all the while to a continuous drain of men. Somehow or other he had to gain respite if he was ever to have a chance of recouping his strength. His first idea was to throw himself on the mercy of the Sotho chief

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- (8) F.C., Vol. 37, No. 4(c), 'History of Swaziland', by David Forbes, (Mss. fragment). Interview Logwaja and Uhlangamiso Mamba, 15 July, 1970, Ka Mamba, Swaziland; interview Majibhini Ngcamphalala, 18 June, 1970, Ngcamphalaleni, Swaziland; interview Thabede and Khumalo informants, 21 July 1970, Kwendzeni, Swaziland.
- (9) F.C., Vol. 37, No. 4(c), Forbes, 'History'; S.P., Notebook 30091, 87, Tikuba, 27 Nov. 1898.

living somewhere north of the Mdimba mountains, but this his would-be benefactor prudently declined (10). Rebuffed in that direction, Sobhuza was obliged to look for succour elsewhere, and eventually found it with Magoboyi, a Sotho chief, living in the Dlomodlomo mountains, a little way to the north-west. The precise extent of Magoboyi's power is unclear, but he seems to have exercised a vague sort of hegemony all around Dlomodlomo, and from the moment he gave Sobhuza sanctuary, Sobhuza's fortunes began to pick up. This was not just because of Magoboyi's protection, as Zwide's attacks also presently petered out. Having set in motion an early phase of the Difaqane when he drove Sobhuza out of Shiselweni, he was now diverted by its later stages, which culminated in his struggles with Dingiswayo and Shaka. Sobhuza put the respite to good use. He regrouped his forces under the cover of Magoboyi's authority, and then cut loose on his own account by attacking neighbouring chiefs. Within the space of a year his power had grown to such an extent that he was even able to destroy the chiefdom of Mkize, which stretched from near Dlomodlomo to the vicinity of modern Mbabane, (Maps 1 & 3). Magoboyi's response is uncertain. He may have initially tolerated Sobhuza's behaviour, but as the full extent of Sobhuza's ambitions became known he seems to have taken the lead in a Sotho back-lash against his ungrateful protégé. Sobhuza fell back on the defensive and might ultimately have had to withdraw, but he was saved a decisive trial of strength

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(10) Ibid.

by an unexpected intervention from the south (11).

Since Sobhuza's hasty withdrawal across the Lusutfu, the Ngwane heartland of Shiselweni had been the scene of turmoil and strife. Zwide's armies roamed back and forth, and its people were reduced to a state of anxious dependency, acknowledging Zwide's overlordship but never sure whether this would confer immunity from attack. In time some degree of regrouping took place. The Mamba who occupied the transitional zone between the middleveld and the lowveld around Mbelebeleni were never really subdued, and soon came to be looked upon by the leaderless remnants in Shiselweni as the natural heirs to Sobhuza's power. This they declined, perhaps for fear of inviting Ndwandwe reprisals, but there were others more eager to take on that role (12). Foremost among these were several of Sobhuza's close relatives. Forbes talks of a brother of Sobhuza called Nkwekazi assuming control of the area, while both Bryant and Honey refer to another brother named Magwegwe, who was aided in Bryant's account by several sons of Sobhuza (13). Current Swazi tradition helps us pinpoint things further, for according to the

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(11) Ibid; ibid, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 25 Nov. 1898; F.C., Vol. 37, No. 4(c), Forbes, 'History'; M.P., 1.08.1., 'Swaziland' by Miller, lecture, 4 March, 1905, 18; Bryant, Olden Times, 321; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 20; S.S., 30, 482, R.3359/59, statement by 'Kappoen' and Makuasitiel, Lydenburg, 19 Dec. 1859. For the extent of Mkize's power see A.M. Miller, Swaziland: the California of South Africa, (Johannesburg, 1907), 14. On this point, however, see Bryant, History, 3.

(12) Interview Logwaja Mamba; interview Majibhini Ngcamphalala; A.J.B. Hughes, Swazi Land Tenure, (Institute for Social Research, University of Natal, Durban, 1964), 38.

(13) F.C., Vol. 37, No. 4(c), Forbes, 'History'; Bryant, Olden Times, 321; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 20.

history of the Nsibande, Nkwekazi mounted his challenge not after Sobhuza's flight from Shiselweni but on his initial accession to power (14). By a process of elimination therefore it would appear that it was Magwegwe who usurped Sobhuza's position and who tried to marshal the broken remnants of the old Ngwane state.

Magwegwe's efforts met with some initial success, but registered a serious setback with the refusal of the Mamba chief, Maloyi, to countenance his claims. That was soon to cost him dear. In 1819 Zwide's armies were finally routed by Shaka, and Maloyi took the opportunity of sending an expedition to Dlomodlomo to bring Sobhuza back (15). Facing a hostile Sotho combination, Sobhuza was only too happy to return, and with Mamba assistance swept Magwegwe from power. Thanks to this, and no doubt to Maloyi's de facto autonomy, the Mamba were granted the ritual and military privileges which they still hold today. Maloyi was permitted to raise his own regiments; to give refugees from Sobhuza sanctuary, and to hold a version of the first fruits ceremony, all of which was tantamount to treason for anyone else. The Mamba in effect had become a state within a state (16).

Despite the ease with which he had been reinstated Sobhuza was

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(14) Interview Phuhlaphe Nsibande (conducted by Balam Nyeko and Hugh Macmillan) early 1972, Zombodze, Swaziland.

(15) Above, 30.

(16) Hughes, Land Tenure, 39; interview Logwaja Mamba; interview Mhambi and Damusi Dlamini, Mangaliso Malambe, Magamba Khoza, Nkomiyaphy Mamba, Dubingoma Gwebu, Mangaliso Ndlala, 3 June, 1970, Mvembili, Swaziland. This seems to have induced a later Mamba chief or sub-chief, Polile Mamba, to assert his complete independence of Swazi control, which ended in his destruction by Sobhuza's forces (Logwaja Mamba); Kuper, Aristocracy, 111.

still extremely insecure. According to Mamba historians, Zwide had first attempted to retreat into Mamba territory, but had been forced to withdraw by the resistance they put up (17). Whether this was so, or whether the forces the Mamba encountered were other displaced elements of the Ndwandwe state, the Ndwandwe continued to present a potential threat. Zwide regrouped his forces at ama Nzambomvu, the northern tributary of the Komati, and although seriously mauled, they were still a force to be reckoned with (18). Eight years later Zwide's heir Sikhunyane could muster a fighting force of perhaps eight thousand, and they must have been a constant worry to Sobhuza as they perched on his eastern flank (19). Nor was that all. Only three years later, Mzilikazi also fell out with Shaka and fled into the same part of the modern Eastern Transvaal (20). By this stage Sobhuza had himself begun colonising central Swaziland, with the result that three major Nguni powers were all rubbing shoulders in the same restricted space. Exactly what relationships developed between them would be fascinating to know, but in the first instance at any rate they seem to have been cordial enough. According to two fragments of oral tradition relating to this time, the Ndwandwe assisted the Ngwane in their attacks on the Magagula, and it was only later that open conflict may

(17) Interview Logwaja Mamba.

(18) Bryant, Olden Times, 208-10.

(19) James Stuart and D. Mck. Malcolm (eds), The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, (Pietermaritzburg, 1950), 126.

(20) W.F. Lye, 'The Ndebele kingdom south of the Limpopo River', Journal of African History, X,I (1969), 87-104.

possibly have flared up between the two (21). As for Mzilikazi, Sobhuza made his by now familiar marriage overtures, and an arrangement was made whereby a daughter of the Ndebele king would become the chief wife of Sobhuza's heir (22).

The impact of the Mfecane was not confined to the movements of Zwide and Mzilikazi. After Zwide's second defeat, splinters of the Ndwandwe state flew off in all directions, lodging in some cases as far away as Lakes Tanzania and Victoria. Soshangane sped north to Delagoa Bay, and with a small band of followers began incorporating the local Tsonga chiefdoms into the nucleus of the Shangane state; Zwangendaba followed in his footsteps shortly after; and at more or less the same time Nxaba skirted the western borderlands of the Ngwane, picking up Ngwane Maseko on the way (23). Like the Ndebele and the Ndwandwe their menace was more latent than actual, and in some instances their

- (21) Interview Mbhuduya Magagula, Ganda and Sigungu Magagula and Mavelebaleni Ginindza, 20 Dec. 1971, Dvokolwako, Swaziland; S.P., Notebook 30091, 87, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 26 Nov. 1898. In an interesting but somewhat garbled account derived from 'an old follower of Sobhuza', the Berlin missionary Nachtigal writes of how Zwide fled in the first instance to the region of the Steelpoort River only to die there the following year. Sikhunyane then apparently brought his father's body back to the Pongola, attacking Sobhuza on the way, after which he settled somewhere north of the Pongola River. At some later stage he went back to the Pongola and again defeated Sobhuza, who sought refuge on this occasion with Shaka in the south. Shaka now administered the coup de grace to Sikhunyane who fled to Manicusa (i.e. Soshangane), A. Nachtigal, 'Das Tagebuch des Missionars', II, (typescript, University of South Africa Library), 381 (original Mss. pagination).
- (22) S.S. 34, R 3852/60, 49-50, S. Schoeman to C. Potgieter, 18 July, 1860; S.S. 75, R 303/66, 302, Minutes of meeting with Swazi messengers, 6 Mar. 1866.
- (23) For a general account see Omer-Cooper, Aftermath, Ch. 4-5.

movements may even have served Swazi ends. Shemane, Zwide's heir, whom Bryant considers as being lost in the confusion, begged refuge from Sobhuza, as did sections under Ngolotsheni and Sihalahala Nxumalo and Zanzika Gumede, and between them these three must have greatly added to Sobhuza's strength (24). Still more valuable were a host of individual refugees who fled to Sobhuza's "armpit" (25). Lacking any territorial or kinship base in Swaziland, these were totally dependent on royal favour, and came to constitute some of the most reliable pillars of royal power (26). Nevertheless it is unlikely that the advantages of the confusion outweighed the disadvantages for Sobhuza. As parties migrated round or through Ngwane territory, or even begged for refuge among the Ngwane themselves, there was always the danger that they would ally themselves with some disgruntled faction inside his own kingdom, and it was probably with a growing sense of relief that he saw first Nxaba and Zwangendaba (1821-23), and then Mzilikazi (1825), Sikhunyane (1826) and Soshangane (1828) vanish over his horizon (27).

It was in this climate of insecurity that the new Swazi state was born. Having re-established his authority in Shiselweni, Sobhuza turned more or less at once to the colonisation of the north. In part he may have wanted to exclude Zwide and Mzilikazi,

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(24) Interview James Nxumalo, 14 March 1970, near Masundwini, Swaziland; interview Mandlenkosi Nxumalo, 23 April 1970, Dhume, Swaziland; interview Simahla Msane and various Nxumalo informants, 18 March 1970; interview Simahla Msane, 23 April 1970; interview Mahloba Gumede, 11 June 1970, eBulandzeni, Swaziland.

(25) Kuper, Aristocracy, 17.

(26) The Zwane are one example. I have this from a Zwane informant at the Swazi traditional court in Hlathikhulu, interview 8 May 1970, (tape lost).

(27) Omer-Cooper, Aftermath 38-9, 58, 64-5, 133.

but more important in his thinking was the need for greater security from Shaka (28). During the course of his exile Sobhuza had been impressed by the strength of the natural fortresses of central and northern Swaziland, and since his return it had become increasingly plain to him that if he were ever to evade subjection he would have to take himself further out of Shaka's reach. The obvious answer was to conquer central Swaziland, and this he proceeded to do in 1820 or 1821.

The area which Sobhuza made the centre of his expanded kingdom shared in many of the advantages of Shiselweni. Based on the Ezulwini valley, it was blessed with an abundance of water and fertile alluvial soils, besides being within easy reach of a finger of lowveld which pushed in from the east. (Map 3) Its only disadvantage was that Ezulwini itself and most of the country around it was covered in lowveld sour bushveld, described by Acocks as "of sourish mixed nature, of poor quality for grazing and difficult to manage" (29). (Map 2) Amply compensating for this, however, were the Mdimba mountains which rose from the west side of the Ezulwini valley. These contained the largest cave fortresses in the whole of the region, and it was almost certainly their reputed impregnability that made Sobhuza choose this particular spot (30). Stretching out on every side was a terrain very similar to the south. A few miles to the

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(28) For example see interview Mandlenkosi Nxumalo.

(29) J.R.H. Acocks, Veld Types of South Africa, Union of South Africa, Department of Agriculture, Division of Botany, Botanical Survey Memoir No. 28, (Pretoria, 1953), 46; G. Murdoch, Soils, 61.

(30) Sw.A., R.C.S. 454/40, Seme, 'Petition', 4.

east the middleveld gradually gave way to the lowveld which was infested with tsetse at intervals for the last twenty to twenty-five miles before the Lebombo. To the west the middleveld was soon displaced by the highveld, with its relatively harsher environment for cattle and crops (31). Only in the north was there any major difference. There the line of the middleveld and the highveld drew back into the interior, leaving a relatively larger expanse of tsetse ridden lowveld in the area that fell under Swazi control (32).

Dotted across this landscape were various chiefdoms of Sotho, Nguni, and Tsonga stock. Most numerous were the Sotho, and in particular the Magagula/Ngomane. Over a space of four or five generations these had split into a number of independent branches, spreading out from the Mdimba mountains as far as the Sabie River in the north (33). Other Sotho groups in the area were the Mncina and Gama at Mdimba (34), the Mnisi near modern

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(31) Doveton, *Geography*, 48-9, 55.

(32) For the references to tsetse see above, 16 ; note 34, and T. Baines, *The Gold Regions of South-Eastern Africa*, (London, 1877), 108-9, 182-3; E. Cohen, Erläuternde bemerkungen zu der routenkarte einer reise von Lydenburg nach den goldfeldern und von Leydenburg nach der Delagoa Bai im östlichen Süd-Afrika, (Hamburg, 1875).

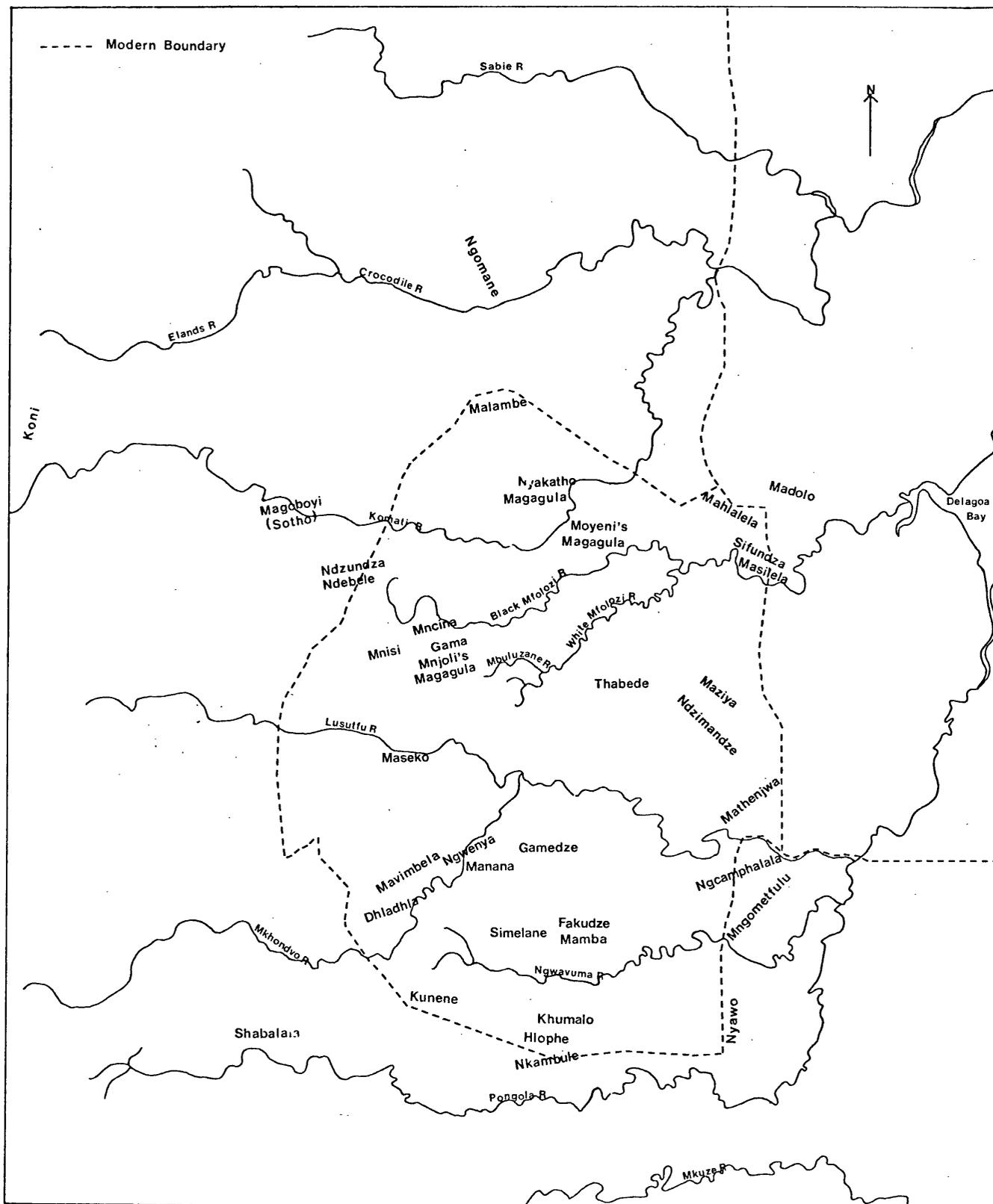
(33) Interview Mbhuduya Magagula; interview Mankwempe, Mevane, Mcedzane Magagula and Mmemo Masilela, 23 June 1970, Madlangampisi, Swaziland; A.C. Myburgh, The Tribes of the Barberton District, Union of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, *Ethnological Publications No. 25*, (Pretoria, 1949), 106-7, 126.

(34) Matsebula, *History*, 9; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 21; interview Guzana and LaMnandisi Mncina, Nkunzane and Mchoza Dlamini, 12 June 1970, Silothwane, Swaziland; J.J. Nquku, 'The Swazis', the Times of Swaziland, 1 July, 1943, 4.

Mbabane (35), the Ngwenya, Mavimbela and Dhladhla west of Mahlangatja (36), and the Malambe at Hhohho (37), but more powerful than any of these were the Maseko at Nqabaneni. Of Ntungwa-Nguni origin these had arrived at the Lusutfu at least two generations before, and had constructed a minor confederacy composed of at least twenty subordinate clans (38). Further west were more Sotho interspersed with Koni and Ndzundza Ndebele. Magoboyi lived at Dlomodlomo (39), next to a section of the Ndzundza Ndebele (40) while a scatter of Koni settlements fanned out from the Steenkampsberg towards the south (41). Finally, in the east lay a number of Tsonga or

- (35) Interview Mboziswa Mnisi, 16 June 1970, Phumplele, Swaziland; J.J. Nquku, 'The Swazis', the Times of Swaziland, 1 July 1943, 4; Kuper, Aristocracy, 110-111.
- (36) Interview Hehhane Ngwenya, 9 June 1970, Mgomfelweni, Swaziland.
- (37) Interview Mhambi Dlamini. Other Sotho groups possibly in the Hhohho area were the Mndzawe, Mathonsi, Mphila, Malindzisa, Shabangu and Sikhondze, A.B. Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 34, 53, interviews with Andreas Dlamini of Mpofu, Swaziland, December 1973, and Mangaliso Malambe of Emvembili, 13 April 1974. The latter was one of the informants in the first interview mentioned in this footnote.
- (38) Dlamini, 'Expansion', 4; interview Maloba Maseko; interview Thintitha Malaza, 13 June 1970, Mbabane, Swaziland.
- (39) Above, 30.
- (40) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 21; Bryant, Olden Times 311; Kuper, Aristocracy, 14; interview Jobe and Mambosego Dlamini, Mbane Msibi, Mgwanya Simelane, 26 April 1970, Steynsdorp, S. Africa.
- (41) N.J. Van Warmelo, 'Genealogy of the House of Sekhukhuni', Union of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, Ethnological Publications, No. 21, (Pretoria, 1944), 17-22; A.P. Van der Merwe, 'Die Naturelle en die Maatskappy te Ohrigstad en Lydenburg (1845-1857)', Historiese Studies, II (1940-1941), 87; D.R. Hunt, 'An Account of the Bapedi', African Studies, 5, (1931), 285.

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semi-Tsongaised Sotho chiefdoms. The Mahlalela and Maziya occupied a section of the Lebombo together with the Sifundza and Masilela (42), leaving the Thabede and Ndzimandze in command of the Lebombo flats below (43), and the Mathenjwa and Mngometfulo occupying the mountain range further south (44). (Map 6)

Sobhuza began his campaign of conquest cautiously, and in a way that underlines how very weak he still was. The most formidable power in central Swaziland were the Maseko, and Sobhuza was still in no position to antagonise them. Instead he chose the safer course of marrying his daughter Lambombotsi to Mgazi, and conferring a wide degree of autonomy on the Maseko king (45). Next in order of importance were the Magagula chiefdoms, but they presented a much less united front. Moyeni, who was ruling at Bulandzeni, was at loggerheads with his kinsman Mnjoli at the Mdimba, and both acted entirely independently of their genealogical superior at Nyakatho (46). Even so, Sobhuza was reluctant to tackle them head-on, and sent emissaries to Mnjoli

- (42) Interview Mphundle Maziya, 5 July 1970, Maphungwane, Swaziland; interview Gija Mahlalela and Mandela Dlamini, 7 April 1970, Lomasha, Swaziland; interview Mjole Sifundza, 28 April 1970, Ka Shewula, Swaziland.
- (43) Interview Mphundle Maziya; interview Mashabhane Magagula, Manchulwane and Nganga Thabede, Ndvoku Mavimbela, 17 June 1970, Malindze, Swaziland. The Thabede may however be of Ntungwa-Nguni origins, see Bryant, Olden Times, 342.
- (44) Bryant, Olden Times, 340-3.
- (45) Dlamini, 'Expansion', 4; interview Maloba Maseko; interview Mandanda Mtetwa, 13 March 1970, Sigodzi, Swaziland; interview Thintitha Malaza.
- (46) Interview Mbhuduya Magagula; S.P., Notebook 30091, 84, 86-7, 25 and 26 Nov. 1898; M.P., M.S. 1478, Miller, 'Short History' 9. A disagreement exists here between current Magagula tradition whose account I have broadly followed, and the other sources cited, which speak of an elder brother of Mnjoli called Mhlangala occupying the Mdimba and being defeated by Sobhuza. In these accounts Mhlangala fled and Mnjoli was killed.

to propose some sort of alliance. Mnjoli's answer was crude and to the point. He had Sobhuza's messengers beaten and returned them to his encampment covered in bruises and weals. Mnjoli's response had placed Sobhuza in a quandary. Mnjoli's headquarters were well defended, and Sobhuza did not have the forces to take them by storm. On the other hand his capital commanded the Ezulwini valley which had been chosen by Sobhuza as the centre of his new state. Fortunately one of Sobhuza's followers came forward with an idea. Why not, he suggested, smuggle Swazi soldiers in under cattle hides as the Magagula brought their cattle in from pasture at dusk, and use these to open up the encampment from the inside? Makhubu's suggestion was gratefully accepted, and with its help the Magagula stronghold was stormed (47). Magagula resistance did not end there. Although Sobhuza had acquired the Magagula rainmaking charms, and hence an immense increase in ritual power (Mnjoli was in fact slit open because the Swazi thought he had swallowed the charms), Moyeni was still determined to hold out. Reluctantly therefore Sobhuza again prepared to fight, and it was only after a protracted siege of Moyeni's mountain stronghold, during which Sobhuza may have had to call in Ndwandwe support, that he finally bolted to Madolo (48). Thereafter Sobhuza's

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(47) Interview Chief Makhubu, June 1970, Luyengo, Swaziland.

(48) Interview Mankwempe Magagula; above, 34, note 21. Another version of the same conflict, or just possibly another conflict altogether, is recorded by Nachtigal. According to reminiscences he derived from 'an old follower of Sobhuza', Moyeni fought with Sobhuza after a son of Zwide named Madzanga had fled to Moyeni, following Sikhunyane's defeat by Shaka (i.e. in 1826). Moyeni had thereupon refused to give Madzanga up and Sobhuza had only been able to compel him to do so after he had secured the help of Portuguese riflemen from Delagoa Bay. (Nachtigal, 'Tagebuch', 382.) If this chronology is correct it further supports the argument for the slow imposition of Ngwane control.

progress was more smooth. The Mncina resisted and were forced to flee, but for the most part the chiefdoms of the area took note of the fate of the resisters, and accepted Ngwane rule without putting up a fight (49). Thus the Ngwenya, the Dhladhla and the Mavimbela immediately subordinated themselves to Sobhuza, while the Maziya and Mahlalela capitulated after the neighbouring Ndzimandze had been destroyed (50). In this way Sobhuza gradually extended his control over the country, until in a few years he was able to subordinate chiefdoms as far afield as Chief Luguba's on the other side of the Sabie River, and those of the Sotho and Koni on the Steenkampsberg (51).

It was an impressive record, but one should be careful not to exaggerate the extent of Sobhuza's power. Sanders remarks how often Moshoeshoe's existence during the early Mfecane hung on a single thread, and the same is true of Sobhuza throughout the 1820s (52). Quite apart from his problems with Shaka and various Mfecane states, Sobhuza's domestic regime was still far from sound. The Maseko for example jealously guarded their autonomy, and may even have cherished ambitions to be free of all Dlamini control. An outward sign of such sentiments was their treatment of Lambombotsi, whom Sobhuza had sent to be Mgazi's wife. The idea of giving Lambombotsi in the first place was that she would

(49) Interview with Guzana Mncina.

(50) Interview Hehhane Ngwenya; interview Mphundle Maziya. The Ndzimandze chief was Ngwenyama. The defeat of the Thabede chief Gojisa in the lowveld may also have influenced this decision. Interview Mashabhane Magagula.

(51) Below, 61, note 106.

(52) P. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, Chief of the Sotho, (London/Cape Town, 1975), 59.

be mother to Mgazi's heir, and so bind the Maseko that much more closely to the Dlamini, but this the Maseko made strenuous efforts to avoid. A village was built for her ten miles from Mgazi's capital and an Ndzimandze woman was surreptitiously installed as chief wife. Lambombotsi was deeply offended, and she left her village at Kufinyeni to report her situation to the king. To lend colour to her story she is said to have soaked her leather skirt in the Mhlambanyatsi River, and then put on the dried and misshapen garments for her meeting with the king. Sobhuza was suitably provoked, but as yet was too weak to tackle the Maseko head-on. A less direct way had to be found, and the one he eventually selected was to call Mgazi's regiments for a hunt, and to use the opportunity to take them unawares. The stratagem worked, and Mgazi's regiments were cut to ribbons on Mawelawela island in the middle of the Lusutfu River. A few soldiers escaped to warn Mgazi to flee, but this was still not enough to let him get away, and he was overtaken and killed at Intsakane mountain before he had travelled more than a dozen or so miles. The Maseko were thereafter scattered in various directions. Some were settled in the eastern Transvaal; some fled as far as Lesotho; while one minor section, which had remained loyal to Sobhuza during the hostilities, was allowed to remain at Nqabaneni (53).

The clash with Mgazi was exceptional in as much as fighting broke out, but it was symptomatic of a wider set of tensions between rulers and ruled. On the Komati the Mncina were exposed

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(53) Above, 40, note 45. Intsakane mountain is a little to the east of modern Bunya.

to periodic looting, while the Magagula were still smarting from expropriation and defeat, and there must have been many others in the same position who resented Ngwane rule (54). Indeed the picture that emerges from this period is of an army camped out in hostile territory rather than of a settled administration. "In those early days", one oral history recalls "there were no chiefs, only princes and leaders of regiments" (55), and the same picture can be derived from the evidence given by Swazi messengers to Captain Gardiner when they visited the Zulu capital of Mgungundlovu in 1835. The capital of Swaziland, they told him, was Elangeni, and a little to the south was another village of Lobamba, which between them housed the entire male population of the Swazi, then numbering no more than a few hundred men (56). The messengers were apparently exaggerating, no doubt for Zulu ears. The villages which they mentioned were the capitals of Sobhuza and his queen mother, and there were certainly other Swazi settlements beside those. Sonyezane Dlamini was posted on the strategic southern tip of the Esincneni hills, soon after Sobhuza moved north, and Macetshane Fakudze was given a similar position around the Bulungu range (57). Similarly in Mankayana Matsebula talks of a royal homestead being established with a gift of cattle from Shaka, while on the southern bank of the Komati, Nyamayenja Dlamini was given charge of the scattered Mncina people (58). Least of all could the

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(54) Interview Mbhuduya Magagula; interview Loncayi Hlophe.

(55) Ibid.

(56) A.F. Gardiner, Narrative of a journey to the Zoolu country, in South Africa, (London, 1836), 165 and 167.

(57) Interview Maphoyisa Manana; interview Nyanda Nhlabatsi; interview Mandlabovu Fakudze.

(58) Matsebula, History, 12; interview Guzana Mncina.

messenger's description apply to the Shiselweni area. Some shift of population may have taken place after Sobhuza's move north, but at the end of Sobhuza's reign there were well over a dozen chiefdoms firmly established there (59).

The messengers were therefore misleading, but in the area of conquest there was some truth in what they had said. Few of Sobhuza's brothers or sons were assigned chiefdoms in the central areas until the closing years of Sobhuza's life, and the type of 'placing' to which Kuper refers did not occur on any extensive scale until the reign of his successor (60). The history of Maphalaleni illustrates the trend. Maphalaleni was established for LaNdwandwe, who was one of Sobhuza's favourite wives, but so late in Sobhuza's reign that by the time she got there Sobhuza was already dead (61). A similar pattern recurs throughout central Swaziland. Neither Maloyi nor Malunge seem to have taken effective occupation of their chiefdoms in the Mbuluzane River area until the reign of Mswati, and on the north side of the Komati River none of the Hhohho district was even allocated until the 1840s and 1850s (62). In the south things were somewhat different. As many as five of Sobhuza's sons seem to have been given chiefdoms there, but if Mantintinti is anything to go by, they only took possession comparatively late in Sobhuza's reign (63). After accompanying Sobhuza to

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(59) For example the Mamba, Ngcamphalala, Nsibande, Mdluli, Ndlela, Kunene, Shiba, Hlophe, Mndzebele, Nxumalo, Khumalo Simelane and several Dlamini chiefdoms like the descendents of Liba Dlamini.

(60) Kuper, Aristocracy, 57-8.

(61) Interview Sambane Dlamini, 14 May 1970, Maphalaleni, Swaziland.

(62) Interview Mbhuduya Magagula; below, 164-5.

(63) The other sons were Fokoti, Malambule, Ndlaphu and Mfipha (interview Makhosini Dlamini, 12 August 1970, Mbabane, Swaziland).

Mdimba, Mantintinti "never set foot alive" in the chiefdom he had been given, and it was only "during the time of the return of the princes" to neighbouring Velezezweni that his successor Mtfonga "was instructed to return" (64). In sum then, the story told to Gardiner is at least partially confirmed. In the area of conquest the Ngwane were, for most of Sobhuza's reign, a nation under arms. Little of the conquered territory was settled, and the bulk of the population clustered for security in military towns. Only in the final years of Sobhuza's reign did the situation begin to change. Men could now be spared to reinforce the south, and an administrative presence was gradually extended in the conquered zone. Imperceptibly a shift was taking place to a society less overtly parasitic, and one less obviously reliant on a naked use of force.

A conquering aristocracy was gradually sinking its roots, but it would be a generation or more before they were adequately secured. The situation was not helped by the absence of any real effort on the part of the Swazi leaders to assimilate the conquered groups. They were expected to provide levies of soldiers and tribute, but in the inner councils of the nation they had little voice at all (65). The contrast with the early phase of Swazi state formation could not be more complete. Then the Ngwane nucleus assimilated thoroughly with the groups they overcame. The Matsebula were soon providing the chief ritual wife of the king, and the Sotho Motsa his second insila (a blood brother who became the closest companion of the king

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(64) Interview Mpitha Dlamini, Gombolo Nkhosi, John Nhlabatsi, 8 May 1970, Mbelebeleni, Swaziland.

(65) Interview Mbhuduya Magagula.

for the rest of his life) (66). Likewise, within a generation, the Mndzebele were called upon to supply the chief wife of Ndvungunye, and the Nsibande the chief induna to his son (67). Finally, cultural indices tell an identical tale, with Sotho influences penetrating every sphere of Swazi life. Language, dress and marriage customs were all equally affected, while the particular position of the libandla (national council) and queen mother in Swazi society are often attributed to the same source (68).

Why did the Swazi respond so differently in the second phase of their expansion? One possible explanation may lie in the different needs of the respective periods of growth. In the 1770s, when the Ngwane nucleus entered southern Swaziland, they were small and vulnerable, and their first priority was to expand their nuclear core strength. A policy of intensive incorporation was accordingly pursued. The second phase of Swazi state formation imposed different imperatives. The era of 'primitive accumulation' was passed, and the Ngwane nucleus was sufficiently numerous to coerce the supply of tribute and military support without sharing the full privileges of citizenship. The same was true of the Ndebele when they incorporated the Holi caste from the Shona, but strengthening this tendency in the Swazi case was a factor peculiar to themselves. One of the influences facilitating rapid incorporation in the first period of Swazi state formation had been the

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(66) Kuper, Aristocracy, 58, 79-83 (especially 83), 114.

(67) Matsebula, History, 6-7.

(68) Bonner, 'State Formation', 15-16.

character of exogamy practised by the Ngwane. No Ngwane adult was allowed to marry into clans of his grandparents, with the result that they had to marry extensively into the clans of subject groups (69). Rapid acculturation inevitably followed, and it is one of the ironies of Swazi history that one of the most important customs to be adopted by the Swazi was the practice of preferential marriage within kin. It has been suggested that this evolved among the Sotho to cope with the less abundant natural resources of the highveld (particularly of stock), and to ensure that what little there was remained in the hands of one's kin (70). To the Swazi during the Mfecane this would have been a particularly useful device. Various references in Stuart and other places bemoan the scarcity of cattle at this time, owing to the frequency of Ndwandwe and Zulu raids (71), and it is likely that it was this, as much as anything else, which served to keep cattle "concentrated largely in kraals of the national leaders" (72).

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- (69) This seems clear from the absence of similar marriage practices among all other Nguni and Tsonga groups, A.T. Bryant, The Zulu People as they were before the White Man Came, (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 581-5; H. A. Junod, The Life of a South African Tribe, (2 Vols, Neuchatel, 1912), Vol. I, 221-248; E. Preston-Whyte, 'Kinship and Marriage', in Hammond-Tooke, Peoples, 192-3, 205, 208-9.
- (70) Preston-Whyte, 'Kinship', 206; Sansom, 'Economic Systems', 153. For Sotho sentiments about the circulation of cattle and cross cousin marriage see for example A. Kuper, 'The Social Structure of the Sotho speaking peoples of Southern Africa', Part II, Africa, 45, 2, (1975) 144.
- (71) S.P., 30091, 12, Mabola, 25 Nov. 1898; ibid, 12, Mgoqo, 19 Nov. 1898; ibid, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 25 Nov. 1898, 104; A. Mersensky, Erinnerungen aus dem Missionsleben in Transvaal, 1859-1882, (Berlin, 1899), 9.
- (72) Kuper, Aristocracy, 151.

The net result was the political and economic stratification of Swazi society in the second phase of Swazi expansion. Whereas the earlier period of growth had seen the rapid assimilation of the conquered group, the very extent of that assimilation meant that in future it was at least partly ruled out. Once cousin could marry cousin amongst the intruding Ngwane, and kin could marry kin, the need to recruit wives from the conquered was correspondingly diminished, and so long as such exchanges were uncommon, political and other barriers remained high. These, it is true, were neither permanent nor impermeable. The marriage of matrilateral cross cousins is much more flexible than its patrilateral parallel variant which fixes genealogical relationships in a virtually unchanging rhythm (73). The Swazi moreover marry their classificatory cross cousins and not their actual mother's brother's daughters, and have preferential marriages with a variety of other kin (74). Finally, a more general political expediency could easily involve an entirely different order of preference and led Mswati to exchange wives with both main Magagula chiefs (75). From the broader structural point of view nevertheless the relationships which developed with the conquered were decisively different from those which characterised the first phase of Swazi expansion. Although offering a more flexible range of marriage options than parallel and true cross cousin marriage the various Swazi marriage preferences still concentrated them within a restricted group of kin (76). Marrying a father's mother's daughter,

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(73) C. Levi-Strauss, The Elementary Structures of Kinship, (Boston, 1969) 451-2; R. Needham, Structure and Sentiment; A Test Case in Social Anthropology, (Chicago, 1962), 14-17.

(74) Kuper, Aristocracy, 95-61; Kuper, 'Kinship', 104-6.

(75) Interview Mbhuduya Magagula; interview Mankwempe Magagula.

(76) Needham, Structure, 14-17.

which was perhaps the most popular marriage preference, involved recreating the alliance that one's grandfather had made; while marrying a classificatory mother's brother's daughter, the next most popular Swazi marriage, meant doing the same thing with the alliance of one's own immediate father, while avoiding the competition for spouses which direct mother's brother's daughter marriage involved (see Figs. 1 and 2).

Wealth, if anything, tended to follow a still more restrictive route. Even where marriages were contracted outside the ruling group, thereby blurring political divisions between the aristocracy and the rest, property usually followed an entirely different circuit, and was continually funnelling back into the hands of the ruling group. For female relatives of the king inflated bridewealths were demanded, and this even extended to female captives attached to the royal house, whereas the king was at liberty to take wives from whomever wanted without any corresponding bridewealth being levied on himself (77). Nor did the transfer of resources simply end at that point. The heir to a chiefdom, and hence to most of its property in cattle, would automatically be the son of the chief's royal wife (78). He in turn would be subject to the typical marriage preferences which would encourage him to recreate ties with his mother's (royal) house, which thus

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(77) Kuper, Aristocracy, 151-2. The same goes for the aristocracy as a whole. As Kuper remarks, "cattle come to aristocrats rather than go from them on the marriage market", ibid, 152.

(78) Ibid, 94, 152.

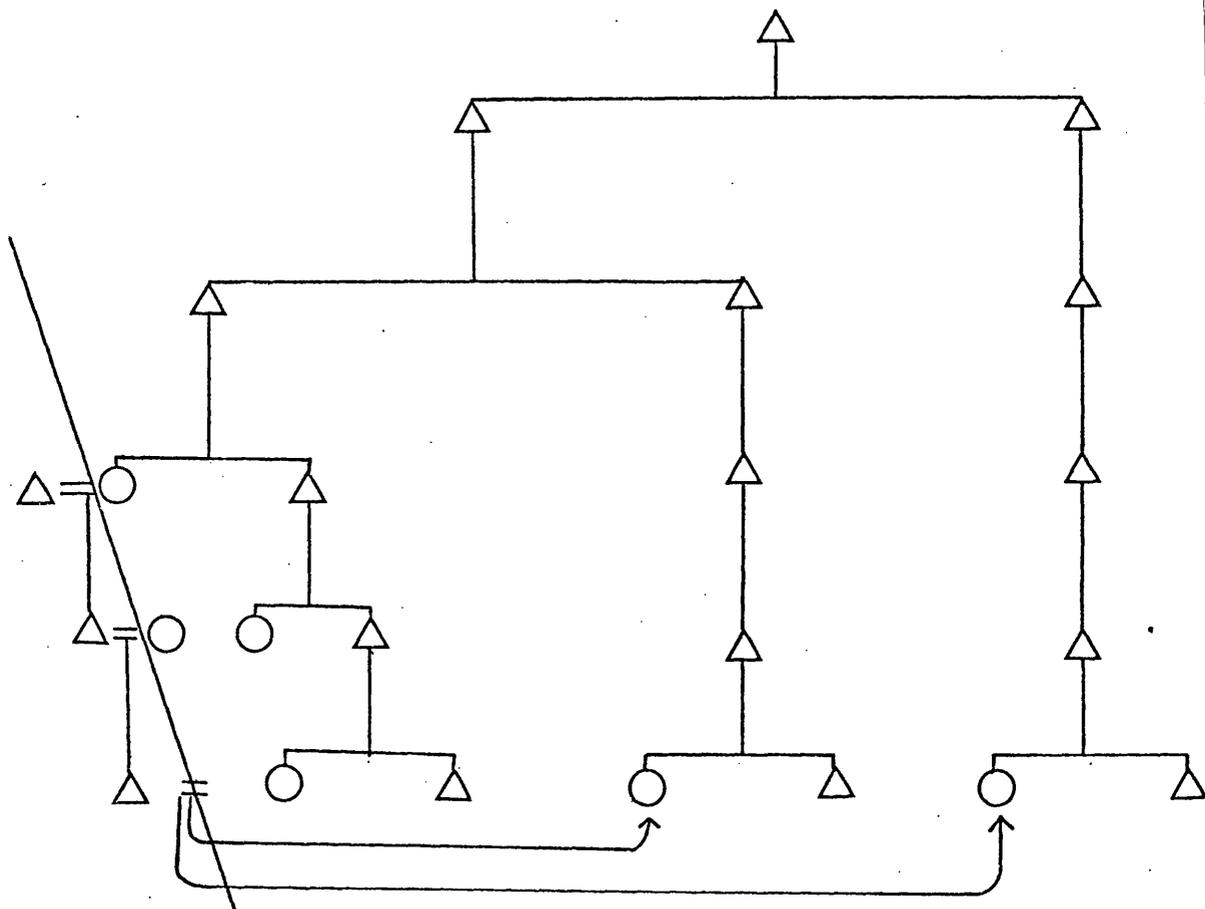
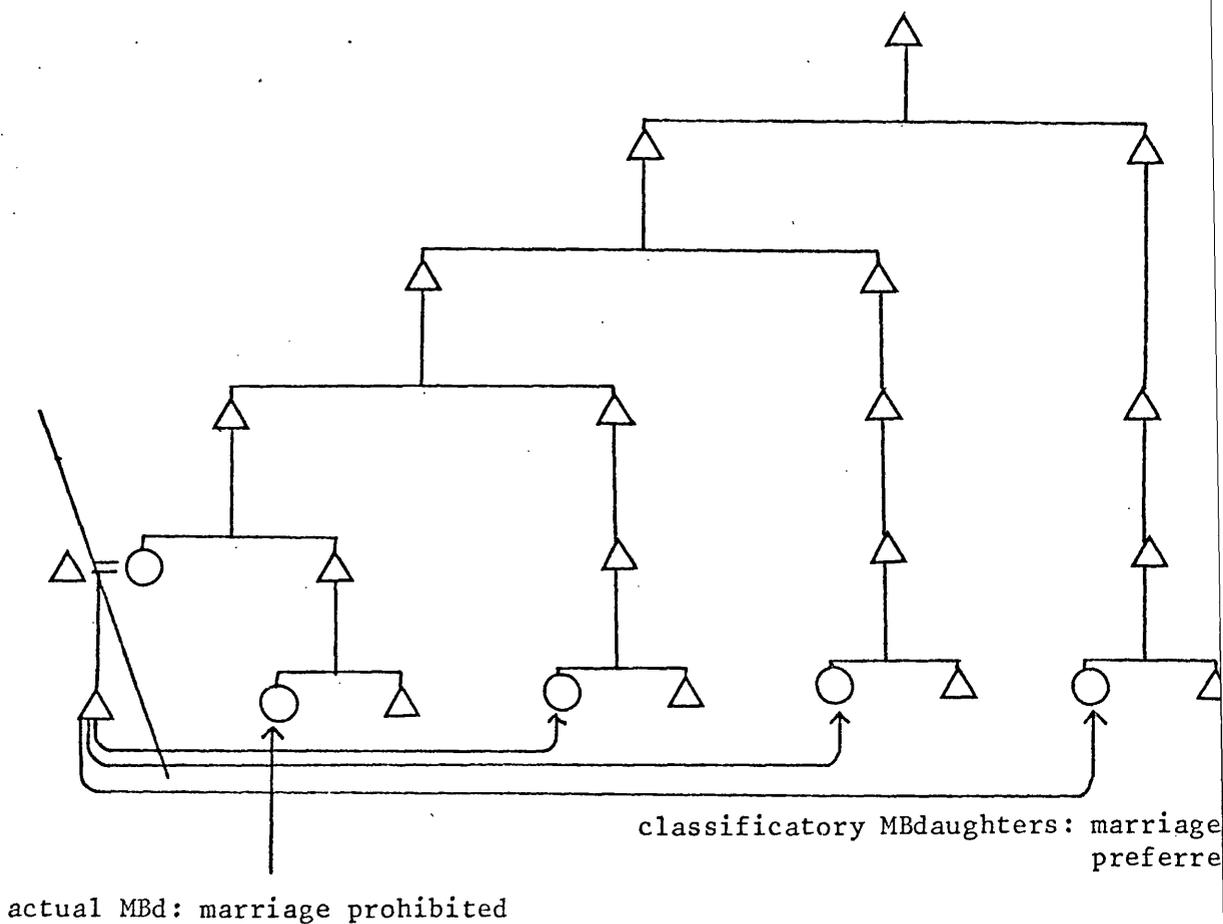


Figure 2. Marriage to classificatory mother's brother's daughter



channelled marriage payments in the same direction again (79). Small wonder then that nineteenth century Swaziland is remembered for its gross disparities in wealth. "In former days", Kuper remarks, "cattle were concentrated largely in the kraals of the national leaders", and the evidence of John Gama and Mnkonkoni leaves a similar impression (80). According to John Gama, "before the time when cattle began to be used for this purpose [i.e. lobola] it was normal practise to use goats, cattle only belonged to the great people", while Giba and Mnkonkoni talk of the small numbers of cattle used in such transactions, particularly during the reign of Sobhuza (81). The broad effect of these practises therefore was that while a degree of social and political mobility was permitted, differences of political and economic status were perpetuated, which persist to this day. In Sobhuza's time these were at their most intense. Marriages were confined politically within the dominant Ngwane, and spatially to their military encampments, while wealth tended to circulate in the same restricted group. The implications for political stability were of course profound. Political and cultural tensions ran high, and economic grievances bit deep, with the result that every crisis in the nation's affairs carried with it the threat of disintegration and collapse.

And there was no shortage of crises. No sooner had the dust of

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(79) Kuper also points out that, "in the early days 'lobola did not end' - a few cattle were paid after marriage, and demands continued throughout the marriage", ibid, 98.

(80) Ibid, 151.

(81) Webb and Wright, Stuart Archive, 138, John Gama. 18 Dec. 1898, 150-1, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 25 Nov. 1898.

the Mfecane begun to settle than Sobhuza was left to face his most dangerous adversary yet - the newly arisen power of Shaka in the south. His success in these encounters has puzzled many writers, and various hypotheses have been advanced. For Bryant, Swaziland's

unusual good fortune was in no wise due to the invincibility of its people, nor yet to the impregnability of its fastnesses. Neither of these conditions ever restrained or baffled Shaka ... the explanation? It is this - either Shaka died too soon, or Sobhuza, the Swazi king, was too wise to necessitate forceful submission. (82)

Ritter, however, takes a different view, and believes that Sobhuza's secret lay in the strength of his fortresses, which enabled him to withstand Zulu aggression (83). More recently still A.M. Dlamini has steered a middle course, and puts his success down to a combination of factors: Sobhuza's diplomatic marriages to the Zulu; the efficacy of his rain-making powers; the impregnability of his fortresses; and the short duration of Shaka's reign (84).

If we take Bryant's explanation as our starting point, it seems clear that the brevity of Shaka's reign was a major factor in Swazi survival. In twelve brief years even Shaka could only do so much, and for most of that time his priorities seem to have lain largely elsewhere. From the moment Zwibe was overwhelmed, Shaka spared scarcely a thought for the north. Apart from

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(82) Bryant, History, 1.

(83) E.A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu, (new reset edition, London, 1969), 269-71.

(84) Dlamini, 'Expansion', 1-7.

establishing control over the Tsonga and the trade to Delagoa Bay, and making an early assault on Soshangane, all his efforts were devoted to restoring order across the Tugela River, and establishing political and trading links with the Cape (85). Only in 1827 did his interest revive in the north, by which time he had only another year to live.

Bryant is therefore right to say that the brevity of Shaka's reign was of major importance to Swazi survival, but he still begs the question of why Shaka chose to concentrate on the south. In part, this may have been because of his vision of partitioning the eastern sea-board between British and Zulu spheres of influence, but it is likely that northern factors themselves helped to determine this emphasis. It can surely be no accident, for example, that Shaka's interest in the north re-awoke only after the final destruction of the Ndwandwe in October 1826 (86). In that bloody encounter Sikhunyane deployed an army of formidable proportions, and the prospect of meeting such a force in the broken terrain north of the Pongola must have acted as a powerful brake on expansion into those parts.

Sobhuza encouraged this natural hesitancy by adopting an appropriately submissive stance. He gave his daughters Lonkulumo and Mphandzeze in marriage to the Zulu king, and probably

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(85) P.R. Kirby, (ed) Andrew Smith and Natal: Documents relating to the early History of that Province, (Cape Town, 1955), 68 (extracts, apparently copies from Fynn's original notes). The army referred to here appears to have gone against Soshangane; see also Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 20, where Fynn talks of Soshangane being attacked three times.

(86) Below, 59-60.

became tributary to the Zulu at more or less the same time (87). Swazi sources are universally silent on this point, but there seems little doubt that it was so. Fynn makes this clear when he speaks of the Swazi as having "several times joined the Zulus and as often revolted" (88), and the same relationship is implied by Cetshwayo's history of the Zulu nation. According to Cetshwayo, Shaka periodically summoned subject chiefs to visit him, and it is presumably in this capacity that Sobhuza journeyed south at about this time (89). According to Swazi sources, it happened in the following fashion:

Again it was known throughout the land that he was a good ruler. Even Shaka the Zulu king heard of his virtues, and consequently there came messengers from Shaka to Somhlolo's royal residence (90). They came to invite Somhlolo to visit Shaka, so that Shaka could satisfy himself of his virtues, as he had heard of Somhlolo's admiration by other people. Some people did not favour the invitation, because they suspected that Shaka would murder their king. But Hlophe of Mahbongane favoured the invitation, confident that no harm would befall him. The Swazi then agreed to Hlophe's suggestion. Preparations were made and the king started for Zululand. When he neared Shaka's palace there was an abrupt change in the weather - a thunderstorm was brewing. The Zulu call that "the elephant rumbles". During the period of the thunderstorm Somhlolo arrived at Shaka's palace. Unfortunately Shaka had caught flu. After Maphokela and another man had returned from Shaka after reporting the arrival of the king, Shaka

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- (87) Dlamini, 'Expansion', 2; S.P., Notebook 30091, 84, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 25 Nov. 1898; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 22-3; Bryant, Olden Times, 321.
- (88) Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 153.
- (89) Natal Mercury, 15 March 1880, 'Cetshwayo's Story of the Zulu Nation', 3, (reprinted from MacMillan's Magazine).
- (90) Somhlolo, meaning 'prodigy' or 'wonder' is the name by which Sobhuza is popularly referred to. It alludes either to the circumstances of Sobhuza's birth or to Ndvungunye's reaction on first seeing him - interview Maboya Fakudze; interview Ndambi Mkhonta.

sent his induna and mother to greet the son of Ndvungunye and assure him of safety, also saying that he would perhaps see him tomorrow. Shaka's warriors were full of malice, and they danced and cried out that Shaka should give the command to kill Somhlolo. But the guests were given ten head of cattle and were assigned to a nearby homestead for lodging. Before they could undo the mats to prepare for sleep, Somhlolo told his escort that they should wait a moment. There was then a torrent in Zululand. Somhlolo asked his people to go out and look at the sky. On their return they told him that the king was fully clad. Then Somhlolo asked his escort if they had seen the warriors dancing in their anxiety to kill him, and if they thought that they would see the next daylight. He himself suggested that they had rather depart then and there. They went out. The cattle were resting. They touched one of them, and then they went off into the night. All night long they went on their way. Just before dawn they were about to cross the Pongola River. It was still raining, but not on the Ngwane party who were walking on dry land. Across the Pongola they spotted a hillock with caves. They got there, slaughtered one beast and undid their sleeping mats. Some flayed the beast while others prepared for sleep. Just then they looked across the river, in the direction which they had come, and they saw a great army there. The Zulu could see the cattle but could not readily see the Swazi. Suddenly, in the overflowing river there floated a big tree, which was being washed down by the flood. The anxious Zulu army began to throw assegais over the flooded river. All the assegais they threw did not cross the river, but were washed away. Then there came another regiment of Zulu. The latter urged the first regiment to cross the flooded river. They decided to attempt it. This was the first heavy rain experienced on Zulu soil after six years of drought (91). Unfortunately their courage led them to their death - all were washed away downstream and drowned. None managed to

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(91) If this is not just a dramatic embellishment it may refer to the drought which afflicted these parts c.1820, which finally broke in 1823, Hall, 'Dendroclimatology'.

reach the Swazi. Those who remained on the bank of the river remorsefully remarked that their fellow warriors were just chasing the mhlengas (a term of abuse). (92)

As the foregoing passage suggests, relations between the two rulers were not uniformly cordial, and either then or shortly after, they lapsed into open confrontation. It is in this period presumably that Shaka executed his Swazi wives on the pretext of their becoming pregnant (Sobhuza would never have visited him if it had happened before), and there are various indications of subsequent Zulu attacks (93). Bryant and Ritter mention an expedition being despatched in 1827 to attack the Swazi and Pedi, and it is presumably to this which Cetshwayo is referring when he talks of an expedition going north after the Mfondo campaign, of which a quarter went westward (presumably against the Pedi), and the remaining three quarters attacked the Swazi king (94). Finally, Fynn, as we have seen, refers to several Zulu invasions, as does the occasional fragment of Swazi oral tradition (95).

Shaka's success in these encounters is variously interpreted.

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- (92) Interview Maboya Fakudze. This version is confirmed in Dlamini, 'Expansion', 2-3, and by a further account of the same episode from Ndambi Mkhonta, with the addition that Shaka was restrained by his mother. Matsebula (History, 12) claims Shaka treated Sobhuza kindly and let him go in peace. For less complete references to Sobhuza's visit see, S.N.A., Vol. 1/4/1, Report of Acting S.N.A. 26 June 1878.
- (93) F.C., Vol. 37, No. 4(c), Forbes, 'History'; Kuper, Aristocracy, 14. S.P. Notebook 30091, 104, Giba and Mnkankoni, 25 Nov. 1898; Sw.A, Honey, 'History', 23; Dlamini, 'Expansion', 2.
- (94) Bryant, Olden Times, 604-5; Ritter, Shaka Zulu, 269-271; Natal Mercury, 15 March 1880, 'Cetshwayo's Story'.
- (95) For other references to Shaka's attacks see Merensky, Erinnerungen, 9; interview Joseph Dlamini.

Cetshwayo considers the Swazi to have been comprehensively beaten and compelled as a consequence to resume the payment of tribute, but Ritter and Fynn suggest a rather different result. According to Ritter the Swazi retired into their strongholds from which they could not be dislodged, while Fynn is quite definite that they were up in arms against the Zulu only a short while thereafter (96): at the very least it is clear that they were not completely overwhelmed. A clue to their success may lie in Shaka's continued southern preoccupations, for it is plain that he was not deploying his maximum strength. It would be unwise all the same to underrate the part played by Swazi resistance. Fynn makes this clear when he writes of the "several caves and rocky eminences [which] from the difficulty of access to them, have been resorted to by various tribes", and talks of "a tribe of Amaswas under Sopusas and others under Umboach [being] now the only remaining, the others being entirely destroyed by the repeated attacks of the Zulus" (97). So too does one of Stuart's informants when he relates how "Beja ka Maguzi [who] was eNgome, and Sobuza ka Ndungunya [who] was eSwazini, ahlula'd [avoided] TShaka by taking refuge in fortresses" (98). As much as anything else it was the strength of Swazi fortresses which kept the Zulu armies at bay.

The references to Beje and Mlotshwa (Umboach) are, in this context, particularly illuminating. One of the great myths of

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(96) Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 153; see also Bryant, Olden Times, 629.

(97) N.A., F.P., Part 2, No. 67.

(98) S.P., No. V, 48, Ngida alias Magambul, 7 Nov. 1904.

South African historiography is the supposed invincibility of Shaka's troops, and both of their cases help repudiate that claim. In open terrain, Shaka's armies reigned supreme, but against enemies who barricaded themselves in strongholds they had much less success. The resistance of Beje and Mlotshwa illustrates the point. Both occupied parts of Zululand (Beje the Ngome Forest; Mlotshwa a hill north of the Mkuze River), and both defied Shaka for astonishing lengths of time.

Mlotshwa's people, according to Fynn, had been

repeatedly attacked by the Zulus [and] have always succeeded in rising [?] the mountain with their cattle, having their corn generally there in readiness and having a sufficient supply of water, (99)

and it was only a surprise attack which found them temporarily unprovisioned after Sikhunyane's defeat, that finally forced them to give in (100). Beje if anything was even more successful. The attempt by the Umota regiment in 1823 to dislodge him was an utter fiasco, while the subsequent effort that followed the defeat of Sikhunyane in 1826 had even less success. On this occasion an entire regiment of two thousand men perished, and Beje was only brought to book the following year by the guns of the Natal traders (101). Boasting superior fortresses and a larger reservoir of men, Sobhuza could hardly

(99) N.A., F.P., Part 2, No. 67.

(100) Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 128.

(101) Bryant, Olden Times, 596-7; Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 128; L. Herrman, (ed.), Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa by Nathaniel Isaacs, (2 Vols. Cape Town, 1936), 158-9, 163-171, Vol. I.

do much worse. He held out against the numerous Zulu attacks, and was even on occasions able to deploy his ritual powers to good advantage by 'withholding' rain during drought, until his people were left in peace (102). Whether this would have been enough to resist a sustained assault will presumably never be known; suffice it to say that on the eve of Shaka's death Sobhuza was able to withstand the full might of the Zulu army sent against Soshangane, and was still sufficiently unbowed both to sever its communications and to harry its regiments as they straggled their way home (103).

During the army's absence against Soshangane great changes had occurred. With Shaka temporarily defenceless a conspiracy had been set afoot, involving his half-brothers Dingane and Mhlangala, together with his personal attendant Mbopa, and his aunt Mkabayi. Their plans went forward without a hitch, and on September 22 1828 Shaka was killed (104). The assassination ushered in a period of calm for the Swazi. Unsure of his position, Dingane sought to curry favour with the army by partially dispersing the regiments, and allowing them to marry (105). Sobhuza took

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(102) Dlamini, 'Expansion', 5-6. The one concrete reference given here is to the withholding of rain until Shaka had returned the famous rainmaker Malamlala Magagula (he had been captured during an invasion). My own information suggests this must have happened much later, probably during the reign of Mpande - interview Mbhuduya Magagula.

(103) Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 153. The version given here somewhat abbreviates the account in the manuscript of the diary (N.A., F.P., Fynn's Diary, 87-8); Bryant, Olden Times, 629.

(104) Herrman, Isaacs, Vol. I, 257; Bryant, Olden Times, 659-662.

(105) Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 162, 164, 174; S.P., MS 29392, Sucwatsha, 2 Jan. 1902; Bryant, Olden Times, 674.

advantage of the situation to consolidate and expand. It was probably in this period, that he pushed his boundaries in their furthest extent, reaching the Sabie River in the north and the Steenkampsberg in the west, and at the end of it the Swazi were greatly strengthened and revived (106). Thus by 1836 Swaziland was sufficiently prosperous for the third and least successful section of Dingane's army of conquest to return with six thousand cattle in train, while in 1839, when the Swazi were finally forced to confront the Zulu in open battle, they were sufficiently powerful and numerous to rout Dingane's troops (107). So much, then, for the Swazi messengers whom Gardiner interviewed in 1835 who spoke of a male population numbered in hundreds, and an almost total absence of stock! (108)

This interlude of tranquillity was relatively short lived. The principal bond uniting Shaka's Zululand had been its regimental

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(106) F.C., Vol. 37 No. 4(c), Forbes, 'History'; Sw.A., R.C.S. 454/40, Seme, 'Petition', 6; G.S. Preller (ed.) Dagboek van Louis Trigardt (1836-1838), (Bloemfontein, 1917), 215. H.C.M. Fourie, Amandebele van Fene Mahlangu en hun Religieus-Sociaal Leven, (Zwolle, 1921), 38-9; J.A. Winter, 'The history of Sekwati', Report of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, (1912), 331; Hunt, 'Bapedi', 288; S.N.IA, No. N, 118/79, G. Schotz to Clarke, 31 March 1879, 'Fragments of History of the Natives in the Lydenburg District'. For the region to the north of modern Swaziland Nachtigal gives the most detailed account of Sobhuza's conquests, mentioning the chiefdoms of the Mahokeni, the Baloi, the Tschisungule, the Ntimpani the Tsekololo, the Mongo, and the Langane, Nachtigal, 'Tagebuch', Vol. II, 238-241.

(107) Below, 63-4, 69-70.

(108) Gardiner, Narrative, 165-7.

system, and once this became weakened separatist tendencies re-emerged. The most striking example was the secession of the Qwabe chiefdom under Nqeto, which was made doubly serious by the Zulu army's failure to hunt them down (109). As the implications of this sunk in, other rumblings were heard, and Dingane was left with little alternative but to reinstate a more rigorous regime. All those suspected of secessionist leanings were rounded up and removed, and this was rapidly followed by a tightening of military discipline and a resumption of campaigning (110). Thus in 1832 a major expedition was sent against Mzilikazi, and this was followed in 1833 by an attack on Delagoa Bay (111).

The Swazi could not hope to remain immune from these events. In 1834 Dingane imposed a blockade on Swazi trade to Delagoa Bay (an event which prompted J.A. Nobré, the secretary of the Lourenço Marques Commercial Company, to write to Fynn to ask him to request Dingane "to open the port of Sabusse in order that we may buy cattle on account of that which he [Dingane] sends us dying at the arrival, in consequence of the long journey") (112), and by 1835, when Gardiner met the Swazi messengers at Mgundgundlovo, they were once again tributary to the Zulu (113). A few months later the situation took a further

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(109) Stuart and Malcolm, Diary, 165-6.

(110) Ibid, 164.

(111) Lye, 'Ndebele Kingdom', 91-2; G. Liesegang, 'Dingane's attack on Lourenço Marques in 1833', Journal of African History, X,4, (1969), 565-579.

(112) K.C.L., F.P., Fynn's letters, Vol. I., A.J. Noble to ..., 10 Oct. 1834, (Noble is a misprint for Nobré; personal communication, David Hedges).

(113) Gardiner, Narrative, 165-7.

turn for the worse. Eight years had elapsed since the last Zulu attack, and these had been put by the Swazi, to almost too good effect. They had become prosperous and strong, or so it appeared from outside, and they had done so on the very edge of Dingane's domains. They were in a sense, a living reproach, and one which he could not indefinitely ignore.

Dingane took up the challenge in 1836. His army went off, so Bryant tells us "with the firm intention of turning Swaziland into a second Natal", and other sources tell the same tale (114). "All the strength of the country ... was drawn out to fight against Sopusuza", wrote one American missionary, while Brownlee, who seems better informed than any other white, saw it as "an exterminating expedition against the Swazies" (115). Dingane's idea was to catch the Swazi in a trap. Three columns moved off in three separate directions, with instructions to reach their respective destinations at a prearranged time. From there they could converge on the Swazi, separating them from their strongholds and forcing them to fight. As so often happened with Dingane, the plan went awry. Ndlela and Dambuza reached their respective positions at the allotted time, but Mongo was delayed by swamps and forests along the coast, and arrived three days

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(114) Bryant, Olden Times, 321.

(115) D.M. Kotze (ed.), Letters of the American missionaries, 1835-1838, (Cape Town, 1950), 120; C. Brownlee, Reminiscences of kaffir Life and history, and other papers, (Lovedale, 1896), 86-90. The rest of the account is drawn from Brownlee.

late. Unaware of Mongo's predicament, Ndlela and Dambuza went ahead, and left a gaping hole on the third side of their trap through which Sobhuza gratefully slipped. Their quarry gone, Ndlela and Dambuza engaged in some desultory looting and then returned home. Mongo meanwhile put in an appearance, and in the absence of the others found himself under attack. Whatever happened in this engagement, it was unlikely he was drubbed, since he returned to Zululand shortly afterwards with six thousand cattle in tow. Dingane however was not the least bit appeased. Mongo's column was received in silence (acclamations being the norm), and Dingane went on to strip him of his wives and his property, and to reduce him to the ranks. Dingane had been humbled, and Mongo had to pay (116).

Once more one of the Mfecane's great survivors had survived, but at this point, according to Bryant, he died (117). As usual it is impossible to determine what Bryant's sources are, but in this case it is likely that he drew on Swazi traditions which say that Sobhuza died in the midst of a major Zulu attack. From histories I myself have collected this would appear to be correct, but it

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(116) Partial corroboration for Brownlee's account comes from an entry in Champion's journal dated 16 September, 1836, in which he refers to the under captains and dependents recently killed for their tardiness in the war against Sobhuza (Missionary Herald, Vol. for 1838), and from a portrait in Gardiner's book which depicts Jojo being tried for his poor leadership in battle, (Gardiner, Narrative, 50). Jojo was Mongo's military name (Brownlee, Reminiscences, 89). In the text Gardiner claims that this was for poor leadership against Mzilikazi, (Narrative, 48-9), but the caption that Samuelson gives the same picture is explicitly for poor leadership against the Swazi, R.C. Samuelson, Long, Long ago, (Durban, 1929), 8th illustration between 144-145.

(117) Bryant, Olden Times, 322.

seems far more plausible to place Sobhuza's death during the invasion of 1839, rather than that of 1836 (118). Allison's account is consistent with this, and the timing of Mswati's circumcision supports the later date. Mswati is widely reported to have been in his teens on the death of his father, and he is known to have been circumcised in 1845. Since he was at most seventeen or eighteen at the time of his circumcision, this would have left him an unlikely nine or ten years old if Sobhuza had died in 1836, or a much more probable thirteen if Sobhuza had died in 1839 (119).

Bryant's dating of Sobhuza's death has implications for other parts of his narrative, for among its repercussions he sees a slackening of central authority, and the raiding of Zulu cattle by undisciplined border chiefs (120). Raiding of some sort certainly took place (121), but it is more likely to have been because of mounting scepticism among the Swazi about the strength of Zulu arms, and because of the extensive losses of cattle sustained the previous year. Reprisals soon followed, but did little to dispel the impression they had formed. The Zulu party

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- (118) Interview Loncayi Hlophe; interview Ndambi Mkhonta. Because of the turmoil Sobhuza's body lay at Dlangeni for some considerable time, before being transferred to Embilaneni (interview Msebenzi Gama). Sokhukhuza apparently kept the news from the regiments for some while so as not to lower their morale (interview Loncayi Hlophe).
- (119) Kuper, Aristocracy, 15; Sw.A., R.C.S. 454/40, Seme, 'Petition', 5; G.P., File IV B (Swazis), 1158, 1163-4, 1167 and especially 1172.
- (120) Bryant, Olden Times, 322.
- (121) J. Bird (ed.), The annals of Natal. 1495 to 1845, (2 Vols., Pietermaritzburg, 1888), Vol. I, 377 (Statement respecting Dingaan by William Wood).

charged with the recovery of the cattle proved helpless when the Swazi took refuge in a mountain, and Dingane had to summon the support of traders from Natal to get them dislodged. William Wood, who was a member of this party, leaves an account of what followed. The Swazi had apparently drawn themselves up on the brow of a hill immediately over and commanding a natural cavern in which they had stowed the stolen cattle, and from which they had defied Dingane's soldiers for several days. The guns of the traders soon made them change their minds. The Swazi were already aware from the Portuguese of the damage these could do, and promptly agreed to surrender all the stock in their possession. The offer was graciously accepted, and the cattle changed hands, after which the Zulu and their allies somewhat tamely retired (122).

Sobhuza by this stage could consider himself relatively content. The Zulu had shown themselves incapable of seriously threatening Swazi security, and on the evidence of the most recent encounter a spirit of slackness and irresolution was spreading through their ranks. Within the year moreover Dingane was to suffer a shattering defeat at Blood River at the hands of the Boers, which depleted Zulu manpower and further sapped their morale. Ironically, it was precisely this engagement which put the Swazi in their worst predicament yet. In the past the Zulu kings had made no attempt to exercise direct political control beyond about eighty miles of their capitals, after which they either raided and depopulated, or enforced the payment of tribute. Sobhuza had

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(122) Ibid, 377-8.

experienced both these practices, but had been shielded by the strength of his strongholds, and the short duration of Zulu raids. The defeat at Blood River now promised to alter all that. In terms of the peace, Dingane had agreed to withdraw from the territory south of the Black Mfolozi (123). At the same time, like the Boers, he regarded it as no more than a temporary lull. New hostilities would come, or so Dingane thought, and for these he proposed to abandon southern Zululand and to expand across the Pongola (124). Consequently, whether it be peace or be war Dingane's attention had fastened on the north, and on the final extinction of Swazi autonomy.

Dingane disguised his intentions in an ingenious way. In an unpublished clause of the Blood River treaty, Dingane had agreed to tunga, that is, to sew headrings on all his soldiers (125). The reason for the demand was to disband his standing army, since the headring conferred the right to marry and settle down. It was this provision that Dingane turned to unexpected use. According to Ndukwane, who was one of Stuart's informants,

his secret purpose [in this] was to continue to defy the power he pretended formally to have tendered his submission to. Dingane always felt that he had and could ahlula [overcome] the Boers. He never really feared them. What he really wanted was time and opportunity to increase his fighting forces. (126)

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(123) G.S. Preller, Voortrekker Wetgewing: notule van die Natalse Volksraad, 1839-45, (Pretoria, 1924), 2.

(124) S.P., Mss. Stuart, 1.09, 138-9, 151-2, Evidence of Ndukwane, 15 Sept. 1900.

(125) Ibid, 151.

(126) S.P., Mss. Stuart, 1.09, 152, Ndukwane, 15 Sept. 1900.

Elsewhere Ndukwana explained further, recalling that,

Dingane's object was to occupy two countries [ak'izizwe esibili i.e. Zululand and Swaziland] so that although the Boers attacked and succeeded in one country, Dingane could still defend and hold the other, and, in order to occupy this other country it was necessary to cause an extra number of men to marry in order to populate and hold the proposed state. (127)

Yet misfortune continued to dog Dingane's every step. Expecting the Swazi to adhere to their traditional pattern of warfare, he only used four of his regiments to carry out the mission (128). The orders they were given were also limited in scope: they were to build a military village at Lubuya near the sources of the Ingwavuma, but were otherwise to avoid any military clash (129). On previous experience this should have presented no problem, but this prelude to settlement was no normal event. Certainly the Swazi themselves were under no such illusions, and took unprecedented steps to drive the Zulu out. According to one of Stuart's informants, "the whole country rose to a man, including the abalondokozi kaSobuza", as they went to evict the Zulu (130), and the ensuing battle of Lubuya is justly famed in Swazi tradition. Of the many acts of individual heroism still recounted today perhaps the most famous is that of Dambuza Lukhele.

(127) Ibid, 138.

(128) Bryant, Olden Times, 324. Bryant refers to four regiments; Stuart's informants name three, the Mbelebele, the Imkulutshane and the Nomdayana, S.P., Mss. Stuart, 1.09, 152, Ndukwana; ibid, 29, Evidence of Mkando, 11 June 1902, but according to Mpande's testimony to the Volksraad Bryant seems to be right, Bird, Annals, Vol. I, 537, Minutes of Volksraad, 15 Oct. 1839.

(129) South African Commercial Advertiser, 21 Dec. 1839, 2; Kuper, Aristocracy, 14, note 2; S.P., Mss. Stuart, 1.09, 152, Ndukwana, 15 Sept. 1900.

(130) Ibid.

According to Ndambi Mkhonta,

One defect or mistake made in that war was the division of the warriors. A major portion of the Swazi force attacked from above the hills, while a comparatively minor portion attacked at the foothills. Unfortunately the smaller groups of Swazi warriors met the major groups of Zulu warriors. It was in this smaller group that Dambuza showed his valour and discretion before he fell. He had realised that they were already doomed, but before he fell he was prepared to play his part, which he did. The advantage Dambuza had was the fluency of the Zulu tongue. In the evenings he used to steal into the Zulu camp and meet the war officer, like one of their warriors. The next moment Dambuza would be heard, "Ye Dambuza", as he struck a surprise blow at the unwary Zulu officer and stabbed him. Then off he would bolt. Later Dambuza hid in a cave fortress at the Mkhondvo River. But the Zulu were not satisfied until they had killed him. They followed him to the fortress. There he stabbed and killed many warriors before one of them got him. One got away from the cave and hit him with a stone. He wearily continued to stab them, but his strength ebbed and he could no longer stand it. Then he gave his spear to a woman (even women were hidden there), and she bravely played her part in blocking the entrance and killing the Zulu warriors. They nearly gave up until Dambuza finally yielded. Just before they stabbed him he told them not to kill him in the cave, and agreed to come out. As he emerged they still feared, but he was stingless and they killed him. (131)

The main force of the Swazi nevertheless triumphed. Led by Mngayi Fakudze, they fought the Zulu to a standstill, so that by the end of the day two of Dingane's regiments lay dead in the field (132). For the time being at any rate the occupation

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(131) Interview Ndambi Mkhonta; see also interview Lukhele and Ngota Nkambule.

(132) Bryant, Olden Times, 324; P.A.W. Cook, 'History and Izibongo of the Swazi Chiefs', African Studies, V (1931), 182; Bird, Annals, Vol. I, 537, 539, Minutes of Volksraad, 15 October 1839.

had been blocked.

The defeat at Lubuya marks the second stage of Dingane's fall. As a result, he was obliged to hurry off two more regiments into Swaziland, and to summon the people of his half-brother Mpande to help colonise the north (133). Mpande was understandably suspicious. The bulk of his support was concentrated in the south, and would, if Dingane's order were obeyed, be scattered far and wide. Mpande therefore stalled, which in turn served to crystallise Dingane's suspicions about his brother, and led him to consider a plot against his life. Once this had leaked out Mpande had no option but flight, and he had little trouble in persuading his supporters to follow suit (134). Dingane was already unpopular from his long string of defeats, and was now doubly so among those he proposed to resettle in the north. Consequently, when Mpande crossed over to the Boers on the other side of the Tugela, he did so with a following of seventeen thousand or more (135). The Zulu nation was now divided in two.

Mpande's flight put paid to any thoughts Dingane may have had of colonising southern Swaziland. Fearing an attack from the south he recalled the regiments he had despatched against Sobhuza, and shifted himself and his capital to a site further

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(133) South African Commercial Advertiser, 21 Dec. 1839; Bryant, Olden Times, 324; Bird, Annals, Vol. I, 536-8, Minutes of Volksraad, 15 Oct. 1839.

(134) Ibid.

(135) A. Delegorgue, Voyage dans l'Afrique australe notamment dans le territoire de Natal, dans celui des Caffres, Amazoulous et Makatisses jusqu'au 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843 & 1844, (2 Vols, Paris, 1847), Vol. I, 166.

north (136). There for a time matters stood. Mpande was viewed with suspicion by the trekkers, who feared a Zulu plot, and it was some time before they appreciated the extent of the rift. Once they did they proposed a joint invasion of Zululand, which finally got underway in January 1840. As it turned out, Mpande's army had little need of Boer support. For much of the time the trekkers simply sat on the sidelines and let Mpande's army fight, and at the decisive battle of Maqonqo only Mpande was involved (137). Thereafter Dingane's reign drew rapidly to a close. With diminishing forces he fled to Esankoleni, just to the north of the Pongola, in the dense Hlathikhulu bush. There a Swazi patrol under Sonyezane Dlamini was soon told of his presence by the Nyawo regent in whose territory Esankoleni lay. On receipt of the information Sonyezane moved south with his forces, to find Dingane temporarily undefended by his few remaining troops. With the Nyawo in support Sonyezane immediately siezed on this advantage, and Dingane was killed by Silevana Nyawo, the brother of the acting Nyawo chief.

By this stage Sobhuza had already died, but not before taking another policy initiative which directly bore on the way Dingane died. One night, shortly before his death, Sobhuza is supposed

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(136) South African Commercial Advertiser, 21 Dec. 1839; Bird, Annals, Vol. I, 536-8, Minutes of Volksraad, 15 Oct. 1839.

(137) J.J. Guy, 'Some Aspects of the History of the Zulu kingdom', paper presented at the History Workshop, Gaborone, Botswana, Sept., 1973, 9.

(138) H.C. Lugg, Historic Natal and Zululand, (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 163-4; Bryant, Olden Times, 325-6; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 27; J.Y. Gibson, The story of the Zulus, (London, 1911), 90; G.P., File II (iii), 519.

to have had a vision. He dreamed, so he told his counsellors, of white-skinned people with hair like the tails of cattle who would arrive in his country bringing two things; umculu (a scroll or book) and indilingu (a round piece of metal or money). Sobhuza advised his people to accept the book (the Bible) but to refuse the money, and warned them never to harm these white people, since if they did their country would be destroyed, and they would disappear as a nation (139). In detail the story is probably apocryphal, but it may give some idea of the importance that the approach of the white frontier came to hold for Sobhuza in the latter years of his life. At a relatively early stage Sobhuza had recognised the potential value of firearms, and had enlisted Portuguese support in an internal dispute (140). In the mid 1830s (probably in 1834) he went one step further and sent emissaries to the Wesleyan missionaries at Kuruman, with a request that missionaries be sent to minister to his people (141). The missionaries did not arrive until

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- (139) Matsebula, History, 13 (from which this is taken more or less verbatim); Dlamini, 'Expansion', 6; interview Mandanda Mtetwa, 13 March 1970.
- (140) Matsebula, History, 12; M.P., MS 1478, Miller, 'Short History', 10-11. According to Miller this conflict was with Moya Magagula, a son of Mhlangala, and took place some while after the Magagula defeat. Moya is presumably Moyeni who was only a distant relative of Mhlangala, and the conflict in question must have been during Sobhuza's initial campaign of conquest (above, 41). Sobhuza was also apparently aided by 'Magwamba' levies raised by the Portuguese during other battles in this period, G.S. Preller (ed.), Dagboek, 359.
- (141) B. Shaw, Memorials of South Africa, (London, 1840), 262; W.M.M.S., South Africa XII, Bechuanaland, 1838-57, 1844, 10, Report by J. Allison, 15 Aug. 1844. Sobhuza also made overtures of alliance to the southern Sotho and in particular Moroko, Merensky, Erinnerungen, 9.

1844, five years after Sobhuza's death, but the use to which they were put probably conformed to his ideas. Allison, the party's leader, was offered a site deep in the south with the aim of creating a missionary buffer against the Zulu, and he was further encouraged to proselytise around the headwaters of the Pongola where the Swazi and Zulu were competing for control (142). The desire for an insurance against the Zulu which marks Sobhuza's dealings with the missionaries is also characteristic of his dealings with the Boers. After the battle of Blood River an embassy was sent to seal an alliance with the Voortrekkers, and the same policy was continued in the months after Sobhuza's death (143). Even before Mpande's invasion got under way in January 1840 Swazi envoys visited Pretorius with a pledge of support, and together with Jobe and Matiwane were given the task of containing Dingane in the north-west (144). In the event Dingane fled north-east and Pretorius made it a condition of future cooperation that the Swazi either deliver Dingane alive or bring in his head (145). The Swazi evidently complied.

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- (142) W.M.M.S., S. Africa, XII Bechuanaland, 1838-57, 1844, Report by Allison, 15 Aug. 1844; Natal Witness, 18 Oct. 1846, extract letter from Allison to Rev. Richards, n.d.
- (143) Bird, Annals, Vol. I, 375, D.B. Bezuidenhout, 'The Pioneer's Narrative'.
- (144) South African Commercial Advertiser, 28 March 1840, extract letter dated 3 Feb. 1840 from Port Natal; Bird, Annals, Vol. I, 579, 580-1, 'Journal of the commando under the chief commandant, Andries Pretorius, against Dingaan.' According to G.S. Preller, Voortrekkermense, (6 vols., Cape Town, 1918-1938), I, 59, note 110 the Sobhuza here referred to is not the Swazi one, but I have seen no evidence to support this. In fact Preller seems to contradict himself on this point elsewhere, G.S. Preller, Andries Pretorius: Lewensbeskrywing van die Voortrekker kommandant-general, (Johannesburg, 1937), 111.
- (145) Bird, Annals, I, 375. Bezuidenhout, 'Narrative', M.W. Pretorius, Beschieden, 10-11; Preller, Voortrekkermense, I, 295, 'Losse mededeling Van J.Z. Uijs.

After Sonyezane had assisted in the killing of Dingane, Carel Trigardt, who had just sailed up the Maputu River, was summoned to view Dingane's corpse (146). Then, scarcely had the commandos returned than another Swazi party arrived bearing the scalp of the former king together with the ornaments from his body (147). Mpande and his captains were called on to identify these remains, and once they had satisfied themselves they were Dingane's the Volksraad concluded a treaty of friendship with the Swazi and sent them back to Swaziland with a present of twenty head of cattle (148). Another major plank of Swazi foreign policy had been tentatively set in place.

In conclusion, how does one assess Sobhuza's reign? Sobhuza once described himself as "only a broom to sweep the way for something better", and in one sense he was correct (149). When he died Swaziland was still riven by numerous divisions, and it was only Mswati who bridged them to create an integrated state. Similarly, in combating the Zulu or in his relations with whites Sobhuza had never come up with a lasting solution, and it was left to Mswati's diplomacy to secure protection from them both. Nevertheless, as an epitaph to Sobhuza it is one-sided and unjust. From his contested succession with his brother Nkwekazi

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(146) Preller, Voortrekkermense, II, 17-19, Herinneringe van Karel Trichardt. Preller Voortrekkermense, I, B1 note (iii).

(147) Preller, Voortrekkermense, I, B1 note (iii); ibid, III, 105, Herinneringe Van I.J. Breytenbach; ibid, I, 295, J.Z. Uijs; ibid, IV, 103-4, S.W. Burger Sr. Burger gives a list of these ornaments and says that Dingane's head was in a decomposed state.

(148) Ibid, III, 105, I.J. Breytenbach; ibid, V, 134-5, Herinneringe Van H.H. Hattingh.

(149) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1158.

until the Zulu invasion during which he died Sobhuza showed himself to be one of the Mfecane's great survivors, which was undoubtedly the quality most demanded of the times. More importantly it was he who laid the foundations of modern Swaziland. Its administration might be sketchy and its settlements sparse, but its basic structure and composition can be traced back to him. In the end, then, modern Swaziland must be seen as Sobhuza's creation, and one needs look no further than this for a lasting monument to his reign.

## CHAPTER III

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE SWAZI STATE -  
 ADMINISTRATIVE RE-ORGANISATION AND  
 ZULU ATTACKS, 1839-1852

The heir apparent was Mswati, a young boy of thirteen (1). On purely constitutional grounds he had an almost watertight claim. His mother, Thandile, was regarded as Sobhuza's chief wife, and he himself did not suffer from any obvious disabilities, like a younger full brother or a disabled right hand (2). His succession for all that was controversial and stormy, and he had to ride out a series of challenges in the first decade of his reign. When considered against the particular history of this area, and 'Bantu speaking' succession practices in general, this should not perhaps be a cause for much surprise. In African societies throughout southern Africa, succession laws are not as fixed or readily interpretable as have often been assumed. Among the Rolong, for example, Comaroff shows how succession laws can be manipulated to the point of even ousting established chiefs, and how custom can then be retrospectively re-interpreted to tally with that claim (3). The Swazi have not

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(1) Above, 65.

(2) As for example was claimed in the cases of Magudlela and Ndlela (below). Thandile had been recognised as chief wife ever since her marriage to Sobhuza, G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1158; 'History', 25; Kuper, 'Primitive Nation', 343. Matsebula, History, 11; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 25; interview Maboya Fakudze. Mswati did have a sister Mzamose as well as an elder brother named Nzimandze who had died in childbirth - Kuper, Aristocracy, 14; Matsebula, History, 14; interview Maboya Fakudze.

(3) J.L. Comaroff, 'Rules and Rulers: political processes in a Tswana chiefdom', Paper presented to the University of the Witwatersrand, African Studies Institute, African Studies Seminar, Sept. 1975, 1-27.

usually gone to such lengths, but on occasions were not above ignoring old principles and manufacturing new ones to put in their place. Thus one hears of Magudlela being excluded from the succession because he was left-handed, and Ndlela being overlooked because he had a younger full brother, both of which have a suspiciously retrospective ring, while the controversies surrounding the succession of Sobhuza suggest that even he did not possess a generally acceptable claim (4).

With succession laws honoured as much in the breach as in the observance, Mswati could hardly expect his own elevation to be completely trouble free, and the chances of that were made all the more slender by the actions of his father in the last years of his reign. Some while before he died Sobhuza had suffered a serious illness, during which he had been persuaded by his wife La Vumisa to alter the succession in favour of her own son Malambule (5). The case that she argued was brutally simple. Mswati's succession would entail a protracted minority, and would almost certainly encourage challenges from both within and without. Malambule on the other hand was a fully grown man, and had the necessary legitimacy to succeed his father by virtue

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(4) Interview Maboya Fakudze; interview Phuhlaphe Nsibande.

(5) G.P., File IV2 (Swazis), 1158. The source of Garden's information is apparently the Rev. James Allison who worked as a missionary among the Swazi between 1845 and 1847. Allison himself presumably drew on information supplied by adherents of Malambule with whom he fled after a dispute had blown up between Malambule and Mswati in 1846 (below, 96). It is therefore possible that this is a somewhat embellished account to justify Malambule's later conflict with Mswati. Even if that were so however, it probably still reflects the arguments going on at this time about the prospect of a minority.

of the Ndwandwe parentage of La Vumisa herself (6). Had La Vumisa succeeded, Mswati would no doubt have joined the ranks of Magudlela and others with some disqualifying disability. Sobhuza, however, had the good fortune to recover, and was obliged by elements hostile to Malambule to revoke his decision. For the moment La Vumisa was foiled, but she had nevertheless implanted the seeds of doubt in Sobhuza's mind. What if he did die soon, and what if Swaziland did fall apart during a protracted minority? As he brooded over these questions Sobhuza became more and more convinced that an older son would have to succeed, and nominated Thekwane and Fokoti in turn to take Mswati's place. His council however remained adamantly opposed. No further tinkering with the succession would henceforth be allowed, and Sobhuza was forced to live out his remaining years under the shadow of the minority that might follow his death (7).

Mswati duly succeeded, but the damage had been done. Princes were openly contemptuous of the "herd-boy king", and an atmosphere of suspicion grew up between Mswati and his brothers which was to poison their relations for the rest of his reign (8). An initial response of Mswati's regents may have been to accelerate

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(6) Garden refers to La Vumisa as "a relative of Zwide's" (ibid). For her first name see interview Mandlenkosi Nxumalo; interview Makhathi Mkhathshwa.

(7) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1158.

(8) Sw.A., R.C.S. 454/40, Seme, 'Petition', 5.

the dispersal of Mswati's brothers to the provinces (9). Nowadays this is seen as giving princes an outlet for their ambitions away from the centres of power, and in the context of the 1840s this need was especially acute (10). A large part of the Ngwane (11) were still concentrated around Ezulwini, as were the majority of the princes, and this left the new regime highly vulnerable to a princely coup d'etat. Dispersal however held its own disadvantages. Princes could easily become the vehicles of local grievances, and could in turn be the catalysts of regional revolts, which indeed was precisely what happened a few months after Sobhuza's death, when Fokoti launched a rebellion from a regional base in the south. The rebellion itself was a rather half baked affair. No support was forthcoming from the royal capitals at Ezulwini, and on the eve of the battle many southerners slipped away. Consequently when the two rival armies lined up against each other, Fokoti found himself decisively outnumbered, and his forces were decimated on the slopes of Mahamba hill (12).

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- (9) Above, 45 . The descendents of prince Ndwandwe for example speak of his settlement at Mbidlimbidlini, "during the time of the dispersal of the princes", interview Dlamini informants, 24 June 1970, Mbidlimbidlini, Swaziland. Hhobohhobo probably moved nearby at much the same time (interview Dlamini informants, 10 June 1970, Kuhlamukeni, Swaziland.
- (10) Kuper, Aristocracy, 57.
- (11) I use this term to describe the 'true Swazi' who had migrated north with Sobhuza, and who were still a class apart in the new Swazi state.
- (12) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1167; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 25; Sw.A., R.C.S. 454/40, Seme, 'Petition', 5; Kuper, Aristocracy, 15. Among the few who remained loyal to Fokoti were Mfipha and Ndlapu, both sons of Sobhuza, and Sihalahala Nxumalo. Of these Mfipha was killed and Ndlapu and Sihalahala fled (interview Makhosini Dlamini; interview Mandlenkosi Nxumalo).

The rebellion did nevertheless give the ruling party a jolt. Too many chiefdoms had initially sided with Fokoti, and it served notice of the development of regional cleavages in the enlarged Swazi state (13). The regents responded by embarking on the biggest single reordering of Swaziland's administration and political system to be seen since Sobhuza's migration north. The moving spirit was Thandile, who may well have patterned her reorganisation on the institutions of her father's Ndwandwe state (14). One part of this related to the ritualisation of the king (15), but her most important single reform was in the field of military-administrative organisation. Here she systematised earlier structures by creating nation-wide age regiments as a framework of Swaziland's military organisation, and by establishing parallel to this a far more extensive network of royal villages, to serve both as rallying points for regiments, and as centres for monitoring and supervising local political activities (16).

These reforms in themselves evoked a further wave of reaction, but before considering that, it is worth looking at the evolution of Swaziland's relations with Mpande, since these affected that reaction in a variety of ways. After Dingane's defeat Mpande had found himself in an almost identical position to that of his brother two years earlier. Large numbers of cattle had been

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(13) Below, 216-8.

(14) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 29; Kuper, Aristocracy, 15.

(15) Interview Makhathi Mkhathshwa; Hughes, Land Tenure, 43.

(16) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 29; Kuper, Aristocracy, 15, 124.

lost, which his subjects were anxious to replace, and Mpande was obliged to accept the same Black Mfolozi boundary which had driven his brother north. In addition there was the prospect of growing friction with the Boers. Refugees streamed across the border with their cattle, and every attempt at recovery risked an escalation into war. Hemmed in on the Mfolozi Mpande looked to the north, where the first people to catch his attention were the minor chiefdoms a little to the north-west. Sandwiched between the Zulu on the one side and the Swazi on the other, these had maintained a precarious quasi-independence, and Mpande now attacked them with a new determination and vigour (17). Beginning in 1842 with an attack on Langalibalele, the chiefdoms of Magonondo and Putile each suffered in turn, until Mpande had either exacted total submission, or forced their luckless inhabitants to flee to Natal (18). However, Mpande's long term objective was to gain a foothold further north. Towards the end of 1841 he asked the Swazi for permission to build a military village on the north side of the Pongola,

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- (17) Allison speaks of them as "professing a nominal allegiance to Panda and Mosuasi", W.M.M.S., South Africa XII Bechuanaland, 1838-57, Allison, 15 Aug. 1844, 19, and elsewhere as paying an "undefined sort of deference to Panda", G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1170. Messengers from Putile describe the relationship in similar terms, C.O., 179/5, Encl. in Encl. 2 in No. 119, statement by Pangasile, 21 Feb. 1848; ibid, Encl. in Encl. 6 in No. 119, message of 5 June 1848.
- (18) Natal Mercury, 22 March 1880, 'Cetshwayo's Story', 2; H.S. Pretorius and D.W. Kruger, (ed.), Voortrekker argiefstukke, (Pretoria, 1937), 127, A.T. Spies to A.W. Pretorius, 24 May 1841; W.M.M.S., South Africa XII, Bechuanaland, 1838-57, Allison, 15 Aug. 1844, 2-3; C.O., 179/5, Encl. in Encl. 2 in No. 119, statement by messengers from Magonondo's mother 21 Feb. 1848; ibid, Encl. in Encl. 2 in No. 119, statement by messengers from Putile, 5 June 1848.

and then when this was refused he approached the Natal Volksraad for permission to recover the cattle that the Swazi had taken from Dingane (19). The difficulty that Mpande anticipated in making this request was the alliance that existed between the Swazi and the Boers, but on that count at any rate he had little to fear. The Volksraad, it is true, did prohibit his expedition, but not out of a sense of obligation to their former allies in war. It was rather their own interests which they thought they could promote, and this they proceeded to do in the most cynical of ways. Dingane's cattle, they argued, were their's by right of conquest, and a commission was appointed to bring them back to Natal. If the Swazi seemed to behave honestly, the commissioners were told, they should be allowed to retain a portion of Dingane's cattle. If on the other hand they betrayed the least sign of duplicity, any concession of this kind should be instantly withdrawn. Lastly, if the Swazi turned out to be completely recalcitrant, they should be told that the Volksraad would "take into closer consideration whether to send a commando against him in conjunction with Panda" (20). All else failing, in other words, naked blackmail should be used.

The Swazi regents were now faced with an extremely delicate decision. No record exists of how many of Dingane's cattle the Swazi took, but it is highly unlikely that they amounted to very

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(19) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 152, unsigned letter to Natal Stad, 30 Dec. 1841; S.A.A.R. Natal I, (Cape Town, 1958) 128, Minutes of meeting 6 Jan. 1842, Art. 1; ibid, 141, Meeting of 22 Feb. 1842, Art. 4.

(20) Ibid, 128, Meeting of 6 Jan. 1842, Art. 1; ibid, 146, Meeting of 26 Feb. 1842, Art. 1.

much (21). A sizeable proportion would moreover have found their way into private hands, thus further reducing the numbers that entered the royal herds. Since Mpande would almost certainly inflate even the original numbers, the regents were faced with the prospect of either stripping the royal herds of cattle which had never been inducted, or of imposing a general levy on the population at large. Neither solution can have been particularly attractive. The royal herds were a trust which they dare not treat lightly, while a general levy in cattle would have put their authority under potentially intolerable strain (22). The regents were saved from this dilemma by the outbreak of war in Natal. Only a few days before the commission was due to depart, fighting broke out between the British garrison and the Boers, and further action was suspended until the conflict was resolved (23). After a period of stalemate the British ultimately won, and with that the Swazi position was completely transformed. Many Boers trekked back onto the highveld, where they were to become a further counter in Swaziland's struggle against the Zulu, when they eventually settled in the eastern Trans-vaal. As for the British, they pursued a far more consistent policy of restraint of Zulu ambitions than the Volksraad had done. As early as October 1842 Mpande sent to Major Smith in Natal informing him of the

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(21) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 28.

(22) The regents were not as seriously placed as Moshoeshoe when faced with the same problem, since the royal herds were not distributed under a mafisa (Swazi kusisa) system (Sanders Moshoeshoe, 296-7; Kuper, Aristocracy, 155-6). Coupled with unpopular administrative reforms however (below, 84) it would have brought discontent to a dangerous level.

(23) C.O. 48/223, Despatch no. 116, Encl. 3(c), W. Cowie to Captain Smith, 1 April 1842.

desire of some of Mswati's sub-chiefs to abandon their country, and implying that it might be necessary for him to go to their aid (24). Smith made his disapproval clear, and maintained the same attitude when Mpande made a further request to enter Swazi territory to recover Dingane's children and cattle (25). Despite the obvious importance Mpande attached to these projects, he heeded these warnings, and it was not until 1846 that he was finally able to engineer a situation which would enable him to intervene in Swazi affairs (26).

The crisis which gave Mpande his excuse was closely related to Fokoti's rebellion. This it will be recalled had prompted major administrative and political changes, and these in turn had strained relations between the royal capitals and the provinces. Implicit in the reform programme was an assault on local liberties, and the discontent that this engendered finally welled up in the confrontation witnessed by the Wesleyan missionary, Allison, and his two African preachers, in 1845-6. By this stage new grievances had been grafted on to old, the most important of which was the wave of attacks on regional chiefdoms which attended Mswati's circumcision. It was this it seems which finally spurred the provincial chiefs into action, and which led to their issuing an ultimatum to Mswati that any further depredations would be resisted by the chiefly hierarchy as a whole. The threat had an immediate, devastating impact.

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(24) C.O. 48/224, 136-7, Encl. in No. 201, Smith to Napier, 15 Oct. 1842.

(25) E.C.A., Vol. I, 15, Annexure I of meeting 2, statement by Mpande's messengers, 11 Feb. 1846.

(26) Ibid, 9, 15.

For a spell the royal capital was in the grip of panic, with some councillors even advising flight to Mswati's Portuguese friends in Lourenço Marques, and it was not until a series of concessions had been made by the royal party that a semblance of normality returned to Swaziland's affairs (27). What these concessions were is not recorded, but it is tempting to wonder whether we do not have here a partial explanation for the failure of the Swazi administrative and military system to attain the full rigour of its Zulu counterpart.

Superimposed on this pattern of 'chiefly' opposition to centralising policies can be detected a renewed conflict within the royal house, which may itself have played some part in encouraging the regional chiefs to be so vocal in their opposition to the royal party. Mswati had been formally installed as King in 1839 or 1840, in the aftermath of Fokoti's rebellion (28),

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(27) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 58-60, 1158; C.L., Methodist Archives, Minute Book of the Bechuana Methodist Meeting. Report of the Baraputse Mission, 1845. Allison it should be noted was only dimly aware of the wider ramifications of the dispute. He placed the blame for the rupture squarely on the last attack made by the royal party on a regional chiefdom. Yet there was clearly more to the dispute than this. On Allison's own admission, there was evidence of a growing estrangement between the two parties even before the circumcision ceremonies. Allison put this down to the simple capriciousness of the royal clique, but it seems certain that what he thought of as caprice was in fact the outward sign of a much deeper conflict of interest. The scale of the violence, and the bitterness it provoked seem both to confirm this view. In the absence of more explicit documentation one cannot say for certain what this conflict of interest was, but the general background of events just outlined, and the odium attaching to the royal clique suggest that it was the reforms initiated by them that were to blame.

(28) Kuper, Aristocracy, 15.

but since he was still young, the handling of affairs remained in the hands of his former regents. As late as 1844 when Allison visited Mswati, he could not speak officially with him because Mswati was as yet uncircumcised, and unfit to conduct public affairs, while policy, as Allison's general narrative of events makes clear, was still in the hands of his mother, Thandile, and of the senior regents, Malambule and Malunge (29). Mswati was circumcised some time in 1845, but whether he immediately assumed full control over affairs is far from clear, since even as late as July 1846 Mswati's eldest brother, Somcuba, was still designated in a treaty of cession between the Swazi and the Ohrigstad Boers as "ruling in place of the King", while Mswati merely figured as "captain" (30). What is certain though is that Mswati's circumcision did mark at least a beginning to his assumption of the full powers of kingship, and it is significantly from this time that new tensions began to emerge within the royal party. At the centre of these was Mswati's elder brother, Malambule, who like Mswati could boast a mother from the family of Zwide (31), and who had acted as a principal regent for the young king since Sobhuza's death. In the period following Mswati's circumcision Malambule and Mswati became progressively more estranged, until finally, in the

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(29) W.M.M.S., South Africa, XII Bechuanaland 1838-1857, J. Allison, 15 Aug. 1844, 10.

(30) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 233-4. Attention should however be drawn to an element of confusion in the treaty. This arises out of the conflicting designation of Mswati, who appears as "King" in the text but as "captain" in the signatures appended to the text. The description of Somcuba as "ruling in place of the king" also occurs in the signatures.

(31) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1158; above, 78, note 6.

latter part of 1845, a point of open rupture was reached. Exactly why the final breakdown occurred is contested. One source claims that hostilities started after Mswati uncovered a plot of Malambule's to kill him during a hunt (32). Others allege that they arose out of Malambule's refusal to surrender cattle to Mswati (33). But in either case the implications are much the same. Mswati was tiring of Malambule's tutelage, and Malambule was beginning to find the increase of the young king's authority too much to accept.

In the early stages of open confrontation Malambule pre-empted much of the diplomatic ground. He not only acquired the backing of Mpande, but even succeeded in manoeuvring the missionary Allison into an unwitting association with his cause (34). Following so soon on the heels of the confrontation with the regional chiefs, these new developments bristled with dangers for Mswati, for now there was a very real possibility that Malambule, at the head of a victorious Zulu army, might be installed in Mswati's place, or that a Zulu puppet state might be created in southern Swaziland. But Malambule did overlook one new power which had only just made its appearance in this area, and which had not as yet made any appreciable impact on the politics of the region. This was the settlement of the Ohrigstad Boers, which was established to the north of Swaziland

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(32) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 32.

(33) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1167; Natal Witness, 24 May 1850, Letter from Allison to Editor, 21 May 1850; Bryant, Olden Times, 326; Matsebula, History, 16.

(34) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1164; For a fuller account see Perkins, 'Missions', 95-104.

in August 1845. For Mswati, the appearance of this new power was an unlooked for piece of good fortune, and almost directly attempts were made by the royal party to obtain its support and co-operation (35). Initially their success was limited. At that stage the Swazi could offer little to the Ohrigstad authorities to compensate them for becoming embroiled in local disputes. Although the Swazi had some claim to the land on which the Ohrigstad community had settled, and were prepared to negotiate about it, Potgieter, the Commandant General, had already concluded an agreement with the Pedi chief Sekwati, in terms of which he had secured cession of the land for himself in return for the promise of Boer protection against the Swazi (36). To have obtained its cession from the Swazi would thus have been self-defeating, and would merely have duplicated the agreement with Sekwati for the dubious benefit of protecting the Swazi against Mpande.

Equally important in explaining Potgieter's brusque response was the support that the Sekwati agreement lent to his own internal position, at a time when this was coming increasingly under challenge from opponents within the community. The quarrel between Potgieter and his opponents had its roots in the dispute which had divided the Voortrekker communities from the time of

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- (35) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 227, Memorie aan Volksraad, 8 June 1846; E.C.A., I, Annexure I of meeting 2, statement by Mpande's messengers, 11 Feb. 1846.
- (36) Preller, Voortrekkermense, IV, 9, S.W. Burger Sr. The pressure that Sekwati had been under from Sobhuza is corroborated by Louis Trichardt, Preller, Dagboek, 21.

the Natal settlement and before. At its most visible level it was between the proponents of two opposing systems of government, the one of whom demanded a government in which all authority was lodged in a civilian and democratically elected Volksraad, and the other who wished to institute the autocratic and personalised government of individual military leaders (37). The Sekwati agreement was integral both to Potgieter's own internal predominance and to this concept of highly personalised government. Being personal and informal it not only accorded exactly with Potgieter's own ideas of good government, but also gave him a grip on an important branch of external affairs which his opponents found extremely difficult to loosen. This in turn had important consequences for the internal political struggle within Ohrigstad. In the past the domestic significance of the Sekwati agreement has been seen exclusively in terms of the personal title to Ohrigstad's land that it allegedly vested in Potgieter (38). As a factor in the internal power struggle in Ohrigstad however this has almost certainly been exaggerated (39). At least as important was the mediating role that the agreement conferred upon Potgieter in relations with the Pedi and

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(37) See for instance D.W.Kruger, 'Die Weg na die See', A.Y.B., 1938, I, (Cape Town, 1938), 96-7.

(38) See J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, The Native policy of the Voortrekkers, an essay in the history of the interior of South Africa- 1836-1858, (Cape Town, 1928), 57-60; F.A.F. Wichmann, 'Die Wordingsgeskiedenis van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek 1838-1860', A.Y.B., 1941, II, (Cape Town, 1941), 50-51; T.S. Van Rooyen, 'Die Verhouding tussen die Boere, Engelse en Naturelle in Die Geskiedenis van die Oos Transvaal tot 1882', A.Y.B., 1951, I, (Cape Town, 1951), 4-5.

(39) Potgieter for instance had to apply for a farm in Ohrigstad in the same way as anyone else, S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, (Cape Town, 1949), 15, Art. 5, 2 Aug. 1845.

associated groups, and the precedent that this set for other African communities to treat with the Republic through the same channels. In the environment in which the Ohrigstad community was situated, Potgieter's control over this key area of internal/external affairs was of major importance in the internal distribution of political power, because it allowed him an influential, if not decisive voice, in such varied matters as labour, trade, hunting and the enrolment of African auxiliaries against other black groups (40). Besides this, it also enabled him to enforce a particular economic orientation on the community as a whole. The hunter/raider/trader proclivities of Potgieter's adherents had been evident from the start, and these came into immediate conflict with the more pastoral inclinations of later immigrants from Natal. The division, it must be emphasised, was by no means absolute, and was a matter of emphasis as much as anything else, but it imposed a sufficiently different set of priorities at either end of the economic spectrum to promote

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(40) One complaint against Potgieter was that he was able to derive personal economic advantage from his position by appropriating the ivory sent in as tribute from neighbouring chiefs. Another was that he gave freedom of access to the English trader Hartley. The two are not generally related but a connection can be made. The Volksraad party objected to Hartley not so much because he was an Englishman (as is usually suggested) but because he was a trader who could market Potgieter's ivory and help consolidate his economic power. Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 227, Memorie aan Volksraad, 8 June 1846; 230, Bekendmaking, 19 Jan. 1846. For the importance of hunting and trading to the Ohrigstad settlement see F.J. Potgieter, 'Die Vestiging van die Blanke in Transvaal' (1837-1886)', A.Y.B., 1958, II (Cape Town, 1959), 39, 44, 48, 60, 84-7, 95, 145, 148. J. Stuart, De Hollandsche Afrikanen en hunne Republiek in Zuid-Afrika (Amsterdam, 1854), 210, 219, 225. Boer dependence on black auxiliaries in their tussles with other African groups is a constantly recurring theme in the history of the Transvaal. It would require a separate chapter to document this properly but for one example see below, 108, note 94.

continuing conflict over African affairs. To what extent this underlay competing political philosophies is difficult to say, but what is certain is that when combined with more specifically political rivalries it gave control over black/white relations a central position in the developing struggle.

The earliest Swazi overtures were thus a source of serious embarrassment to Potgieter. The Swazi could hardly have demanded much less than the Volksraad subsequently agreed to (110 head of cattle), and this Potgieter was neither willing nor able to pay. At the same time they also cast doubts on the validity of the community's title deeds, besides drawing attention to the existence of alternative African powers with whom his opponents could deal. Potgieter's reaction was to suppress all mention of the Swazi envoys who returned to Swaziland empty handed (41), but news of some sort eventually leaked out, and by the end of December 1845 the services of four free-booters from Ohrigstad had been secured for Swaziland's defence (42). One may judge the value of these efforts by their impact on Mswati's enemies. Until then neither Mpande nor Malambule seemed to have had any real idea of the role that Ohrigstad could play in the coming conflict. Now realization dawned, and a flurry of messages was sent out in an effort to make good the lapse. To the British Mpande protested about the Boer intrusion and requested some men be sent to him to counteract the advantage that Mswati had gained (43),

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(41) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 227, Memorie aan Volksraad, 8 June 1846.

(42) E.C.A., I, Annexure 1 of meeting 2, statement by Mpande's messengers, 11 Feb. 1846.

(43) Ibid.

while on the Boers he urged the desirability of evacuating unhealthy Ohrigstad for the more bracing climate of Swaziland, and of expelling the Swazi in the course of their move (44). Neither Natal nor Lydenburg responded to his messages. Each had an equally good reason for suspecting Mpande's motives, and each was deaf to his appeals (45).

The differences between Potgieter and his opponents gradually mounted in intensity as the Volksraad party became strengthened by an influx of new settlers from Natal in the early part of 1846 (46), and the Sekwati agreement soon emerged as one of the principal bones of contention between the two groups. Intent on wresting power from Potgieter, and on securing more respectable title deeds for the settlement, the Volksraad party now began to insist that the treaty be renegotiated in the name of the community as a whole, and that some payment be made to Sekwati in return for the land (47). Potgieter, not unnaturally was opposed to any such move (48), but by May 1846 the opposition was sufficiently strong to override his objections, and the half-caste, Doris Buys, was commissioned to enter into negotiations with Sekwati (49). The Buys negotiations are a typically murky

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(44) S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 27, Volksraad Notules, 20 Jan. 1846, 1st Resolution.

(45) Ibid; Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 227, Memorie aan Volksraad, 8 June 1846.

(46) Wichmann, 'Wordingsgeskiedenis', 53; Kruger, 'Weg', 98-99.

(47) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 227, Memorie aan Volksraad, 8 June 1846; 230, Bekendmaking, 19 June 1846.

(48) Ibid.

(49) S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 50, Eerste Volksraad Notules (hereafter E.V.R.), 15 May 1846, Art. I. It is possible that Potgieter tried to accommodate some of the Volksraad's demands before this. In the middle of March he agreed to summon Sekwati to Ohrigstad, but this could equally well have been for some other reason - ibid, 41, 18 March 1846, Art. 8.

episode in the early history of the eastern Transvaal. The degree to which Potgieter himself supported the mission (50), the affiliation of Buys at this time - he changed sides at least twice later on in the dispute (51) - and the extent to which Sekwati's response represents an attempt to exploit the Potgieter/Volksraad rift, are all equally blurred. All that is certain is that Buys's efforts proved abortive. Sekwati was as averse as Potgieter to renegotiation, and told Buys that since he had once given the land to Potgieter he could not sell it again (52). Consequently, whether by accident or design, Potgieter was able to maintain for a little longer the fiction that he personalised the authority of the Republic in its dealings with neighbouring blacks.

But nemesis, in the shape of the Volksraad/Swazi agreement of July 1846, was soon to overtake Potgieter. The 1846 agreement is doubly interesting for the historian as it not only illustrates the sort of factional inter-relationships that characterised Transvaal/Swazi politics at this time, but also provides an example of how an exaggerated concentration on white policies and motives in South African historiography has warped interpretations of historical events. The usual gloss given to the

(50) Above, note 49.

(51) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 252, Verklaring van (?), Maraba, 23 Jan. 1847; 253, Verklaring van Mapela, 26 Jan. 1847; 273, A.H. Potgieter to J.C. Klopper and J.F. Schutte, 5 June 1847; 295, Verklaring van I, 18 Jan. 1848; 308-9, Verklaring van Doris Buis (Buys), 4 Feb. 1848.

(52) S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 50, E.V.R., 15 May 1846, Art. I.

treaty is that the Volksraad party followed their rejection by Sekwati by redirecting their efforts to the Swazi, from whom they secured a massive cession of land, stretching between the Crocodile and Oliphants Rivers, in return for the payment of one hundred and ten head of cattle (53) (Map 7). It has occasionally been doubted that the appropriate Swazi authorities were consulted, or that its provisions were fully explained, but nobody has ever questioned that the initiative for the cession lay entirely with Boers, or that they were chief beneficiaries of the treaty (54). An examination of the evidence in the context of the Swazi politics of the period places both assumptions in doubt. It is commonly overlooked, for example, that it was a Swazi initiative that first acquainted Potgieter with the Swazi claim to Ohrigstad's land, and which first raised the question of cession. Potgieter suppressed the information, but by early June the Volksraad were also acquainted with the Swazi claim, and with Swazi willingness to cede (55). How this information reached them is unclear, but given the community's ignorance of even the most rudimentary facts about the politics of the region only four months earlier, it is at least possible that it was deliberately transmitted to them by the Swazi (56). The timing of the cession further reinforces this impression. The first

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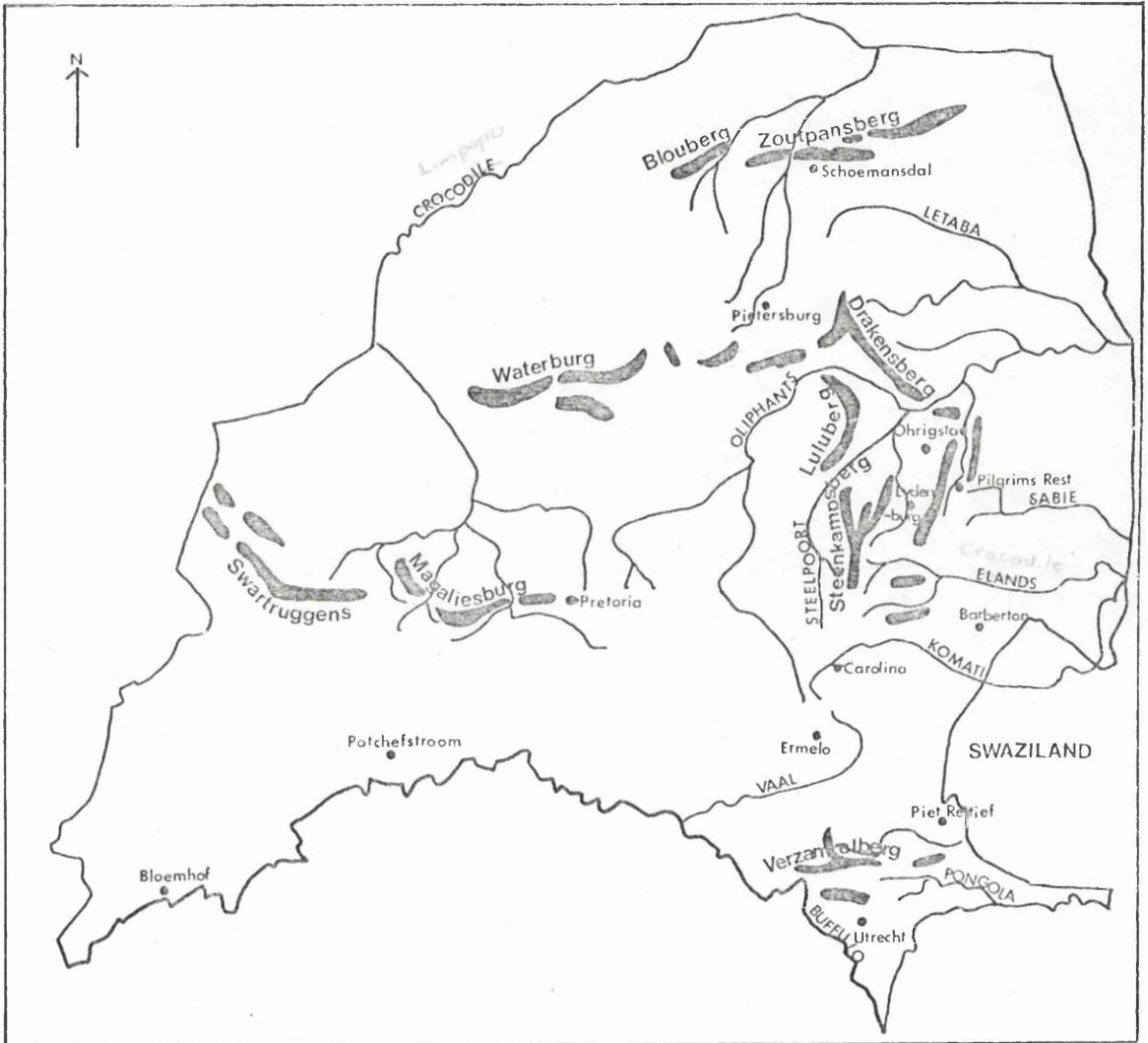
(53) For example Wichmann, 'Wordingsgeskiedenis', 51; Kruger, 'Weg', 100. For the text of the treaty see Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 233-234.

(54) For example Agar Hamilton, Native Policy, 61.

(55) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 227, Memorie aan Volksraad, 8 June 1846.

(56) One source of intelligence for the Swazi and Volksraad party alike would probably have been the four Boer free-booters who joined Mswati early in 1846. There was little love lost between them and Potgieter, as can be seen from Potgieter's denunciations of their activities early in 1847, C.O. 179/3, Encl. in Encl. in 87, Cutting from The Patriot, 23 April 1847.

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(Adapted from Potgieter, 'Vestiging', opposite 141.)

official mention of the Swazi offer, for example, coincides exactly with important new developments in Swaziland. By mid-June, Malambule had secured the support of Mpande, and was ready to take active steps in his campaign to oust Mswati. While Mpande called up half his army for duty in Swaziland (57), Malambule moved his headquarters to the vicinity of Allison's mission station at Mahamba in southern Swaziland (58). By mid-July the conflict was imminent, and the ruling party was desperate for assistance and protection. Finally on the 27th of that month the treaty of cession was signed. The conclusion that the difficulties of Mswati provided the chief impetus for the cession thus seems almost impossible to escape.

The agreement between Mswati and the Ohrigstad Boers came not a moment too soon for the royal party in Swaziland. After a preliminary skirmish with Mswati's forces at Mahamba (59), Malambule returned for reinforcements to his chiefdom at LaVumisa. Six weeks later, in accordance with a plan already arranged with Mpande, Malambule left LaVumisa, and moved off parallel to the Pongola River to Allison's mission station at Mahamba (60). Here he engaged one of Mswati's armies, but was repulsed and fled southwards before pursuing forces into the territory of Nyamainja, Magonondo and Mhlangampisi (61). This supplied Mpande with

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(57) E.C.A., Vol. I, 62, Annexure 2 of meeting 6, Moodie to Secretary to the Government, 20 July 1846.

(58) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1164..

(59) Ibid, 1166-8 .

(60) Ibid.

(61) Below, 98.

a long-awaited excuse to invade Swaziland and annex its strategic southern areas. For some months now Mpande had been displaying a revived interest in Swaziland. Early in February he had sent a further request to the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal asking for permission to exact reparations from the Swazi, and when all this elicited was a promise of mediation, he offered to renounce all further claims on the cattle of Mawa, which until then had been a major source of contention, if only the British would grant him a free hand in the north. The Lieutenant-Governor was unimpressed, and Mpande was gradually forced to accept that without being given a convincing casus belli by the Swazi the British authorities would never waive their objections to any such plan (62). The pact with Malambule should be seen in these terms. Malambule was instructed to flee towards the headwaters of the Pongola where Mpande could then waylay any pursuing Swazi force. The ostensible reason for this tactic was to draw the Swazi away from their usual sanctuaries in Swaziland, but equally important in all probability was the desire to tempt the Swazi into an area of dubious sovereignty so that this could be branded by Mpande as an invasion of Zulu territory. If this was the plan it worked to perfection. In August, soon after the initial plot had been laid, Mpande informed the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal that he was assembling his armies because, in the light of the current troubles in Swaziland, "he judged it prudent to be prepared for

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(62) C.O. 179/1, Encl. I in Encl. in No. 110, Report of N.C. Armstrong and Cowie, 30 March 1846; ibid, Encl. 2 in No. 110, message from Panda, 6 April 1846.

any emergency". The Lieutenant-Governor gave a predictably discouraging response, but the situation was already slipping beyond his control (63). In mid-September Mswati's armies again engaged Malambule, and aided by their four Boer mercenaries easily carried the day. As arranged, Malambule now fled towards the headwaters of the Pongola. Mswati's armies followed suit, and also took the opportunity to attack Magonondo and Mhlangampisi. Mpande had now been given his excuse. He notified the Lieutenant-Governor of his intention to repel the invasion, and to "follow the enemy as far as they may go to recover cattle". Under the circumstances the Lieutenant-Governor could do nothing but acquiesce, and Mpande was thereby given a free hand in the north (64).

Mpande's intentions by this stage were becoming ominously clear. Already in May the American Board missionary Grout had received reports from two separate sources that Mpande was organising an expedition to seize possession of some caves in the north, "where he hopes he may save himself if attacked by a strong enemy" (65). Somewhat later Allison's preachers reported in similar vein. Mpande had expelled Mswati's forces the previous October, and in the process had seized large numbers of cattle. It was now his intention, they claimed, "to send out a strong

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(63) E.C.A., Vol. I, 75, 78, 82-3, Annexure I to Meeting 7, message of Panda to Lieutenant-Governor, 6 Aug. 1846 and the latter's reply of the same date.

(64) Natal Witness, 9 Oct. 1846, message from Mpande to the Lieutenant-Governor and the Lieutenant-Governor's reply.

(65) P.P., 1847-8, 'Correspondence', 87-8, Encl. 5 in Encl. in No. 38, A. Grant to Secretary for Government, 6 May 1846.

force composed of all his married men to subdue the Swazi, and then with his unmarried men remove all to Swaziland". Only the opposition of certain councillors had so far prevented this happening, but the plan was now scheduled to go ahead as soon as winter approached (66). Messengers arriving from Swaziland painted a similar picture. According to their information Mpande had instructed Putili and Mhlangampisi to cut poles to assist in the making of villages in the north, and had informed them of his intention to plough in Swaziland that year. Even as they were leaving, they added, they had seen signs of an impending invasion, with Mpande's armies already massing on the southern bank of the Pongola (67).

The threatened invasion materialised early in 1847. Advancing across the Pongola in several independent divisions, Mpande's armies swept straight through the country until they reached the Crocodile River. Here they found that many Swazi and their cattle had taken refuge with the Boers, and with outright victory denied, stalemate set in. On the one hand the Zulu could not subdue the Swazi because they took refuge in caves or with their Lydenburg neighbours. On the other the Swazi were not in a position to expel the Zulu invaders since their Volksraad supporters were themselves on the verge of hostilities with Potgieter, who had in turn made an effort to align with the Zulu (68). As a result, it was not until July 1847 that the

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(66) Natal Witness, 2 Oct. 1847.

(67) S.N.A., Vol. 1/6/1, No. 17, Statement of Swazi messengers Bulane and Kwahla, 27 Jan. 1847.

(68) C.O., 179/3, Encl. in Encl. in No. 87, Cutting from The Patriot, 23 April 1847.

Zulu army finally retired from Swaziland (69), apparently in response to pressure from the Volksraad, which had by this stage reached a temporary solution to its differences with Potgieter (70).

While the influx of settlers from Natal and the conclusion of the July treaty heralded the beginning of Potgieter's decline in Ohrigstad, it was some time before this became sufficiently pronounced to make him march away for good to form a new settlement in the north. His attempts to rally an Afrikaner constituency have been documented extensively elsewhere, but his efforts to mobilise African support have received little or no attention (71). The reports concerning his negotiations with the African chiefdoms to the north and west of Ohrigstad are highly partisan in character, and must be treated with caution (72), but for his dealings with the Swazi there is a more reliable record. Potgieter had every reason for making a special effort in this direction. The Volksraad party in Ohrigstad remained his most implacable enemy in the Trans-vaal and much of their legitimacy and security rested on the treaty of July 1846. Consequently, if he could sabotage that agreement, or cast doubt on its authenticity by some new arrangement with

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(69) P.P.1847-8 'Natal', encl.in encl.in No.75, messengers 8 June 1847.

(70) Kruger, 'Weg', 100. Evidence of the Volksraad party finally compelling Mpande's forces to leave Swaziland is in S.N.A., Vol. 1/6/1, 'Statements', No. 12, Message of Panda to Lieutenant-Governor, 13 Aug. 1847.

(71) See for example Kruger, 'Weg', 99-113; Wichman, 'Wordings-geskiedenis', 48-64, F.A. Van Jaarsveld, Die Eenheidstrewes van die Republikeinse Afrikaners: Deel I Pioniershartstogte (1836-1864), (Johannesburg, 1951), 78, 81-3, 92-5.

(72) Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 295-6, Memo of interview by J. de Clerq, 18 Jan. 1846; 308-9, Declaration by Doris Buys, 4 Feb. 1848. Sekwati and Zebedela are amongst the chiefs named in these reports.

the Swazi, he would give a much needed boost to his flagging cause. And this is what he evidently tried to do in the summer of 1847-1848.

For a number of reasons it is difficult to gauge the exact measure of Potgieter's success. The evidence for such an attempt ever having been made comes from a transcript of an interview between representatives of the Volksraad and envoys from Somcuba, which seems to date from June 1848 (73), and if the Swazi did make any agreement with Potgieter it is unlikely that they would have revealed it here. All that emerges clearly from this document is that the Volksraad representatives believed that the Swazi had been tampered with by Potgieter, and probably the most satisfactory interpretation of this episode is that the Swazi had been keeping their options open with both parties until the situation clarified itself.

One further explanation of the ambiguities of the interview of June 1848 may also lie in the increasingly ambiguous position of Somcuba himself, with whose representatives the interview was conducted. After Malambule's defection Somcuba had apparently assumed at least some of the powers that Malambule had enjoyed. Thus he was not only the leading figure in securing the treaty of July 1846, but was even described in its text as "ruling in place of the king" (74). While it is highly improbable that Somcuba had succeeded in appropriating the full

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(73) Ibid, 320-321. Statement of six men of 'Saptobas', (probably) early June 1848.

(74) Above, 94, note 53.

powers of regency as is suggested here (75), what is evident is the light in which he was viewed by the Boers. In their eyes he was seen as the dominant figure in Swaziland, and it was accordingly with him that they treated on matters of mutual concern. In many ways this appreciation of Swazi politics was self fulfilling. Large as Somcuba's authority already was, this sort of patronage expanded it a great deal further, and enabled Somcuba to dominate Swazi politics during the crisis of 1846-1847 (76). Once the crisis had passed however, Somcuba found his position under pressure from above. By now Mswati's earlier experiences had bred in him a morbid distrust of over-mighty brothers (77), and it was almost inevitable that he would take steps to limit his power. Meanwhile opposition to the 1846 cession had also begun to stir. Hopes of repudiating the treaty had probably been fostered by Potgieter's efforts to undermine it, and by the visible weakening of the Ohrigstad community from desertion and disease (78). But there was more to the opposition than narrow expediency of this kind. Criticism of the treaty could not fail to reflect on its chief architect,

(75) There is no suggestion of this from any Swazi source old or new, and it would have been highly irregular.

(76) Thus he led the Swazi armies against Malambule, G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1167-8; C.L., Methodist Archives, M.S. 15, 3, extract of a letter from Allison dated 6 Oct. 1846; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 35, and was in charge of all negotiations with the Boers during and after the hostilities. Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, 233-4, 273, A.H. Potgieter to J.C. Klopper and J.F. Schutte, 5 June 1847; 320-1, Statement of six men of 'Saptobas', (probably) early June 1848; S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 70, E.V.R., 22 June 1847, Art. 4.

(77) See for instance J.S.M. Matsebula, Izakhiwo ZamaSwazi, (Johannesburg, 1953), 9-11, 15, who also pictures Mswati's chief personal attendant and confidant, Khambi Sikondze as playing on these fears:

(78) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 6-7.

Somcuba, and must in part have been an expression of opposition to him. Whether Mswati was implicated in this is not known, but if he did actively canvass against the treaty, the internal politics of Swaziland must have increasingly polarised around this external issue. What effect this had on the meeting between Somcuba's messengers and the Volksraad representatives in mid-1848 one cannot be sure, but it presumably contributed its share to the general opaqueness of their answers and the inconclusiveness of the interview as a whole.

Any thoughts that Mswati's party may have entertained of repudiating the agreement vanished with the departure of Potgieter and his disgruntled followers from Ohrigstad in the middle of 1848. Now any such act could only drive the Boers into Somcuba's camp, and the only sensible course of action left open to those loyal to Mswati was to reaffirm the legality of the cession and to try and detach the Boers from Somcuba's cause. Somcuba, for his part, was encouraged to take an even more independent line, and relations between the two took a sharp turn for the worse (79). The traditional version of these events makes clear how seriously Somcuba was challenging Mswati's authority at this time. Much earlier, when Somcuba

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(79) One problem in connection with the departure of Potgieter and his followers from Ohrigstad is to decide when its finality became apparent to Mswati and Somcuba. Potgieter had made expeditions to the north before this, and the exodus of his followers on this occasion took some time before it was complete. It does however seem safe to assume that by the middle of 1849, when the first signs of discord between Somcuba and Mswati appear in Ohrigstad records, the full implications of Potgieter's move were grasped by both sides.

had been installed at the Eludlambedwini village in the eastern Trans-vaal, he had been given charge of Ludlambedlu cattle (80). This was an important charge because of their ritual and symbolic significance to the Swazi, and it was also one that was held explicitly in trust for the king. Somcuba's crime was to treat the herd as his private possession, and to seem to appropriate the economic and ritual powers of the king. The critical moment came in 1846 when instead of handing over all the cattle paid by Ohrigstad for the cession he kept some back for himself. Once the Zulu were gone Mswati demanded their return, but Somcuba declined. Mswati thereupon repeated his demand, extending it this time to the entire Ludlambedlu herd. Once again Somcuba refused, and the stage was set for war (81).

The final stages of the dispute can be charted in comparative detail. In August 1849 Somcuba was the source of a rumour current amongst the Ohrigstaders that a force of Mswati's, which was already in the field, was on its way to attack Field Cornet de Beer (82). Evidently Somcuba either feared an attack on himself by this force and hoped the Boer mobilisation would deter it, or he was trying to foster suspicion and ill-feeling against Mswati in anticipation of such an event. In September Somcuba was once again the source of a report that Mswati had

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(80) Myburgh, Carolina, 86.

(81) Kuper, 'Ritual', 230 note 2; Kuper, Aristocracy, 203-4, 214, 220-1, 222; Myburgh, Carolina, 88; G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1176, Statement by Kwahlakwlahla and two others to the Lieutenant Governor, 7 Aug. 1851; P.P. 1880, C. 2695, 23, Encl. 7 in No. 17, Report of the Swazi Transvaal Boundary Commission.

(82) S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 285, W.F. Versveld to Volksraad, 17 Sept. 1849.

sent to Manicusa (Soshangane) to suggest that the two kings undertake a joint attack on the Boers (83), and by December relations between Mswati and Somcuba had deteriorated to such an extent that each was sending messengers to the Landdrost at Krugersdorp to protest against the misdemeanours of the other (84). It must have been at about this time that Mswati finally sent an army to attack Somcuba (85). Somcuba however managed to repulse this at a battle in the region of the Komati River, and fled to the protection of the Ohrigstad Boers, under whom he was to shelter in safety for the next five years (86). The protection extended by the Ohrigstad Boers to Somcuba cannot have come entirely as a surprise to Mswati and his advisers, as Somcuba's close proximity to their settlement and special relationship with their leaders had made this a potential hazard for Mswati from the moment they arrived. Indeed, for some time before the final rupture between the two brothers, there are indications that Mswati and his advisers had concluded that they could not rely on even neutrality, still less the support, of the Boers in any future conflict with Somcuba. Thus towards the end of 1849 or the beginning of 1850, the Swazi sent messengers to Natal with a view both to securing an alternative means of restraining Zulu attacks, and in the hope that the British might exert influence to prevent the Boers openly

(83) Ibid., 103, Meeting of 19 Sept. 1845, Art. 18.

(84) Ibid., 289, W.F. Versveld to Volksraad, 27 Dec. 1849.

(85) This happened probably towards the end of 1850. This is deducible from a message sent by Mswati to the L.G. of Natal, 11 Sept. 1852, T.S.C., Case 22.

(86) Myburgh, Carolina, 88-9: P.A., Soutter Collection, Packet 6, No. 2, 285, Resolution of Krygsraad, 5 Nov. 1853.

supporting Somcuba against Mswati (87). At approximately the same time overtures seem also to have been made to Manicusa, though whether these were directly connected with the Somcuba dispute is less certain (88).

But until these diplomatic initiatives bore fruit Mswati was still anxious to prevent relations with the Boers from lapsing into open hostility. Apart from the presence of Somcuba on his flank, Mswati was still plagued with the same kinds of opposition as had confronted him at the beginning of his reign. At least two more brothers are supposed to have conspired against him in this period, both of whom occupied politically sensitive areas in the south (89). Worse still, the loyalty of many Emakhandzambile chiefdoms continued to remain in doubt, more particularly after the Zulu invasions, which seem to have encouraged renewed restiveness in Emakhandzambile ranks (90). Lastly, overshadowing all of these problems, and in itself partly responsible for them, was the spectre of fresh Zulu attacks, to which each new manifestation of disunity made the Swazi ever more prone. It was hardly surprising therefore that Mswati should not have wished to break with the Boers before obtaining some firmer commitment from the British, and contacts

(87) S.N. 1A No. N 105/79, Report by G. Roth.

(88) S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 103, Meeting of 19 Sept. 1849, Art. 18.

(89) These two brothers were Mgidla (interview Tigodvo Hlophe; interview Nkambule, 24 April 1970, Buseleni, Swaziland; interview Maphoyisa Manana) and Hhobohhobo (interview with various Dlamini informants, 10 June 1970, Kuhlamukeni, Swaziland); Sw.A., 48/07/220 J, Reply to Resident Commissioners Circular, No. 9/1907, Hlathikhulu District.

(90) Below, 174; Emakhandzambile, meaning 'those found ahead', is the generic term applied to those chiefdoms in central and northern Swaziland who were absorbed in the years after 1820 (Kuper, Aristocracy, 14).

with selected Lydenburg officials were continued well into 1851 (91).

The Zulu raid that Mswati feared finally materialised at the end of 1848, only shortly after Somcuba broke away. Once more Mswati was given a partial reprieve by opposition to the expedition within Zululand itself. As a result, the scale of the invasion was much smaller than intended, and it retired in disarray after some minor skirmishing in the south (92). Still, there was no doubting the respite was no more than temporary, and the raid sounded a warning of what Mswati could expect if he did not find a suitable counterweight to Zulu ambitions. The problem was with whom could he ally to achieve lasting security? No neighbouring African state had the military capability required, while the presence of Somcuba near Lydenburg ruled out any co-operation with the eastern Trans-vaal Boers. Apart from the difficulty of compromise on the issue of Somcuba himself - he had located himself less than 40 miles from the royal capital at Hhohho and was becoming a greater and greater threat to Mswati as he recruited local Sotho, Pai and Mapulana

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(91) Thus as late as August 1850 Mswati still sent a child as a gift to J.B. de Clerq, the Landdrost at Lydenburg - S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 143, Meeting 24 May 1850, Art. II. Even after the final breakdown of relations with Lydenburg, Mswati still seems to have maintained connections with individuals inside Lydenburg, presumably with an eye to exploiting continuing divisions within the community - see, L.L. Vol. 172, 10, No. 6, Entry for 29 Nov. 1851; P.A., H.T. Buhrmann Versameling Vol. 7. Buhrmann to his wife, 25 May 1851.

(92) S.N.A., Vol. 1/1/2 No. 107, W. Cowie to S.N.A., 24 Sept. 1849; T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents bound together), Statement by Mapitshan and others, 11 Sept. 1852. It seems likely that it is also this same event that is referred to in S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 289, W.F. Versveld to Volksraad, 27 Dec. 1849.

into his forces (93) - the Boers no longer had the same need of a Swazi connection now that they had Somcuba's services (94). The British in Natal on whom Mswati pinned his main hopes were little more help. All they would do was advise Mswati to seek some sort of accommodation with Mpande, even if this meant becoming his tributary (95).

In the end this was what Mswati was compelled to do, and for a time the balance of power in the region was completely transformed. The new alignment was a particular shock to the Lydenburg Boers (96), to whom its negative consequences became very quickly apparent. In August 1850 a commission which set out through Swazi territory to supervise the making of a road to Delagoa Bay was bundled unceremoniously out of Swaziland (97), and twelve months later the Lydenburg Republic was suddenly engulfed by a Zulu army attacking the Pedi chief, Sekwati (98). In the person of Somcuba, moreover, still worse danger resided.

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- (93) Ziervogel, Eastern Sotho, 11; interview Majahane Dlamini, 5 June 1970, Ludlawini, Swaziland.
- (94) Somcuba for example was now used to supply both intelligence and military assistance to the Lydenburg Boers, see S.A.A.R. Transvaal 3, 87, E.V.R. 4 July 1855, Art. 12; Fourie, Amandebele, 34; S.S. 487, R 4978, Encl. R 4809, G. Roth to Col. Secretary, 5 Nov. 1880.
- (95) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents ...), Statement by Mapiitshan and others, 28 Sept. 1852.
- (96) This had been a prospect which had haunted the Boers in the earliest days of the Ohrigstad settlement (see S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 33, E.V.R. I, Sitting of Commissie Raad 27 Jan. 1846, Art. 2). Slowly however these fears had evaporated as they came to comprehend the deep-seated antagonisms that existed between the two groups.
- (97) S.A.A.R. Transvaal 2, 224-5, P.C. Minaar and 22 others to Volksraad, 18 Aug. 1851.
- (98) S.N.A. Vol. 1/7/1, 65, Statement by Gebula and Gambushe, messengers from Mpande, 14 Oct. 1851.

Mswati could hardly abstain much longer from reprisals here, more especially now the Zulu were no longer to be feared, and if Lydenburg stood firm on their treaty obligations outright hostilities could be the only result (99). The Republic was only rescued from this dilemma in 1852, when the prejudices of a generation re-asserted themselves and Mpande's armies once again took the field against the Swazi.

There are several versions of why hostilities resumed, Mpande himself being the author of two. At a meeting with Captain Garden who travelled through Zululand in 1852, he maintained that after Mswati had tendered his submission, he had sent some of his own representatives to live in Swaziland with the intention of having them report back to him, but that Mswati had killed them, and all those who had been associated with them (100). In an alternative version given to the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, Mpande advanced a different explanation, claiming that when his army was campaigning against Sekwati the previous year, a brother of Mswati named Gehle had entered into communication with its leaders. Mswati had thereupon executed Gehle, and had then gone on to make overtures of alliance with Sekwati, and it was in retaliation for this that Mpande attacked (101).

(99) For the treaty between Somcuba and Lydenburg see P.A., Soutter Collection, Packet 6 No. 2, 205-6, Treaty between Krygsraad and Sincoeba, 6 Nov. 1853.

(100) G.P., File II (iii), 522, Journey to the Pongola, July-Sept. 1852.

(101) P.P., 1852-3 'Further Correspondence relating to the Settlement of Natal', 73, Encl. I in No. 21, Message from Panda via Gebula and Gambushe, 20 July 1852. Gehle is just conceivably the same as Mgidla, who occupied the chiefdom of Buseleni near the junction of the Mkhondvo and Lusutfu, and is remembered as being executed by Mswati for some alleged act of treachery, interview Nkambule, 24 April 1970, Buseleni, Swaziland; interview Tigodvo Hlophe.

Lastly, there is also the Swazi account, according to which Mpande had invaded Swaziland at the instigation of a Swazi traitor named Mgopo, after learning of the marriage of Mswati's sister to Langalibalele. Mgopo however had been detected and for his pains had been killed (102).

While it is obviously impossible to reconcile all the inconsistencies in these accounts, there are certain points which emerge from them all. The most obvious is that Mpande was trying to exercise effective authority in Swaziland, in opposition to the effort of the Swazi to keep it as shadowy as possible. More specifically, Mpande was seeking tighter control over Swaziland's foreign affairs, and was using the information of agents in Swaziland to facilitate that end. The Swazi, predictably, rejected this ploy and responded by having the guilty parties killed. This in turn exposed the contradictory premises from which the two parties had been acting. The Swazi had apparently still not adjusted fully to the changed circumstances created by the colonisation of Natal, and expected Mpande to be satisfied by a token submission and tribute. Mpande on the other hand was intent on turning Swaziland into a physical sanctuary should he become embroiled with Natal, and was not prepared to settle for anything less than effective control.

Misunderstanding Mpande's objectives, the Swazi were caught

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(102) T.S.C., Case 2 (Swazi documents ..), Statement by Mapitshan and others, Swazi messengers, 11 Sept. 1859.

entirely unprepared by his decision to invade. Comprising the entire strength of the Zulu kingdom, his army entered in two divisions in July 1852, and had swept through the country before the Swazi knew what was happening (103). Many Swazi were killed and vast numbers of cattle swept off, while even those who managed to reach the sanctuary of their caverns were subjected to a more systematic practise of 'smoking out' than had ever been used before (104). So sudden and devastating was the Zulu attack that it is difficult to escape the impression that the Swazi were faced for a time with the prospect of disintegration and collapse. When Captain Garden's party travelled through northern Zululand and Swaziland in July and August 1852, for example, they encountered large numbers of Swazi fleeing in every direction (105). A month later advance parties were streaming into Natal, prompting the Secretary for Native Affairs, Shepstone, to conclude "the Amaswazi are destroyed as a tribe, and are a needy, destitute, starving people" (106). Indeed, so bleak was the situation that towards the end of September Mswati sent messengers to the Lieutenant-Governor asking for permission to take refuge in Natal. "Our tribe is fast dispersing", the messengers reported, "and seeking

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(103) P.P., 1852-3, 'Correspondence ...', 73, Encl. in No. 21, Message from Pande, 26 July 1852.

(104) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents ...), Statement by Mapiitshan and others, 11 Sept. 1852; Bryant, Olden Times, 329-30; C.T. Binns, The Last Zulu King: the life and death of Cetshwayo, (London, 1963), 33.

(105) G.P., File II (iii), Journey..., 506, 574.

(106) G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1189-90, Extract Report by Resident Magistrate Fynn, 27 Sept. 1852; S.N.A., Vol. 1/7/2, Report on letters from Resident Magistrate, Klip River, 24 Dec. 1859, 24-5; G.P., File IVB (Swazis), 1190, Extract from report by Diplomatic Agent, 28 Sept. 1852.

asylum with the Zulu... Umswazi begs the Government to receive him and the last remnant of the Swazi tribe" (107).

It is just possible that Mswati's messengers were exaggerating Swaziland's plight; that anticipating the instinctive horror the Government had of refugees, they decided that this was the best way of making sure it would act. Certainly, whether intentionally or otherwise, they touched a raw nerve. The last thing Natal wanted was a massive flood of refugees, and its messages to Mpande assumed an increasingly urgent note. Moreover, even if Mpande wished to ignore them there were others who would not. Opposition had been voiced to the invasion of 1846, and had virtually wrecked the one sent out in 1848, and this could only be strengthened by the stand taken by Natal. At the same time a new force was emerging on the Zulu political scene, which would increasingly act to tie Mpande's hands. Despite his usual image as a kind of roi faineante, Mpande had so far had a reasonably successful reign (108). By 1852 he had reigned for 12 years - four years more than Shaka and one more than Dingane - and had just capped a number of previous military successes with a highly successful campaign in Swaziland. The same invasion had however brought to the fore a potential challenge to his rule. Unlike Shaka or Dingane, Mpande had never taken the precaution of eliminating his male progeny, and already several of these had reached the status of fully grown men. The eldest was Cetshwayo whose regiment, the Tulwana,

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(107) T.S.C., Case 22, (Swazi documents..), Statement by Mapitshan and others, 28 Sept. 1852.

(108) See for example D. Morris, The Washing of the Spears, (London, 1966), 192.

was enrolled in 1851. The ensuing campaign in Swaziland, known as the "Ukufunda ka Tulwana", the "teaching of the Tulwana", evidently marked Cetshwayo out as a political rival to Mpande. Its "outstanding result", according to Binns was "to increase the prestige of Cetshwayo", and from then on Mpande had to keep too close an eye on domestic affairs to allow him to indulge in adventures abroad (109).

Mpande's response to Cetshwayo's rise was to promote the claims of another son Mbuyazi as a foil to Cetshwayo's ambitions. Together with Cetshwayo, Mbuyazi was given a large area of Zululand to administer, and was also singled out to "Ncinda ode Ngezini" after Mpande at the annual First Fruits ceremony when Cetshwayo was not allowed to "Ncinda" at all (110). This last was apparently designed as a public recognition of Mbuyazi as Mpande's senior son, and with that, Zululand rapidly polarised into two contending camps, the Usuthu supporting Cetshwayo, and the Isiqosa backing Mbuyazi (111). A physical struggle had become inevitable.

(109) Binns, Zulu King, 34; Samuelson, Long, Long Ago, 230; Bryant, Olden Times, 329.

(110) The term refers to one of the more important rites of the Zulu First Fruits ceremony, in which the king extracts and consumes a magical decoction from a heated clay pot. The act is supposed to confer special powers upon him. Bryant, Zulu People, 512-3.

(111) S.P., No. 2(b), 'The Battle of Ndondakusuka', (Revised draft, T/S), 4; *ibid*, 29392, 'History of Zululand', Ndukwana, 7 Nov. 1902, 34. It is even possible that Mpande encouraged these antagonisms in the hope that the protagonists would destroy one another and enable him to nominate a young and less threatening successor. If these were his calculations they went badly awry after Cetshwayo emerged triumphant from the Battle of Ndondakusuka in December 1856.

The Swazi played on these divisions with considerable skill. Whether wittingly or unwittingly Mswati's plea for sanctuary had made a deep impression on Natal, and the Swazi exploited this by a clever adaptation of traditional diplomacy. From Majumba Kunene, the messenger employed by the Swazi in their communications with Langalibalele, the Swazi had learnt of Shepstone's position, and may even have gained an inkling of his ambitions to preside over a confederation of south-east African states. At the urging of Malunge and Mpikhelele therefore, they decided to suggest a marriage between the family of Shepstone and Mswati's sister Tifokati, as a means of securing his support, in particular against the Zulu (112). To later writers this idea has seemed a trifle naive, but they vastly underestimate the subtlety of Swazi diplomacy (113). We have already seen how the Swazi had a far more acute appreciation of affairs of the Boer republics than did the republics of the Swazi, and the same is likely to have been true of relations with Natal. Only five or six years later the Anglican missionary Robertson expressed his astonishment at Zulu sophistication in analysing Natal politics, and with sources like Langalibalele and the Edenvale Swazi it is unlikely the Swazi lagged very far behind (114). Certainly the importance the Swazi attached to such information is not a matter of doubt, and is borne out

(112) S.P., 30091, 88, Tikuba, 27 Nov. 1898; ibid, 118-9, Gama, 18 Dec. 1898; According to Matsebula, Majumba's sibongo was Mndzebele not Kunene - History, 16, 19.

(113) Bryant, Olden Times, 330; M.P., MS 1478, 'Short History', 15-16.

(114) S.P.G. 'E', Vol. 7, 1021, Robertson to Secretary of S.P.G., 31 Oct. 1860. Schreuder also told Robertson about "a complete system of espionage in the Zulu country which extends itself to Natal", (ibid, 1040, Robertson to Secretary of S.P.G., 6 Dec. 1860).

by their attempts to penetrate Shepstone's household. According to oral evidence collected by Stuart in the 1890s, the Swazi never expected that Tifokati would actually marry Shepstone, but specifically suggested a proxy in the shape of his chief induna Ngoza (115). The advantage would be two-fold. On the one hand this would signify a symbolic union of the houses which would deter Zulu attacks; on the other it would open a channel of communication into the heart of the Shepstone camp. That this is not merely fanciful can be seen in Swazi attempts to revive the arrangements after Ngoza fell from grace. Once this had happened Mhlopekazi was despatched to enter Shepstone's service, and soon rose to fill Ngoza's place as the chief induna in Shepstone's household (116).

Shepstone's response to Mswati's overtures was warm. Two waggon loads of blankets were sent through Zululand to the Swazi, together with a demand that Mpande allow the bridal party be left to travel unmolested to Natal (117). The identity of Natal and Swazi interests could not have been made more plain, and the effect on Zululand was correspondingly large. Even with Zulu confidence at its most buoyant the impact would have been great. In a divided nation in which both of the principal protagonists were preoccupied with fears of the other acquiring external support, it was enormous. Now neither party

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(115) Above, 114, note 112.

(116) H. Rider Haggard, The Days of My Life, Vol. I (2 vols., London, 1926), 74-5; Natal Witness, 26 Oct. 1897.

(117) S.P., 30091, 88, Tikuba, 27 Nov. 1898; ibid, 119, Gama, 18 Dec. 1898.

could contemplate an invasion of Swaziland, for this might involve British (or even Boer) support on the side of their rival (118). Until the power struggle in Zululand had in some way been resolved, the security of the Swazi was assured.

From being on the point of virtual disintegration the Swazi were now relatively secure. Mpande was effectively hobbled, and measures to reform Swaziland's internal administration could now be carried through. At the same time Mswati could also spare attention for somewhat grander designs, like the elimination of Somcuba and renewed expansion into the territory Sobhuza once controlled. It is with this second phase of consolidation that the next chapter will be concerned.

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(118) As early as 1852 Mbuyazi's faction was spreading rumours about the Natal government's intention of sending a military force to Zululand, (S.N.A., 1/3/5, 508, M. Schreuder to H.F. Fynn, 27 Dec. 1852).

## CHAPTER IV

## SWAZI-BOER RELATIONS 1852-1865

As the sense of crisis gradually lifted on Mswati's southern border, Swazi attention reverted to the north. Here Somcuba remained a nagging irritation, and continued to poison Mswati's relations with the Lydenburg Boers. The sudden dwindling of diplomatic intercourse between the two communities after the Commission of 1851 gives some idea of the ebb to which relations had sunk. Reference is not even found in surviving documents to the unprecedentedly disruptive invasion of Swaziland by Zulu forces in the first six months of 1852, and even ordinary trading enterprises slowly ground to a halt after Mswati neglected to pay for the goods he had previously received (1).

The problem of Somcuba was not simply one of his presence in the Republic; his removal of the Ludlambedlu cattle, and his performance of the iNcwala ceremony meant that he was directly usurping Mswati's political and ritual power (2). Nor indeed had he been content to live peaceably under Lydenburg's protection, but had subjected Mswati's people to a variety of harrassments, including the murder of Swazi messengers sent to parley with the Boers (3). Somehow or other his depredations had to be stopped. To begin with, Mswati made at least one

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- (1) D.W. Krynauw and H.S. Pretorius (eds), Transvaalse Argiefstukke. Staatsekretaris; Inkomende Stukke, 1850-1853, (Pretoria, 1949), 375-6, letter from Landdrost J. de Clerq 19 Aug. 1853; L.L.1, R 561a/53, T.J. Beetge to J. de Clerq, 17 Aug. 1853; R 561c/53, M.F. da Souza to J. de Clerq, 17 Aug. 1853; L.8, No. 9/56, J.M.De Beer to Kommissie Raad, 17 May 1856.
- (2) Myburgh, Carolina, 86, 88-90; Kuper, 'Ritual', 230, note 3, 239; Kuper, Aristocracy, 225; above, 104.
- (3) S.A.A.R. Transvaal 2, 418, G.J. Joubert to Volksraad, 11 June 1853.

effort in 1853 to tackle the problem by negotiation, but not surprisingly these efforts quickly broke down (4). In the last analysis Mswati could only be satisfied with Somcuba's death or his delivery into Swazi hands, and this was something to which Lydenburg could plainly not agree.

As the threat of Zulu attacks receded, Mswati became less and less disposed to accept that verdict as final, and, in September 1853, he brought the matter to a head by invading the Republic and forcing its citizens to flee into laager at Lydenburg, from which, despite a barrage of entreaties and threats, they were unable to emerge for the next seven days (5). The exact object of these exercises is difficult to ascertain. Van der Merwe claims that they were part of an attack on Sekwati, but since the documents to which he refers can no longer be traced, and since no similar attack is recorded in Pedi tradition, it is just as likely that the siege was intended to cut off the Lydenburgers from their ally Somcuba, leaving him to stand alone against the Swazi attack (6). If this was the case Mswati's plan proved abortive, for according to Swazi tradition, his assembled forces could not penetrate Somcuba's perimeter defences,

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(4) Ibid.

(5) Krynauw and Pretorius, Transvaalse, 380, Landdrost J. de Clerq to W.F. Joubert, 3 Oct. 1853. The Swazi also devastated a number of farms in the area, ibid; L.L., Vol. 172a, 10-13, sixteen claims by H.T. Buhrmann, P.J. Kruger, J.J. Viljoen and J.W. Schoeman, Nov. 1853.

(6) Van der Merwe, 'Naturelle', 93-4.

and his forces were compelled to retire empty handed (7).

The impact on Lydenburg was immediate and profound. First reactions were expressed in a petition to the Volksraad signed by sixty-four people, requesting that P.J. Coetzee be appointed as Commandant-General (8). The line of reasoning that seems to have been followed here is that if anyone could placate the Swazi, that person was Coetzee. He had regularly acted in negotiations with Mswati, the esteem in which he was held being later attested to by Aylward (9), and it was evidently felt that it would help to substitute him for W.F. Joubert, who was already too closely identified with Somcuba's cause. Before long, however, Joubert's group reasserted itself and it was decided to reaffirm the connection with Somcuba. At a meeting between the Krygsraad, led by W.F. Joubert, and Somcuba one month later it was resolved that their agreement be confirmed and endorsed, "to forestall further unpleasantness and to place everything in good order" (10).

The attitude adopted by the Republic's authorities makes a good deal of sense, particularly when one considers the amount of prestige they had already invested in Somcuba. What is less

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- (7) The engagement took place at Katsibeni in the Barberton district, Myburgh, Carolina, 88; Kuper, 'Ritual', 230, note 3.
- (8) S.A.A.R. Transvaal 2, 480-1, H.T. Buhrmann and 64 others to the Volksraad, 4 Oct. 1853. Van Heerden mentions this petition as well as Joubert's request to be relieved of his duties in Nov. 1852, but explains neither event. J.J. Van Heerden, 'Die Kommandant-Generaal in die Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek' A.Y.B. 1964, II (Cape Town, 1964), 17.
- (9) A. Aylward, The Transvaal of Today, (London, 1878), 18,20-23. Also below, 203.
- (10) S.C., Packet 6, No. 2, 285-6. Treaty between the Krygsraad and Sincoeba, 6 Nov. 1853.

explicable is the original decision to harbour him at all. Mswati had after all proved himself to be a reliable and cooperative neighbour; he was not averse to Boers trading in his dominions; he furnished a certain number of 'apprentices' to the Republic; and, until the flight of Somcuba, he appears to have been prepared to allow a vitally important access route to be built through Swaziland to Delagoa Bay (11). Ultimately, he might even have been persuaded to aid the Republic with their neighbours. So what induced them to sacrifice all these various advantages when they decided to allow Somcuba to seek sanctuary among them?

A satisfactory answer to this question would require a far more comprehensive analysis of the political economy of the Trans-vaal than is possible here. A preliminary attempt should however be made, although what follows, it must be emphasised, is only a sketchy account. When the trekker parties first moved into the Trans-vaal they did so in compact bodies whose mobility and fire-power made them almost impossible to withstand. That initial tactical and technological superiority was made all the more pronounced by the recent ravages of the Difaqane. Many chiefdoms had been shattered, many others displaced, and they could be expropriated relatively easily of their labour and their land. Once the trekker parties began to spread out over the Trans-vaal the situation was to some extent reversed. Now it was the trekkers who were thinly spread over the land, and African chiefdoms who began concentrating in more consolidated

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(11) Above, 107-8.

blocs. The situation would not have been so serious had the trekkers been more effectively able to combine, but this proved beyond their capabilities from the moment they split up. Much has been made by MacCrone and others of the heightened sense of group consciousness and solidarity which emerged from the isolation and insecurity of the frontier situation, but this is not borne out by a close examination of the Trans-vaal (12).

In the eastern and northern Cape, Legassick and Giliomee have shown how the period of open frontier was characterised by the fragmentation of frontier society, together with multiple small scale interactions across the colour line, governed by situational as much as by racial criteria (13). The closing of the frontier (that is to say the establishment of a single recognised authority), the shift of economic emphasis from pastoralism to agriculture, and the increasing labour repressiveness which this entailed, bred a more virulent sort of racial consciousness than had previously existed, and this was finally elaborated into a fully fledged racial ideology under the impact of the British assault on that system, embodied in Ordinance 50 and there-

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(12) I.D. MacCrone, Race Attitudes in South Africa: historical, experimental and psychological studies, (Johannesburg, 1937) 98-135.

(13) M. Legassick, 'The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography', S.S.A., Vol. 2, Oct. 1970 - July 1971 (London, 1971), 14-20; H. Giliomee, 'The Cape Eastern Frontier, 1775-1812', paper presented to the University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Post-Graduate Seminar, The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries, London 1973, 8-9, 18, 20-25; M. Legassick, 'The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries 1780-1840: the Politics of a Frontier Zone', (Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1969), 86, 90-1, 122-3.

after (14). It was largely the latter factor which led the trekkers to hive off into the interior, but there is little evidence of this much more developed racial ideology surviving long in the Trans-vaal. Rather than isolation and insecurity heightening a sense of group solidarity and separateness from other racial groups, the weakness and isolation of the constituent elements of trekker society seems to have forced them into relations of symbiotic dependence with local African groups, which helped further accentuate their differences one from another. This is not to say that racial prejudice did not persist; the constitution of the South African Republic and the atrocities perpetrated by Potgieter and his fellows made it clear that they did (15). What it does indicate however, is the flexibility of racial attitudes in the frontier situation, the lack of white unity and group consciousness in relation to neighbouring African peoples, and the intimate relations of dependence of which this was both the effect and the cause.

These circumstances are best illustrated in the events of 1852 to 1854. Since the treaty of Derdepoort in 1849 a formal unity had existed among the white groups of the Trans-vaal, but every

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(14) Legassick, 'Frontier Tradition', 9-10, 13-14; Legassick, 'The Griqua', 100-1, 125; W.M. Freund, 'Thoughts on the Study of the History of the Cape Eastern Frontier zone', in C. Saunders and R. Derricourt (eds), Beyond the Cape frontier: studies in the history of the Transkei and Ciskei, (Cape Town, 1974), 89-91; G.D. Scholtz, Die Ontwikkeling van die Politieke Denke van die Afrikaner, (10 Vols, Johannesburg, 1967 - ), Vol. II, 220-248, 264-7; C.F.J. Muller, Die Oorsprong van die Groot Trek, (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1974), 189-191, 197-208.

(15) See, for example, Merensky's comments on A.H. Potgieter, Berliner Missionsberichte, 1862, 'Beitrage zur Geschichte der Bapeli', 339.

attempt to inject any real substance into this had floundered on their distance from one another, and on the nature of their relations with local African groups. As Wichmann points out, a major obstacle to white unity was the enormous distances which lay between various white communities of the Trans-vaal. Lydenburg, for instance, was eighty hours by waggon from Potchefstroom, and similar distances separated the other main groups. An attempt was made to overcome these difficulties by establishing a national Volksraad, whose meetings rotated between the main concentrations of white population, but these broke down on the non-attendance of representatives of whoever was not host. Such extreme parochiality can usually be traced to local African affairs. Between 1852 and 1854, for example, meetings of the Volksraad were invariably incomplete because one or other of the communities was absorbed with local African disputes. In 1852 it was conflict with Secheli in the west, and Sekwati and Mabhogo in the east; in 1853 the Swazi seige of Lydenburg and further trouble in the west; and in 1854 an expedition against Makapane in the north and into Marico in the north-west, as well as a new Swazi war scare on the eastern frontier. Little wonder then that Lydenburg's officials that year went to the length of memorialising the Volksraad about, "the insecurity of this land [which] continually becomes greater", and the absence of peace with African chiefdoms "on [even] a single side (16).

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(16) S.S. 9, 111-2, R 24/54, Memorial signed by W.J. Joubert and others to Volksraad, 16 Sept. 1854.

Such entanglements were highly subversive of the fragile unity of the Republic. Proper sessions of the Volksraad were impossible to hold so that meetings of Kommissie Raads or Krygsraads were sometimes held in two communities at once. The scope for misunderstanding was naturally vast. Acts passed by one Kommissie Raad or Krygsraad were often not acceptable to the other, and it was in these circumstances that the predikant van der Hoff was welcomed by the western Trans-vaal without the prior sanction of the east, and prompted first religious and then political schism between the two (17).

Along with political divisions went military weakness. In 1852 the west could not help the east, nor the east the west, because both had their troubles with African communities on their borders, and even when all sections of the Republic were not at war at once, there was always a fear among those not so engaged that a crisis might blow up in their own particular community should they go to the assistance of beleaguered allies, not to mention the suspicion that their neighbours had brought their troubles on themselves. The withdrawal of Potgieter from the 1852 commando against Sekwati was tied up with something of this kind (18), so too was the opposition in the Trans-vaal to Pretorius' assumption of the presidency of the Orange Free State, which was inspired at least in part by the fear of becoming

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(17) This account is based largely on Wichmann, 'Wordings-geskiedenis', 119-131, 153-161; Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 8-9. For references to the Swazi seige of Lydenburg and the war scare of 1854 see above, 118, below, 137.

(18) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 102; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1862, 353-4.

embroiled in the Free State's disputes with Moshoeshoe (19). More striking still was the loss of Schoemansdal in 1867, which resulted directly from the reluctance of other parts of the Trans-vaal to lend aid to a community whose dealings with blacks they condemned (20). In this way conflict bred disunity and disunity weakness, and that weakness made those conflicts all the more difficult to resolve.

War was not of course the norm, but it was a close reflection of it. Discussing the Cape northern and eastern frontier Legassick has made the point that,

Trade and war ... were but two sides of the same coin: so-called co-operation and conflict both entered simultaneously ... trade shaded into patently unequal barter, unequal barter into theft, and theft into the organized raiding by commandos which characterized the first "frontier wars". (21)

More recently Trapido has outlined a similar thesis for the Trans-vaal, asserting that even though "there was a considerable amount of trade in which force was absent ... most exchange relationships were pervaded by coercion". In a very direct way, he argues, the Boer economy rested on coercion, its main branches being,

slaving expeditions ..., a parallel or simultaneous raiding for booty, and the maintenance of tributary relations created by reducing tribal peoples to ever increasing servitude. (22)

(19) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 234.

(20) J.B. De Vaal, 'Die Rol van Joao Albasini in die Geskiedenis van die Transvaal', A.Y.B. 1953, I (Elsies River, 1953), 94-5; R. Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg: Some notes on the Dynamics of a Hunting Frontier', S.S.A., Vol. 6 (London 1976), 33.

(21) Legassick, 'Frontier Tradition', 17.

(22) S. Trapido, 'Aspects in the Transition from Slavery to Serfdom: the South African Republic 1842-1902', S.S.A., Vol. 6, (London, 1976), 24-5.

Implicit in the Boer economy therefore, was an element of dependence on African societies, which required a degree of coercion to be fully realised, and so left them constantly in a state of imminent or undeclared war.

Trapido's argument can in fact be taken a stage further, although only by modifying certain aspects of his analysis. Accepting the central importance of slave and tribute labour in the Boer economy of the Trans-vaal, and the structure of coercion by which it was underpinned, it is still far from clear whether the Republics were in a position to secure that commodity at will. In the beginning this may have been so. Despite the impression conveyed by Agar-Hamilton and others that the land settled by the Ohrigstaders was free of African occupation, and that they were then able to set up a segregated state, at least five African chiefdoms were incorporated by the trekkers within their boundaries, and were soon transformed into a serf labour supply (23). In the west a broadly similar situation obtained. After the departure of Mzilikazi in 1837, the trekkers had considered themselves entitled to both the lands and the labour of the people he left behind. In time this also extended to chiefdoms he had expelled, as one by one they asked permission to resettle their old territories, and one by one they were given the appropriate authority, on the assumption that they

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(23) Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy, 55; Stuart, Hollandsche, 189; Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 3; S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, Register van Aantekening van Plase behorende onder Andries Ohrigstad, Spekboomrevier (sic), Steelpoort revier (sic), Mageneets hoogten (sic), 116-197.

would provide labour for the farms (24). By the early 1850s that assumption had proved to be wrong. Most of the evidence for the coercion of labour and tribute supplies, or for indiscriminate raiding seems to be concentrated in the first decade of Boer occupation. Thereafter such practices slackened off as the balance of power between black and white gradually evened out. In the eastern Trans-vaal the withdrawal of Potgieter and his supporters from Ohrigstad to the north greatly weakened both communities, and deprived Ohrigstad in particular of much coercive strength (25). At the same time the Pedi, the Kwena and others began arming with guns, which helped further tilt the balance against the trekker states (26). There was a dual effect on labour supply. In the first place, African communities were far more able to protect themselves against expropriation than had previously been the case; in the second, any intensification of labour oppression beyond the fourteen days initially demanded by the trekkers, was liable to spark off wholesale emigration to neighbouring African powers, who were now themselves better placed to refuse to give them up. It was at least partly these circumstances which gave rise to the conflicts

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- (24) Cape of Good Hope (Colony), Commission on the claims to the Diamond fields, Evidence taken at Bloemhof before the Commission appointed to investigate the claims of the South African Republic, Captain N. Waterboer, Chief of West Griqualand, and certain other Native chiefs, to portions of the territory on the Vaal river, now known as the Diamond Fields, (Cape Town, 1871), 144, Evidence of Molema, 6 May 1871; 181, Evidence of Isaac Matlabane, 15 March 1870.
- (25) Wichmann, 'Wordingsgeskiedenis', 33; Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 6.
- (26) Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy, 62-4, 82, 85, 207-9; S.J.P. Kruger, The Memoirs of Paul Kruger, four times president of the South African republic, told by himself, (London, 1902), 43-4; S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 262, P. Nel to Volksraad, 1 Oct. 1848 (105 Volksraad minutes, 20 Sept. 1849, Art. 23), Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 198-201.

of 1852-4, and which seem to mark a watershed in the relations between the Trans-vaal's black and white groups. In the western Trans-vaal labour demands on the Bakaa, the Lete, and the Kgatla of Mosielele led to them fleeing to Dimawe to settle under Sechele, and gave rise to fears of a black combination against white demands (27). In the east similar currents fed into the hostilities with Sekwati. Aimed officially at divesting the Pedi of their firearms, the attack in 1852 had an obvious bearing on Lydenburg's capacity to exact labour, and according to one source at least was bound up with Potgieter's serf labour demands (28). Much the same sorts of pressures seem to have led Msuthfu to abandon the Republic for the Pedi at the end of the same decade, and the problem finally came to a head in the late 1860s/early 1870s when the produce and labour markets provided by the Diamond Fields and the Pilgrim's Rest gold diggings led to mounting labour repression, sharpened racial attitudes, and an exodus of farm labour from the Republic to Sekhukhune (29).

Dependence on African labour thus bred conflict; failure in that

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(27) A. Sillery, Sechele: The story of an African chief, (Oxford, 1954), 140, 145; Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy, 143-4; Krynauw and Pretorius, Transvaalse, 233-5. P.E. Scholtz, Acting Commandant General to A.W.J. Pretorius, Commandant General, 12 Sept. 1852.

(28) Berliner Missionsberichte, 1862, 'Beitrage zur Geschichte der Bapeli', 339-40, 353-5; Maleo and Mapoch also resisted in a similar fashion, Krynauw and Pretorius, Transvaalse, 85-6, J. de Clerq, Landdrost to A.W.J. Pretorius, 16 May 1851.

(29) Ibid, 92, 356.

conflict entailed a new order of dependence. For the republics to secure labour they now had to take one of several equally invidious choices: they could enlist the support of other African chiefdoms in their slave raiding enterprises, and gain labour in that way; they could purchase the victims of wars undertaken independently by neighbouring African chiefdoms; or they could allow the refugees from these conflicts sanctuary on relatively easy terms. All of these options involved more a relation of dependence than the dominance that Trapido suggests, and since they meant becoming enmeshed in the web of intra-African politics, further narrowed the horizon of the communities concerned, and further diluted the group consciousness distilled in the Cape. So much then for Van Jaarsveld's judgement that Africans played an important part in the development of national consciousness, but only by creating a sense of racial antagonism through conflict and struggle (30), or F.J. Potgieter's comment that although the Boers employed African labourers they remained "something outside of him - something which he accepted as part of his environment, like the mountains, the grasslands and fever" (31).

Dependence on African resources formented divisions within white communities, as well as between them, but before moving on to that, it will help to delineate one further area of white/black interaction which was crucially important to the balance of political and economic power. For Trapido, although there

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(30) Van Jaarsveld, Eenheidstrewe, 30-31.

(31) Potgieter, 'Vestiging', 195.

were some exchange relationships between black and white that were not pervaded by coercion, these were not a central part of the Boer economy in the way that booty raiding or tributary relations were. As I have already suggested, the booty and slave raiding phase of the Boer economy was on the wane by the early 1850s, and was overshadowed by a far more important aspect of surplus appropriation in the shape of hunting and trading. Like booty raiding the centrality of these activities varied from community to community, as well as over time. To take just one example, Ohrigstad which started out life as an elephant hunting community, gradually assumed a more pastoral orientation as the elephants move north-eastward with Potgieter in pursuit. Nevertheless, to a greater or lesser extent, hunting and the sale of its products remained an important part of the entire Boer economy, and more particularly of that of its leaders, and further deepened Boer dependence on neighbouring African groups (32). In the same way that Potgieter and Albasini used African auxiliaries or mercenaries when raiding for slave labour, they were also dependent on their services for hunting in tsetse ridden zones. Moreover, as the game retreated further east and north, these parties were drawn deeper and deeper into the territories of African peoples, or were alternatively obliged to trade rather than hunt the commodities they desired (33). In both cases a relationship of dependence was forged, together with an often debilitating involvement in local African disputes. Zoutpansberg, with its almost total dependence on hunting and trading,

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(32) Potgieter, 'Vestiging', 53, 60, 84-7, 95, 145; Kruger, 'Weg', 127, 140, 194.

(33) Potgieter 'Vestiging', 125-6, 146-8; Kruger, 'Weg', 140; Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg', 36-7.

provides the classic case. On at least two occasions Albasini, the Secretary for Native Affairs, gave sanctuary to important refugees from the Shangane state, and in so doing revealed the conflicting foundations of Boer prosperity and power. On the one hand he needed the human and military resources represented by the refugees for his hunting and trading and tribute collecting expeditions; on the other, his offer of sanctuary immediately embroiled him in conflict with the state from which they had come. In 1859 the Shangane king Mawewe's demand to have his brother Mzila restored led to a trade embargo on the Zoutpansberg, which only ended when Mzila fled away from the community to challenge Mawewe for the throne, and two years later precisely the same thing happened when Mzila, who was now king, insisted on the return of a leading functionary of his father named Monene, who himself had previously taken refuge in the Zoutpansberg. Albasini evidently contemplated ransoming Monene, but as we shall see was thwarted by his rivals in the community, so that Monene remained behind in the Zoutpansberg and again trade was shut off (34).

The trade embargo or boycott pinpoints a further weakness of the white economy, in so far as it demonstrates the importance of black cooperation and acquiescence for trading or hunting to be pursued. The experiences of J.B. Botha and Piet Potgieter during a hunting expedition in 1846 provide a rare insight into the way in which this cooperation worked. Botha and Potgieter began their expedition by calling on Sebetiele to ask for guides

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(34) Below, 196; De Vaal, 'Rol', 77-8. A similar situation arose when Davhana fled to Albasini after a dispute with Maghato over the succession to Ramabulana's Venda chieftaincy, ibid, 75-6.

to take them to a friendly chief who would not harm them, and were escorted to Makapan and thence to Makapela. At Makapela's Botha asked where they could hunt in safety, and was warned against straying into the territories of Maletsi and Matja, who were prepared to attack any whites entering their lands. It would be better, Makapela suggested, for them to go on to Gannana in the Blaauwberg, to whom they were accordingly escorted by Makapala's guides. At Gannana's they were given men to help them in the hunt, but soon became aware that they were being followed by Maletsi and stood in danger of attack. They therefore left with what ivory they already had, and later learnt from Sebetiele that they had narrowly escaped being attacked by Maletsi's men (35). Eight years later another hunting party, under Piet Potgieter, was not so fortunate. In the intervening years some injustice had apparently been done to Makapan, and when Potgieter's party ventured into his territory, they paid for it with their lives (36).

Boer society, of course, was not powerless to react. In 1847, A.H. Potgieter launched an attack on Maletsi, after the killing of Piet Potgieter's party, and in 1854 Makapan and his people were starved to death when they took refuge in a cave (37). All the same, in hunting as in other fields of interracial interaction, the retributive capacity of the Boers declined over time. In the Zoutpansberg, which initially had great coercive powers, because its hunters and traders were in a sense

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(35) S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 45-7, Minutes of Volksraad, 20 April, 1846.

(36) Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy, 163-4.

(37) Ibid; Winter, 'Sekwati', 332; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1862, 'Beiträge', 339-40.

permanently under arms, one sees a weakening taking place as a result of the factors just mentioned, as well as through divisions inside the community itself. Somewhat earlier, an allusion was made to the way in which a reliance on African support fostered intra-communal divisions, and nowhere is this clearer than in the Zoutpansberg case. There, rival factions vied with each other for African followings to act as hunters or mercenaries, or in the collection of taxes. There too, African communities responded by exploiting these tensions, and intensifying the hostility between rival white groups (38). The Zoutpansberg is admittedly an extreme case to select, but elsewhere in the Trans-vaal one sees a similar pattern of Boer communities competing among themselves for African support, and African factions manipulating those divisions for their own sectional ends (39).

Viewed against this background the few shreds of information we have about Lydenburg's decision to harbour Somcuba begin to make a little more sense. Most of Mswati's reign had, hitherto, been spent on the defensive, and there are clear signs in this period of a crumbling of his power. On all of his frontiers his jurisdiction was narrowing, and this was compounded in 1848 by defections from his ranks (40). Faced with a weakened Swazi

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(38) See for example De Vaal, 'Rol', 75-8.

(39) Above, 89-95, 100.

(40) The one was Somcuba, the other Mgazi, S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 103, Volksraad minutes, 19 Sept. 1849, Art. 18.

king, and growing shortages of manpower, it must have seemed worth running the risk of giving refuge to Somcuba. He was, after all, accompanied by something like five hundred male supporters, who would constitute an invaluable addition to Lydenburg's fighting strength (41). At the same time they were useful as guides and for the gathering of intelligence, besides constituting a valuable reservoir of labour supplies (42). Finally, it is likely that certain sections of the community benefited disproportionately to others, and may have welcomed his presence to serve factional ends. If that is so this may explain the petition to replace W.F. Joubert, and Joubert's riposte in the shape of the treaty with Somcuba.

As a result, relations with the Swazi remained in a critical state. In July 1854 the Krygsraad was convoked to hear complaints from Mswati, but pronounced them once again largely inadmissible (43). Almost immediately afterwards, it expressed its forebodings about the future in a letter to Utrecht. "For our part", it wrote, "we still have 'a so-called peace' with Mswati, but we cannot determine with any certainty whether or not to expect a

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- (41) S.N. 1A No. N 105/79, Report by Roth, n.d.; Fourie, Amandebele, 34, for example cites the use of Somcuba's forces against Maboko, chief of the Transvaal Ndebele, and this is confirmed by Roth, S.S. 487, R 4978, Encl. R 4809, Roth (Landdrost, Lydenburg) to Colonial Secretary, 15 Nov. 1880.
- (42) S.C. Pkt. 6, No. 2, 285-6, Treaty between Krygsraad and Sincoeba, 6 Nov. 1853; S.A.A.R. Transvaal 3, 88, Kommissie-raad's meeting 4 July 1855, Art. 12; Van der Merwe, 'Naturelle', 97. Van der Merwe refers to an agreement that Somcuba should supply labour for building a canal near Lydenburg, but I have not been able to track down the reference.
- (43) S.S. 9, 104-5, R 217/54 Vergadering van Krygsraad, 7 July 1854, Lydenburg.

speedy war with him because we cannot and will not give up Sincoeba whom we have now taken in already for 5 years." (44) Rumours even began to circulate of a new alliance between Mpande and Mswati, directed against the Republic (45), but these, while carrying some weight in Republican councils, are likely to have had their origin nearer home than Swaziland or Zululand, most probably at Eludlambedwini, the chief homestead of Somcuba.

By now Lydenburg's authorities were becoming increasingly uneasy, and they shortly afterwards memorialised the Volksraad about, the dangers they were facing and "the absence of peace on a single side"(46). The remedy they suggested was that a Commission be despatched to conclude a treaty with Mswati, and that a commando be summoned to lend authority to their demands. Eventually, nearly two months later, a Kommissie Raad sat to consider this petition, and between the 6th and 10th of November it passed resolutions to the effect that the Republic should completely overhaul its relations with the surrounding chiefdoms, with a view to placing them on a more satisfactory footing. All written peace treaties previously concluded with Africans were to be considered null and void, and new ones, more conducive to the "general welfare" of the Republic, were to be submitted in their place. Once again the Swazi figured

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(44) S.A.A.R. Transvaal 3, (Cape Town, 1951), 606, W.F. Joubert to J.C. Steyn, 8 July 1854.

(45) Ibid.

(46) S.S. 9, 111-12, R 24/54 Memorial signed by W.J. Joubert to Volksraad, 16 Sept. 1854. A solution to the dispute between Mswati and Somcuba was high on their list of priorities. It was in point of fact the only dispute specifically mentioned.

prominently in these plans, not only in connection with the feud with Somcuba, but also as an agent of the Republic in implementing these policies, as it was also resolved that the assistance of Mswati should be obtained, "in accordance with an agreement earlier made with him" (47) to reduce the Republic's rebellious African subjects. The quid pro quo, it would seem, was the removal of Somcuba to a less provocative distance from the borders of Swaziland (48).

These resolutions underline the bankruptcy of Lydenburg's foreign policy at this time. The original resolutions of the petition of 16 September 1854 had been based on the assumption that a show of force, in conjunction with Commandant-Generals Pretorius and Potgieter, was the only satisfactory way of re-establishing the Republic's authority over neighbouring African peoples, but the Kommissie Raad's resolutions of November 1854 make it clear that such a project was hopelessly unrealistic. Far from raising re-inforcements from neighbouring communities, Lydenburg's military authorities had not even been able to persuade a sufficient number of burghers from their own Republic to take part in an ordinary negotiating mission to the Swazi (49). Unless the Republic had already come to some secret

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(47) As the Commission which the Petition of 16 Sept. 1854 resolved should go to Mswati never in fact left, owing to lack of cooperation by Commandant P.J. Coetzee and others (see S.A.A.R. Transvaal 3, 25-6, Kommissie Raad's meeting 18 Nov. 1854, Afd. 18-20) it seems that this must refer to the 1846 agreement. President Burgers later claimed that the Swazi at the time of this transaction had offered to "clean the land" which they had ceded, of other Africans.

(48) S.A.A.R. Transvaal 3, 22-5, Sitting of Kommissie Raads, 6 Nov. 1854, Afds 3-15; but see also below, 191.

(49) Above, note 47.

understanding with Mswati (50), its proposals were a hollow and meaningless sham. The entire strategy which they had formulated depended on obtaining the support of Mswati, and this would quite patently not be forthcoming without either the threat of coercion, or a meaningful concession on Somcuba.

Whether a Commission ever set out for Swaziland to implement the above resolutions, and if so whether it achieved anything are not recorded (51). The absence of any further mention of its activities in the Volksraad or Executive Council minutes suggests that it probably never departed at all, and the most likely explanation for this is to be found in the reports which reached Lydenburg in the middle of November, that a force of Mswati's was waiting on the other side of the Vaal River, with the intention of attacking the Boer settlements in the Republic as soon as the flood water subsided (52). Shortly afterwards, in mid-December, there followed still more airy rumours that Mswati's force was by now on the Boer side of the Crocodile River, and this was apparently enough to dissuade the Commission from setting out at all (53).

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(50) The heavy penalties threatened to anyone revealing information about the Raad's resolutions, and the omission of Afd. 7 from the Public Notice of these resolutions (this was the one making reference to the use of Mswati's forces - S.S. 9, 154), together with the provision for the removal of Somcuba to a place without caves (it was this that had saved him at the time of Mswati's earlier attack upon him), all raise suspicions on this score.

(51) A Commission to do so was provided for in Afd. 6 of the Kommissie Raad's Resolutions.

(52) S.S. 6, 321, R 721/54 P. Schutte, Commandant Mooi River to G.J. Kruger, Acting Commandant General, 14 Nov. 1854.

(53) S.S. 9, 164, R 371/54 J. de Clerq and others to P. Schutte, 11 Dec. 1854.

As the subsequent movements of this Swazi force went unremarked, it seems unlikely that the incursion did in fact materialise. However, in view of the many other lacunae in Lydenburg's records, one cannot entirely discount the possibility that these movements were in fact the prelude to an unrecorded attack on Somcuba. From later sources, it is known that Somcuba was killed by the Swazi at some time during this general period (54), and from the evidence supplied by Swazi oral traditions, it appears that his chiefdom was attacked in circumstances similar to these. The army evidently approached Somcuba's area while the Crocodile River was in flood, and achieved total surprise after crossing it by means of a human chain. Somcuba's village was thereupon obliterated, and contrary to Mswati's alleged instructions, Somcuba himself was also killed (55).

If the evidence for locating Somcuba's death at this particular juncture is flimsy, the chronology does at least have the merit of providing some explanation for the otherwise unaccountable thaw in Swazi/Boer relations, which took place in the first half of 1855, and which found expression in a treaty of cession between the Swazi and the Lydenburg Boers in July of that year. The background to this treaty is utterly obscure. The first that we hear about it is in the Volksraad minutes of July 1855,

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(54) S.S. 30, 480, R 3359/59, Interview of C. Potgieter with Swazi messengers, Lydenburg, 19 Dec. 1854.

(55) Myburgh, Carolina, 90; D. Steyn, 'Die Swazis' in De Hoevelder, 11 Feb. 1927; Kuper, 'Ritual', 230, note 3. According to Nachtigal ('Tagebuch', II, 237-8) the bulk of Somcuba's followers (amounting to a similar number to those of Maleo before he was attacked, that is, several thousand) thereafter stayed on the farms of the Boers.

where an offer by Mswati to part with more of his land is recorded, and only two and a half weeks later we find a formal treaty embodying this proposal already signed and sealed (56). What had happened in the period since the non-departing Boer Commission had been summoned by the Volksraad to go to Swaziland, to try and salvage something of Lydenburg's 'native policy', is a complete mystery.

It was subsequently assumed that fear of the Zulu was the main spur to Mswati's concluding the treaty, for by its terms a ten mile wide corridor along the northern bank of the Pongola River was ceded to the Boers, on condition that they should populate it with white settlers, and thus form a cordon sanitaire (57). However, even a glance at the history of the previous few years makes it clear that any agreement of this kind was highly improbable without preliminary solution to the question of Somcuba. Even were this not so, it is difficult to understand why the Swazi should have made this proposal at this particular time. Fear of Cetshwayo no doubt still loomed large in Swazi minds, and it is possible that they felt that only a substantial concession could repair their damaged relations with the Boers. But even so, the outlay does not seem to match the return, for the Zulu threat was far less conspicuous than it had been prior to 1852, and it is not difficult to imagine the Lydenburgers being happy with far less land than they ultimately obtained.

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(56) C. 2220, 293, Encl. 2 in No. 109, Appendix 'A', Treaty of Cession of 21 July 1855.

(57) C. 2220, 292, Encl. 2 in No. 109; C. 2252, 49, Frere to Hicks Beach, 24 Jan, 1879.

Moreover, to sustain the argument that this cession was in part a sort of indemnity for a foregoing Swazi incursion, one really requires stronger evidence for believing that an incursion actually took place. As has already been indicated, there is no hard evidence that Mswati's army ever crossed the Crocodile River in the December of 1854, only, as the Landdrost of Lydenburg observed at the time, "wild rumours, chiefly from the Kafirs of Sekwati and Mapoch", which even managed to attribute to Mzilikazi some part in the dispute (58). The last verified location of Mswati's forces late in 1854 was on the other side of the Vaal River, in the territory of Mlambo, the Nhlapo chief, and as Mswati is known to have been in conflict with Mlambo throughout this period, a far more plausible interpretation of these reports and rumours is that Mswati's forces had taken the field against the Nhlapo late in 1854 (59). One further piece of evidence, which also suggests that Somcuba was not disposed of at this time, is to be found in the resolution of the Volksraad dated 4 July 1855, which directed the Landdrost of Lydenburg to summon "two kaffirs from Sincoeba", to act as guides to a Commission that was going to Delagoa Bay (60). Once again this reference is not completely conclusive, since it is possible that Somcuba was already dead, and that these were simply some of his remaining followers. However, the form

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(58) S.S. 6, 321, R 721/54, P. Schutte, Commandant Mooi River to G.J. Kruger, Acting Commandant-General, 14 Nov. 1854.

(59) For the Nhlapo see below, 182-3.

(60) S.A.A.R. Transvaal 3, 87-8, Kommissie Raad's meeting, 4 July 1855, Arts. 9-12.

of words used, and the fact that they do not recur again in official documents, suggests that what is referred to here is a Somcuba who is both alive and well.

We are still left, therefore, with mystery over the date and the circumstances of Somcuba's death. The only remotely contemporaneous reference is to be found in 1859, when Swazi messengers to Lydenburg mentioned his having earlier met his death at Swazi hands (61). As for other Republican records, Somcuba's name simply fades from view after one final reference in the Volksraad minutes of July 1855. It is perhaps merely accidental that this last reference to Somcuba's name coincides with the first and only reference to Mswati's offer to cede more land to the Republic. It is, on the other hand, undeniably suggestive, particularly when, apart from the text of the 1855 treaty itself, there is no single further allusion to either event. Other lacunae in the Republic's records undoubtedly abound, but such a deafening silence about these two centrally important events in the history of Lydenburg can surely not be merely a matter of chance. More likely is the much more sinister conclusion that the removal of Somcuba was the stated or unstated condition of the 1855 cession. This would go a long way towards explaining why Mswati was prepared to sign away such a vast area of land, for only something of this sort could have bought Lydenburg's acquiescence in his plans. Moreover, if Mswati's primary goal was the short-term tactical one of eliminating Somcuba, and

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(61) S.S. 30, 480, R 3359/59, Interview of C. Potgieter with Swazi messengers, Lydenburg, 19 Dec. 1859.

not the long term strategic one of establishing a bulwark against the Zulu, then there was nothing to stop him from renegeing on the cession as soon as Somcuba was dead; and this in fact was what he subsequently did (62). Mswati could cede away this vast tract of land with perfect equanimity because he did not endow it with any finality. The cession was simply one more in a succession of diplomatic stratagems, whose validity would last as long as its immediate use. Once that ceased to be so, in Swazi eyes, it lapsed.

And lapse it rapidly did. The basic contradiction in the agreement from Lydenburg's point of view was, that once Somcuba was dead, its principal bargaining counter was gone. Mswati's fear of the Zulu did, admittedly, provide a continuing point of leverage, but even here Lydenburg's ability to help was coming increasingly in doubt. As part of the 1855 agreement the Lydenburgers were supposed to have occupied a strip of territory along the north bank of the Pongola River, to create a buffer against the Zulu, but no move in this direction was made until the early 1890s (63). Instead, the Swazi were forced to witness the galling spectacle of Zulu settlers from the other side of the Pongola River colonising the land they had left (64). Nor,

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(62) Below, 104-6.

(63) U.A., Briewe Boek 13, Rudolph to Shepstone, Memorandum on the present state of relations between the Transvaal Government and the Swazi king and people; personal communication, Richard Cornwell.

(64) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement by Cabanise and others, messengers from Mswati, 24 April 1860.

given Lydenburg's current state of military weakness, could the Swazi necessarily count on availing themselves of the right of refuge in the event of Zulu attack. Having burnt its fingers with Somcuba, the Republic was now far less inclined to accept refugees on that sort of scale, and five years later refused precisely that request from the Swazi, on the grounds that it would oblige them "to check and prevent Panda's commando which would occasion great difficulties and evils" (65). What remaining use the 1855 agreement had for the Swazi therefore vanished, and Mswati came instead to lean increasingly heavily on the good offices of the Natal government, keeping up a stream of communications to them, acquainting them of his intentions, requesting their permission for his actions, and constantly reaffirming his dependent status (66).

Symptomatic of Lydenburg's inability to fulfil the broader political obligations of the treaty was its failure to meet even its specific contractual terms. In its written version, the only explicit return for the cession was the payment of seventy cattle in two six monthly instalments, but even that proved beyond the parlous financial and administrative resources

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(65) L.L., I, 215, C. Potgieter to P.L.Uys (Landdrost) and J.D. van Collen (Commandant) Utrecht, 24 April 1860.

(66) See for instance T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement by Kwahlakwaha and others, 3 July 1857, "UmSwazi... wishes us first to say he has always looked on this Government as a friend and he has for years past always communicated with it on the occurrence of any difficulty or emergency. The whole country is in the hands of the Government. Whether nominally or not UmSwazi looks upon himself as a subject of this Government".

of the Republic, so that the balance remained unpaid (67). If the Swazi needed an excuse to repudiate the cession this gave them one, and in the following years they encroached systematically into the land bartered away. The earliest recorded incident was in 1858, when Mswati launched attacks into the chiefdoms of Mhlangampisi and Mhlangala located on the land ceded to the south-west of Swaziland (68). The lack of reaction on the part of the Lydenburg authorities to these attacks suggests that they considered their rights over these areas as flimsy as did the Swazi, and Mswati followed them up in 1860 by a renewed attack on Mhlangala and other campaigns in the north and north-east (69). Of more immediate significance were Mswati's attempts to reoccupy land in the north-west, which was considerably nearer the Lydenburg community, and of far greater importance to them for the winter grazing it contained. Prior to the treaty of cession this had been sparsely populated by Pai and Pulana chiefdoms, but in the late 1850s and early 1860s these had been either obliterated or expelled, to be replaced by royal villages under Mswati's wives or close lieutenants (70). The objectives of the exercise were of two distinct kinds. In its more modest form it was aimed at restoring control over the winter pasturage of the Komati valley, which was perhaps securest of all from

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(67) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 76-7; below, 253-4.

(68) Below, 181-2.

(69) Below, 182-3. According to the Berlin missionaries, the Lydenburg authorities forbade any white from settling in this territory for fear of creating friction with the Swazi, Berlin Missionsberichte, 1860, 62.

(70) Von Wielligh, Lebombo, 169-70; Myburgh, Barberton, 33-4, 47-8, 59; L 8, No. 9/56, J.M. de Beer to Kommissie Raad, 17 May 1856.

Zulu attack (71). At its most ambitious it was to set up military villages, which would serve as launching pads to take control of the eastern lowveld as a whole (72). Mswati was preparing to project himself into the role of Swaziland's "greatest fighting king" (73).

The Lydenburg authorities, or at least a section of them, did not let this go unchallenged, and the changing fortunes of the two parties in the dispute over the next decade provide a useful lens through which to view changing relationships in the region as a whole. Mswati drove in his first wedge, by taking advantage of what appear to be continuing factional divisions in the Lydenburg hierarchy. At this stage its two leading personalities were W.F. Joubert, the Commandant-General, and Cornelius Potgieter, Chairman of the Volksraad, and political heir to J.J. Burgers's Volksraad party (74). Judged by his later utterances, Potgieter was strongly opposed to the idea of allowing the Swazi to resettle parts of the ceded territory (75). Joubert on the other hand was much more amenable, and without consulting either the Volksraad or Potgieter, gave permission to the Swazi to occupy the land north of the Crocodile River

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(71) S.S. 30, 480, R 3359/59, Interview between C. Potgieter and 2 captains of Mswati, 19 Dec. 1859; below, 149-50.

(72) Myburgh, Barberton, 33-4, 47-8, 59; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 31.

(73) Kuper, Aristocracy, 15.

(74) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 10, 17; Wichmann, 'Wordings-geskiedenis', 130, note 47.

(75) V.R.B., 13 June 1859, Art. 39; S.S., 30, 480, R 3359/59, Interview between Potgieter and several messengers, 19 Dec. 1859.

up to the edge of the Drakensburg range (76). His reasons for behaving in this fashion are difficult to unravel, but it is likely that he was actuated by that mixture of personal and public interests which seem common to most officials in the Republic at the time, particularly those charged with military matters. Joubert had evidently been in bad standing with the Swazi, ever since the position he took up on the Somcuba affair. As a result he had received little of the cooperation he might otherwise have expected, and was held responsible in some quarters for the lack of labour and tribute (77). It seems quite likely therefore that by giving Mswati the run of the lowveld he was seeking a means of repairing that relationship, or at least trying to prevent it coming under greater strain, with a view to securing those various advantages which a closer friendship with the Swazi would presumably bring.

If these were arguments that influenced Joubert, they were not the kind that would appeal to his rivals, and within the year he had been taken up on his offer to resign (78). Even now Potgieter did not act on the question of encroachment, and in the end it was the Swazi and not Potgieter who broached the matter, when Mswati sent envoys to the Republic in December 1859. At least one of Mswati's objectives is evident from the

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(76) Ibid, 479-80.

(77) L 8 No. 9/56, J.M. de Beer to Kommissie Raad, 17 May 1856.

(78) S.S., 33, 418-9, R 3800/60, 12 June 1860; Van Heerden, 'Die Kommandant', 17, 58.

transcript of that interview (79). Joubert was no longer in a position of authority, and Mswati felt the need for some confirmation of his actions from the other officials of the Republic. Why Mswati was so anxious to get that is less clear, but it was probably related to Mswati's fear of Zulu reprisals for his attacks on chiefdoms in the south. That being so, Mswati was envisaging a setback to his plans, for it is clear that the Republic would demand the recognition of its sovereignty, if not some other more material gain. This in fact is what happened when Potgieter replied to Mswati's message by demanding the payment of three substantial tusks of ivory for the right to occupy his land. Mswati's response to Potgieter's demand is illuminating, for it reveals his continued commitment to expansion, as well as the kind of manoeuvring that was possible in such a fluid situation. Some two and a half months later the Swazi envoys returned bearing only a fraction of the tribute, the relative inadequacy of which was apparently carefully gauged. Instead of the three large tusks of ivory demanded, they brought with them two very inferior ones, giving as their excuse that Mswati had not been able to lay his hands on any more (80). This was as transparently feeble to Potgieter as it is to the modern historian, for Potgieter had also said that they could bring oxen as an alternative if ivory were not at hand, but it was enough to secure Mswati's basic aims. On the one hand a connection was maintained with

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(79) S.S., 30, 479-82, R 3359/59, Interview between C. Potgieter and Swazi messengers, Lydenburg, 18 February 1859.

(80) S.S. 33, 74-5, R 3620, Statement by messengers from Mswati, 18 Feb. 1860.

Lydenburg at a time when the possibility of Zulu attacks was becoming daily more real; on the other, the right of the Republic to levy any specific quantity of tribute had been denied, leaving Mswati in a position to argue at some later stage that the ivory had been a gift, implying no acknowledgement of Republican sovereignty over the occupied ground. Potgieter was only too well aware of the implications of the act, and gave vent to his irritation by remarking that the envoys would not even have brought the first two tusks had it not been for the threatening demeanour of Mpande (81). Potgieter was right, but there was nothing he could do, and, with relations soured but not yet severed, the messengers made their way back home.

The messengers took back a demand for the outstanding tusks of ivory, but it is clear from the tenor of their previous conversations, that they had little intention of complying with these terms (82). However, during their absence from Swaziland the situation had changed; rumours of a Zulu invasion had hardened into concrete intelligence, creating panic out of the previous climate of unease (83). Mswati's intransigence in these circumstances understandably vanished. The outstanding ivory reached Lydenburg in the latter part of February, and a few weeks later the Swazi were petitioning the Republic to take

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(81) Ibid.

(82) Ibid.

(83) S.S. 33, 326, R 3756/60, C. Potgieter to President and Volksraad, 23 May 1860; L.L. 1, 123, J.J. Combrink to C. Potgieter, 30 April 1860, 173, G.J. Joubert to C. Potgieter, 24 April 1860, 215, C. Potgieter to P.L. Uys etc. 24 April 1860.

refuge in its lands (84).

One could conclude from all this that Mswati had miscalculated, and in one sense Mswati obviously had. The South African Republic had never been particularly keen on the idea of Zulu armies pursuing Swazi refugees into the heart of its territory, and the behaviour of Mswati over the previous few months had ensured they would do all they could to keep his people out. Mswati had also jeopardised his territorial ambitions. The extra ivory had implied a recognition of the Republic's territorial rights, and it may have taken this opportunity to consolidate its claims by handing over the balance of cattle owing on the 1855 cession, and by making a new treaty with one of the chiefs in the south-west (85). Yet in other ways the situation was not as bleak as it seemed. The Zulu had not invaded, which partially vindicated Mswati's longer-term calculations, and even if they had, Mswati would almost certainly have taken refuge in the Republic whether it liked it or not. Indeed it seems likely that Mswati took the precaution of

(84) S.S. 33, 79 R 3620/60, interview with messengers from Mswati, probably March 1860.

(85) The situation with the balance of the payment is unclear, see for example Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 76-7; S.A.A.R. Transvaal 4, (Cape Town, 1952), 410, Report of expenditure 1 Nov. 1860 to 31 Dec. 1860, Payment of debt to Mswati, 664 Rds; P.P. 1878-9, C 2316, 23, Encl. 2 in No. 15. With the treaties things are more clear, S.A.A.R. Transvaal 4, 332, Treaty between Mantlapies (Mhlangampisi) and the S.A.R., 20 July 1860; see also S.S. 33, 416, R 3799/60, Declaration by 3 Swazi messengers at Lydenburg, 12 June 1860.

lodging his cattle in the ceded territory in open defiance of the Republic's objections, and then went on to stake a further claim to the disputed territory by using their presence there as a lever to persuade his reluctant followers to set up villages deeper into it than had previously been the case (86). Covertly, if not overtly, the process of expansion still went on.

What one sees in these events is an emerging contradiction between substance and form. The Swazi had formally acknowledged Republican rights to the area, but in practice were simultaneously repudiating them on the ground, and there was little chance of the Republic converting the one kind of recognition into the other unless Mpande actually decided to attack. The same contradiction runs through most of the next year. In June 1860 when new villages were still being populated in the ceded territory, Mswati sent messengers to the Commandant-General of Lydenburg asking permission to be allowed to attack Maleo and Sekwati and recover the cattle that they had seized from Somcuba. Van Dyk sent back the uncompromising reply that Mswati had no right to send a commando into Republican territory without direct orders from the Commandant-General himself, and to this rebuke Mswati meekly submitted (87). The following month Mswati's messengers were back asking for an escort to bring a Swazi marriage party back from the Zoutpansberg, and again this was couched in equally humble terms. "He could easily send a

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(86) U.W.A., A845, A. Merensky, 'Tagebuch unserer Reise zu den Swazi Kaffern', March-May 1860, 36-8; L.L.I., 215, G.J. Joubert to P.L. Uys, Landdrost Utrecht, 24 April 1860.

(87) S.S. 33, 418-19, R 3800/60, Interview between J. van Dyk (Commandant-General), C. Potgieter (Landdrost) and G.J. Joubert (Commandant) and the Swazi messengers Zies, Makwazietel and Mabokwan, 12 June 1860.

commando to fetch the woman back", Mswati said, "but that would not be showing obedience". He consequently asked for the Republic's help in the matter (88).

The Republic complied with Mswati's request, as much out of suspicion as anything else, but this was to be the last it heard of obedience for some considerable time (89). The underlying trend of Swaziland's relations with the Republic since the early 1850s had been in the direction of a growing dependence of the latter on the former, which was only occasionally checked by threats of Zulu attack, and after 1861 that trend reasserted itself for the rest of Mswati's reign (90). Supporting it now were two new elements in the situation. The first was the civil conflict in the South African Republic, which broke out in 1862 and was only resolved in 1864, and which paralysed the Boers in their dealings with blacks. The second was the Shangane succession dispute, which entered a new phase in 1862, when the Swazi entered the lists on the side of the defeated party of Mawewe. From the Swazi point of view these two conflicts were linked. The civil war in the South African Republic enabled many African chiefdoms to shrug off the last remnants of

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- (88) S.S. 34, 49-51, R 3852/60, C. Potgieter to S. Schoeman (Commandant-General, Schoemansdal), 18 July 1860; L.L. 1, 199-192, S. Schoeman to C. Potgieter, 21 July 1860.
- (89) S.S. 34, 50-1, R 3852/60, C. Potgieter to S. Schoeman, 18 July 1860.
- (90) In June of that year for example, the Republic requested Mswati's assistance to 'root out' Mapoch, S.S. 40, 8, meeting of G.J. Joubert with four representatives of Mswati, 6 June 1861. Mswati refused on the grounds that an epidemic of measles was raging among his people, S.S. 45, 112, 115, Resolution of Krygsraad, Art. 4, no. 3, 22 Jan. 1862.

Republican control, and so further imperiled an already precarious labour supply (91). The Shangané civil war permitted the Swazi to range over huge areas of lowveld in the modern Eastern Transvaal and southern Mozambique, and from there to secure the captives of which the Boers were desperately in need. Taken together they denote a major realignment of forces, which had profound repercussions for the area as a whole.

Enough is known of the Transvaal civil war and its impact on black-white relations for us to pass over it here. What stands in need of further clarification is the emergence of the Swazi as the principal captive trading state in south-eastern Africa. In the next chapter I suggest that it may have had something to do with the stratification of Swazi society, and the role that captives came to play in a more agriculturally orientated economy (92). For our present purposes, however, all that needs to be shown is the existence of slaves on a fairly large scale in the Swazi economy, and a substantial traffic in this commodity to the Boers of the Transvaal. Both points are as easily attested as they are difficult to compute. Hilda Kuper has hinted at the importance of slaves in the Swazi economy, and other sources bear her out (93). According to Ndambi Mkhonta, the Ezulwini village once boasted large numbers of captives, and the same is likely to be true of all royal capitals (94).

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(91) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 106, 233-5; De Vaal, 'Rol', 65-104.

(92) Below, 175-6.

(93) Kuper, Aristocracy, 67-8.

(94) Interview Ndambi Mkhonta.

Other examples which I have come across without directly questioning on the subject are those of the Dube, who were attacked and made captive during the reign of Mswati, and of the Thabede who suffered a similar fate at much the same time (95). Sources for captives fell in two broad categories, although the distinction was probably blurred in the early days of the state. The first group comprised non-Swazi, who were raided outside their kingdom's boundaries (the Titfunjwa) (96). In Sobhuza's early conflicts with the chiefdoms of Magoboyi and Mkize, for example, captives were taken, and their presence in Swazi society was used in later years to justify Mswati's right to cede the eastern Trans-vaal(97). Later it was the Tsonga who bore the brunt of these attacks, and it was they who were most usually traded as slaves. The other major source of supply were children seized from households within the Swazi kingdom (the Tigcili) (98). As Tikuba told Stuart in 1898,

It often happened that when a person was killed for some crime or other and his cattle and children seized, those children were taken by the Swazi and sold to the Boers in the Transvaal. (99)

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- (95) Interview Mlingwa Dube, Machango Kunene, 17 May 1970, Mpholonjeni, Swaziland; interview with Thabede and Khumalo informants, 21 July 1970, Kwendzeni, Swaziland. For other references see Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 30-1, interview with Zwane Gwebu, Helehele, 8 Dec. 1973, 48, interview with Paul Mndonga Ngubane, Evusweni, 11 March 1974.
- (96) Kuper, Aristocracy, 67-8.
- (97) S.S. 30, 481-2, R 3359/59, Interview between C. Potgieter and the Swazi messengers Kappoen and Makwasitiel, 19 Dec. 1859.
- (98) Kuper Aristocracy, 67-8.
- (99) S.P. 30091, Tikuba, 27 Nov. 1898.

The Berlin missionary, Merensky, reported on similar practices after his visit to Swaziland in March 1860. "Even now" he wrote in his diary,

if a man of his [Mswati's] people has many daughters or good cattle his soldiers come, surround the Kraal, murder the old, and take the young people and cattle as booty. Children are being sold or given to the 'great of the realm'. (100)

And this seems to have been precisely what happened in the Thabede example just given (101).

Children captured in these ways were often sold in the Transvaal. There is evidence that captives were given in return for the assistance lent by the Boers during the Zulu invasion of 1847, and as the 1850s wore on the traffic seems to have grown increasingly regular (102). "The first white man to visit Swaziland", Stuart was told by Giba and Mnkonkoni,

was a Boer named Ngalonkulo. He was accompanied by Potolozi said to be president Kruger's father. Kruger also came to [the] country in [the] early days to hunt elephants as well as [to] purchase Tonga children with horses and oxen from Swazis who had raided the children from the Tongas. Other Boers made similar purchases. (103)

In 1863 a messenger from the ex-king Mawewe to Natal commented in similar vein, stating that,

While at Umswazi's three months back a party of Boers brought 30 horses and 20

(100) U.W.A., A 845, Merensky, 'Tagebuch', 41.

(101) Interview Thabede and Khumalo.

(102) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 49; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1860, 267-8; De Vaal, 'Rol', 7-8.

(103) S.P. 30091, 85, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 25 Nov. 1895.

guns in exchange with Umswazi for slaves. The Boers wanted 2 people for each horse, but Umswazi refused to give them more than one. Upon this negotiations were broken off and the Boers went away.

Umayi added that,

This trade is very commonly carried on by Umswazi and is supplied by captives of war or confiscated families among his subjects. (104)

The exact proportions of the trade are difficult to calculate either absolutely or in relation to the total intake of the Trans-vaal. The Landdrost of Lydenburg's control book of inboekings lists four hundred and thirty children booked into service between August 1851 and April 1866, but these entries fail either to specify their origin, or to include many of those impressed in a variety of other ways (as for instance through field-cornets) (105). Certain impressions can nevertheless be gained. The first is that the Swazi were by far and away the most important dealers in captives in the eastern Trans-vaal. Wherever the actual origin of the captive is specified it is almost always the Swazi who are so named, and at least two of the bulges in the number of slaves booked in at the Lydenburg Landdrosty can be correlated with engagements in which the Swazi took captives and/or were concerned as a result to maintain the goodwill of the Trans-vaal (106). It is also possible to discern the trade changing over time. To begin with captives seemed to have been given by the Swazi as a kind of prestation in order to cement the political alliance

(104) S.N.A. 1/6/2, No. 121, Statement by Umayi, messenger from Langa, 16 Nov. 1863.

(105) L.L. 172, Landdrost Kontrol Boek, Inboek Kaffers 1851-1878.

(106) Ibid, 1855-1856, 1860-1862.

which was developing with the Boers, and the trade appears to have remained on that level until the mid to late 1850s.

Thereafter, with the onset of the Republican and Shangane civil wars, a major expansion took place. Stepping into the vacuum left by both the Shangane and the Boers the Swazi ranged all over the lowveld in an ever broadening search for ivory, cattle and captives. Looking back on these events in 1899 Grandjean wrote of,

ten years of battles and of 'razzias' from which the country has still not recovered. Initially there were five years of continual wars when one could not even think of working in the fields. People survived on roots and branches of palms. Women and children followed armies to have their part of the meagre booty. For the next five years there was less fighting but people were ceaselessly on the lookout. Each year Mawewe's people came back to ravage fields and burn villages. (107)

Other sources confirm this tale of war and devastation. In 1868 Albasini, the Secretary of Native Affairs in the Zoutpansberg, complained to the Governor of Mozambique that,

This district is in the greatest possible distress given rise to by the continual kaffir wars which since the beginning of 1864 have wasted not only this district but as far as the English colony [and] have caused a complete standstill in trade, (108)

and the following year the traveller Erskine was told by people

(107) A. Grandjean, 'Une page d'Histoire inédite. L'Invasion des Zoulous dans le Sud-est Africain', Bulletin de la Societé Neuchateloise de Geographie, II, (1899), 85.

(108) A.B.B. Serie 1868, No. 3, Albasini to Governor, 1868.

on the southern banks of the Limpopo that,

they had at one time kept cattle but that the Swazi had so plundered and harrassed them that they had ceased to keep any. (109)

A proportion of the captives acquired on these campaigns were absorbed directly into Swazi society. In 1859 an epidemic had carried off large numbers of Swazi, and at least some of the captives went to make good that loss (110). Still others, perhaps the majority, were traded to the Boers, and there are signs from 1860 of an upswing in supply. When the Berlin missionaries Merensky and Grutzner visited Swaziland in February of that year they were asked to take captives to Lydenburg and trade a horse in return, and by December one may even be seeing signs of a surfeit of supply when Mswati failed to dispose of eight of his captives at a satisfactory price (111). Fragments of information from the Lydenburg records give evidence of the continued vigour of the trade, but even then may well conceal the full proportions it assumed (112). In May 1864, for example, Maleo's Bakopa were almost annihilated, and large numbers of their children were traded to the Boers. According to the Berlin missionaries, something like five hundred Bakopa captives were taken by the Swazi, of whom the majority eventually found their way into Boer hands, yet one finds only a dozen or so appearing

(109) St. V.W. Erskine, 'Journey of Exploration to the Mouth of the River Limpopo', Journal of the Royal Geographical Society XXXIX, (1869), 244.

(110) T.S.C. Case 22, (Swazi documents...), statement by Xabanisa, messenger from Mswati, 4 Oct. 1859.

(111) L19, 99-101, G.J. Joubert to C. Potgieter 21 Dec. 1860.

(112) L.L. 177, C. Potgieter and J. van Dyk to G.J. Joubert, 24 July 1862; S.A.A.R. Transvaal 4, 411, Report of expenditure 1 July 1861 to 30 Sept. 1861; *ibid*, Dagboek, 12 Oct. 1863, 22 Oct. 1863, 3 Feb. 1864, 14 April 1865; L.L. 172, Landdrost Kontrol Boek, Inboek Kaffer, 1851-1878.

in the Landdrost of Lydenburg's diary, while the official inboeking register is if anything down (113). All one can say therefore is that from 1860 there appears to have been an appreciable increase in the trade, which reached its peak in the year or so after Maleo's fall, but that its volume cannot be even approximately estimated, and with our present documentary sources will probably never be known.

If the disposal of the Bakopa captives marks the peak of the trade, the attack that preceded it was itself the culmination of a trend. Like many other petty chiefdoms in the northern and eastern Trans-vaal the Bakopa had always chafed under the constraints of Boer control, and had been one of the earliest to acquire firearms to resist their demands (114). Because of their numbers and their terrain they were not as successful as their neighbours Sekwati and Mabhogo, but their position gradually improved in the 1850s as that of Lydenburg declined. The civil war in the Trans-vaal greatly accelerated the process, so much so that once it was over the Boers could not re-establish control. The Republic's failure against the Bakopa illustrates the straits into which it had sunk, for they were hardly a powerful chiefdom by the standards of the Trans-vaal. Others could, and many did, follow the same example, and the South African Republic was driven to rely increasingly heavily on the

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(113) Berliner Missionsberichte, 1865, 207; Merensky, Erinnerungen, 54; L.L. 179, Dagboek 1864-8, 7-8, 15, 62, 200, 218, 222-3; L.L. 172, Landdrost Kontrol Boek, Inboek Kaffers, 1851-1878.

(114) Above, 127.

help of the Swazi to retain their political and military control. In 1864 Swazi help was enlisted against Maleo, and a few months later against Mabhogo, and in 1867 a plea went out for help against the disunited Venda in the north (115). What was happening was a basic shift of power relations, with the Swazi now fulfilling many of the positions of the Boers.

The last pieces of the jigsaw to be fitted into position are the objectives of the Swazi in trading on this scale. To some this may seem self evident; in its earlier phases the trade had been prosecuted for primarily political purposes, and those rewards would presumably grow in rough proportion to the trade. In the 1860s, however, one can detect a new factor in the equation, with the emphasis gradually shifting to the goods received in return. Again this might be viewed as a purely 'natural' progression, since such reciprocatory gifts had always figured in the trade. The difference in this case was in the type of goods solicited, and it is here that one sees a certain re-orientation of the trade. One of the earliest hints of what was happening comes from Merensky and Grutzner's account of their visit to Mswati in April 1860. Merensky and Grutzner were requesting permission to establish a mission in Swaziland, and despite a delay caused by Mswati's taking refuge from the Zulu, were initially optimistic at the response they received. Mswati seemed to welcome the prospect of their secretarial

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(115) S.S. 50, R 905/63, van Dyk to Kruger, 2 Dec. 1863, Staatscourant, 14 June 1864; Wangemann, Sekoekoeni, 62-3; S.S. 89, R 752/67, Albasini to President and Executive Council, 20 July 1867; L.L. 177, 295, Statement by J.A. de Beer, 11 March 1864.

services, and was prepared to let his children be taught in a school they would run. The handling of correspondence missionaries could readily agree to, but it was not long before they were faced with more difficult demands. In return for the favours he was conferring on them Mswati also wanted more concrete returns, the most important of which were the gift of a gun they were carrying, and a horse from Lydenburg when the missionaries returned. Merensky and Grutzner interpreted this as the thin edge of the wedge, which it probably was, and were promptly ejected from the kingdom when they refused Mswati's demands (116). As they returned they learnt of other duties which Mswati had envisaged them performing, like the building of a European house, his 'straw house' being too warm; the building of a bridge over the river at Hhohho; teaching him to shoot; and helping in the hunting, so that white hunters could be excluded and he could get the ivory for himself (117). One hesitates on this evidence to call it a programme of selective modernisation (118). What is clear however is Mswati's desire to secure horses and guns, and the services of the missionaries, both to lessen his dependence on the Boers of the Trans-vaal, and to increase his control over his own natural resources, as the former grew less serviceable, and the latter more scarce (119).

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(116) Wangemann, Sekoekoeni, 15-16, 23-5; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1860, 64; S.S. 33, 342, R 3762/60, Merensky and Grutzner to Ex.Co., 27 March 1860.

(117) U.W.A., A 845, Merensky, 'Tagebuch', 96.

(118) U.W.A.; A. 845, Merensky, 'Tagebuch', 103-4; L.L. 177, 100-102, Statement of G. Endres, 19 Nov. 1862; ibid, 110-11, Statement of A.F. de Beer, 1 Dec. 1862. Somewhat later Merensky tried to trade back some of the Bakopa captives from the Swazi, but they would only consider trading them for guns, Berliner Missionsberichte, 1873, 75, 358.

(119) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 34-5.

The same pre-occupation with horses and guns runs through the rest of his reign, although our information on both subjects is often garbled and scarce. Considering the clandestine nature of the trade, this is hardly surprising. Traffic in horses and guns was against the law of the Republic, which meant that it was not the sort of information people would readily divulge. Moreover, given the importance of Swazi services to leading officials and to the Republic, it is likely that they turned a blind eye to such breaches as did occur. Finally, to make these transactions still more difficult to unravel, there may well have been a quasi - legitimate trade operating at one remove, in which the Portuguese or British bought captives for guns and horses, and then traded them to the Boers for other goods again. As a result, the only glimpses one catches of the traffic are chance comments like that made by the messenger from Mawewe, or where disputes over payment were referred to Natal (120). Whether this is enough to establish the trade of captives for firearms is obviously debateable, and one may be wiser for the moment to separate the two trades. That both grew in the 1860s is clear from the documents, but the extent to which they were exchanged for one another is more difficult to pin down. The evidence of the messenger from Mawewe suggests that this happened, but without further documentation we cannot be sure.

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(120) Above, 155; L.L. 177, 151-2, Statement by Swazi messengers, 10 Aug. 1863, 262, letter to Gov. Natal, 24 Nov. 1863.

Summing up this survey of relations between the South African Republic and the Swazi in the last decade of Mswati's reign, perhaps the most striking thing about them is the contradiction that emerges between political substance and legal form. In 1855 the South African Republic had acquired rights to a massive tract of land stretching from the Pongola to the Komati and had got confirmation in 1860 and again in 1866; their strength against the Swazi seemed hardly in doubt. On the ground, the situation was almost completely the reverse, at least in the few years before Mswati's death. The Swazi retained effective control over the area east of the escarpment, and intervened in numerous polities which were nominally controlled by the Boers. More generally the Republic was reliant on the Swazi for a whole variety of services in military, commercial, and economic spheres. The significance of this contrast must obviously be evaluated, and varies with the perspective from which it is approached. It could be argued that Mswati had mortgaged his kingdom's future by being unaware of the enduring nature of written treaties and cessions. On the other hand, it could equally well be contended that these considerations were immaterial to the politics of the time. For the Swazi, the treaties and their provisions were simply a reflection of current strengths and current needs, and could easily be superceded when those strengths and needs changed. Thus in the same way that the Boers exploited their position of relative strength in securing the treaty of 1855, the Swazi exploited theirs in the years thereafter by diluting or abrogating its

principal provisions. In reality the written treaty was largely irrelevant to both sides. What counted was the power to enforce it or to set it aside. And this of course leads on to the further conclusion that where there was the power to enforce, the treaty was redundant. Documents, particularly in the nineteenth century African context could be fabricated, provocations engineered, and this indeed would probably have happened had not the British intervened. In the last analysis, therefore, it must be concluded that it was not the enduring quality of the treaty that the Swazi failed to perceive, but the massive changes which took place in the balance of power of the region after the annexation of the Transvaal, and the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, neither of which they could have readily foreseen.

## CHAPTER V

## DEEPENING AND WIDENING OF DLAMINI POWER

1852-1865

The final years of Mswati's reign had as far reaching repercussions internally as they did in foreign affairs. Externally Mswati used his freedom from foreign challenge to restructure relations with neighbouring powers. Inside of Swaziland he took advantage of the same lull to consolidate his domestic administration, without having to worry about denying an internal constituency to enemies abroad. The precise nature of these changes, the circumstances which brought them about, and the way in which they impinged on Swaziland's relations with the Zulu, the Portuguese and the Shangane are the subject of the present chapter.

For Mswati, 1852 was a year of almost unrelieved disaster. Under the impact of invasion and foreign occupation, large numbers of Swazi had fled to neighbouring states, and one can only presume that this was just the visible tip of a much larger submerged group, whose loyalty wavered during the crisis. Once the Zulu armies had departed, Mswati took steps to weed out the waverers and sought to eradicate the conditions which had brought him so near to collapse. The strategy he adopted fell into two distinct parts, each of which had been tentatively developed even before the attack. Some time after the Zulu invasion of 1847, Mswati had evacuated his capital from Ekufiyeni

to Hhohho, which had meant shifting the main locus of royal power considerably further to the north, and after the occupation of 1852 Mswati greatly accelerated this process by allocating numerous chiefdoms in the area to his brothers and his wives (1). By siting his capital north of the Komati River, Mswati gained the twin advantages of greater distance from the Zulu, and greater proximity to the Boers, among whom he could shelter his cattle in the event of Zulu attack, but the bulk of his kingdom still lay south of the Komati, and it was there that he still needed to strengthen his grip. The steps he took in this direction had again been foreshadowed in the early years of his reign. In the early 1840s, Mswati's mother Thandile had pressed through a number of reforms aimed at stabilising royal power, and in the same period one finds one of the earliest invasions of Emakhandzambile autonomy, when Mswati expelled the Maseko from the Lusutfu valley to Embhuleni (2). After

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- (1) It is difficult to date these developments exactly. One clue, however, is that the first chiefdom in that area was assigned to Mswati's wife, La Nyandza, as a consolation for the execution of her father Magongo who had been accused of conspiring with Somcuba after he had fled - probably between 1849 and the early 1850s. Thereafter this was subdivided and other chiefdoms were added until Ndzingeni, Vusweni, Nkamazi, Mshingishingini, Ka-Ndwandwe, Sidwashini, Mgundundlovu, Nsangwini, Nginamadvolu, Ludlawini, Helehele and others had been established. S.P. 30096, Tikuba, 18 Dec. 1898 "q"; Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 22, 46-7, Mgobozane Dlamini, 13 Oct. 1973, 10 Feb. 1974, 23, Mhambi Nkambule, n.d., Samuel Dlamini, Oct. 1973, 25, La Matobhi Mavimbela, Oct. 1973, 48, Paul Mdonga Ngubane, 11 March 1974; interview Manyonyoba Magagula, 4 June 1970, Ndzingeni, Swaziland; interview Mambazu and Macala Vilakati, Makhambane Motsa, 4-5 June, Ndzingeni, Swaziland; interview Majahane Dlamini; interview Nkunzi Shongwe, Ganinjobo Dlamini, Mtondzeki Mamba, 5 June 1970, Vusweni, Swaziland; interview Mtutwanana Shabalala, 23 June 1970, Nkamazi, Swaziland.
- (2) Above, 80, Myburgh, Carolina, 84-5; S.P. 30091, 86, Giba and Mnkonkoni, 26 Nov. 1898.

1852, the pace speeded up as can be seen in the wave of assaults on Emakhandzambile chiefs. Whether these were prompted by any overt disloyalty on the part of the Emakhandzambile chiefdoms during the invasion, or whether the invasion merely focussed attention on their rather ambiguous position is difficult to tell. All that we know is that, in one way or another, nearly all the Emakhandzambile chiefdoms experienced an encroachment on their autonomies in the period that followed. Of the nineteen of which I have definite information, fourteen suffered in some way or other at Mswati's hands, and in the cases of the others it required the intervention of special factors or unusual circumstances to save them from a similar fate (3). Thus the Mnisi, the Thabede, the Gamedze, the Mngometfulo, the Sifundza, the Masilela, and the Mavimbela were all attacked by Mswati's forces, and it is also reported that the chiefdoms of the Mahlalela and Moyeni's Magagula would have been accorded similar treatment had it not been for the intercession of chance on the

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(3) I possess no information on the Bhembe or Gwebu chiefdoms. As for the chiefdoms that survived unscathed, three are from the same root - the two Maziya chiefdoms and the Mahlalela chiefdom, and seem to have some early undefined connection with the Dlamini. This presumably accounts for their favourable treatment (although even then the Mahlalela came very close to being attacked - see below, 114, 190, note 59). Interview Mphundle Maziya; interview Gija Mahlalela; interview Mandanda Mtetwa and Mkhabela, 23 April 1970, Sigodzi, Swaziland. The Thabede chiefdom that survived untouched probably did so at the expense of the neighbouring Thabede chiefdom that was decimated (interview Mashabhane Magagula; interview Mandlabovu Fakudze), while the Magagula chiefdom which Mswati left alone had already been crushed by Sobhuza (interview Mankwempe Magagula; A.M. Dlamini, unpublished notes on Magagula history, January 1970).

one hand and a royal relative on the other (4). As for the others, their autonomies were no less completely restricted with the Ngwenya, the Dhladhla, the Mncina and Moyeni's Magagula being demoted and placed under trusted officers of the king (5). The Emakhandzambile had become the first casualties of peace.

However, to say Mswati was rationalising his control, or whittling away at Emakhandzambile autonomies does not tell us very much, and it is also important to ask controls over what, and with what objects in mind? For the sake of analytical clarity I will distinguish three levels of control, in economic, political and ritual spheres, although as we will see, these are in the end dimensions of the same thing. Of the three it is often ritual rivalries that are remembered most vividly today. Explanations of conflict framed in ritual or magical terms must obviously be treated with considerable caution, since they can easily be no more than a convenient shorthand for a more complex causation, or simply a device for explaining conflict away. However, with the Swazi, there are signs that there are more to such explanations than simply mystifying conflict of a more material kind. Sobhuza's attack on Mnjoli Magagula underlines this point. When Sobhuza occupied central Swaziland, one of his earliest campaigns was against Mnjoli's branch of the

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- (4) Interview Mboziswa Mnisi; interview Mashabhane Magagula; interview Mhawu Gamedze, Loshina Gamedze, Moyeni Mamba, 29 June 1970, Mandlenya, Swaziland; interview Mandlabovu Fakudze; interview Mjole Sifundza; interview Hehhane Ngwenya; Bryant, Olden Times, 341-4; Kuper, Aristocracy, 16; M.P., MS 1478, Miller, 'Short History' 17; interview Mahloba Gumede.
- (5) Interview Hehhane Ngwenya; interview Guzana Mncina; interview Loncayi Hlophe; interview Mahloba Gumede; interview Mankwempe Magagula.

Magagula. Part of his reason was because the Magagula were in occupation of the choice Ezulwini valley, but what made Sobhuza doubly determined to break Mnjoli's power were the rain-making attributes he reputedly enjoyed. As a general rule in southern Africa, Sotho chiefdoms have enjoyed a greater reputation for rain-making than their Nguni counterparts, and Sobhuza was sufficiently anxious to assure himself of Mnjoli's medicines to have him allegedly slit open when he thought they had been swallowed (6). By this or some other means the Magagula's rain-making powers were appropriated, and from this derived much of his vaunted power in this field. However, what Sobhuza neglected to do was to extend the same policy to other Emakhandzambile chiefdoms, whose ritual authority remained largely intact. The challenge that this came to represent to royal authority is difficult to understand, unless one appreciates the close identification between religious and political activities in Swazi thought. In common with most other pre-capitalist societies, nineteenth century Swazi society did not conceptualise its various activities in terms of discrete and sharply defined categories of religion, politics, economics and so on. Religious and secular life were interwoven with each other at all levels, and no hard and fast division existed in every day life between religious and political roles. Consequently, as in medieval Europe where religious schism was automatically equated with political secession, in Swaziland

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(6) Above, 41.

the assertion of independent religious or magical powers almost invariably connoted an attempt to usurp political powers as well. Moreover, because of the interchangeability of these two fields of action, a political challenge was expressed as often as not in religious or magical terms. The political significance of this cosmology can be seen at its starkest in the iNcwala celebrations, where ritual subordination to the king was a declaration of personal loyalty, and where a failure to participate represented an act of revolt (7). In much the same way, the simple retention of magical and religious powers by various of the Emakhandzambile chiefdoms was liable to be interpreted by Mswati as a potential threat to his position, for it not only challenged his ritual ascendancy, but also emphasised links with their independent past, which in turn could be viewed as a kind of cultural separatism. As a result, the desire to eliminate ritual autonomies figured prominently in Mswati's motives for attacking Emakhandzambile chiefs. The clearest and least ambiguous example can be found in the case of the Mnisi, who were attacked because their pretensions as rain-makers rivalled those of Mswati, but similar elements were present in a number of other clashes (8). Thus, according to some accounts, Shewula, the Sifundza chief, is supposed to have compounded his other crimes by asserting his ritual autonomy, while both the Mngometfulu and one section of the Mahlalela seem to have underpinned their political ambitions with extensive

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(7) Kuper, 'Ritual', 230, note 3, 239; Kuper, Aristocracy, 223-5.

(8) Interview Mboziswa Mnisi.

claims to magical and ritual powers (9).

Despite the emphasis placed on ritual factors in some accounts of this period, it is also evident that Mswati was activated by specifically political designs. Some kind of political or institutional reform was certainly long overdue. Swaziland remained the deeply stratified society it had been in Sobhuza's time, combining the elements of political exclusion at the centre and a wide measure of autonomy outside, which was a ready-made prescription for political unrest. Mswati tackled the problem both positively and negatively by attempting to impose a greater degree of integration, and by weakening the powers of the localities to resist. Again the origins of these policies lie earlier in his reign. Even before the 1847 invasion, Mswati set about restructuring the administrative system by accelerating the dispersal of Dlamini princes to the provinces; by mobilising the regiments on a more permanent basis; and by setting up a more comprehensive network of royal villages to monitor and control a variety of local activities. Each of these measures has been discussed in a previous chapter, as has the wave of unrest that followed the reforms (10). Mswati was forced to back-track for a while when faced with this resistance, but once the capital was shifted from Ekufiyeni to Hhohho the process was once again cautiously resumed. According to Tikuba, Mswati, "constantly kept his regiments about him", and it is likely that he sought an increasingly permanent mobilisation with the passage

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(9) Interview Mjole Sifundza; Kuper, Aristocracy, 198, note 1.

(10) Above, 80, 84-7.

of time (11). The permanent presence of the regiments at the royal capital conferred benefits of a variety of kinds. It withdrew young men from the productive cycle of the provinces into that of the capital, and so constituted a kind of disguised surplus appropriation; it reinforced the coercive strength of the centre at the expense of the periphery; and it socialised young men of the Emakhandzambile chiefdoms, and especially those of their chiefly lines, into the new Swazi state. Lastly, of course, the regiments also raided and exacted tribute, and appropriated surplus in a more overtly coercive kind of way.

Other techniques employed by Mswati to stabilise his regime were the forging of marriage alliances with various Emakhandzambile chiefdoms, and distributing his wives and other relatives in outlying parts, but more immediately important than any of these devices was what we have described as the negative side of the consolidation of power (12). What this boiled down to in the end was stamping out the last vestiges of Emakhandzambile autonomy, and this was accomplished sometimes with violence and sometimes without. The Gamdeze, the Thabede, the Mavimbela, the Mngometfulo, and one section of the Mahlalela for example were all the objects of physical attacks, aimed at bringing them under closer political (and probably economic) control (13).

(11) S.P. 30091, Tikuba, 27 November 1898; see also Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 46, Ngobozane Dlamini, 10 Feb. 1974.

(12) For example the Magagula - interview Mbhuduya Magagula; interview Mankwempe Magagula; interview Phica Magagula, 19 April 1970, Kutsimuleni, Swaziland.

(13) Above, 167, note 4; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 31.

Elsewhere Mswati did not go so far, and simply demoted without resort to physical force. The Maseko, for instance, fell foul of him fairly early on in his reign when they trumped up charges of adultery against his wife La Ngodzela Mkhonta, who had been sent to rule amongst them, and were banished to outlying Dlomodlomo for their pains (14). More instructive in many ways was the fate of Moyeni Magagula. Moyeni had returned to Swaziland at some point after his initial defeat by Sobhuza, and seems subsequently to have led the life of an exemplary citizen. However, over time, he had accumulated considerable wealth and a considerable following, so that he eventually became the object of envy and suspicion, to the extent that Mswati began contemplating stripping him of both. Moyeni was saved by the intercession of Madzanga Ndwandwe, who had taken refuge in his chiefdom after the last Ndwandwe defeat. Being a son of the Ndwandwe king Zwide, he was also a half-brother of Mswati's mother Thandile, and was able to use this particular leverage to stop the intended attack. Moyeni did not however get off scott free. As the price of royal forbearance (and Madzanga's 'intercession') Mswati insisted that Madzanga be given control over the Magagula chiefdom, and Moyeni was summarily reduced to subordinate rank (15). Less dramatically the same thing was happening all over the kingdom. Royal wives and their attendant princelings were being given charge over chiefdoms in the provinces (16); royal functionaries like

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(14) Above, 165.

(15) Interview Mahloba Gumede; interview Mankwempe Magagula; Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 27, Paul Dlamini, Oct. 1973.

(16) Above, 79.

Mhlaba Motsa, Mtshengu Mdluli and Sandlane Zwane were being placed in control of previously autonomous chiefdoms (17); and the extension of royal authority was pressed inexorably on.

Finally, Mswati sought to rationalise and extend his powers of surplus appropriation. Here he encountered obstacles which were if anything more formidable than those in political and ritual spheres. In the final decade of Sobhuza's reign, the size of the problem had been to some extent masked as Sobhuza raided regularly and extensively in the north and the west. The various vicissitudes of the kingdom in the years after his death had meant that Swazi military capacity had been seriously diminished, and the ability to raid and exact tribute correspondingly curtailed. The emphasis, as a result, switched back to domestic appropriation, and it is perhaps about this as much as politics that the early struggles were concerned. The artificiality of distinguishing issues of surplus appropriation from those of political control now comes sharply into focus, since they are so often in one way and another dimensions of the same thing. The Mavimbela, for instance, who refused a wife from Mswati, were also rejecting the inflated sum of bride wealth they were expected to pay, and so were simultaneously opposing both kinds of control (18). All that can be drawn for the moment are therefore provisional conclusions about which 'level' or other was principally involved, and we will have to await a series of micro studies of individual chiefdoms

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(17) Sw.A., R.C.S. 381/21, Encl. Assistant Commissioner Mankaiane to Government Secretary, 21 June 1921; interview Dlamini informants, Mbidlimbidlini; interview Mambojwana and Njikisa Zwane, 28 May 1970, Mkudzawe, Swaziland.

(18) Interview Hehhane Ngwenya.

or regions before a more satisfactory statement is capable of being made.

It was not only political crises which placed a strain on the mechanisms of surplus appropriation; natural ones did too.

When Mswati tried to exact tribute from the Sifundza and Masilela peoples during a period of drought, his party was intercepted as it returned and stripped of all it had seized. Mswati did not react immediately but, according to tradition, bided his time until the offenders' fears had been lulled. A more serious consideration was probably fear of the Zulu, since it is likely that these events took place in the drought of 1848. However, once the Zulu threat had begun to recede, the Masilela were made to pay dearly for their crimes. A hunting party was arranged to which the Masilela were summoned, and they were then surrounded and annihilated by the rest of the assembled host (19).

Their children, like many others, joined the ranks of Swazi captives, which involved labour appropriation of a somewhat different kind. The question which now arises is the extent to which the appropriation of labour power in this form became an object in itself, and not merely the by-product of a rationalisation of economic and political controls, and from this flows questions of two related kinds. Firstly, to what extent does this signify the emergence or consolidation of classes in the Swazi state? And secondly, to what degree did these developments

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(19) A.H.M., Boletim Geral Das Colonias, 187-90; Sw.A., Assistant Commissioner Ubombo to Government Secretary, 2 Jan. 1908, 9.

involve an intensification of exploitation, and the emergence of classes not just "in" but "for" themselves? (20). I will begin by considering the position of captives, and will then move on to the other under-classes in Swazi society.

Captives had probably been a feature of Swazi society since the days at Shiselweni, if not before. Despite the particularly desirable combinations of resources encountered there, the Swazi had still been confronted with the constraints common elsewhere in Africa, of low levels of productivity and of surplus extraction, and were obliged to raid for booty and labour power if they were to make those levels up (21). After the removal to Ezulwini these difficulties may well have grown, for whereas Shiselweni had provided an ideal environment for a pastoral economy, the central areas of Swaziland in and about Ezulwini imposed a more agricultural orientation, with the extra labour requirements it automatically entailed. Part of that was secured by raiding neighbouring communities, the evidence for which has already been given (22). What was not considered at that point, however, was how far these captives

(20) For a general discussion of this problem and an attempt to investigate it in a specific West African context see E. Terray, 'Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abon Kingdom of Gyaman', in M. Bloch (ed.), Marxist analysis and social anthropology, (New York, 1975), 85-135. For a more extended comment and critique than is found here see P.L. Bonner, 'Classes, the Mode of Production and the State in pre-colonial Swaziland', paper presented to the History Workshop on Pre-capitalist Social Formations, and Colonial Penetration in southern Africa, National University of Lesotho, 23-4 July 1976.

(21) J. Goody, Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa, (London, Ibadan, Accra, 1971) 25-7, 30-1.

(22) Above, 61.

came to constitute a slave class in the sense that Terray, among others, uses the term (23). By any strict definition it would appear they did not. Captives in Swazi society were enveloped by such a range of protections and reciprocal obligations, that it makes it almost impossible to conceive of them as a distinct or especially disprivileged group. "A sigcili", Kuper writes,

was allowed to lodge a complaint against his master, and no sigcili could be killed without the permission of the king... The men were entitled to speak on the council and to marry, provided they had the cattle to obtain a wife... The girls received as high a lobola as his [the owners] own daughters... The main drawbacks of bugcili were the absence of own kinsmen, the lack of supporters in ritual, and the limited economic security. (24)

Like captives in many other parts of Africa moreover, they could rise to positions of authority and trust, and completely outgrow any possible stigma that may have attached to their origins.

In this way Jabhane Dube, who was captured as a young boy in the reign of Mswati, was gradually elevated in status until he was eventually given charge of the king's herds at Mpolonjeni and Ehlanzeni (25), and less spectacular rises were accomplished by others as well. To call this group slaves, therefore, conveys a completely false impression of their true status, which seems to correspond more to a protracted, and then not even necessarily permanent, cadetship.

(23) Terray, 'Classes', 85-135.

(24) Kuper, Aristocracy, 68.

(25) Interview Mlingwa Dube. Another example was Mashilmane who became indvuna of Ezulwini village - interview Ndambi Mkhonta.

The range of restrictions governing the treatment of captives and their eventual incorporation into their adoptive society is something which is also common to the Gyaman state studied by Terray, and is explained by him partly in terms of the political instability which the existence of such a permanently dis-privileged slave class would create, and partly by reference to their role as the generators of use and not exchange values, (i.e. the goods they produced were consumed and not exchanged) (26). The same constraints applied equally forcibly to Swazi society, and gave rise to similar pressure for the replenishment of captive supplies (27). Over and above this, however, one sees in both societies an added incentive being given to the taking of captives by the possibility that existed for trading in slaves. In his study of the Upper Guinea Coast, Rodney credits this with having massively depressed the status of captives, and with creating chattel slavery where none previously existed, but it seems to have had a much less serious impact on Abron or Asante, and still less again in our particular Swazi case (28). Perhaps the crucial difference with the Swazi example lies in the type of captive supply demanded by potential purchasers, for in the case of the Boer republics it was only young children who could be legally absorbed into an unfree labour force. Consequently, in addition to the transience of captives-for-

(26) Terray, 'Classes', 125-128.

(27) Ibid, 127; I. Wilks, Asante in the nineteenth century. The structure and evolution of a political order, (Cambridge, 1975), 85, 177.

(28) W. Rodney, 'African Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic Slave Trade', Journal of African History, 3 (1966), 432-40; Terray, 'Classes', 112-3, 126-7; Wilks, Asante, 8.

trading in Swazi society, they were also usually too young to be severely exploited, or to constitute a class either "in" or "for" themselves.

Where the trading of captives may have had a greater impact was amongst the other under-classes in Swazi society, and it is here that the main burden of Rodney's argument lies. In Rodney's analysis, the expansion of slave trading on the Upper Guinea Coast brought about intensified social oppression, and a hardening of class divisions, as the chiefly class progressively debased customary law with a view to enslaving their subjects, and raided extensively for the same purpose among neighbouring chiefdoms, while retaining relative immunity from this practice themselves (29). To what extent does one see a similar pattern developing among the Swazi? The answer appears to be, not very much. To begin with, the economic pressures being applied to the Swazi were of a substantially different kind. West Africa had to take the brunt of a mercantile capital of the most predatory kind, and hundreds of thousands were enslaved to meet its demands. The pressures faced by the Swazi were of a far more attenuated kind. The Boer republics were at best the indirect agents of mercantile capital, and their demands were of a much more limited sort (30). As a result, the trade in

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(29) W. Rodney, A history of the upper Guinea coast 1545-1800, (Oxford, 1970), 100-118.

(30) This leads us into difficult terrain which I have not space to explore. In general I would rest my argument on private property in land, close connections with the market at the coast, and accumulation of land by mercantile capital from Natal and the Cape.

captives from the Swazi was initially of miniscule proportions, and even at its height it cannot have exceeded much more than a few hundred a year.

Nevertheless, several hundred children a year is by no means a negligible figure, particularly when one remembers the slaughter of adults this also entailed, and provides at least a prima facie case for wondering whether captive taking within Swaziland was not becoming an object in itself. A number of points can be raised against this view. Firstly, while children of homesteads or villages assailed within Swaziland were often traded to the Boers, the really dramatic expansion of the trade coincided with the extension of Swazi marauding into the lowveld, and there is every reason to believe that the bulk of those traded were obtained from that source (31). Secondly, the attacks on individual villages or chiefdoms, and the trading of their children, seems to have tailed off with the consolidation of royal economic and political power during the late 1850s and 1860s. The evidence, it must be emphasised, is far from conclusive, since Mswati's death in 1865 would also have had the effect of curbing such practices. Nevertheless, the odd fragments of evidence we have from the end of Mswati's reign do seem to confirm that impression. Where Mswati could rationalise his economic and political controls without a resort to gratuitous violence, it would appear that he did.

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(31) Above, 155-8.

Thus, when Mswati's attention was drawn to the indecent prosperity and influence of Moyeni Magagula, he allowed himself to be persuaded to install Madzanga Ndwandwe as Moyeni's superior, rather than physically stripping the Magagula of both (32).

Obviously one cannot place too much weight on this and similar examples, but the broader point does, nevertheless, stand, which is that it was not so much Swazi society that took the brunt of captive taking in this period, but the increasingly pillaged and underdeveloped areas of the lowveld and southern Mozambique. It is to the ramifications of this that we will now turn in the second part of this chapter.

Mswati's attacks on Emakhandzambile chiefdoms fully incorporated into the Swazi state also shaded into a wider strategy, which cannot be called either strictly internal or strictly external, and which involved actions against chiefdoms in 'grey' areas on the periphery, who had in the past managed to retain a measure of autonomy. Our information with regard to the north and north-west is extremely sketchy, but it seems clear that at least two of the Ngomane chiefdoms suffered from attacks designed to bring them into closer subordination to Mswati (33). In the north-east much the same sort of pattern can be observed, with Mswati gradually assuming control over the Madolo, and driving Portuguese influence back to within cannon

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(32) Interview Mankwempe Magagula; Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 27, Paul Dlamini, Oct. 1973.

(33) Myburgh, Barberton, 108, 127. Other groups who were also attacked in this period were the Baloi, the Tshisungule, the Mati and the Mongo, Nachtigal, 'Tagebuch', II, 238-242.

range of Lourenço Marques (34). Further down the Lebombo the same cycle is repeated again, with Mswati killing the Mngometfulo king in battle, and restoring his chiefdom to the subordinate status that it had occupied in Sobhuza's reign (35).

It was in the south-east, however, where Mswati's new policies were most pregnant for the future, as this had been the scene of rivalry with the Zulu for the previous two decades. After the Zulu invasion of 1847, Mpande had made a major effort to consolidate his hold over this area. Using a mixture of cajolery and threat he had persuaded Nyamainja to move from his chiefdom on the northern side of the Mkhondvo River to somewhere between the Buffalo and Pongola Rivers, and at the beginning of 1848 he had launched a series of raids on the chiefdoms of Langalibalele, Putili and Magonondo, which in the end had compelled the former two to flee for asylum to Natal (36). It was only after 1855 that Mswati attempted to re-assert any control over this trans-Pongola region, secure in the knowledge of British and Republican backing, and of internal divisions among the Zulu. Beginning in 1858 with an attack on Nyamainja, who was obliged as a result to take refuge in Natal, he then went on, not long afterwards, to attack both the Nhlapo and the Nkosi Shabalala,

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(34) Below, 205.

(35) Above, 166-7.

(36) C.O. 179/5, Encl. in encl. in Encl. 2 in No. 119, Statements by Pangasila, son of Putini, and by messengers from Magonondo's mother, 21 Feb. 1848; Encl. in Encl. 4 in No. 119, Statement by Uninalume, 21 March, 1848; S.A.A.R. Natal 2, (Cape Town, 1960), Statement by Radebe, messenger from Langalibalele, 21 March 1848.

and compelled the latter to fall back across the Buffalo (37).

The Nhlapo fall into a slightly different category from the other chiefdoms just mentioned, in that their territory was much more clearly within the Swazi orbit than the others, being situated considerably further to the north, in an area a little to the east of modern Ermelo (38). The Nhlapo had moved there in the early 1820s, after fleeing from Natal in the wake of Matiwane's raids. On arrival they, too, adopted an equivocal stance. The area fell clearly within the Swazi sphere of influence, but on their migration from Natal they had become subject to the Zulu. They consequently continued to pay an undefined sort of fealty to Shaka, but also entered into a tributary relationship with the Swazi, acknowledging authority of Magubhela Dlamini, Sobhuza's local representative in the area, and forging a marriage alliance with Magubhela's kin. Somewhat later that relationship broke down, when a

(37) S.N.A. Vol. 1/3/7, 456, No. 151, R.M. Ladysmith to S.N.A. 25 Oct. 1858; ibid, 511, Encl. in No. 165, Statement by Ian, 10 Nov. 1858; S.S. 66, R 1237/65, Encl. H.T. Buhrmann to M.W. Pretorius 23 Nov. 1865; S.N.A. Vol. 1/3/8, 302, No. 209, R.M. Ladysmith to S.N.A. 1 Feb. 1859; Transvaal Native Affairs Department, Short History of the native tribes of the Transvaal, (Pretoria, 1905), 61; R.M. Massie, The native tribes of the Transvaal: prepared for the general staff, war office, (London, 1905), 92.

(38) The following reconstruction of events derives largely from J.H. Nhlapo's, 'The story of the Amanhlapo', African Studies, 4, (1945), 97-100. Confirmation for the latter part of the account dealing with Swazi intervention in the Nhlapo succession crisis is to be found in S.S. 66, R 1237/65, Buhrmann to Pretorius, 23 Nov. 1865; Wangemann, Sekoekeoni, 7; T.N.A.D., Tribes, 42. The oral account given to Myburgh (Carolina, 87-8), by Ngungunyane Dlamini, a descendent of Somcuba, seems to confuse this incident with an earlier altercation between the Swazi and the Nhlapo, which appears to have taken place before Somcuba fled under Boer protection.

quarrel flared up between Bhunu Nhlapo and his Dlamini superior. A battle ensued in which Magubhela was killed, and which can be tentatively placed during the period of dislocation that followed Sobhuza's death. Thereafter Mswati was too nervous of Zulu retaliation to make any attempt to re-assert control, and it was not until the relatively tranquil period after 1852 that he made any further effort in that direction. A move may have been made in the December of 1854, but the evidence for it is inconclusive (39), and Mswati's main thrust was to wait until 1858 when a succession crisis blew up among the Nhlapo, and the unsuccessful aspirant, named variously Gama or Khulwane, approached Mswati for help. Mswati obliged, and an attack was launched against Mhlangala, the alleged usurper. Mhlangala is supposed to have been successively saved by a lightning bolt and by a snowstorm (40), and it was only during a third attack, made towards the end of 1860, that Mswati was able to inflict sufficient damage to make Mhlangala flee.

The Zulu response to these actions is difficult to gauge, largely because of the backdrop of internal dissension against which they have to be viewed. On at least two separate occasions there was talk in Zululand of a new invasion of Swaziland, but in neither instance is it possible to disentangle the extent to which this was simply a camouflage for internal jockeying for power. Of a rumoured invasion in 1858 nothing more was heard beyond the original report, and there seems to

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(39) Above, 140.

(40) This at least was the story given out by unsuccessful returning troops, interview Maboya Fakudze.

have been little, if any, substance to the talk (41). Less illusory was the invasion scare of late 1860, for a Zulu army was undoubtedly summoned by Mpande, and created a big enough fright in Swaziland to cause the authorities there to send a gift of cattle as compensation for the attack on Mhlangala (42). Yet even here the common, if untutored, view of these events in Zululand was that the summoning of the army was simply another phase in the power struggle between Cetshwayo and Mpande, and the fact that the army never proceeded on its mission can perhaps be construed as corroborating that view (43).

Nevertheless, if the invasion scare of 1856 was an illusion, and that of 1860 a blind, the very fact that it should have been felt appropriate to cloak internal political manoeuvres in such a guise does provide some index of the persisting interest that there was in some quarters in Zululand in reviving an aggressive policy towards Swaziland. Cetshwayo, for one, maintained an abiding interest in the north, which was shared by other important members of his faction. As early as the end of December 1856, Fynn wrote from Zululand that, "after the feast of the first fruits Cetshwayo proposes to remove to the north", and only seven months later Mpande reported to Natal that, "it is Cetshwayo's intention to abandon the present Zulu

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(41) For the original report see S.N.A. 1/3/7, 508-11, Encls. in No. 165, Statement by Royland, native constable, 10 Nov. 1858, and statement by Jan, 10 Nov. 1858.

(42) Above, 148, A. Mackenzie (ed.), Mission Life among the Zulu-Kafirs: memorials of Henrietta Robertson, wife of the Rev. R. Robertson, (Cambridge, 1866), 127-8, 151.

(43) Ibid. Such a view was apparently common talk amongst the Zulu around the Robertson's Kwamankwaza Mission Station.

and cross the Pongola River towards where Dingane was killed" (44). Six months later again Mpande was making more serious allegations: Masipule had tried to make him divide the country into three parts, and give the northern part to Cetshwayo, while Mapita had been urging Cetshwayo to remove to the Lebombo, on the grounds that he feared the authorities in Natal would send a force to help Mpande (45). Finally, in April 1859, Mpande communicated to the Lieutenant Governor that he had discovered that Ceshwayo had "been treating with other chiefs to leave the Zulu country and thus dismember the nation" (46).

Mpande's testimony cannot, of course, be regarded as disinterested, but other evidence lends weight to his view. In July 1857, for example, one finds Mswati complaining to the Lieutenant Governor of Natal about the encroachment across the Pongola River by people specifically identified as belonging to the Usuthu faction (47). Mswati seems to have taken steps to expel the intruders, but Cetshwayo's interest in the area continued undimmed, and at one point he was even contemplating launching a full-scale invasion of Swaziland, until more prudent counsels persuaded him that to do so would jeopardise his domestic position (48). Thereafter, he seems to have directed his energies

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- (44) S.N.A. Vol. 1/3/5, No. 189, Diary 21 Dec. 1856; G.H.N., Vol. 1394, message from Panda to Lieutenant Governor, 20 July 1857.
- (45) S.N.A. Vol. 1/6/2, No. 22, message from Panda to L.G., 6 Jan. 1858.
- (46) S.N.A. Vol. 1/6/2, No. 3J, message from Panda to L.G., 2 April 1859.
- (47) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement by Kwahlakwaha and others, 3 July 1857.
- (48) D.C.F. Moodie (ed.), John Dunn, Cetywayo and the three Generals, (Pietermaritzburg 1886), 27.

at consolidating his position internally, and it was not until after his succession that his gaze was directed seriously towards Swaziland again (49).

Mswati's expansionist policies in the south and south-east were also matched in the north and the north-east. Here, if anything, they were conceived on an even grander scale, and in the brief space of ten years he was able to deal a succession of blows to Portuguese power in the area, and to compel the withdrawal of Shangané influence to the valley of the Limpopo. As a result, by the time of his death in 1865, Mswati had made himself into one of the most feared and powerful figures in this part of south-east Africa.

Swazi relations with the Portuguese had not always been on such a hostile footing. Indeed, in the preceding years they seem, by and large, to have been of a comparatively cordial kind. In 1823, a caravan of one thousand porters is reported as having arrived in Lourenço Marques from the west, and this can only mean that it had come from, or had passed through, land controlled by the Swazi king (50). Later, in the early 1830's, the Portuguese sent armed assistance to Sobhuza, probably for use in suppressing an internal rebellion (51),

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(49) Below, 7.

(50) W. Owen, Narrative of Voyages to explore the shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar: performed in H.M. Ships Leven and Barracouta, (2 vols., London 1833), Vol. I, 20. A. Smith, ('Trade'), seems to ignore the fact that Owen specifically states that the caravan had come from the west, and argues instead that it had set out from northern Zululand. Trade links between Portuguese are also testified to later in Sobhuza's reign, above, 62.

(51) Preller, Dagboek, 359.

and in the troubled times following the accession of Mswati, they seem to have redoubled their efforts to consolidate their commercial and diplomatic position in Swaziland (52). But this favoured position of the Portuguese rested on very shaky foundations, relying as it did on Zulu predominance on the one hand, and Swazi divisions on the other. Areas of potential conflict abounded, and as soon as either of these constraints diminished in importance, growing frictions between them would almost certainly arise.

The major sources of competition related to the questions of sovereignty and trade. The very proximity of the two powers was in itself a potential source of irritation as each inevitably became a kind of political magnet to dissident groups on the periphery of the other. Add to that the tensions generated by competition for trade, which itself presupposes a degree of control over the territories through which trade routes pass, and one had a ready made prescription for political conflict. The first suggestion of friction comes late in 1852, when reference is made to a Swazi attack on the Madolo, whom the Portuguese considered to be subject to themselves (53). Here Mswati is referred to by the Portuguese as "our enemy", so it

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(52) G.P. File IVB (Swazis), 1163.

(53) A.H.M., Cod. 2168, 2 FC 3, 12, Gov. Cardenas to Gov. General Moçambique, 22 Nov. 1852.

is possible that other incursions may have previously occurred (54). However, given the unsettled conditions of the early part of Mswati's reign, it is unlikely that they can have amounted to much, and in this area, as elsewhere, it required the end of Zulu raids and the resolution of internal divisions before Mswati could make any really significant impact on the politics of the area.

It is difficult to assess whether this incursion of 1852 marked the beginning of such a process of political regeneration or whether it was simply the last of a number of sporadic raids intent on no more than seizure of slaves and booty. Portuguese records reveal little other than that a number of invasions actually took place during this period. A body of oral evidence collected in 1888 tells us a little more, but since it only refers to two invasions in this period, when Portuguese sources record several more, it is difficult to know which of the invasions recorded by the Portuguese correspond to those mentioned in the oral depositions of 1888 (55). On balance,

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(54) There is an oral record that the Swazi attacked the Tsonga to obtain slaves to give to the eastern Transvaal Boers, this being the price of the protection extended by the latter during one of the Zulu invasions of Swaziland, (see Bryant, Olden Times, 330). The Swazi raid of 1852 could conceivably be identified with this, but as all the available information points to the fact that the Lydenburg Republic did not extend protection to the Swazi in 1851/2, it seems more likely that this refers to the aftermath of the 1846/7 invasion of Swaziland, when the Ohrigstad Boers undoubtedly did provide protection to the Swazi. If this is the case it may well account for the term, "our enemy" used here by the Portuguese.

(55) Below, 189.

it seems more likely that the 1852 invasion was only a comparatively insignificant episode, and that the real revival of Swazi authority in this region was to be postponed until the Swazi invasions of 1855 or 1858 (56). Certainly, if the withdrawal of Zulu influence from this area was a precondition for the extension of Swazi control there, one can scarcely view the 1852 invasion of Madolo as marking the beginning of this process, for it followed far too closely on the Zulu invasion of the same year, when Zulu influence throughout the area was still at its zenith. The oral evidence, although difficult to interpret, appears to confirm the same view, since the Swazi informants of 1888 appear to have regarded the 1855 or 1858 invasion as the "first" invasion of the Madolo, while that of 1852 seems to have faded from popular memory (57).

In many ways the 1855 invasion of the Madolo can be regarded as a direct consequence of the Zulu incursions of 1847 and 1852, as it was provoked, at least in part, by the disintegration of Swazi authority on the Lebombo, which those attacks seem to

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(56) S.A.A.R. Transvaal 3, 351, R.T. da Costa e Silva to Volksraad, 1 May 1855.

(57) This oral evidence takes the form of depositions made by various witnesses - Swazi, Madolo, Tembe, Portuguese and English - to the Portuguese Boundary Commission of 1888 (see C.O. 879/29, 150-172). One possible clue to identifying which raids correspond to which is the fact that a number of witnesses refer to the Portuguese firing upon the Swazi during the second raid, a detail which dates it to 1858 or 1860, (see A.H.M., Cod. 2168, 2 FC 3, IIIV, Machado to G.G., 14 Aug, 1858; C.O. 879/29, 174.) However, the use to which this piece of information can be put is limited to the individual testimonies in which it occurs, since there can be no certainty that different testimonies are not referring to entirely different invasions, or that different invasions have not been elided together in all of the testimonies.

have caused. In all probability, Swazi control of that area had never been very strong, given the rival influences exercised from the Madolo, the Tembe and the Portuguese, and even in the heyday of Sobhuza both the Mahlalela and the Sifundza are reputed to have paid tribute to the neighbouring Madolo chief (58). The same or worse presumably applied to the early years of Mswati, until it was catalysed in 1847 and 1852 by Mpande's invasions of the Swazi. Then, with the Swazi kingdom on the verge of collapse, the Sifundza chief, Shewula, seized his opportunity to assert his independence of Swazi control, and the Mahlalela chief, Nomahasha, possibly also followed suit. Neither, of course, could have realised that a complete withdrawal of the Zulu from active intervention in the area was impending, and when this happened both were left politically high and dry. As a result, shortly before the 1852 or 1855 invasion of Madolo, the Sifundza, and possibly the Mahlalela, were attacked by the Swazi (59), and then when Shewula fled for

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- (58) C.O. 879/29, Minutes of Portuguese Boundary Commission, 160-170, Minutes of the 8th and 11th meetings on 16 June 1888 and 22 June 1888, Evidence of Uhlabanini, Makubeni and Umabekwana. The evidence given here must be treated with a certain degree of caution, since the witnesses just mentioned all represent the Madolo side of the case. All that can be said for it is that it seems to be internally consistent.
- (59) C.O. 879/29, Boundary Commission, Minutes of 5th meeting, 8 June 1888, Evidence of Mahlale (Maziya) - pro Swazi; Mins. of 8th meeting, Evidence of Uhlabanini; Mins. of 4th meeting 22 June 1888, Evidence of Umabekwana - latter two both pro Madolo; interview Mjole Sifundza. Uhlabanini is the only one who speaks of Namahasha actually being attacked. Umabekwana refers to both Nomahasha and Shewula as having paid tribute to the Madolo. Mahlale refers to Shewula's rebellion and flight as having been the occasion for the first Swazi attack on Madolo. Miller (M.P. MS 1478, 'Short History', 17), only goes as far as to say that the Mahlalela narrowly escaped attack on this occasion, while another variant of modern oral tradition claims that a Swazi force was called in against Shewula at the Mahlalela's behest (interview Mandanda Mtetwa and Mkhabela).

sanctuary to the Madolo, they too, together with the Tembe, were attacked by the Swazi forces (60).

Punishment of the Madolo for complicity in Shewula's rebellion was not, however, the only motive behind the Swazi invasion. Even without their connivance at all, the Madolo could not have stayed at peace with the Swazi for long, now that the latter were free of Zulu entanglements. Their very existence as a powerful and independent kingdom close to Swaziland undermined Mswati's authority along his border, and gave him ample reason for wishing to subject them to his control. Moreover, the internal dissensions in Zululand had a further consequence besides the ending of Zulu invasions of Swaziland, which was the creation of a power vacuum in the whole Tsongaland/Delagoa Bay area. A struggle for influence consequently ensued, in which all of the major powers in the region became involved, and out of which the Swazi and Mabudu eventually emerged with the greater part of the commercial, territorial and political spoils (61).

The invasion of 1855 did not achieve all this for Mswati at a stroke. It was in fact a relatively short-lived affair lasting no more than three to four days, and although it effected a number of significant gains for the Swazi, such as the annexation of certain parts of Madolo territory and the detachment of at

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(60) For the attack on the Madolo see below, 192, note 62. For the attack on the Tembe see C.O. 879/29, Boundary Commission. Mins. of 12th meeting, 23 June 1888, Evidence of Umtshotshi.

(61) Below, 207-9.

least one dissident group from the Madolo regime (62), it failed in its main professed aim of bringing the Madolo into a tributary relationship with the Swazi (63). That objective had to await realisation until 1858, when Mswati launched a third invasion of Madolo, accompanied this time by an attack on the Tembe (64). Both attacks seem to have enforced the payment of tribute (65), and although the Portuguese claimed that the invasion had been repulsed (66), it seems more likely that they retired voluntarily after having successfully accomplished what they had set out to do.

While Mswati was prosecuting his campaigns against the Portuguese and their satellites, other developments were taking place elsewhere in the area, which before long were to expand the scale of the conflict enormously. On 11 October 1858 Soshangane, the Shangane king, died, and almost immediately a dispute broke out over the succession. Mawewe, the lawful successor according to Nguni custom, won, but only after fierce

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- (62) C.O. 879/29, Boundary Commission, Minutes of 3rd and 11th meetings, Evidence of Usibamu and Isigwembu, where it is asserted that both Uhele and Gehlisa defected to the Swazi after this raid. Both were apparently placed in Madolo and Tembe territory that had been annexed. Ibid, Evidence of Usibamu and Isigwembu; Evidence of Umabekwana (mins. 11th meeting) and Umtshotsi (mins. 12th meeting).
- (63) C.O. 879/29, Boundary Commission, Minutes of 3rd and 5th meetings, Evidence of Usibamu and Ugwababa respectively.
- (64) Ibid, Minutes of 12th meeting, Evidence of Mabusenqeni and Umtshotsi; A.H.M., Cod. 2168, 2 FC 3, 111v, Machado to G.G. 14 August 1858.
- (65) C.O. 879/29, Boundary Commission, Minutes of 5th and 8th meetings, Evidence of Ugwababa and Mahlela.
- (66) A.H.M., Cod. 2168, 2 FC 3, 111v, Machado to G.G. 14 Aug. 1858.

fighting in which four of his principal rivals were killed. The fifth, Mzila, fled to the Zoutpansberg to the protection of Joao Albasini, who held the dual position of Portuguese Vice-Consul to the South African Republic, and the South African Republic's Commissioner for Native Affairs in the Zoutpansberg (67).

It seems to have been Albasini's anomalous position, linked to his lack of commercial or political scruple, which lay at the heart of the ensuing conflict, although this is not the interpretation of events that has found favour either with contemporary chroniclers, or with Albasini's most recent biographer (68). Instead, they have ascribed more or less complete culpability for the subsequent wars to Mawewe, depicting him as a cruel and capricious tyrant, who quickly alienated his subjects by his excesses, and thereby encompassed his own eventual destruction.

(67) G.L. Liesegang, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Reiches der Gaza Ngune im Südlichen Moçambique 1820-95', (Ph.D. Thesis, Köln 1967), 74, 76-8. There is not entire agreement about the death of all four of Mawewe's rivals. One source claims only two were killed, while another merely records their flight to the north (Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 78).

(68) For contemporary or near contemporary accounts of Mawewe see D.F. das Neves, A hunting expedition to the Transvaal, (London 1879); Erskine, 'Journey', 248. An equally jaundiced view of Mawewe is also purveyed by later accounts which are based largely on oral evidence, derived from adherents of the winning side, see Grandjean, 'L'Invasion', 83-4, and H.A. Junod, 'The Ba-Thonga of the Transvaal', British Association for the Advancement of science. Addresses and papers read at the joint meeting of the British and South African associations for the advancement of science, held in South Africa, III (1905) 222-262; T.N.A.D., Tribes, 60; J. Stevenson-Hamilton, The Low Veld; its wild life and its people. (London 1929), 170-1. The most recent study of the subject (Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 74-82), while drawing few conclusions on the subject, seems tacitly to accept the same view. For Albasini's recent biographer see De Vaal, 'Rol'.

Such a view is absurdly one-sided. Mawewe, while no doubt far from blameless, was equally far from the vicious tyrant that he is generally portrayed to be. Much of his supposedly mindless tyranny can be viewed as a set of rational responses to the peculiarly difficult situation to which he was heir, for even after Mzila's flight to Albasini, a number of subordinate Tsonga chiefdoms continued to conspire with his brother, leaving him little option but to pursue the kind of repressive policies for which he later became known (69). Mawewe's reign was also characterised by a quite different contradiction. Much of the power and prosperity of the Shangane state rested on its control over the export of ivory, stocks of which were becoming progressively depleted with the penetration of Portuguese mercantile capital. Mawewe tried to combat the situation by opening up contacts with Natal, in the hope that this might help him to escape the worst extremes of unequal exchange (70). The Portuguese trading community was naturally outraged, and retaliated by making efforts to destabilise his regime, by plotting and intriguing with disaffected factions in the land (71).

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(69) Mawewe's father, Soshangane, had never been able to resolve the underlying tensions in Shangane society, based on the cultural cleavages between its Nguni and Tsonga components, and as a result there was a tremendous latent energy for political disintegration within the Shangane kingdom. The dispute over the succession was merely symptomatic of this, with the leading Nguni figures in the country supporting Mawewe, who was the son of Soshangane's chief wife, and so in their eyes the legitimate heir, and many Tsonga, on the other hand, backing the candidature of Soshangane's eldest son Mzila, partly because this conformed to their own customary practices, but largely one suspects, in the hope of ameliorating their own depressed position within the Shangane state.

(70) P. Harries, 'Labour Migration from the Delagoa Bay Hinterland to South Africa: 1852 to 1895'. Paper presented to University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, African History Seminar, 5 May 1876, 2, 9.

(71) Below, 195.

It was Mawewe's reprisals against admitted conspirators such as these that provided the raw material for later stories about his senseless barbarity - stories that have since been perpetuated by a variety of writers, who seem to be unable to account for Mawewe's anti-Boer and anti-Portuguese policies except in terms of an indiscriminate blood lust. In fact, Mawewe's hostility towards whites was neither senseless nor indiscriminating. Of the other Portuguese ports besides Lourenço Marques that were within Mawewe's orbit, Inhambane suffered only marginally from his accession, and Sena and Sofala were not affected at all (72), while further south Mawewe took a leaf out of Mswati's book, and made energetic efforts to get on friendly terms with Natal (73). Only the Portuguese of Lourenço Marques and the Boers of the Zoutpansburg suffered to any degree, and it is fairly clear that the principal reason for this was the persistent intriguing of individual hunters and traders from these places with disaffected elements in the Shangané kingdom (74). Amongst these hunters and traders, Albasini was the

(72) Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 74-5.

(73) S.N.A. Vol. 1/6/2, No. 120, Statement of Unkumhlana, messenger from Langa (i.e. Mawewe), 5 Oct. 1859; ibid, Vol. 1/7/4; 30-31, Statement by Mabulaba and others, messengers from Langa, 12 Jan. 1860; ibid, 1/6/1, Statements by Native Messengers, No. 51, Statement of Umango, 12 Jan. 1860.

(74) Das Neves was one of the main figures involved (see Das Neves, Expedition, 119-22; Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 76. Liesegang does not seem to invest this with any particular significance). The involvement of other Portuguese merchants is suggested by the fact that the treaty later drawn up between the Portuguese and Mzila in September 1861 (below was signed in the first place by four leading Portuguese merchants, with the Governor of Lourenço Marques only appending his signature after theirs (see Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 81; P.R. Warhurst, Anglo-Portuguese relations in South-Central Africa 1890-1900, (London 1962), 83-4). On the Boer side, F. Combrink, one of the leading figures in the Lydenburg Republic, seems to have seized this opportunity to try and extort ivory from Mawewe (A.B.B., Serie 1860, No. 2, 11-15, Albasini to O.L. d'Andrade n.d., but apparently early 1860).

arch conspirator. Following Mzila's flight to the Zoutpansberg, he seems to have first tried to extract blood-money from Mawewe for every one of Mzila's dead (75), and then when this failed, to have entered into an agreement with him whereby, in return for a certain quantity of ivory, he would have Mzila executed (76). The ivory was duly handed over, but Mzila lived on undisturbed, and this so incensed Mawewe that he immediately sent his forces deep into Zoutpansberg territory, and placed an embargo on hunting and trading in his lands (77).

Having almost single handedly brought about the rupture of relations between Mawewe and both of the governments with whom he held office, Albasini now worked tirelessly to get them to attack the Shangane (78). In this, however, he was destined to fail, for the Trans-vaal was in the grip of its own civil dissensions, and was unable to spare the manpower necessary for such an undertaking (79). These dissensions in the end nearly thwarted all Albasini's carefully laid plans for reinstating Mzila, for the opposition faction in the

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- (75) S.N.A. Vol. 1/6/2, No. 120, Statement of Unkumhlana, messenger from Langa, 5 Oct. 1859; ibid, Vol. 1/7/4, 30, Statement by Mabulaba and others, messengers from Langa, 12 Jan. 1860.
- (76) S.S. 40, 56-8, 'Onderzoek gedaan wat dat de reede is dat Manekos Distrikte Zoutpansberg met zyn Kommandes in getrek het', 10 Oct. 1861.
- (77) Ibid.
- (78) A.B.B., Serie 1860, No. 2, 11-15, Albasini to O.L. d'Andrade, 4 March 1860; Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 75.
- (79) De Vaal, 'Rol', 57-70; Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 234-5.

Zoutpansberg apparently entered into negotiations with Mawewe for the delivering up of Mzila. Mzila got wind of the plan, and was, as a result, compelled to make a premature bid for power (80). He quickly made his departure from the Zoutpansberg, and set out via Khocene and Madolo to obtain assistance from the Portuguese at Lourenço Marques. On the way he was intercepted by Mawewe's forces, but beat them off with heavy losses, and on arrival at Lourenço Marques he was greeted as a conquering hero. A treaty of alliance between the two sides was now drawn up, and the merchants of Lourenço Marques provided vast quantities of arms for Mzila's army and for the troops of local Portuguese tributaries. As a result, their combined forces were able to march out of Lourenço Marques on 8 December 1861, and within a week they had inflicted a shattering defeat on Mawewe, which left him no alternative but to flee to the sanctuary of his brother-in-law, Mswati (81).

Mawewe's flight to Mswati is evidence of a growing convergence of interests between the Swazi and the Shangane, which had been becoming apparent since the latter part of Soshangane's reign. Swazi relations with the Shangane had always been fairly cordial, apart from an uncharacteristic episode which may have taken place after Sobhuza's death, when Soshangane tried to extend

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(80) S.S. 39, 242, R 4753/61, Albasini to Schoeman, 31 Oct. 1861; A.B.B., Serie 1861, No. 25, 75-6, Albasini to d'Andrade, 6 Nov. 1861.

(81) S.S. 4J, 13-15, Albasini to Schoeman, 8 Jan. 1862; ibid, 25-6, 'Verslag van J. Albasini'.

his authority into the vacuum left by the withdrawal of Swazi influence from the Sabie River area. This may subsequently have occasioned a clash between the two powers (82), but if so, good relations were soon restored, as both found themselves increasingly threatened by the Portuguese and the Boers (83). After Soshangane's death, this identity of interest became even more marked, as Mswati's efforts to re-assert control over land lost to the Boers (84), and to undermine Portuguese influence in the Delagoa Bay region, were closely paralleled by Mawewe's own disputes with both of these powers. Mutual enemies promoted mutual accord, and before long this situation was formally acknowledged by the despatch of two of Mawewe's sisters to be married to Mswati (85).

It was therefore natural for Mawewe to flee to his brother-in-law, Mswati, after his defeat by Mzila. Mswati, for his part, was only too eager to help, as this offered an unrivalled

- (82) A clash between Soshangane and Mswati is referred to in Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 35. The most likely occasion for this would have been when Soshangane made the Changanos people tributary to himself. These had previously been under the control of the Ngomane chief Tihi, who, in turn, had been subjected by Sobhuza. But they freed themselves of Ngomane control at a time when the latter were in conflict with Mswato (F. Ferrao, Circumscripções de Lourenço Marques - Reportas aos questitos feitos pelo secretario dos negociou indigenas, (Lourenço Marques, 1909), 83; Myburgh, Barberton, 108-9) The most likely date for this is the period after Mswati's accession, when the Swazi seem to have lost control of a number of their more distant tributaries.
- (83) S.A.A.R. Transvaal I, 103, Evidence of Sintcoeba (Somcuba) and complaint of Umcaas (Mgazi), 19 Sept. 1849.
- (84) Above, 144-50.
- (85) Das Neves, Expedition, 254; A.C. Myburgh, Barberton, 75; interview Mancibane Dlamini, 18 Dec. 1971, Ncakiní, Swaziland; Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 79.

opportunity to expand in the north. Elephants in Swaziland had already largely disappeared, and giving aid to Mawewe would open new sources of supply (86). Similarly, participation in the war would give access to Tsonga cattle and Tsonga children, for which latter there was a growing demand among the Boers. From the purely material point of view there seemed everything to be gained.

Having decided on intervention in support of Mawewe, Mswati's chief worry was not the likely reactions of either Boers or the Portuguese, but the response that his move might elicit in Zululand. The Portuguese position in the area was intrinsically weak. Lacking the basic military capacity to enforce their demands, they depended on a system of shifting, and inherently unstable, alliances for what limited authority they were able to wield (87). The Boers, at this stage, were not much better off. Wracked by a civil dissension for much of this time, and with competing factions in the Zoutpansberg heavily reliant on black support, their power to intervene had diminished to almost nothing (88). But Mswati treated the Zulu, with greater respect. The mustering of the Zulu army in March 1860, purportedly to

(86) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 35.

(87) See A.K. Smith, 'The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique 1720-1835', (Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970). Here Smith deals with the Portuguese position in the area in the 1820s and 1830s, but the pattern of relationships that he describes also typifies the later period.

(88) S.S. 42 R 171/62, 26, Extract journal, 15 March 1862; A.B.B., 109, Copy of address, 21 March 1862.

exact revenge for Mswati's attacks on Zulu tributaries in the south gave rise to a major panic in Swaziland (89), and Mswati was well aware that the increased power and prestige that would accrue from his intervention against Mzila could only inflame the hostile feeling engendered by his earlier activities in the south. He therefore did what he could to insure his intervention against Zulu reprisals by notifying the Natal authorities of his proposed course of action, assuming, no doubt correctly, that if the Zulu did wish to attack they would attempt to show the British government that his attack on Mzila gave them justifiable cause (90).

In the event, the same basic inhibitions on a militaristic Zulu foreign policy as had preserved the Swazi for the previous seven years continued to operate now, and Mswati was able to intervene against Mzila unimpeded. His forces left Swaziland in the second week of February 1862, and on the 15th of that month attacked Mzila's homestead at Makotene (91). Astonishingly, both the Portuguese and Mzila were caught completely unprepared. Mzila, although having two days notice of the attack, could not organise his forces - a point which argues for a further disintegration of his control, and against his supposed massive popularity with his people. Nor was he able to effect a

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(89) Above, 184, L.L. Vol. 1, 123, J.J. Combrink to C. Potgieter, 30 April 1860; *ibid*, 215-6, C. Potgieter to P.L. Uys (Landdrost) and J.D. van Collen (Commandant) at Utrecht, 24 April 1860.

(90) T.S.C, Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement of Kwahlakwaha and others, Swazi messengers, 12 March 1862.

(91) S.S. 42, R 171/62, 24-5, Extract journal of Portuguese Vice-Consul in S.A.R., 15 March 1862. For the name of Mzila's homestead see Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 81.

junction with the Portuguese or the Zoutpansberg Boers, for Mswati had divided his army into three parts, employing the other two sections to bottle up the Portuguese in Lourenço Marques, and to cut off communication between Mzila and the Trans-vaal. As a result, after an abortive movement east, Mzila was obliged to fly directly north across an arid, waterless waste, until he reached the sanctuary of the chiefdom of Chiguaraguara. The losses he sustained in the process were not surprisingly vast (92).

Mzila did not remain long at Chiguaraguara's, but proceeded further north across the Save River to Mosapa or Buzi (93). Mawewe, after taking possession of territory up as far as Bilene, gave pursuit - apparently without Swazi support - but on this occasion found his own army the victim of hunger and thirst as it, in its turn, had to cross the desolate tract laid waste by Mzila's troops (94). Mawewe's impetuosity now proved to be a fatal mistake. Many of his men perished, while still further losses were inflicted by the outbreak of disease (95), and by the time they reached Mzila they were easily repulsed. It was

(92) Ibid; Stevenson-Hamilton, Low Veld, 171, confirms the division of Mswati's army into three parts.

(93) Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 81-2; Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 234.

(94) Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 82. Liesegang cites Gouvea as his source for Swazi non-participation in this battle; Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 234, confirms this and refers to Mawewe's march across a desert; Grandjean, 'L'Invasion', 85, likewise confirms the march across the desert, but is apparently ignorant of Mawewe's victory which proceeded it.

(95) Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 234; Myburgh, Barberton, 77, also confirms the outbreak of smallpox.

now Mzila's turn to move onto the offensive and he quickly despatched his army on the heels of Mawewe's troops. This soon succeeded in ejecting Mawewe from Bilene, and in a final battle which took place on the plains of Moambe, between the 17th and 20th of August, Mawewe's forces were decisively routed, and he had to flee once again to his brother-in-law Mswati (96) (Map 8).

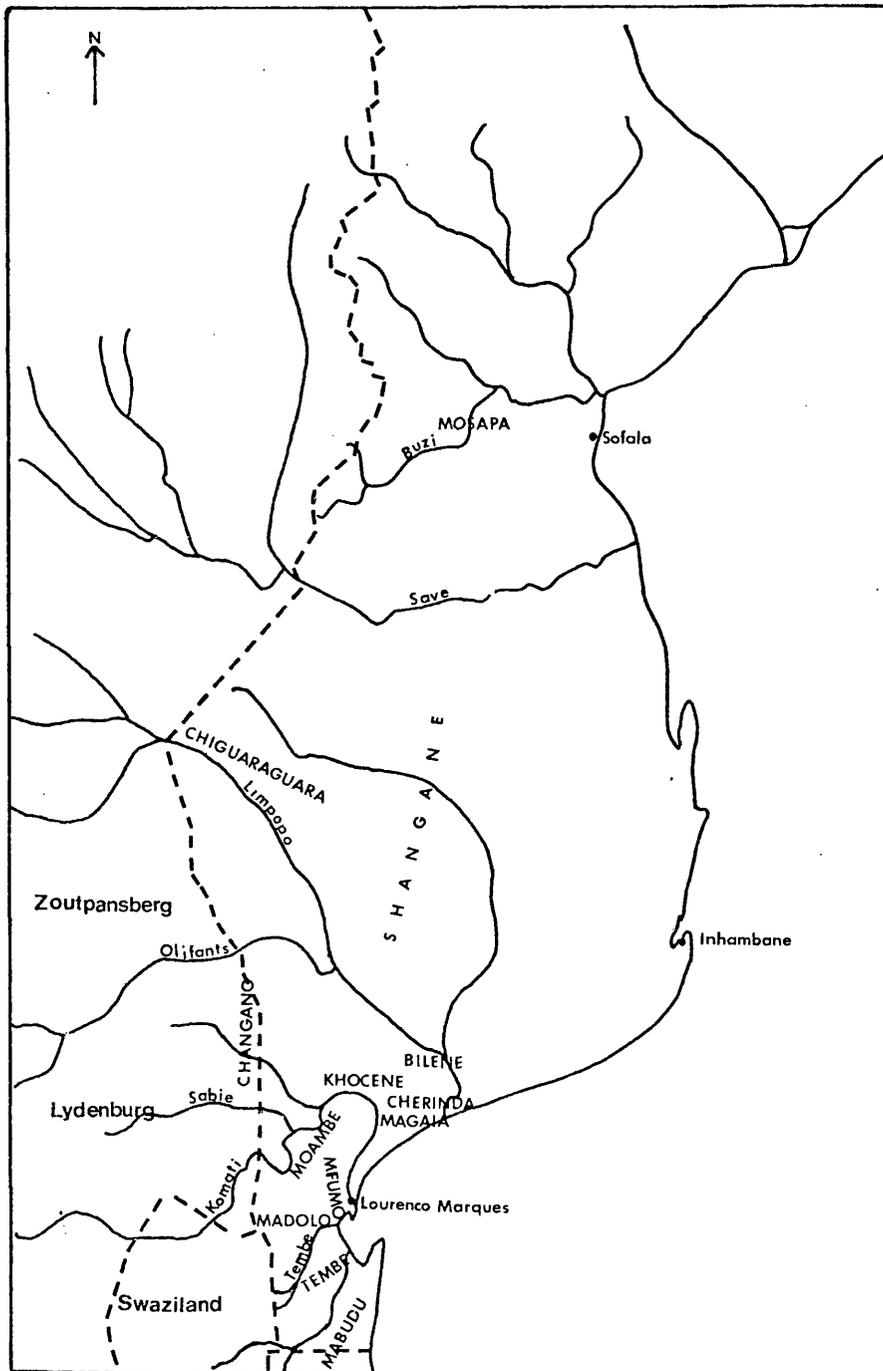
It is unlikely that Mswati played a major part in this final battle, although it is not clear whether he was deterred by the superior fire-power being deployed against Mawewe, or whether he was simply given too little notice of Mawewe's plight at a difficult time of the year (97). Whatever the reason, this certainly did not mean any Swazi disengagement, and in 1863 and 1864 they mounted two new expeditions against Mzila, both of

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(96) Liesegang, 'Beiträge', 82; Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 234; Grandjean, 'L'Invasion', 84. It seems likely that Portuguese tributaries assisted Mzila in this battle, as his forces appear to have been armed with guns, and possibly even with mortars and cannon. G.M. Theal (ed.), Records of South-Eastern Africa, (9 vols. London, 1898-1903), Vol. IX, 115, Enclosure in letter from Count de Seisal to Lord Lytton, 15 Sept. 1873; Bryant, Olden Times, 330.

(97) It may well have been a combination of both factors. Bryant, (Olden Times, 330-1) asserts that Mswati's forces besieged the Portuguese at L.M. to prevent them lending assistance to Mzila, but then beat a hasty retreat when news of Mawewe's defeat became known. This may be correct, but since Bryant is unaware of the occasion earlier on that year when Mswati's forces assisted Mawewe and cut off communication between L.M. and Mzila, it is more probable that he has confused the two events and that no siege of Delagoa Bay took place on this latter occasion. Bryant, in fact, supplies a contradictory version of the same event later on in Olden Times (456-7), in which he asserts that Mswati did despatch some troops to Mawewe's aid, but that when they heard the opposition's guns, and saw the way the battle was going, they retreated. Here we probably have the correct account of this second battle, with Bryant - unaware of the first battle, and unable to rationalise the two accounts - allowing both versions to appear in different parts of his book.

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which had as their objective the re-installation of Mawewe (98). Mzila, however, was prepared to sacrifice that part of his country to the south and west of the Limpopo, in order to retain the rest - an attitude denoted by his departure for Mosapa -, and in the end the difficulties of operating an army at such a distance defeated Mswati as they had earlier defeated Shaka (99). Nevertheless, while relinquishing hope of re-instating Mawewe, Mswati in no way abandoned his efforts to establish himself as the leading power between the Pongola and the Limpopo. If anything, these increased, and in the years that followed, Swazi armies repeatedly ravaged the lands between the Crocodile and Limpopo (100). In this second phase of the struggle, Lourenço Marques gradually displaced Bilene as the hub of the conflict, as it became increasingly evident that the Portuguese, rather than Mzila, now presented the principal obstacle to Swazi predominance in the region. The Portuguese were completely unprepared for this turn of events. Initially, in the euphoria which followed Mawewe's second defeat, they had even deluded themselves that Mswati would withdraw from the military and political arena altogether, leaving themselves in control of the hinterland of

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(98) Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 234, gives the years 1863 and 1864 for these expeditions, but does not specify that Swazi assistance was provided. Erskine, 'Journey', 248, mentions three occasions on which the Swazi helped Mawewe to try and regain his throne, the latter two presumably being those of 1863 and 1864. Grandjean, 'L'Invasion', 85, speaks merely of five years of continual warfare with the Swazi, following Mawewe's second defeat.

(99) Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 234; Erskine, 'Journey', 248.

(100) Grandjean, 'L'Invasion', 85; Stevenson-Hamilton, Low Veld, 172.

Delagoa Bay (101). Those hopes were, however, quickly dashed when the Swazi resumed their attacks both on Mzila and on the so called "Portuguese possessions" a few months later in 1863. The period that followed was one of humiliating reverses for the Portuguese, beginning in September 1863, when Swazi armies attacked Lourenço Marques's Madolo and Mfumo allies, and then went on to lay siege to the fort itself. The Portuguese proved utterly helpless in the face of this onslaught, being unable even to venture beyond cannon range of the fort, and it was probably on this occasion that they were compelled to acknowledge Swazi sovereignty down as far as the Tembe River, as the price of Swazi withdrawal (102). After this humiliation, Portuguese power and prestige in the area collapsed, and was not fully to recover for fifteen years or more. In the interval, the Swazi were indisputably the dominant power of the region.

The scale and suddenness of these successes are striking, and require some explanation. Undoubtedly, the main factor which made them possible, was Mzila's withdrawal to Mosapa, and his effective disengagement from the struggle in the south. This, however, would not have had such startling consequences had it not been for a number of other considerations. First and fore-

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(101) There is little doubt however that Mswati went out of his way to foster this impression while he marshalled his forces for further attacks on Mzila and the Portuguese - A.H.M., Cod. 64, 2 FA 11, 70v, Andrade to Gov-Gen., 2 Oct. 1862.

(102) A.H.M., Cod. 64, 2 FA 11, 98 & 98v, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 7 Dec. 1863; *ibid*; Sec. Militare, 107-106v, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 14 April 1864; C.O. 879/29, Boundary Commission, Minutes of 5th meeting, 8 June 1888, Evidence of Ugwababa.

most of these was the military weakness of the Portuguese. It may sound odd to speak of Portuguese military weakness after documenting their success against Mawewe, but a closer examination of the history of the Portuguese presence in Delagoa Bay, and of the resources available to them in the early 1860s, show that this was a persistent feature in the life of the settlement (103). The Portuguese military establishment at Lourenço Marques was in fact absurdly tiny, which meant that successive Portuguese governors were deprived of the only meaningful sanction that they could employ against hostile groups. Instead, they had to rely for a very fitful and fluctuating influence on the political leverage given them by their control of the Delagoa Bay entrepot, their possession of firearms, and their neighbour's disputes. At times this could be surprisingly large. Inter- and intra-chiefdom feuding was endemic to the area, and the Portuguese could usually rely on the support of the neighbouring Mfumo - a semi-client state - in exploiting such divisions. Nonetheless, the influence so derived was fundamentally unstable, since it relied on its opponent's weakness and not on the settlement's own strength. Consequently, when its enemies remedied their weaknesses by composing their differences, Portuguese influence in the area was prone to sudden collapse. And it is this which seems to have happened in 1863.

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(103) See Smith, 'Struggle'. For the situation in the 1860s see A.H.M., Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, 62-5, Letter No. 25, Simao to G.G., 18 Aug. 1868; *ibid*, 65 v, Letter No. 46, Simao to G.G., 18 Aug. 1868; Das Neves, Expedition, 172 ff.

Another major cause of Swazi success was the wider repercussions of the struggle between Mpande and Cetshwayo. In a narrower sense the Zulu succession crisis had affected the politics of the region by freeing the Swazi from the threat of Zulu attack, and by allowing them to patch over their internal divisions. Its wider repercussions were equally great. The slackening of Zulu control over their more distant tributaries left something approaching a power vacuum in the whole Delagoa Bay/Tsongaland area, which the major powers in the region all made efforts to exploit. For a time it was the Portuguese who made best use of the situation, but the events of 1863 soon drove home the realisation that in the longer term their interests were better served by the revival of Zulu authority, rather than by any hastening of its collapse. The reasons for this attitude are not difficult to grasp. Zulu interests in the area were essentially limited, whereas those of the other 'great powers' were far more open-ended, simply by virtue of their proximity to Lourenço Marques. To take a specific example, it was a matter of comparatively little importance to the Zulu if the Portuguese interfered in the politics of Madolo or Tembe; all that mattered to them was the payment of tribute and retaining a measure of control over the trade route to the north. To the Swazi or Mabudu, however, such meddling was of vastly greater importance, because of the repercussions that this could have on outlying portions of their own estates. It was virtually certain, therefore, that with the substitution of Mabudu and Swazi influence for that of the Zulu, any efforts by the Portuguese

to establish a more effective sphere of influence in the Delagoa Bay area would be much more sharply resented, and would as a result be that much more bitterly opposed.

An even more important consequence for the Portuguese of Zulu disengagement was that it deprived them of the only counter-weight to the Swazi that was currently available after Mzila's flight north. Not only were the Zulu themselves unable to lend the Portuguese any support - even after Mswati had attacked their tributary the Tembe (104) - but the aid of the only other major power in the region, the Mabudu, was simultaneously denied. Once again this was a product of the struggle for the Zulu succession, as this allowed the Mabudu, under Msongi, to take a far more independent line, and to ally much more closely with their compatriot Mswati. The earliest reference to such an alliance comes in 1865, but the trend of events had been apparent earlier (105). Ever since the Swazi invasion of September 1863 the Portuguese had cast about desperately for allies, and had hoped for a time to bring together Cetshwayo and Mzila (106). That expectation proved entirely misconceived. Cetshwayo's position in Zululand was far too shaky for him to embark on so

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- (104) For Swazi attacks on the Tembe see above, 191. A.H.M. Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, 24, Letter No. 56, Teixeira to Gov. Gen., 9 Aug. 1865. In 1863 the Portuguese were expecting Cetshwayo's assistance against the Swazi, and it may well have been Swazi attacks against the Tembe which led him to promise this. Below, 209, note 107; A.H.M. Cod. 64, 2 FA 11, 98, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 7 Dec. 1863.
- (105) A.H.M. Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, 24, Letter No. 56, Teixeira to Gov. Gen., 9 Aug. 1865.
- (106) A.H.M. Cod. 64, 2 FA 11, 98v, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 7 Dec. 1863. If Cetshwayo's assistance had been secured, one assumes that Msongi would also have been obliged to contribute troops as well. As it was, Andrade obtained the aid of neither.

risky a venture, while Mzila was much too preoccupied defending his own territories against the Swazi incursions to assist the Portuguese in the defence of theirs. As a result, the Portuguese were left only with neighbouring chiefdoms like that of Mabudu, who without Zulu prodding could not be relied on to help (107).

After 1863, the situation in the Delagoa Bay area did not alter materially until after Mswati's death. The Portuguese continued to exercise a limited and rather elastic influence over the Mfumo, and possibly over Cherinda and Magaia as well (108). The Swazi, for their part, maintained control over the chiefdoms of Madolo, Moamba and Changano, as well as of most of the land up to the Olifants River, and a good way beyond (109). With the failure of their grand alliance of 1863, the Portuguese seem to have accepted their straightened circumstances fairly philosophically, and turned their hand more to trade, which slowly began to flourish again after the turmoil of the previous years (110). Similarly Mswati, now that he had secured his basic interests in the area, directed his attention more exclusively towards the north and west, where he harried the Shangane, Venda and

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(107) A.H.M., Cod. 64, 2 FA 11, 71, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 2 Oct. 1863; *ibid*, 93, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 7 Dec. 1863; A.H.M. Paiva Manso, 15, Letter of 20 Aug. 1864 in Bolletín de Moçambique, No. 41, 217, Document No. 10.

(108) A.H.M., Cod. 64, 2 FA 11, 98, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 7 Dec. 1863; *ibid*, Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, 4-6, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 20 Aug. 1864; *ibid*, Paiva Manso, 15, Letter of 20 Aug. 1864 in Bolletín .....

(109) The only group that Mswati did not succeed in dominating were the Khocene people living to the north of the Komati River, but their life was ultimately made so unbearable by Swazi raids that they abandoned their land and moved northwards to the Olifants River - Grandjean, 'L'Invasion', 85.

(110) A.H.M., Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, 4-6, Andrade to Gov. Gen., 20 Aug. 1864.

Sotho groups for the last years of his life (111).

Some more general conclusions can now usefully be drawn.

Firstly, the consolidation of the position of the Swazi ruling class seems to have created both the capacity and the need for an aggressive foreign policy. On the one hand the manpower was now readily available, while on the other captives could not easily be taken inside. Secondly, the tensions in Shangane society, generated by the exploitation of the Tsonga by an Nguni aristocracy, and the gradual exhaustion of the area's main exportable resource, led to an internal conflict along ethnic/class lines, overlain by a struggle for resources with the Portuguese trading community. Thirdly, the weakening of the coercive capacity of the Boers allowed the Swazi to step into the vacuum left by both them and the Shangane, and to become their main source of this particular kind of labour supply (tribute labour being another thing again). The devastation of the lowveld can now be seen in a somewhat different perspective, and not just as the product of some intangible martial spirit of the Nguni, and the same can be said of the origins of underdevelopment and migrant labour. Rather than warfare and pillage

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(111) T.N.A.D, Tribes, 41, 63; H.A. Stayt, The Bavenda, (London, 1968), 18, 71, 191; E. Gottschling, 'The Bawende: A sketch of their History and Customs', Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, (1905), 365-6; Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 239; E. Thomas, 'Le Bokaha: quelques notes sur le pays, ses habitants et ses ressources', Bulletin de la societe Neuchateloise de Geographie, 8, (1894-5), 160; S.P., File 17, notebook 2, Xaba, 3 May 1910; Sw.A., Honey 'History', 35, 45; Bryant, History, 15-17; J.D. Krige, 'Traditional Origins and Tribal Relationships of the Sotho of the Northern Transvaal', African Studies, 11, (1937), 331, 333, 343, 347, 352; Massie, Tribes, 15-17.

being the total explanation of underdevelopment, the penetration of mercantile capital into Mozambique and the Trans-vaal, and the interaction of this with internal class configurations, must also be credited with an important, if not decisive, role.

## CHAPTER VI

## INTERREGNUM : 1865 - 1874

Mswati died at the beginning of August 1865, leaving behind a notably ambiguous legacy. On the one hand, an infrastructure of state had been firmly established, so that the country now divided more on class than on ethnic or chiefdom lines, and looked for the resolution of its grievances in the machinery of state (1). On the other, Mswati had died very young - he had yet to reach forty at the time of his death (2) - and left behind no acknowledged successor. Successive efforts to obtain a main wife from Mzilikazi and Mpande had miscarried, and before new approaches were underway, Mswati had died (3). The resulting struggle provides an interesting commentary on the new-found maturity of the Swazi state, both insofar as all parties were competing to control rather than dismember the state, and because of the way in which the defeated party reconciled itself once the die was cast. This chapter will examine the implications of that struggle and the regency that followed, together with their repercussions on Swaziland's regional position.

- (1) I take my definitions of class and of the state from B. Hindess and P.Q. Hirst, Pre-capitalist modes of production (London, 1975), 21-41. For an elaboration of these points see Bonner 'Classes', 1-15.
- (2) Mswati was about thirteen at his accession in 1839 (above, 65.) Matsebula's assertion that he died at the age of forty-seven seems to rest on the erroneous belief that Mswati died in 1868 (Matsebula, History, 23).
- (3) Overtures to Mzilikazi were made in the middle of 1860 - S.S. 34, R 3852/60, 49-50, C. Potgieter to S. Schoeman, 18 July 1860; L.L.I., 188-92, S. Schoeman to C. Potgieter, 21 July 1860. A message from Mbilini in March 1866 confirms this, and adds the information about Mswati's proposal to Mpande - S.S. 75, R 303/66, 302, minutes of meeting with Swazi messengers 6 March 1866. One intriguing discrepancy between the two accounts is that in the first Mswati claimed that the wife was to be married to his heir, and was to provide his heir's successor, according to an earlier agreement made between Sobhuza and Mzilikazi.

A leading contender for the kingship was Mbilini, the son of La Makhasiso, Mswati's chief wife at Hhohho (4). Constitutionally Mbilini was debarred from taking office, because his mother was Mswati's first wife, but there are signs that Mswati had considered him as a possible successor (5). Mbilini certainly thought so, and claimed that Mswati had announced precisely that as he lay dying in the arms of his brother Maloyi (6). Mbilini's claim must obviously be treated as a piece of special pleading, but it would be equally unwise to ignore the reasons that must have existed to push Mswati in this

- (4) Matsebula, History, 24; interview Mpholweni Dlamini, 6 Jan. 1973, Jacks, Swaziland. In a Swazi message to Natal of 22 June 1866, however, Mbilini is only referred to as "one of the eldest sons of Mswati", S.N.A. 1/6/1.
- (5) Mbilini claimed several times in messages to the Transvaal authorities that he "had drunk" to his grandmother, and that this signified he was to be king - S.S. 83, 56, C.v.d. Leeuw to De Beer, 5 March 1866. For a possible parallel here see above, 113. Swazi oral traditions confirm that Mbilini stood high in Mswati's esteem. According to these, Mbilini was assigned the leadership of the Imigadlela regiment, and was given the privilege of leading them in an attack on the Gamedze chiefdom, located on the Lusutfu River near present day Sipofaneni. Some oral accounts even go so far as to allege that Mswati intended Mbilini as his successor (personal communication A.M. Dlamini, 5 Jan. 1973). Both Miller ('Short History', 17) and Honey ('History', 31) corroborate Mswati's pre-disposition towards Mbilini, and refer to the occasion when Mswati organised an attack on a subordinate chiefdom to allow Mbilini to "wash his spears". Neither, however, agrees as to the identity of this chiefdom, Honey giving it as the Madolo, and Miller as the Sifundza. As both groups lived on the Lebombo, and as each was attacked during the same sequence of campaigns (see above, Chpt. V) the discrepancy is probably not very significant.
- (6) S.S. 75, R 303/66, 302, minutes of meeting with Swazi messengers, 6 March 1866; S.S. 83, 97, 'Report of Commission to Kaffir King Umbalien', 2 April 1866.

direction. Mbilini, at twenty, was Mswati's eldest son, and any alternative would have entailed a protracted minority - in the case of Ludvonga, for example, seven or eight years (7). Even without a disputed succession this could not fail to erode the diplomatic position that Mswati had built up over the previous decade. Combined with an internal struggle, in which rival factions competed for external support, it could do irreparable harm.

There is nothing inherently improbable, therefore, in the idea of Mswati's seeking to settle the succession on the only adult candidate available - more especially if, as seems likely, he was personally predisposed in his favour. A similar choice faced Swaziland after Mbandzeni's death, on which occasion constitutionality gave way to expediency with scarcely a murmur of protest (8). However, the choice of succession ultimately did not lie with Mswati, but with the inner caucus of royal family and regents (9), and there are signs that they distrusted Mbilini's rash and tempestuous spirit (10). Much preferable to a group of their rather stolid composition was the candidature

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- (7) Ludvonga was aged about ten or eleven at the end of 1865 - S.S. 66, R 1237/65, 21 Nov. 1865; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 39; S.P.G. Series 'E', Vol. 27, 1552, Jackson to S.P.G. 30 June 1872.
- (8) Sw.A., J. 50/03 D.Forbes to R. Commissioner, 27 Jan. 1901.
- (9) Kuper, Aristocracy, 88-9; Marwick, Swazi, 257.
- (10) S.S. 66, R 1237/65, W.F. Joubert and others to President and Executive Council, 21 Nov. 1865; S.S. 83, 97, 'Report of Commission...', 2 April 1866; M.P., MS 1478, Miller, 'Short History', 18.

of Ludvonga, whose mother enjoyed the appropriate status (11), and who would allow them several years of undisturbed power (12).

By mid-November, with their assistance, Ludvonga had been installed, but these proved to be only the opening shots of the battle (13). Mbilini remained unreconciled to the decision, and believed he had the support of his father's most powerful

- (11) Sisile was the daughter of Mgangeni Khumalo, a brother or chief indvuna of Mzilikazi living in Ntanga's area around Nongoma (northern Zululand) - interview Maboya Fakudze; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 39; Sw.A., R.C.S. 117/4, Encl. genealogies by Dyer, Government interpreter, 1907. Dyer gives Sisile as the daughter of Ntanga, brother of Mzilikazi, but this is palpably incorrect, as she would then have been called La Ntanga. Another account of Sisile's origins is given by Mandanda Mtetwa (interview), who claims she came from Mgcoyiza Khumalo's, presently located near Hlathikhulu, but this appears to be incorrect - H. Kuper, 'The Swazi Reaction to Missions', African Studies, 15, No. 3 (1946), 178. Sisile had three 'constitutional' considerations working in her favour. First, she came from one of the four clans from whom the Swazi customarily choose their 'great wives' - Marwick, Swazi, 255; Kuper Aristocracy, 112. Second, as a daughter of Mzilikazi's brother or chief indvuna her parentage entitled her to a certain seniority among Mswati's wives. Third, she had no sons other than Ludvonga - Kuper, Aristocracy, 55, 102.
- (12) Among its leading members were Thandile, the Queen Regent; Sandlane Zwane, who had been indvunkulu yemabutfa (leader of the regiments) in Sobhuza's reign, and chief indvuna of the capital Luzzidzini during Mswazi's (Myburgh, Carolina, 84; S.P. 30091, Mgoqo, 19 Nov. 1898; Matsebula, History, 14); and Malunge, a brother of Sobhuza who had been chief regent during Mswati's minority and an important adviser thereafter (above, 79, note 12). Two other regents, Sobandla and Maloyi were also brothers of Sobhuza.
- (13) S.S. 66, R 1237/65, interview with Swazi messengers, 21 Nov. 1865.

regiment, the Nyathi (14). In the end this did not materialise, but it is unlikely that his belief was entirely without grounds. What other backing Mbilini enjoyed is difficult to assess. In a message to the Lydenburg authorities in March 1866, he asserted that the country was divided into four parties, two of whom supported his candidature and two of whom were opposed (15). In the light of subsequent developments it is clear Mbilini was overstating his case. Nonetheless this claim, together with other pieces of circumstantial evidence, does suggest that Mbilini may well have had regional as well as regimental support. In part, the two affiliations overlapped. In the case of Hhohho, which seems to have given Mbilini the bulk of his support, there were sharply defined regional and regimental interests which marked it off from most of the rest of the country. Hhohho was in every sense a 'new' district. Unpopulated by Swazi until the early part of Mswati's reign, it had its original population expelled to make way for the shifting of

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(14) S.S. 83, 97, 'Report of Commission...', 2 April 1866. See also S.S. 75 R 303/66, 301, minutes of meeting... 6 March 1866. Swazi oral tradition also credits Mbilini with the support of his own Imigadlela regiment (personal communication A.M. Dlamini, 5 Jan. 1973). For information on the Nyathi regiment see Matsebula, Izakhiwo, 14. Ludvonga's izibongo also contain a hint of the Nyathi regiment's disaffection from him. Compare, "He stayed on the head of the Buffalo, so that the Buffalo Regiment ran away from him", Cook, 'Izibongo', 197.

(15) S.S. 75, R 306/66, 299, minutes of meeting... 6 March 1866. Later on an African messenger of De Beer's reported that the country was divided in two parts, the greatest being for Ludvonga - S.S. 77, R 469/66, 27, De Beer to Pretorius and Kruger, n.d. (probably mid-march 1866).

the Swazi capital north (16). Resulting itself from conquest and expropriation, its whole existence continued to be phrased in these terms, as it became the centre for Mswati's numerous expeditions north, west and east. Fittingly, the regiments attached to the Hhohho homestead were the youngest in Mswati's army (17), and had a vested interest in the continuation of war. Even after Mbilini's flight, this difference again surfaced when the Hhohho regiments embarked on several expeditions to the north, in the face of the express disapproval of Thandile, the queen mother (18). In view of all this, there is every possibility that Mbilini appeared for a time as the most attractive prospect in the north. Mswati had been, "the greatest of Swaziland's fighting kings" (19). Mbilini, with the blessing of his father, promised to follow in his steps.

The opposition to Mbilini, in so far as it was localised, seems to have been based on a similar juxtaposition of regional and regimental affiliation. Its backbone was comprised of the older regents - Thandile, Sandlane, Malunge and Maloyi (20) -, the older Tichele, Tindlovu and Emahubhulu regiments, stationed at Thandile's homestead, Ludzidzini (21), as well as generally the central (and, of course, older) part of the country in which

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(16) Above, 164-5.

(17) The Imigadlela, the Giba, and to a lesser extent the Nyathi, Matsebula, History, 17.

(18) Below, 241-2.

(19) Kuper, Aristocracy, 14.

(20) The names of these three appear frequently throughout in messages from Ludvonga's camp.

(21) Matsebula, History, 17.

Malunge's, Sobandla's and Maloyi's chiefdoms lay (22). Its interests diverged from those of Hhohho, to the extent that it was more vulnerable to Zulu attacks, whose resumption was threatened with every new expedition north (23). As a result, it was less committed to military ventures and was, by and large, hostile to the candidate of the north. Beyond this, it is impossible to identify the other parties mentioned by Mbilini. One could hazard a guess that the south supported Ludvonga, and the east Mbilini, each for more or less the same reasons as its notional ally, but that still does not take us very much further. In any case, one need not dwell very long on these putative divisions, since what is important in the end is that they never fully materialised, and Ludvonga was able to succeed without serious challenge. It is this that we should now attempt to explain.

A partial answer lies in the process of consolidation and integration which had been proceeding throughout Mswati's reign, but there were in addition a number of secondary factors. Of some importance was the fact that the Swazi regimental system did not easily permit the sort of military coup d'etat that was possible under the more developed regimental system operating in Zululand. Unlike their Zulu counterparts, Swazi regiments were not constantly assembled together in barracks near the

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(22) Above, 45, note 62. Malungé lived at Enyageni, Sobandla at Nsingweni and Moloyi at Kutsimlani.

(23) Above, 200.

royal capital (24). Instead, in Swaziland, only a part of each regiment (the libutfo) was permanently stationed at one or other of the royal homesteads, while the rest of the conscripts (the amajaha) remained behind in their villages, and were only summoned to the royal capitals on special occasions (25). As a result, it did not suffice for a princely contender for the throne simply to have regimental backing, and one reason for Mbilini's failure may well have been his inability to carry with him the older-established and more populous districts in the centre of the country, as well as the northern regiments.

One last reason for Mbilini's failure was partly fortuitous and partly built into the Swazi political system. This was the role played by the queen mother in the crisis. The dual monarchy in Swaziland has always been a powerful source of stability, and never more so than after the death of a king, or during a period of minority that followed (26). To this extent the stability and continuity provided by Thandile in this testing period was inbuilt. What was fortuitous was the remarkable personal weight that Thandile brought to this position. Swaziland has a tradition of exceptional queen mothers, but even amongst this distinguished company Thandile was outstanding. A leading figure in Mswati's early struggle for survival, she had gone on to initiate a series of crucial reforms, and was now accorded enormous respect. Respect of a similar order

(24) However, the extent to which even Zulu regiments were permanently mobilised is open to question, see, for example, Bryant, Zulu People, 497.

(25) Kuper, Aristocracy, 122.

(26) Sw.A., R.C.S. 454/40, Seme, 'Petition', 25 March 1932. The ideological rationalisation is also couched in these terms, Kuper, Aristocracy, 55-6.

attached to the persons of Malunge, a senior paternal uncle of Mswati, and Sandlane Zwane, Mswati's chief minister, for both had been important officials in the reign of Sobhuza, and had also weathered the storms of Mswati's accession. It was the voices of these people that preponderated in the council that decided the succession, and it was their fund of political wisdom and experience that thwarted Mbilini when he tried to get that decision reversed. Together they must be counted as perhaps the most important single obstacle to the realisation of Mbilini's aims.

But Mbilini himself also made a number of mistakes, the most serious of which was to misjudge the possibilities of external support. While the regents either directly or indirectly invoked the assistance of Cetshwayo, Mbilini left his appeal to the Trans-vaal hopelessly late (27). As a result, by the time it was made, his domestic predicament was such as to have deterred even the most ardent interventionist, and he had no alternative but to follow Thandile's advice and flee to the Trans-vaal (28).

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(27) See S.S. 83, 54, C.v.d. Leeuw to De Beer, 5 March 1866, in which Mbilini claimed he had paid one hundred cattle to Cetshwayo. An expedition by the Zulu to "weep" for Mswati is documented by other sources - S.P., 3009i, 119, Gama, 18 Dec. 1898; T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), message from Ludvonga, 19 March 1866. This message dates the Zulu expedition to somewhere between mid-January and mid-February 1866, and claims Ludvonga had to pay out 440 cattle. It was probably immaterial whether Thandile deliberately invoked Zulu aid or not, for the konta'ing symbolised by the payment of cattle would have automatically made Cetshwayo a guarantor of the settlement. (Cetshwayo, of course, also had an interest in the succession of a minor rather than of Mbilini). Bryant, (Olden Times, 206) speaks of Mpande installing Ludvonga.

(28) S.S. 83, 54, C.v.d. Leeuw to De Beer, 5 March 1866; Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 41, Mfolweni Dlamini, 10 Feb. 1974.

With the departure of Mbilini the Swazi simply exchanged an internal malady for an external blight. The Lydenburg Boers did not fare very much better. Whereas the Swazi were faced with the grim prospect of another Somcuba in the marches of the eastern Trans-vaal, the Lydenburg Boers found that the controversies associated with the question of Somcuba were again awakened, forming additional divisions within the Lydenburg fold. As a result a paralysis descended on the centres of decision-making, which only fully lifted when Mbilini foresook the Trans-vaal for Zululand on the third phase of his quest to be king (29). Trans-vaal reactions during this period are therefore worthy of attention, for they give clues to the difficulties which it experienced in its dealings with African chiefdoms, and help explain its relative passivity towards Swaziland throughout much of the next decade.

Possibly the most striking feature of the exchanges between Boer and Swazi throughout this period is the state of ignorance with which they were conducted by the Boers. The Swazi succession dispute was a golden opportunity to gain concessions over the border, particularly while Mbilini still remained in contention, yet initiative along these lines was largely ruled out by Lydenburg's ignorance as to what was going on. The first they learned of the dispute was at the beginning of March, barely four weeks before Mbilini fled to the Republic, when Mbilini sent them a message acquainting them with his deteriorating

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(29) Below, 258, 277.

position (30). Even after that, the volume and quantity of intelligence was pitiful, with J.M. De Beer, the official chiefly responsible for dealing with neighbouring African chiefdoms, reduced to basing his decisions for much of March on information derived from African intermediaries from two semi-independent chiefdoms in the vicinity of the Crocodile River (31).

Ultimately, however, deficiencies of Boer intelligence were subsidiary to a wider problem besetting the Republic in relations with African peoples. This was the persistence of divisions between officials in its administration, which were often bound up with conflicting prescriptions for 'native affairs', and which could be exploited in turn by the black communities concerned. The reception of Mbilini gives an insight into the effect these divisions had. From the very first Mbilini was at pains to avoid dealing with the diplomatic agent, De Beer, preferring to work through the border farmer D.J.G. Coetzer (as well as his messenger, Dinna), and the Commandant of Lydenburg, P.J. Coetzer (32). The reason appears to have been their differing approaches to 'native affairs'. In his brief tenure of office De Beer had proved himself an unrelenting exponent of separation, and an unsympathetic - even heartless - host to refugees from neighbouring chiefdoms (33). Coetzer,

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(30) S.S. 83, 48, P.J. Coetzer to Ex. Co., 5 March 1866; ibid, 53, C.v.d. Leeuw to De Beer, 5 March 1866.

(31) S.S. 83, 58-61, J. De Beer to Ex. Co., 15 March 1866.

(32) Ibid, 48, P.J. Coetzer to Ex. Co., 5 March 1866; 53-7, C.v.d. Leeuw to De Beer, 5 March 1866; S.S. 75, 300, R 303/66, Minutes of Committee meeting, 6 March 1866.

(33) S.S. 76, 115, R 357/66, Meeting of Landdrost's and Commandant-General's courts, 26 March 1866.

on the other hand, took a more flexible view. A border farmer, who is known to have sold horses to the Swazi and to have also had dealings in slaves, he was not averse to a degree of anarchy and confusion, and was prepared to welcome Mbilini with open arms (34). The case of P.J. Coetzer is a little more complicated, and may have been bound up with a personal sense of grievance against De Beer, who had usurped part of his responsibilities when he was appointed diplomatic agent in the Trans-vaal, and possibly his special relationship with the Swazi as well (35).

Much of this latter situation was probably known to Mbilini before his embroilment in the succession dispute in Swaziland. When the time came for him to make his dash to the Trans-vaal, however, both his understanding of the dispute, and his ability to exploit it were greatly enhanced by his association with D.G.J. Coetzer, and with his employee Dinna. The role of Dinna in these events is particularly interesting, for his activities bear testimony to the often very influential part played by African intermediaries in political relations of this kind. Dinna had been used in the past for the collection of intelligence, but his importance extends well beyond this. Operating in the twilight zone of interracial politics, created by inadequate intelligence and the fraying at the edges of politico-ethnic

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(34) S.S. 43, R 383/62, 258-284, Extracts Dagboek, Landdrost Lydenberg, 5 Nov. 1862 - 9 Feb. 1863; L.L. 180, Statement P.J. Fick, 21 June 1870 ; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1872, 10-13.

(35) L.L.I, Government Secretary to Coetzer, 29 June 1864; S.S. 77, 5, R 469/66, J. De Beer to Ex. Co., 28 April 1866; ibid, 18-20, C. Potgieter and P.J. Coetzer to Ex. Co., 3 May 1866.

solidarities, he was able to employ his access to white officialdom, and his contacts with black chiefdoms, to create a field of action for himself which was substantially independent of both. It is in the nature of such activities that they are shadowy, and difficult to document. However, there can be little doubt that Dinna's collection of taxes in De Beer's name, after he had transferred his allegiance to D.J.G. Coetzer, falls within this category of action (36), and one catches glimpses of the same thing in his dealings with Mbilini, although in this case he may well have been taking advantage of a very wide brief - as for instance when he scared off messengers of De Beer's with threats of imprisonment - rather than acting entirely on his own (37). His period of greatest influence seems to have come after he had joined forces with Mabokwan, Mbilini's messenger to the Trans-vaal. Together these two so effectively fanned the flames of the De Beer/Coetzer feud, and so demoralized De Beer that he eventually threw in his hand and withdrew from the negotiations altogether (38). As a result, when the Mbilini affair entered into its most critical phase, and Coetzer rode out to meet him with Field Cornet de Villiers and Landdrost Potgieter, De Beer was not there. When the settlement with Mbilini was reached some two days later,

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(36) S.S. 77, 5, J. De Beer to Ex. Co., 28 April 1866; De Beer to Ex. Co., 3 May 1866.

(37) S.S. 83, 58-61, J. De Beer to Ex. Co., 15 March 1866.

(38) "You should glue your eyes on these two kaffirs", he noted on one occasion. "They behave with nothing but duplicity [Tooshandigheid]", S.S. 77, 26, R 469/66. J. De Beer to ?, n.d.; S.S. 76, 114, R 357/66, Meeting of Landdrost's and Commandant-General's courts, 26 March 1866.

therefore, his views went entirely unrepresented, and Mbilini was permitted, without objections, to take up residence in Lydenburg (39).

Mbilini had in fact escaped to Lydenburg by a whisker. The Swazi force pursuing his small band was already snapping at its heels when the Boer Commando, led by Potgieter and Coetzer, fired upon it, killing four of its number and putting the remainder to flight (40). For some, especially the residents of Komati, whose title was still disputed by the Swazi (41), this skirmish gave pause for thought to what further clashes the future might hold if the authorities persisted in championing Mbilini, Coetzer and Potgieter however betrayed no such misgivings. If Lydenburg did not accept him, they argued, then one or other of the neighbouring chiefdoms would, "thereby causing greater difficulties" (prophetic words). It was, in any case, desirable in principle to encourage divisions between neighbouring chiefdoms and, as if to underline their particular expectations in this regard, they granted Mbilini provisional permission to settle around Somcuba's "gat" (hole), just north of the Crocodile River, as soon as he was strong enough to live there securely (42).

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(39) S.S. 76, 212-4, R 403/66, C. Potgieter, P.J. Coetzer and P.D. de Villiers to Ex. Co., 7 April 1866.

(40) Ibid; S.S. 83, 121, De Beer to Ex. Co., 28 April 1866; S.N.A. Vol. 1/6/1, Statements by native messengers, No. 15 Statement by Swazi messengers, 22 Aug. 1866.

(41) Above, 150 ; below, 237 ; S.S. 83, 98, 'Report of Commission', 2 April 1866.

(42) S.S. 76, 214, R 403/66, C. Potgieter... to Ex. Co., 7 April 1866.

None of these plans was destined to mature. The first setback came when, against all expectations, no really sizeable body of refugees came to share Mbilini's exile in the Republic. When Mbilini had first set foot over the border he had claimed that the Nyathi regiment was still contesting the issue with his opponents, and would soon be flooding out to join him (43). Before long, however, it became clear that Mbilini had sadly over-estimated the commitment of his partisans. Some of his own Imigadlela joined him (44), and possibly some Nyathi, but the large scale desertions that he had anticipated never materialised. It all only went to underline the growing maturity of Swazi politics, and was a thoroughly inauspicious opening to Mbilini's campaign to take up the mantle of his late uncle Somcuba.

Inauspicious, too, were developments within the Republic. There it soon became apparent that De Beer, despite his temporary isolation during March 1866, was not alone in his opposition to the policies expounded by Potgieter and Coetzer. Those tucked away in the relative security of Field Cornet de Villier's ward might lend vocal support to Potgieter's and Coetzer's initiatives, but others more exposed to the immediate consequences of such acts - notably the inhabitants of Komati - were even more vociferously opposed (45). They had, as they observed in a

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(43) S.S. 83, 97, 'Report of Commission', 2 April 1866.

(44) Personal communication A.M. Dlamini, 5 Jan. 1973.

(45) S.S. 83, 84-5, P.D. de Villiers and 19 others to C. Potgieter and P.J. Coetzer, 20 March 1866.

petition to the Executive Council, been through this all before. Their Honours had only, "to investigate the course of the affair with Sincoeba [Somcuba] and Omsoet [Msuthfo] from September 1849 till now [to see] what the case of Ballien [Mbilini] would bring forth." If the lessons of experience were to count for anything Mbilini should be extradited forthwith (46).

The petition, which was an interesting comment on the impact of Mswati's strong-arm tactics of the early 1850s, made an immediate impression. De Beer at once took heart and set out for Swaziland at the end of the next month. His companion, significantly, was H.J. Viljoen, Field Cornet of Komati, and chief signatory of the petition (47). Coetzer and Potgieter were equally taken aback. Opposition of this kind they obviously had not bargained for, and they were soon compelled - under protest - to resume attendance at the committee meetings of De Beer, and to give their sanction to his recent Swaziland trip (48). Potgieter's and Coetzer's answer to this setback was to appeal to the top. In a letter to the Executive Council they recapitulated on their earlier grounds for accepting Mbilini, and added that Mbilini was promising to be enormously valuable as a military auxiliary. Already, they noted, the "Mantatees" (i.e. the Sotho) were living in fear. To demonstrate the depth of their feelings they

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(46) S.S. 79, R 609/66, H.J. Viljoen and others to Ex. Co., 6 June 1866.

(47) S.S. 77, 5-7, R 469/66, J. De Beer to Ex. Co., 28 April 1866.

(48) S.S. 77, 9-15, Meeting of Committee following request of J. De Beer, 28 April 1866. (De Beer also brought back a number of Swazi representatives with him to ensure that there would be no subsequent grounds for misunderstanding).

concluded with a threat. As they were "always in conflict with the Diplomatic Agent" they said, "and could not see eye to eye with him on a single issue", they wished to be relieved of their positions on the Committee forthwith (49).

It is unclear how the Executive Council responded to this ultimatum. Their sympathies evidently lay with De Beer, as can be seen by Commandant-General P.J. Kruger's reply to the Komati petition. In this he concurred in their assessment of the danger entailed in harbouring Mbilini, and even went as far as to predict a violent confrontation with the Swazi, whose outcome, he implied, would be far from certain, since the other districts would be unlikely to lend a hand to rescue Lydenburg from the consequences of its own folly (50). No misunderstanding there, or so it would seem. Yet there must have been some element of ambiguity in the Executive Council's attitude, since Mbilini continued to reside in Lydenburg for another six months or more (51).

As the records are unhelpful, one can only speculate at the reasons why. Most important, probably, was the reluctance of the Executive Council to alienate such formidable figures as Coetzer and Potgieter, for this could have landed them with a source of trouble for many years to come. Also influential

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(49) S.S. 77, 18-20, R 469/66, C. Potgieter and P.J. Coetzer to Ex. Co., 3 May 1866.

(50) S.S. 83, 145-6, S.P.J. Kruger to H.J. Viljoen, 9 June 1866.

(51) Mbilini was still in P.D de Villier's ward at the end of December 1866 - S.S. 82, R 1278/66, P.D. de Villiers to Pretorius, 23 Dec. 1866.

must have been the apparent equanimity with which the Swazi accepted Mbilini's residence in Lydenburg, after their initial abortive attempts to secure his return (52). Swazi restraint however was, in itself, predicated on the very internal divisions within the Republic to which we have just been referring. Had the Lydenburg authorities been sufficiently of one mind to have backed Mbilini wholeheartedly, and had they installed him in Somcuba's fortress, then the Swazi would have been a good deal less accommodating, for Mbilini would have represented a far greater strategic threat, and an infinitely more inviting prospect for potential refugees. As it was however, the strong opposition to Mbilini within the Republic, and the equivocal attitude displayed towards him by the authorities, constituted a powerful deterrent to all would-be defectors, and Mbilini's band-waggon never even began to roll. From every point of view the resulting situation is instructive. Internal Boer divisions had induced a paralysis of action which left Mbilini in a sort of no-man's land of indecision. The stalemate was to no-one's liking, and yet could be resolved by none. None, that is, save Mbilini himself, who eventually tired of the insecurity of his ambivalent position and departed for Zululand, from where, in fulfilment of Coetzer's prediction, he became the scourge of the Republic's south-eastern borders for the next thirteen years.

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(52) For a time the regents tried to get Mbilini back to "milk for" Ludvonga. S.S. 77, 11, Meeting of Committee, 28 April 1866 ; S.S. 77, 3, R 469/66, De Beer and others to President, 2 May 1866. By early September however they had reconciled themselves to Mbilini's presence in the Republic, S.S. 81, 238-9, R 1142/66, P.J. Coetzer to Ex. Co., 17 Nov. 1866, Encl. minutes of meeting between De Beer and Swazi representatives, 4 Sept. 1866.

As fears of Mbilini slowly faded in Swaziland, other issues claimed more of the regents' attention. Prominent among these was the Trans-vaal border question. Traditionally the most sensitive barometer of Republican/Swazi relations, the border had swiftly registered the change in political climate that followed Mswati's death. Scarcely a month after learning the news, the Republic's Executive Council had met to appoint a Commission to re-open the entire border question (53), and the moment the season permitted, this was threading its way across the burnt winterveld of the eastern Trans-vaal to meet with regents' representatives. By the middle of June, despite initial difficulties caused by the non-appearance of the Swazi delegates, border negotiations were underway (54).

The 1866 negotiations have been consistently underrated in Trans-vaal and Swazi historiography. Kuper ignores them, Symington and Garson miss their significance, and Matsebula distorts them (55). Yet they constitute the single most important link in the chain of treaties and agreements that confined the Swazi kingdom to within its present borders. Here, for the first time, one finds a territorial treaty being entered into by the Swazi as a result of Boer initiative rather than their own. Here, too, in sharp contrast to earlier agreements, one sees the balance of advantage tipping decisively in favour

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(53) U.R.2., U.R.B., 30 Jan. 1866, Art. 8.

(54) S.A.A.R. Transvaal No. 6, (Cape Town, 1956), 221-2, Bylaag 82 (a) Aanhangsel I, Minutes of Commission, 18 June 1866.

(55) Kuper, Aristocracy, 20; Garson, 'Swaziland', 272; Symington, 'Swaziland', 46-8; Matsebula, History, 21, 51-5.

of the Republic through the detailed border delimitation that they entailed. Effectively embodied in them, in short, was a decisive limiting of Swaziland's territorial jurisdiction, and of the strategic flexibility by which this had hitherto been based.

So much is clear. Much less easy to understand is why the negotiations were ever permitted to get underway. A glance at the last year of Mswati's reign illustrates the problem. Then Mswati had taken the final steps in renouncing the territorial provisions of the 1855 agreement. Having earlier defied the border delimitation in the north-west, he now went on to repudiate its application in the west and south west as well. Whatever the long-term limitations of such a strategy, there was no doubting its short-term success. No-one in the area was prepared to challenge Mswati, and, beyond making a face-saving offer to negotiate, nothing more was done (56). The cession, in effect, had fallen into abeyance. This was the situation at Mswati's death. Within nine months, however, everything had changed. A border commission had come and gone; a boundary had been defined along almost the whole of Swaziland's western border; and Swaziland's scope for manoeuvre had all but disappeared. What still demands explanation, therefore, is how a change of this magnitude could be so tamely accepted, and how such an unequal settlement was so easily imposed.

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(56) Below, 237, Note 62.

Existing writings shed little light on the problem. Few, in fact, recognise that the problem exists. In most Trans-vaal historiography the agreement is seen as slotting neatly and unexceptionally into an onward white advance, and excites little in the way of additional comment. Among Swazi historians it elicits a broadly similar response, being viewed as simply one more step in the unilateral expropriation of a helpless Swazi kingdom, in its own way equally unremarkable, or deserving of comment. Aside from inadequate research, the weakness of each of these analyses is their crudely deterministic approach.

What both do, in effect, is to invoke the argument of an irresistible white superiority, and to assume that this constitutes an adequate explanation of events. This is hardly satisfactory.

Even if one accepts that the progressive curtailment of Swaziland's political autonomy was in the long term unavoidable, it was by no means a unilinear or continuous progression. Local initiatives, situational variations, individual weaknesses and strengths all had their part in the way things developed, with discontinuities and contradictions as much a feature of the historical process as any systematic expression of white dominance. Only in these broader terms can the significance of the 1866 negotiations be properly appreciated, and it is in these terms that it is now proposed they be examined.

From the timing of the cession it is clear that the death of Mswati was of considerable importance in getting it ratified, although this has often been obscured by confusion about the

date of Mswati's death (57). The exact way in which this happened, however, is not as straight-forward as it might at first seem. The example of earlier minorities might suggest that disputes over the succession, and weak regency control, were the immediate causes of the Swazi volte-face, but there is little evidence to show that these had much effect. The flight of Mbilini illustrates the point. On the face of it, the presence of Mbilini in the Republic should have strengthened its hand greatly in its dealings with Swaziland. Yet in practice the Trans-vaalers were never able to realise Mbilini's full diplomatic potential. Partly through poor intelligence, which prevented exploitation of the issue at the appropriate time, partly through fears of a Somcuba style backlash, which inhibited similar efforts later, Mbilini's flight never had the impact on Swazi/Trans-vaal relations that might have been anticipated. Similar qualifications have to be made to assumptions of divided leadership and weak control, drawn by analogy from earlier minorities. Despite occasional examples of both, what is more remarkable about the Ludvonga regency is the firmness and assurance with which it was conducted throughout. Internal tensions, in short, cannot be regarded as decisive influences on the final outcome of the 1866 negotiations. To explain this

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(57) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 36; Bryant, Olden Times, 337; Matsebula, History, 23; M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), The Oxford History of South Africa, (2 vols. Oxford 1969-71), Vol. I, 346, all of whom give 1868 as the date of Mswati's death. Symington, 'Swaziland' 48, V. Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 77-8 and Garson, 'Swaziland', 271, are much nearer the mark with 1866, but do not relate it explicitly to the cession. A.C. Myburgh, Carolina, 95, who gives 1865 is the closest of all, but fails to mention the cession. For the correct date see above, 212.

we must probe deeper still.

Probably the best place to start is with the regents themselves. Mention has already been made of the regents' caution and political conservatism, and this seems certain to have had bearing on the 1866 cession. From the early 1860s on, there are signs of a gap opening up between the thinking of Mswati and his senior councillors on the question of what to do about the border. Where Mswati was prepared to live dangerously to evade the restrictions of the 1855 agreement, the regents' reflex response was to seek a more stable compromise settlement. Their watchword was caution, and to such conservatism, amplified still further by the safety first imperatives of regency politics, may be attributed much of the inspiration of the 1866 settlement (58).

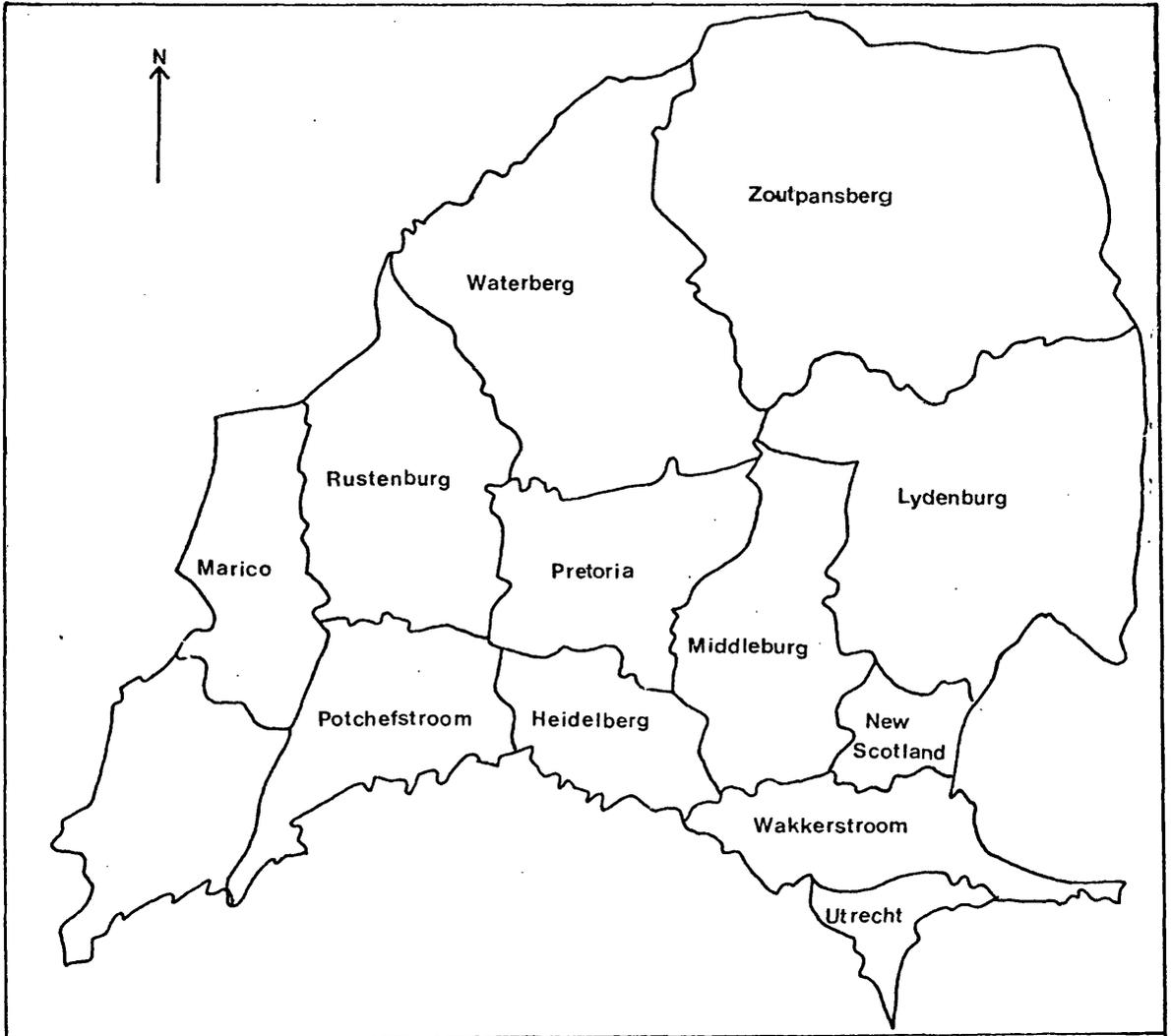
It would be wrong however to label the regents' attitude as totally negative. Although probably more cautious than Mswati by virtue of age and experience, as well as more inclined to cling to the Trans-vaal alliance on the grounds of precedent alone, there was also a far more positive side to their thinking. What ultimately seems to have underlain their fears and hesitations was the realisation of a very real shift in the balance of power in the region, which had been going on imperceptibly throughout the last years of Mswati's reign. As long as Mswati lived, its implications were hardly felt. On

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(58) S.S. 66, R 1237/65, W.F. and G.H. Joubert and H.T. Buhrmann to Pretorius and Ex. Co., 21 Nov. 1865. In this the writers give a brief run-down of the attitudes to the Republic of the leading regents.

the contrary, Mswati's personal weight coupled with a resurgence of internal feuding within the Trans-vaal had facilitated a series of striking tactical advances in Mswati's final years. But appearances, as the regents realised, were deceptive. Apart from the healing of both Boer and Zulu divisions which was apparent in these years, other less conspicuous changes were also making themselves felt, which were ultimately to transform Swaziland's entire strategic position. At their most general these can be described as the capitalist penetration, and the population, of the southern and eastern Trans-vaal. From the earliest days of white settlement in the Trans-vaal one of the key weaknesses of Boer communities in the area had been their lack of human resources, and their thin spread over the land. The general significance of this for black/white relations in the region is obvious. As regards territorial rights or contested boundaries, however, there was an added dimension to the problem, arising from the inability of the Trans-vaalers physically to occupy much of the land which they claimed. By the 1860s these weaknesses were being gradually removed. In established areas, population density was perceptibly building up, while into areas such as those acquired by the 1855 cession, a steady trickle of immigration was beginning to flow. As examples of this process one can cite the districts of Wakkerstroom and Lower Komati (Map 9). Not settled by whites until 1853, Wakkerstroom started acquiring sufficient population even to qualify for consideration as a separate district only in 1859. Thereafter, with the rapid expansion in wool farming,

TRANSVAAL DISTRICTS - 1873



(Adapted from Potgieter, 'Vestiging', opposite 77.)

it grew rapidly in numbers (59). A roughly similar pattern holds for Lower Komati too. Virtually unoccupied in 1858, the area was the scene of continuous quarrelling between Boer and Swazi graziers less than a decade later (60). With the notable exception of the far north, this was the pattern of the 1860s: growing capitalist penetration; expanding white population; increasingly effective occupation; and an almost imperceptible tilting of the strategic balance against the Swazi.

In the end perhaps even Mswati began to realise. Having consistently cultivated fluidity and imprecision in border affairs since the late 1850s - to the extent of even settling other groups of Boers on the territory he had ceded, in an effort to create new interests in conflict with old (61) - he suddenly switched, a few months before his death to demanding the total evacuation of the area by whites (62). If this did signify recognition of the danger, however, it was exceedingly belated. The regents by comparison had drawn the same conclusions much earlier. As they seem to have realised only too well, tactical flexibility of the sort so dear to Mswati could only be purchased at the expense of more fundamental interests. What Swaziland needed now was not a fudging of political limits but some attempt at their definition, and it is in the regents' appreciation of this that lies probably the most important

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(59) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 44-6; Potgieter, 'Vestiging', 65-6.

(60) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 78; Potgieter, 'Vestiging', 66-7; see also below, 246.

(61) See for example the cases of Gideon Joubert and C.J. Vermaak - L.L. II, 165, A. O'Reilly to C. Potgieter, 24 Feb. 1866; S.S. 91, 81-2, C.J. Vermaak to President and Ex. Co., 30 Aug. 1867; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1860, 62.

(62) L.L. II, 34, G.J. Joubert to C. Potgieter, 4 March 1865; S.S. 66, R 1237/65, H.T. Buhrmann to President and Ex. Co., 23 Nov. 1865.

single reason for their readiness to endorse delimitation.

Any remaining doubts on the matter were removed by the situation in Zululand. Throughout the late 1850s and early 1860s Zulu foreign policy had drifted rudderless, lurching first this way and then that, in response to conflicting sectional demands. Mpande appealed to Natal and the Republic for aid against Cetshwayo; Cetshwayo replied in the same coin against Mpande, and neither dared risk any foreign adventure for fear of provoking external intervention on the side of the other (63). As the 1860s wore on, however, this situation began to change. Mpande's internal support had always been limited, and, as hopes of external intervention began to fade, it dwindled still further. By 1863, if the volume of appeals to Natal is anything to go by, he was beginning to give up the unequal struggle, and four years later his abdication from affairs was complete, as was formally ratified by his bestowal of a headring - the symbol of adulthood and responsibility - on Cetshwayo (64).

Firmer direction internally soon communicated itself to external affairs. Where Zulu diplomacy had once been the vehicle of factional rivalries, it was now refashioned into an instrument of national policy. Thus in 1868, for the first time for over a decade, the Zulu actively intervened in the affairs of Delagoa Bay, aligning themselves with the Portuguese in an anti-Swazi

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(63) Above, 115-6, 185-6.

(64) S.N.A. 1/7/6, 35, Statement of messengers from Mpande and Cetshwayo, 9 Jan. 1867.

axis, and three years later they went so far as to demand reparations from the Mabudu for an attack that had been made on the Portuguese (65). More ominously still, from the Swazi point of view, Cetshwayo's gaze also began to switch back across the Pongola. In 1866 he sent a force to ratify the succession, and to demand cattle of the Swazi, while settlement north of the Pongola was simultaneously stepped up (66). All of which again took its toll of the regents' self-confidence, and contributed to the climate of unease from which the cession was born.

In the south, as the cession clearly signals, Swaziland was in retreat. In the north, by contrast, developments had an entirely different look. In 1866 the Swazi launched new attacks on Madolo, and in 1868, when all but two of the Delagoa Bay chiefdoms ganged up against the fort, they offered their support in return for recognition of their territorial claims (67). The Portuguese refused, partly in anticipation of Zulu support, and in the middle of 1868 the Swazi began insisting on the payment of tribute, and backed this up by an attack into Lualana

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(65) A.H.M. Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, Letter No. 45 Simao to G.G. 18 Aug. 1868; *ibid*, Simao to G.G. 13 Sept. 1868, 120v - 119v Sec. Mil.; C.O. 179/106, Encl. in encl. in No. 11, extracts letter D. Leslie to T. Shepstone - extracts for Aug. 6 and 24, 1871; S.N.A. 1/1/2, D. Leslie to S.N.A. 28 July 1871.

(66) Above, 220; below, 277.

(67) A.H.M. Cod 345, 2 FB 3, Pacifico to Commandant of Battalion, 11 June 1868, 16 & 16v; A.H.M. Cod 153, 2 FB 9, Pacifico to G.G., Letter No. 48, 16 Aug. 1866, 37-39; *ibid*, 45-6, Pacifico to G.G., 8 Feb. 1867; A.H.M. Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, Simao to G.G., 22 Aug. 1868, 126v, Sec. Mil.; *ibid*, 62-4, Simao to G.G., Letter No. 45, 18 Aug. 1868.

and Biloane (68). Developments in the north-west closely match those in the east. In the latter part of 1866 Swazi armies mounted perhaps their most devastating foray yet into the eastern Trans-vaal lowveld. Crossing the Great Letaba River, they attacked the Phalaborwa under Majaji, the Lovedu of Madjadji, and then swept back along the escarpment to engulf the Nkuna of Shiluvane, and possibly the Narene and Pedi Maxakala under Sekororo and Mafefe (69). The Swazi, or at any rate the Hhohho section, were jubilant. So much so that they decided to repeat their performance against the Pedi as well. The ostensible reason for this expedition was to restore the pretender, Mampuru, to the throne. Mampuru, the rightful successor, Sekwati, had been ousted from his inheritance by Sekhukhune after Sekwati had

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- (68) A.H.M. Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, Simao to G.G., 13 Sept. 1868, 120v-119v Sec. Mil; ibid, Letter No. 46, Simao to G.G., 18 Aug. 1868, 65 & 65v; A.H.M. Cod. 153, 2 FB 9, Sec. Civil Simao to Moc. 24 April 1869, 75-6.
- (69) For the date of the raid see A.B.B., 243, Albasini to Ibramo David, 4 Dec. 1866, which also mentions Modjadji as being attacked. Kwahlakwaha, in a message from Mswati (S.S. 90, R 789/67, Minutes of meeting, 30 July 1867) mentions Umtjatji and Motjatja, Sotho and Tsonga respectively, as being attacked the previous winter. Motjatji presumably must refer to Majaji, chief of the Phalaborwa - E.J. Krige, 'Note on the Phalaborwa and their Morula Complex' African Studies, II (1937), 358. For the attack on the Nkuna see Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 239-40. A rumour of an attack on Modjadji, Sekororo and Mafefe is to be found in Wa. A., Vol. 1, File Landdrost Correspondent 1866, C. Potgieter (Landdrost Lydenburg) to A.A. O'Reilly, 6 Dec. 1866. Narene traditions record an attack by the Swazi at some time during this period, but it is possible these refer to a previous attack - see N.J. Van Warmelo, 'The Banarene of Sekôrôrô', Union of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, Ethnological Publications No. 13 (Pretoria, 1944), 29. The Swazi subsequently claimed to a Boer Commission that this attack had initially been despatched against Magulu (who I have been unable to identify), and only then went on to attack Matjatji - S.S. 140, 322-3, Minutes of Commission, 23 Jan. 1872. Further evidence of Swazi raids in this period is to be found in Krige, 'Origins', but these are undifferentiated and erroneously dated to 1857-60.

died in 1860, and had subsequently fled to Swaziland to seek protection and aid (70). In 1869, the Hhohho section, against the advice of Thandile, decided the time was ripe for his re-installation. Thandile's objection was, that without the ritual protection of a mature king, the expedition was simply courting disaster. Other reasons however probably weighed equally heavily. From her 'southern' perspective, it must have seemed almost criminal to expose Swaziland either to Zulu retaliation or the withdrawal of Boer protection which such activities might bring. But the princes had other ideas. Spurred on by Mswati's Hhohho indvuna Matsafeni Mdluli, and by the prospect of loot, they overruled Thandile, and plans the campaign went ahead. The expedition that followed fulfilled Thandile's gloomiest predictions. After arriving at the Lulu mountains, they were lured in until entirely surrounded by hills. Then suddenly they were set on by rifle fire from all sides. As one Swazi informant tells,

The Princes fell like the leaves in autumn,  
and the country mourned the insupportable  
loss; poor and rich; noble and common;  
valiant and villains fell alike.

The battle of Ewulu had been irrevocably lost (71).

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(70) Berliner Missionsberichte, 1870, 204; S.S. 140, 323, Minutes of Commission 23 Jan. 1872. Both Hunt ('BaPedi', 293-4) and H.O. Mönnig (The Pedi, (Pretoria 1967), 25-6), are aware of Mampuru's flight, but not the subsequent Swazi invasion.

(71) Interview Prince Makhungu Dlamini, 15 May 1970, Ezulwini, Swaziland; interview Maboya Fakudze, from which the details about Thandile and Matsafeni also come; Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 240; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1870, 204; interview Maduba Dlamini, 15 May 1970, Ezulwini, Swaziland; interview Mabuntana Mdluli and John Mcoshwa Zulu, 22 June 1970, Hhohho, Swaziland.

All this had extensive repercussions on Swaziland's internal policies, although there is some disagreement as to how they made themselves felt. According to Swazi oral traditions, Thandile's policies were now vindicated, and her voice of sanity again predominated in Swaziland's affairs; Matsafeni, for his part, was disgraced, and forced to absent himself from Swaziland until popular indignation died down (72). With hindsight this is obviously how things should have worked out, but in practice Swaziland was obliged to suffer the ignominy of two further defeats, before Thandile's warnings could make themselves heard. Rather than damping the ardour of the northern regiments the Ewulu disaster seems, in fact, to have inflamed it, and gave rise to renewed pressure for campaigns to erase the bitter taste of defeat. In the space of a few months two further expeditions had been undertaken to the north and north-east. The first was an attack on Bilene, which, although unsuccessful, at least stopped short of outright disaster (73). The second was Swaziland's long-awaited raid into the Zoutpansberg. Ever since 1867 this had been under consideration, after Albasini's plea for help against the Venda, who were fast overrunning Boer settlements there (74). However, the Swazi decision to come had little to do with Albasini's plight. As the remaining Zoutpansberg Boers found to their cost, the Swazi were as apt

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(72) Above, 241, note 71.

(73) Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 240.

(74) S.S. 89, R 752/67, Albasini to President and Ex. Co., 20 July 1867; De Vaal, 'Rol', 102, 109.

to attack the chiefdoms supporting them as those they opposed, and their predicament became, if anything worse. The Swazi's first target was nevertheless Maghato, the arch-villain of the Zoutpansberg Boers. As befitted the recent vanquisher of Albasini, he proved a far more redoubtable opponent than the Swazi were accustomed to meet. In a violent assault, beginning on October 21st, both sides lost heavily, and with honours more or less even, the Swazi withdrew to find more vulnerable prey (75). Their troubles however were only just beginning. Rankling from two previous Swazi attacks, and forewarned by events in the Zoutspansberg, the lowveld chiefdoms were already preparing for the Swazi return. As the Swazi army wound its leisurely way home, its every move was plotted by lowveld spies. Finally, as it camped on Tsulamedi Hill by the Makundwe River, they made their last preparations for attack. Oblivious to their danger throughout, the Swazi were doubly oblivious now. Bemused by hemp, and sharpening their spears, they were caught completely unawares, and almost entirely wiped out (76).

After three defeats in twelve months Swaziland's military reputation lay in tatters, as a raid by Msuthfo drummed home the following year. Msuthfo had nursed a grievance against

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(75) S.S. 115, 95, ? to Ex. Co., 1 Nov. 1869; ibid, 100, N. Langer (?) to President, 1 Nov. 1869; S.S. 116, R.A. van Nispen to President, 10 Dec. 1869. De Vaal's only reference to this ('Rol', 122) is taken from G.M. Theal, History of South Africa 1486-1872, (5 vols. London 1888-1900) 5, 222, who is evidently drawing on documents I have not seen.

(76) Junod, 'Ba-Thonga', 240; N.J. Van Warmelo, 'The Bathlabine of Moxobōya,' Union of South Africa, D.N.A. Ethnological Publications No. 11, (Pretoria 1944), 94-5; interview Ndambi Mkhonta; interview Maboya Fakudze.

the Swazi ever since they had been responsible for the death of his father, Somcuba, nearly fifteen years before. He had been absent when that raid had taken place, and after a brief sojourn near Lydenburg had gone on to swell the numbers of Sekhukhune's fast growing state. From this position of security the events of 1869 had convinced both him and Sekhukhune, that the time was ripe for revenge. At the beginning of August he took the plunge, leading his forces against the border village of Eshangweni, and either killing or abducting the bulk of its inhabitants. The Swazi were powerless to retaliate. By the time a large enough force was gathered, Msuthfu was already in the Lulu mountains, and although a token pursuit was ordered, it was easily beaten off by the Pedi guns (77). Nothing remained for the Swazi to do except to make a rather truculent demand on the Boers to deny freedom of transit to any further Pedi raiders (78).

This succession of reverses should have devalued Swazi assistance in the eyes of the S.A.R., and intensified pressure on Swaziland's borders. In fact it did not, at least in any direct or obvious way. To begin with, it is unlikely that many Republican officials

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(77) S.N.I, N 105/79, Report by G. Roth, Landdrost Lydenburg n.d.; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1862, 92; *ibid*, 1872, 10-13; Myburgh, Carolina, 95-6. For the date of this raid see L.L. 180, Dagboek 1868-78, 1 Sept. 1870, in which is the complaint of D.J.G. Coetzer to the Landdrost of Lydenburg that between August 1 and 14, 1870, commandos from Msuthfu and the Swazi had crossed his land four times, and S.S. 152, Agreement between J. Schildhuis and Nodwada (?) etc., 27 Aug. 1870, where it is also referred to. See also P.P. 1877, C. 1748, 249, Encl. 2 in No. 188, in which "an old resident in the country" talks of the repulse of two Swazi raids on Sekhukhune in 1870.

(78) S.S. 152, 162, Extract minutes in matter of Umswaas v. Baviaan, 27 Aug. 1870; S.S. 131, 262, A.F. Jansen, Landdrost Lydenburg, to President and Ex. Co., 16 Jan. 1871.

ever heard of these engagements. The Bilene expedition they almost certainly knew nothing about, while the lowveld disaster is not recorded in either government sources or in the Berlin missionaries' accounts. Even if some rumours had percolated through, it is doubtful whether they would have been reflected in action. The Republic's own situation was too precarious for that. In the north, Republican officials were encountering precisely the same problems as the Swazi had done, if anything, in even more exaggerated form. Political combination among African chiefdoms, the growth of Pedi power, and the widespread diffusion of firearms together combined to create a maze of difficulties from which there was little hope of immediate escape. Reliable African support in this situation remained at a premium, which, in turn, allowed Swaziland to retain much of the bargaining power to which it had earlier laid claim.

There were various ways in which this state of affairs showed: the latitude allowed to the Swazi in the raid into the Zoutpansberg may be taken as one example; the relative freedom with which they rampaged across the border is another; and the impunity with which an armed force was able to barge unannounced into the startled village of Lydenburg to make known its demands, is yet one more (79). Most important, however, were the territorial concessions the S.A.R. were obliged to make.

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(79) Berliner Missionsberichte, 1870, 180, 425-6; S.S. 152, 164, Agreement between J. Schildhuis and Nodwada (?) etc., 27 Aug. 1870; 162, Extract minutes in matter of Umswaas v. Baviaan, 27 Aug. 1870. A garbled version of what seems to be the same episode is also to be found in Myburgh, Carolina, 102-3.

These were less significant in the far north where there was little white settlement to be threatened. In the Komati winter-veld, on the other hand, the situation was more difficult. As early as 1853 the Hollander, J. Stuart, had seen this as an ideal spot for expatriate settlement, (80) and while an unhealthy summer climate had eventually scotched that idea, it was still highly prized by Boer farmers for winter grazing. That, however, was precisely the Swazi point of view, and after re-asserting their claims in 1858, they made it clear that this was one place from which they would refuse to be dislodged. This remained their attitude even after title deeds had been issued, and Boer farmers trickled in. Instead they subjected the intruders to a campaign of harrassment, until they were eventually forced to evacuate. All of which placed the Republican authorities in something of a quandary. On the one side, they were faced with a band of vociferously aggrieved farmers. On the other, by an African ally whose hostility they dare not arouse. In the end, they settled for a typically unsatisfactory compromise. De facto control was allowed to revert to the Swazi; Republican claims were re-asserted but without being enforced; and the Boer farmers were left to fend for themselves. The conflict, in other words, was left to simmer on, but at such a temperature as would hopefully prevent it boiling over (81).

To the south of the Komati things were different again. The

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(80) Stuart, Hollandsche, 263-4, 431.

(81) See for instance L.L. III, 417, O.J. van Niekerk to C. Potgieter, 6 Oct. 1869; S.S. 150, 126-7, Naude to President and Ex. Co., 26 Nov. 1872.

border was undisputed, there was no sign of Swazi irridentism, and such tension as did exist was the product of Republican rather than Swazi demands. It may be that the reverses of 1869 contributed something to this situation, but it is unlikely that they can have affected it much. In the first place this pattern of relations had been in force since 1866, which left little room for these later events to have much effect. In the second, developments in the north and south had proceeded on such divergent lines since that date, that it seems to have suited both governments to treat them as separate and distinct, so that there was remarkably little backwash from events in either direction. Northern explanations for these southern phenomena, therefore, clearly cannot suffice, and the reasons for Swaziland's defensive southern strategy must be sought in the south itself.

As we have already seen, the two distinctive features of Swaziland's southern situation were the persisting threat from the Zulu, and the political and demographic consolidation of the S.A.R. in the south. It was these pressures that had first given rise to the 1866 cession, and it was their combined weight that continued to impose a strategy of restraint. If anything, their power to intimidate had grown since Mswati's death. Not only were Cetshwayo's aggressive intentions that much clearer (82), but political pressure from the S.A.R. had also continued to mount. The most obvious manifestation of the latter was

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(82) Below, 274.

McCorkindale's New Scotland settlement in Swaziland's southwest (83) (Map 9). New Scotland, it is true, did not exactly prosper. Founded in 1867, it was immediately caught up in Volksraad red tape, and never attracted the numbers that McCorkindale intended (84). But even in this arrested state its presence was sufficient to spotlight many of the problems with which the Swazi were increasingly being faced, and to commit them even more firmly to a policy of containment and restraint.

What worried the Swazi most about McCorkindale's scheme was not so much the closer settlement that might result, but the political thinking which it seemed to represent. In detail this varied from person to person, and in McCorkindale's case even with whomever he spoke to. When he broached the scheme to Pretorius, for instance, he promised the opening up of communications to the sea, and the loosening of commercial dependence on Natal (85). In his conversations with the British, on the other hand, he held out the prospect of extensive

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(83) Alexander McCorkindale's career in South Africa had begun with a rather dubious scheme to promote the large-scale immigration of indentured orphans into Natal, in return for which he would receive a free grant of land on which to settle them and have them work. The Colonial Office, not surprisingly, turned it down - C.O. 179/18, Petition, A. McCorkindale to S.S., n.d.; C.O. 179/41, McCorkindale to C.O., 2, 12, 24 January; 12, 19 February; 11 August; 13 and 21 September 1855. Thereafter, the only record of McCorkindale is as a cattle trader (as unloved as ever) in Zululand- S.N.A. 1/6/3, Papers relating to Cetshwayo 1862-78, Statement by Gwantsha and Magwasa, Government messengers returning from Cetshwayo, 27 April 1862.

(84) Kruger, 'Weg', 174-84; P.P. 1878-9, C. 2316, 24-5, Encl. 2 in No. 15, Memorandum, H.C. Shepstone to Frere 31 Dec. 1878.

(85) Kruger, 'Weg', 174-7.

secessions from the S.A.R., and the revival of British influence north of the Vaal (86). And when he spoke to the Swazi he seemed to hint at arrangements to preserve the Swazi from the Zulu (87). For all their surface contradictions, however, these proposals had a common theme in the idea of opening up communications to the sea, and it was this which was viewed by the Swazi with such particular alarm.

Their anxiety was well founded. In order to get to Delagoa Bay, McCorkindale had to gain access through Swaziland, and for this he needed control of a land corridor to Lourenço Marques. Apart from the question of extra cessions that were involved, this held a more general threat for Swaziland's future.

Whatever McCorkindale or anyone else might say, it was obvious that the moment these links were established, the land in between would become all the more desirable, and Swaziland would come under continuous pressure to cede more and more. If the regents had any doubts on that score they were dispelled by McCorkindale himself. From the moment his colonists set foot in New Scotland the Swazi regents were subjected to an endless stream of demands, until, in desperation, they appealed to the authorities in

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(86) G.H.N., Vol. 595, No. 92, 48-9, Wodehouse to L.G. Natal, 19 Sept. 1868. Perhaps the most transparently dishonest part of this entire scheme was his claim that he was acting in the interests of all those who, like Britain, were opposed to the continuance of the slave trade.

(87) Ibid.

Natal (88). McCorkindale, they complained, was continually demanding land inside the Swazi line. "We object" they went on, "but he perseveres, and we see that sooner or later he will occupy this country. It seems useless for us to urge the fact upon him that he has not yet fully occupied the country he states himself to have purchased from the President of the Transvaal. He wants more, and takes little notice of our objections." (89)

Even if one dismisses the language of the message as owing more to Shepstone than the Swazi, the depth of concern can still be gauged from its substance and the way in which it was delivered. However much they might try to obscure the issue by dwelling on McCorkindale's British origins, what the regents were attempting was to secure redress against the S.A.R. by appealing for British intercession. As such, it represents a milestone in Swazi diplomacy. In the past, the Swazi had appealed for British intervention often enough, but this was the first time it had been invoked against the S.A.R. rather than the Zulu. It was,

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(88) McCorkindale in fact claimed that he had obtained a land corridor through Swaziland, together with additional cessions on the border of New Scotland. The Swazi however always denied it - S.C., Pkt. 6(b), No. 4, Minutes of meeting W.F. Joubert, H.T. Buhrmann with Swaziland regents, 19 June 1868; see also below, note 112; - apart from one inexplicable message from Makwasidile - S.N.A., Vol 1/1/20, Encl. in No. 22, 30 May 1870-; for Makwasidile see below, 254. The disparity between Boer and Swazi claims may possibly be explained by a letter written by David Leslie to The Times of London, reported in De Volksstem on 4 May 1874, in which it was claimed that an attempt had been made by a certain Englishman to acquire the corridor by subterfuge, through acquiring timber rights in the first instance, and claiming ownership later.

(89) P.P. 1878-9, C. 2220 Appendix 2, encl. in encl. in No. 2, Statement of Swazi messengers, 31 May 1869.

in short, a telling commentary on Swaziland's changing diplomatic position. The significance which the Swazi themselves attached to the shift is also reflected in the composition of the delegation. Not since 1852, in an earlier period of crisis, had the Swazi despatched a body of similar distinction (90). Present in its ranks were Mhlaba, referred to in the message as brother, but in fact insila of Mswati; Mantinwane, the indvuna of the Lobamba royal homestead; Konjane, the indvuna of the Nkanini royal homestead, as well as an assortment of lesser dignitaries. There was no doubt meant to be left about the gravity of its mission.

In the event, the immediate danger to Swaziland was averted, when McCorkindale died of fever in Lorenzo Marques in May 1871 (91). After that, New Scotland stagnated and trade up the Maputo was reduced to a trickle (92). In a wider sense, however, Swaziland's problems were just beginning. McCorkindale's scheme could never have been implemented had it not coincided with Republican thinking about the area, and that remained unaffected by McCorkindale's death. Ever since the collapse of Pretorius's St. Lucia Bay schemes, Swaziland's place within this had been as the S.A.R.'s road to the sea (93). The commissioning of David Forbes to search for suitable harbours on the other side of Swaziland in 1866, had sounded an early

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(90) Above, 111-2.

(91) C.O. 179/102, No. 63, Keate to Kimberley, 22 June 1871.

(92) S.P.G. Series "E", Vol. 27, 1548-9, Letter from Jackson, 31 Dec. 1871.

(93) Kruger, 'Weg', 149-169.

warning of these intentions (94). The decision to levy S.A.R. customs on the Maputo River once McCorkindale's scheme got underway, was another (95). Both developments held equally serious implications for the Swazi, for what they signalled was Pretorius's ultimate intention to annex. This in fact is what he did by a Proclamation in the Staatscourant on 29th April, 1868, and after an initial squabble with the Portuguese, who objected to its scope and its unilateral proclamation, it came into force in amended form on 29 July 1869 (96).

But it was one thing to annex Swaziland on paper, and another to translate this into practice. Portuguese objections to the annexation might be brushed aside by granting rectifications to the proclamation, but Swaziland's were of a different order again. Pretorius's best chance of securing Swazi acquiescence was through the efforts of Alexander McCorkindale, who had the money, and the organisation to put his proposals into action - and even this was a pretty remote possibility. Once McCorkindale had gone the Republic's own resources proved hopelessly inadequate

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(94) G.H.N., Vol. 1388, Osborne to Erskine, 4 Aug. 1868, Encl. translation section 553, Staatscourant n.d.; F.C. (A602), Vol. 18, Diary D. Forbes 1866, 5-19 August 1866; F.C., Vol. 15, Copy of letter D. Forbes to President Pretorius, 15 Feb. 1867.

(95) G.H.N., Vol. 595, 160-2, Encl. in No. 7, P.E. Wodehouse to Kimberley, 20 July 1870.

(96) Kruger, 'Weg', 185-8.

to the task (97). An idea of the scale of these shortcomings can be gained from a glance at the subsequent history of the 1866 cession. Before Pretorius could even think of implementing more ambitious projects, he first needed to regularise that transaction by paying over the balance of cattle owed the Swazi since 1855. On the face of it this should have been a simple operation, but it proved well beyond the capabilities of the S.A.R. up until 1870. So shaky were the Republic's finances, that instructions to hand over the cattle simply could not be carried out. The district authorities had no money in their coffers to cover the outlay, and government vouchers retained so little credibility that no-one would part with their cattle in exchange. The result was that every time the authorities tried to gain further concessions, the Swazi could side-step

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(97) Initially, in fact, McCorkindale had conscripted to pay off the debt owed by the S.A.R. since 1855 (Wa. A., Vol. I, Loose pages McCorkindale to O'Reilly, 18 July 1866). Later the S.A.R.'s financial position improved somewhat, so that in 1870 it was even able to start paying its officials regular salaries, (S. Trapido, 'The South African Republic: Class Formation and the State, 1850-1900', S.S.A., 3, (London, 1973), 57). Even so the amount of money McCorkindale and his Scottish companies could concentrate in this restricted area was far in excess of anything the S.A.R. could muster. Between 1867 and 1870, for example, the Glasgow and South Africa Company spent £30 000 on livestock and buildings alone, (S.S. 127, 133, Bell to State Secretary, 20 Nov. 1870,), while the amount the S.A.R. could expend for the whole of the country in 1869 was £33 076 (E.H.D. Arndt, Banking and Currency Development in South Africa (1652-1927), (Cape Town, 1928), 107). It should be noted, however, that income and expenditure did increase rapidly, rising to double this figure in the next few years as a result of the discovery of gold (ibid, 115).

the issue by demanding satisfaction on the missing cattle first (98).

Similar difficulties bedevilled the Republic on the level of personnel. Inadequate remuneration discouraged even the most public spirited of public servants from taking part in missions to Swaziland, which meant that initiatives petered out on this

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(98) They also used this as a bargaining counter in the dispute over the Komati winterveld - S.C., Pkt. 6(a), 277, No. 4, W.F. Joubert etc. to Volksraad, 29 June 1868. The entire question of the payment of cattle is also complicated by the behaviour of Makwazidile Dhladhla, the official Swazi representative in the matter. After demanding the cattle on several occasions between 1867 and 1869 he refused to accept them when they were ready to be delivered in April 1870. When the cattle were finally handed over in June 1871, he had ceased to act as official intermediary. The implications of each of these developments is unclear. It may be Makwazidile was playing a double game with both Boer and Swazi, as some Republican officials suspected, in which case he may have been removed from his position for misconduct. There is, however, no hint of this in any Swazi communication, and the alternative hypothesis that he had fled the border after being responsible for the murder of several bushmen in the S.A.R. could also be true. In that case, it is as likely that his actions over the cattle were on instructions from his principals. A further question mark however is thrown on Makwazidile's role throughout these negotiations by his flight to the S.A.R. in Dec. 1874, but the implications of even this are unclear, because within a matter of months he had returned to Swaziland and was being used again as an official representative - S.S. 178, 180, Henderson to President, 9 Dec. 1874; S.S. 190, 25, Rudolph to President & Ex. Co., 4 July 1875; S.S. 89, 62-3, R 633/67, A.A. O'Reilly to President & Ex. Co., 4 July 1867; S.C., Pkt. 6(a), 277, No. 4, W.F. Joubert to Volksraad, 29 June 1868; L.L. III, 21-4, Pretorius and Ex. Co., to C. Potgieter 25 Mar. 1869; S.S. 111, A.A. O'Reilly etc. to President and Ex. Co., 12 May 1869, 139-142, Encl. mins. of Commission 16 April 1869, 143-5; S.S. 111, 121-2, H.T. Buhrmann (?) to President & Ex. Co., 19 July 1869; S.S. 122, 330-2, Buhrmann to Pres. & Ex. Co., 22 April 1870; S.S. 134, J.C.C. Moll, Acting Landdrost to Govt. Secretary, 9 June 1871; S.S. 134, 678, W.F. Joubert to Ex. Co., June 1871; S.S. 140, 324, Mins. of Commission, 23 Jan. 1872, Art. 16.

level as well. Buhrmann set out some of the problems in a letter to Pretorius in August 1869 (99). On his last expedition to Swaziland he observed that he had spent a quarter of his subsistence allowance on presents to the Swazi authorities, and another substantial portion on paying the cost of an interpreter. Neither of these expenses were provided for in his subsistence allowance, which in any case was abysmally inadequate for the long journey over burnt and sparsely inhabited winter-veld. Because of this, he concluded, he had no alternative but to make his services unavailable for any other expeditions in the future. Buhrmann, by his own admission, "always had been and still was a difficult man," but the same charges were re-iterated three years later by P.J. Coetzer (100). In August 1871, Coetzer complained he had taken part in an expedition to Swaziland for which he still had not received remuneration. This was not, he pointed out, an isolated incident. He still had not been paid for his services as an interpreter on a previous occasion, and until he received satisfaction, he would not make himself available again.

In addition to his financial grievances, Coetzer's letter also drew attention to the related problems of a lack of administrative co-ordination and poor official morale. The second expedition in which he had taken part had evidently ended as a fiasco, because none of the Commission members had turned up at the right time. While the initial source of confusion may have been

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(99) S.S. 115, 63-4, Buhrmann to Ex. Co., 20 Aug. 1869.

(100) S.S. 143, P.J. Coetzer to President and Ex. Co., 9 April 1872.

administrative bungling, the subsequent failure of the Commissioners to await their other colleagues indicates weak personal commitment, and very ragged morale (101). No-one, it is clear, wanted to make the trip to Swaziland. Half the time it was fever ridden, and the other half it was burnt, and even when one got there, the chances of successfully concluding one's business were remote. In the face of the regents' bland intransigence, the prospect of any significant breakthrough, at any rate in one mission, was almost nil. Insofar as it was humanly possible, therefore, the Republic's officers made sure they never went.

It was weaknesses such as these that prevented Pretorius from sustaining any sort of momentum in his Swaziland policy. Activity, instead, tended to be haphazard and un-coordinated, and, for the most part, the Swazi were able to parry or evade successive efforts to extend the Republic's control. Nevertheless, however ineffectually directed, the tempo of Republican activity in the region was undoubtedly quickening, and by 1870, some of the worst fears entertained in 1866 were already being confirmed. Apart from McCorkindale's constant agitation, the Swazi were being bombarded by demands from other quarters as well. 1871 and 1872, for instance, saw a spate of projects aimed at opening up road

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(101) Coetzer's story is also confirmed by J. Snyman, another member appointed to the Commission - but with one significant difference. He claimed that having arrived four days late, being unavoidably delayed, he was told that Coetzer had not in any case had any of the necessary equipment for a mission with him - S.S. 135, 143-4, J. Snyman to President and Ex. Co., 26 Aug. 1871.

and rail links between Delagoa Bay and the interior. At first these were fairly innocuous, as the route that was projected skirted round Swazi territory before heading north to Lydenburg. Later however the emphasis shifted south, and Swaziland's interests were placed more seriously at risk. The idea, at this stage, was to link up the coast with the economically more vigorous south, a project for which consent was finally wrung out of the Swazi early in 1872 (102). Concession hunters and missionaries also thronged in, but these were more easily deflected. Although a few Boer farmers may have acquired grazing concessions (103), neither Wilkinson, the Bishop of Zululand, nor Jackson his protégé could make much headway here, and the evangelisation of Swaziland had to wait another day (104). Nevertheless, if one views all this against a background of mounting official pressure from the S.A.R., it is clear that the situation was getting out of control. Small wonder that Jackson could report in 1872 that, "[the Swazi] are suspicious of every stranger, and fancy that he can have no other motive than to obtain their cattle or their land." (105)

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(102) S.S. 130, R 1869/71, 179-80, J.A. Simao, Gov. L.M. to President S.A.R., 1 Feb. 1871; S.S. 133, 129-50, G. Moodie to B. Proes, 20 April 1871; S.S. 140, 324-5, Mins. of Commission, 23 Jan. 1872.

(103) See for example the case of Andries Botha, S.S. 190, 47-50, Rudolph to S.S., 4 July 1875, Encl. minutes of Commission, 3 July 1875, and also Bell's reference to the bad behaviour of Boer wintergraziers in Swaziland, just after Ludvonga's death - S.S. 174, 243, Bell to Burgers, 25 Aug. 1874.

(104) S.P.G. Series "E", Vol. 275, 1551-2, Letter from Jackson. Here Jackson recounts a story which seems to sum up the suspicion in which they were held. On visiting a chief he was closely questioned about his intentions. When Jackson told him, "... there are people beyond the sea who love them and wish to do them good, he seemed to think my language absurd and deserving of ridicule".

(105) Ibid, 1551.

But, however harrassing these attentions might be, they were not individually very serious, and paled into insignificance beside the longer standing problems of Swazi diplomacy. As ever, the central dilemma was the difficulty of striking a balance between the rival ambitions of Zululand and the S.A.R., which would succeed in keeping both of them simultaneously at bay. Two new developments in the middle of 1870 made that problem all the more acute. In July an attack was launched by Mbilini on the south-west border of Zululand, which resurrected all the old fears of Zulu occupation (106). Then in August came Msuthfo's demoralising raid from the north-west, and the spectre of a Zulu/Pedi pincer from the north and south (107). The regents' reaction to the danger was the well-worn one of shuffling a few steps closer to the S.A.R., and asking for her protection (108). This time, however she insisted on a more tangible return. Intent on reviving his flagging Swaziland initiative, Pretorius despatched yet another Commission to Swaziland, armed with instructions to exact political dependence as the price of any further aid.

The situation could not have been more propitious for Pretorius's

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(106) S.S. 125, 283, A. McCorkindale to President & Ex. Co., 27 July 1870. The raid was carried out on the 11th, 12th July by a force of about 900 men.

(107) This is suggested by the regents' first request for assistance in January 1871, in which the names of Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune are linked, and more explicitly in an interview Bell had with Sandlane, the Swazi Prime Minister, two years after this, S.S. 157 R 718/73, 42-3, Bell to Burgers, 29 March 1873.

(108) S.S. 131, A.F. Jansen to Pres. & Ex. Co., 10 Jan. 1871; S.S. 139, 186, Govt. Secretary to Pretorius, 11 May 1871, Encl. Declaration of Maviyet and other messengers from Swazi, 24 April 1871.

move, but once again familiar weaknesses wrecked the entire enterprise. Even though the balance of the cattle owing on the 1866 cession was finally paid in June 1871 (109), the Commission that was supposed to convey the Executive's demands failed to meet at the appointed time, and its members returned home without anything getting done. This was in August 1871 (110). Further action was shelved until January 1872, but here again the disparity between ambition and performance was equally marked. Once more the Executive Council's instructions were to secure political suzerainty over Swaziland, and the right to establish export and postal services to Lourenço Marques in return for Republican aid. To this were also added the exacting tasks of estimating the size of Swaziland's population, and evaluating the mineral potential of the land. Needless to say, not much of this got done. From the beginning the Commission got off to a bad start, when its interpreter failed to put in an appearance, and when it decided it could not undertake either the census or the survey (111). Almost as little progress was made with the Commission's main objectives once Swaziland had been reached. The Swazi were so vehemently opposed to any suggestion of political control, that the Commission had tactfully to let the matter drop, and all it had obtained by the time it left was permission to allow roads and postal

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(109) S.S. 134, 678, Joubert to Ex. Co., June 1871.

(110) S.S. 143, P.J. Coetzer to President & Ex. Co., 9 April 1872.

(111) P.J. Coetzer was eventually obliged, unwillingly to take over his tasks.

services to cross Swaziland, and, more ambiguously, an undertaking by the Swazi not to attack African chiefdoms in the Transvaal (112).

Following these rebuffs, no more moves were made on a Presidential level until the end of the year. In the meantime, however, unofficial initiatives continued from Wakkerstroom. Ever since Henderson had taken over as Field-Cornet in Wakkerstroom, a far more active policy had been pursued from there towards Swaziland. Coetzer's Commission had discovered this when they visited Swaziland in January 1872. Much of the alarm about Zulu attacks, it transpired then, had been artificially whipped up by exaggerated reports sent from Henderson to the effect that the Zulu were massing (113). Henderson persisted in this fashion after the Commission had departed. In August he seems to have primed Jeppe to write to Pretoria claiming that the Swazi desired to be subjects of the S.A.R., and would pay tax as well; and again in March 1873 he was apparently guilty of trying to bully the regents into accepting the political suzerainty of the S.A.R. (114). For all Henderson's bluster however, his position was too lowly to cause much concern, and the regents

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(112) S.S. 140, 32J-29, Minutes of Commission and Report of Commission to President & Ex. Co., 23 Jan. 1872.

(113) Ibid, 319-20.

(114) S.S. 147, 99, F. Jeppe to Govt. Secretary Swart, 30 Aug. 1872; S.S. 155, 284-5, Henderson to President & Ex. Co., 24 March 1873, and encl. Dec. by Jintje and two others, messengers from Henderson to Swazi nation 3 Aug. 1873, 282-3; S.S. 157, R 78/73, 41, Bell to Burgers, 29 March 1873.

made no effort to respond.

A more serious threat in any case was already pre-occupying them. In July 1872 Burgers had taken over the Presidency of the Republic, and had immediately injected a new urgency into its affairs. One of the first of his priorities was the situation in Swaziland. Never one for undue formality, Burgers decided to pay a personal visit there early in 1873. No contemporary record seems to remain of this expedition, but its objects are fairly apparent from later correspondence. Burgers's intention, it seems clear, was to assert the suzerainty of the Republic, and to acquire another strip along the Pongola on which white farmers might settle (115). What he achieved is uncertain, but it is unlikely to have been much. He may have extracted some minor concessions but on the main issue, like his predecessors, he also failed. His mission did, however, have one tangible result. This was the first time a President of the S.A.R. had visited Swaziland, and the regents were left visibly unnerved. If the President of the Republic was prepared to come, they seem to have reasoned, the pressure must really be on: and something more had to be done to acquire protection against encroachment from Zululand and the Republic. The means the Swazi chose were the familiar ones of an appeal to Natal. For the first time, however, this was directed

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(115) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement by Kwahlakwhahla and others, 26 May 1873; S.S. 157, R 718/73, 40-44, Bell to Burgers, 29 March 1873; F.C., Vol. 17, McCorkindale Papers, Mrs. McCorkindale to Sarah, 25 Jan. 1873, 80.

unequivocally against the S.A.R. Burgers, they told the Natal authorities, had recently visited Swaziland with a demand that they accept Republican control. This they had been unable to entertain because they had been tributary to Natal ever since the time of Mswati. What they humbly requested now, therefore, was some written evidence to set the record right, which they would be able to put before Burgers if he came to visit them again (116).

There was, however, very little the Natal authorities could do. They knew Swaziland was in no meaningful sense a tributary of Natal, and that the last time the question had been debated the British government had firmly tied Natal's hands (117). Whatever their personal feelings on the issue, therefore, they had to fob off the Swazi, telling them that no decision could be taken until they knew the Republic's side of the story (118). Fortunately for them, they were spared the embarrassment of further inaction by Burgers himself, who had already decided to settle for smaller returns. Abandoning for the moment the quest for suzerainty, he now concentrated his efforts on obtaining the cession of a strip of land for a military settlement along the Pongola, and on acquiring an undertaking

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(116) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement by Kwahlakwahla and others, 26 May 1873.

(117) C.O. 179/90, No. 84, Keate to Wodehouse, 2 Sept. 1868.

(118) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Reply of Lieutenant Gov., 26 May 1873, to Swazi message of same date.

that the Swazi would not enter outside treaty relations without the Republic's approval. On both of these issues his representatives were shrewdly deflected. In reply to the question of cession the regents promised their answer, "when [the President]... again visited them "; while on the issue of treaty relations, they drove such a huge hole through Burgers's restrictions as to leave them virtually without effect. For years, they pointed out, they had paid tribute to the Zulu, and had maintained friendly communications with Shepstone, and in neither case could they risk abandoning these practices without danger of creating a serious breach with the parties concerned. With those qualifications however, they declared themselves perfectly willing to comply with Burgers's request. One imagines they were: there was hardly anything left of the proposals against which to object. What the Commissioners thought is another matter. They must obviously have realised that they had been outmanoeuvred, but the regents had evidently done this in such an agreeable manner, and had managed to sugar their disappointment with at least some token concessions, that they could console themselves that in future negotiations much more could be done. As the Border Commissioner Bell wrote to Burgers on his return, "I feel sure that once they get a little more confidence in this country's intentions they will do all you ask," and on that note both he and Burgers seem to have been prepared to let the matter rest (119).

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(119) S.S. 157, R 718/73, 40-44, Bell to Burgers, 29 March 1873.

No further action was taken by Burgers prior to Ludvonga's death, so that the regents were able to hand over to Mbandzeni a state whose autonomy was largely unimpaired. But Swaziland did not emerge entirely unscathed. Although it had weathered the diplomatic storm, this had set up strains within Swazi society, which were to have serious repercussions on domestic affairs. On the domestic front the period would have been a testing time anyway. The moment was fast approaching when Ludvonga and his mother would assume complete control over the nation's affairs, and this was a transition which had traditionally engendered a measure of bad feeling and competition. An equivalent period in Mswati's reign had produced Malambule's rebellion. This time, co-inciding with such intense external pressure, its consequences were to prove almost as severe.

First hints of the difficulties ahead can perhaps be detected in 1871. There we find the earliest reference to Sisile's participation in regency politics, as well as the first suggestion of faction in national affairs (120). Firmer indications appear in 1873. By then Ludvonga's impotence and continued exclusion from national politics is almost palpable, and may even have been drawing him towards an independent initiative on foreign affairs (121). In a sense this was to be

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(120) S.S. 139, Proes to Pretorius, 11 May 1871, Encl. Proes to Landdrost Wakkerstroom, 10 May 1871, 190, and J.C.C. Moll, Acting Landdrost Wakkerstroom to Govt. Secretary, 2 April 1871, 191. This is however the slimmest of hints and may have been the product of Boer misapprehension.

(121) S.S. 155, 284-5, Henderson to Pres. & Ex. Co., 24 March 1873; S.S. 160, Henderson to Pres. & Ex. Co., 20 Sept. 1873, 284-6. These references must however again be treated with caution. Henderson was obviously intent on exploiting divisions within Swaziland, and this could have been just an exercise in wishful thinking.

expected, and could even be interpreted as behaviour befitting a young king. What was more serious were suspicions of reciprocal jealousy against Ludvonga's growing influence on the part of some of the regents as well. The name most commonly mentioned in this respect was that of Ndwandwe, Ludvonga's chief regent and the son of Sobhuza by Thandile's sister, File (122).

Rumours about him were sufficiently widespread for Wilkinson to learn about them when he visited Swaziland in September 1873 (123). As Ludvonga's minority neared its end these evidently multiplied, so that when Ludvonga inexplicably took ill and died on 18th March 1874, Ndwandwe was immediately sought out and executed, without even a chance to protest his innocence (124).

Just how responsible Ndwandwe was for Ludvonga's death is, however, open to question. According to Matsebula, Ndwandwe was executed because, as Ludvonga's guardian, he was responsible for his well-being (125), but Swazi traditions go further than that, and state quite baldly that Ludvonga was murdered by Ndwandwe. On this charge the issues are considerably more clouded. Ndwandwe's executioners were obviously certain of his guilt, but from this distance in time it is difficult to be as sure.

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(122) Matsebula, History, 25; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 39; Bryant, Olden Times, 332.

(123) S.P.G., Series "D", Wilkinson to Bullock, Sept. 1873, 43.

(124) De Volksstem, 2 May 1874, Letter from D. Straker, 8 April 1874; S.S. 170, 106-8, Bolt to Pres., 21 March 1874; S.S. 170, 203-4, Bell to Pres., 13 April 1874, 203-4. According to Honey, 'History' 39, Thandile consulted with Malunge, Maloyi and Sobandla - all sons of Sobhuza, as well as with witchdoctors after Ludvonga's death, and all agreed on Ndwandwe's culpability. Matsebula's date of 1872 for Ludvonga's death is incorrect, (History, 27).

(125) Ibid.

By what means, for example, was Ludvonga killed? If one discounts sorcery, then the agency is not so easy to find. One current Swazi tradition suggests that he died after sniffing the barrel of a rifle given him by Ndwandwe, but this hardly sounds like regicide (126). Contemporary accounts for their part talk vaguely of poisoning but again the method is not fully spelled out (127). Of course one cannot get away from the fact that Ludvonga died suspiciously, and it may be too much to expect direct evidence of Ndwandwe's complicity. But in that case it is necessary to provide convincing circumstantial evidence of Ndwandwe's guilt. This exists, but again is of limited value. Recent Swazi tradition asserts that Ndwandwe intended a leviritical union with LaMgangeni, the mother of Ludvonga, whereby he would raise up seed to Mswati, and ensure himself of power until that child had matured. However, as Honey points out, a son so irregularly begotten would still have no better right to succeed than numerous other first sons of Mswati (128). Perhaps Ndwandwe meant to remedy the situation by invoking Cetshwayo as guarantor of the settlement. Something like this is certainly suggested in contemporary accounts, although here one finds a different slant. According to Thandile, as well as to other observers on the border, Ndwandwe was aiming

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(126) Interview Maboya Fakudze.

(127) De Volksstem, 2 May 1874, Letter from D. Straker, 8 April 1874; S.S. 170, 106-8, Bolt to President, 21 March 1874; S.S. 170, 203-4, Bell to President, 13 April 1874.

(128) Honey, 'History', 39; Kuper, Aristocracy, 102. Kuper however, in a rare mistake, confuses LaMgangene (Sisile) with Thandile (LaZidze) here.

to marry one of Cetshway's sisters and to set himself up as Cetshwayo's lieutenant in Swaziland (129). But even this version has certain inherent implausibilities. At the very moment Ludvonga died, for example, Zulu emissaries were in attendance, negotiating Ludvonga's marriage to a Zulu princess - hardly what one would have expected had Cetshwayo believed Ndwandwe's takeover to be imminent. Similarly, if Ndwandwe were involved in a conspiracy it was remarkably ineptly done, since there is no sign of any follow-up after Ludvonga's death. Thandile explained this by claiming that the conspiracy had gone off half cock after being undertaken prematurely. But then one has to ask why was it pushed forward with such risk? One possible way of harmonising these contradictions, is to suggest that the Zulu messengers at Ludvonga's homestead brought news of Ndwandwe's treasonable designs; even so, one would have expected Thandile to reveal this to add authority to her allegations. Or was she perhaps afraid to reveal too close an association with Cetshwayo? Bell thought so, but it is impossible to tell. Nor in the last analysis can one pronounce on Ndwandwe's guilt. He may have been a regicide, or he may as easily have been the victim of the suspicion and hysteria generated by the sudden pressure on Swaziland from outside its borders, and by the inevitable frictions encountered in the transition from regency to full monarchical rule. Perhaps one should at least allow him the benefit of the doubt.

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(129) De Volksstem, 2 May 1874, Letter from S. Straker, 8 April 1874; S.S. 170, 203-4, Bell to President, 13 April 1874.

## CHAPTER VII

## MBANDZENI : 1874-1881

With Ludvonga gone a new interregnum followed, which has subsequently generated a considerable mythology. For this, the main culprit is Alistair Miller. Miller first visited Swaziland in 1888, and subsequently established himself as a leading concessionaire (1). Miller's natural interest in history soon led him to enquire about Swaziland's past, but his ignorance of siSwati, his equivocal position as a concessionaire, and his own penchant for the blood curdling, together combined to produce an extraordinarily garbled version of events. His description of the interregnum is more or less typical in this respect. For two years after Ludvonga's death he claimed, "The country [was] in a bloodbath", which was only brought to an end when "the older chiefs prevailed, the disaffected regiments were broken", and Mbandzeni succeeded to the throne (2). Miller's exaggerations are, unfortunately, with us to this day. Even where his unreliability has been detected, his influence on more authoritative sources still remains, and nowhere is this more so than with the period of the interregnum. Bryant talks of twelve months civil war; Garson refers to a period of chaos and fighting, and the idea has remained embedded in the popular mythology of the time (3).

Lately Miller's myths have been succeeded by counter-myths, whose object has been to rebut Miller's extravagances. The

(1) Below, 392-3.

(2) M.P., MS 1478, Miller, 'Short History', 17.

(3) Bryant, Olden Times, 333; Garson, 'Swaziland', 274.

Swazi have always known that no civil war followed Ludvonga's death, but this has now produced a tendency towards over-compensation. Matsebula, for example, gives little idea of the scale of violence that occurred during this period (4). Not only was Ndwandwe's populous Mbidlimbidlini chiefdom destroyed, at a possible cost of one thousand, five hundred lives, but a host of other associates of Ludvonga also suffered the same fate. Mgenge Matsebula, the indvuna of Ludvonga's Nkanini village, was the most prominent of these, but a number of other leading personalities were also struck down at the same time (5), and this wrought such a transformation in the ranks of the Swazi ruling council that when Jackson returned to the capital, some twenty months later, he could scarcely recognise a face that he had previously known (6).

But it still remains true that none of this adds up to the protracted convulsions described by Miller. Apart from two relatively minor episodes - the execution of a minor chief and the pursuit of Prince Mabhedla - the blood-letting was over in

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(4) Matsebula, History, 27.

(5) De Volksstem, 2 May 1874, Letter D. Straker 8 May 1874, which estimates 3 000 killed at Mbidlimbidlini, and also refers to the execution of a brother of Mswati named Ndhlela; S.S. 170, R 538, 106-7, C. Bolt to President, 21 March 1874, who gives the figure of 1 500 for those killed at Mbidlimbidlini, and mentions the execution of Umgenge and sixteen others at Ditini; S.S. 190, 31, 46, Rudolph to S.S., 4 July 1875, Encl. minutes of representatives investigating complaints at Ludidi, 2 July 1875, where the death of Mgenge is mentioned, as well as the obliteration of the village of Mkanjana, a subordinate of Ndwandwe living near the Lebombo; Matsebula mentions the death of Mgenge (History, 25), but without indicating the context, and the attack on Mbidlimbidlini (29), but without indicating the casualties.

(6) S.P.G. Series "E", Vol. 31, 1225-6, Letter from Jackson, 31 March 1876.

a relatively short space of time. So too was the interregnum as a whole. Rather than lasting one or even two years, it was over in three months, and by the middle of June, Mbandzeni was safely installed (7). The absence of bloodshed nevertheless did not preclude intense competition, and these three months were a period of considerable tension in Swaziland, when the possibility of violence never lay far below the surface.

Ludvonga's death left the field wide open for almost any first born son of Mswati to try his luck, and a bitter, and at times explosive, struggle between them ensued. If anyone had a superior claim it was Giba, but his temperament worked against him. Many thought that he would prove too unstable a leader, and, with this question mark over him, his candidature was blocked (8). So, with no other obvious front runners, the struggle went on.

While the princes were jockeying for position, moves were going on behind the scenes which were narrowing down the field in a quite unexpected direction. At the centre, as usual, were Swaziland's veteran elder statesmen, in the shape of Sandlane, Malunge and the queen dowager, Thandile. Perhaps the most intractable problem left by the death of Ludvonga was the question of what to do about his mother Sisile. Was she to be

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(7) S.N.A. 1/6/2, No. 105, Statement by Mhlaba and Kwahlakwaha, messengers from Thandile, 24 June 1874; S.S. 172, 242, Bell to S.S., 25 June 1874.

(8) Sw.A., J 50/03, D. Forbes to Resident Commissioner, 21 Jan. 1901; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 42-3.

ousted in favour of the new king's mother, or should she remain in an office whose perquisites she already largely controlled? Neither the collective wisdom of the regents, nor the corpus of historical precedent, seemed to offer an easy answer to the problem, and in the end it was left to Sisile herself to come up with the solution. When her advice was taken on the subject she put forward the name of Mbandzeni, on the grounds that he had already lost his mother, and that she could therefore continue her functions undisturbed (9). Anxious for a way out of the impasse, the regents readily agreed. Indeed, they were in all probability, doubly relieved: not only did Mbandzeni solve the constitutional problem, but he appeared to be the best guarantee available for their group interests in the years to come. Placid and pliable, he could be moulded to their wishes in a way none of the other leading candidates seemed to allow. Without further ado he was removed, to be prepared for his new and unexpected role.

With Mbandzeni suddenly secluded, it was not long before some idea of the regents' decision began to filter down to the other contenders. Giba's reaction, allegedly, was to set in motion a conspiracy, together with the princes Mpangwa and Kwabiti, aimed at the assassination of Mbandzeni, but this in the end scarcely got off the ground. Giba and Mpangwa could not agree on an alternative to Mbandzeni, and with deadlock on that question the conspiracy collapsed (10). Mabhedla evidently took his

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(9) Matsebula, History, 29; Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 42; interview Maboya Fakudze.

(10) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 43.

disaffection a step further, leaving himself no alternative but flight once Mbandzeni's nomination had been formally ratified (11). As for the country at large, it too fell into pro and anti Mbandzeni camps, with the north largely in favour of Sisile's nominee and the south broadly opposed (12). Given that distribution of support, the result was almost a forgone conclusion. Supported by the principal regiments, the principal princes and what remained of constitutionality, the regents' choice could hardly fail to win through. Any lingering doubts were dispelled by Mbandzeni's carefully stage-managed installation. Flanked by the Mgadhlela and Mlondolozu regiments, Mbandzeni's nomination was presented to the nation's representatives as a fait accompli, leaving them no other option but to approve by acclamation (13). With all possibility of dissent stifled, and with no agreed alternative to replace Mbandzeni, what remaining opposition there was immediately crumbled.

Despite the way in which he was steam-rollered into office, Mbandzeni's personal position remained relatively weak. Installed to suit Sisile's convenience, rather than for any obvious claim of his own, he was inevitably relegated to a secondary role. Re-inforcing this was his own timidity and political inexperience. In the last years of Ludvonga's minority Sisile had played an

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(11) Below, 273.

(12) S.S. 172, 242, Bell to State Secretary, 25 June 1874; Kuper, 'Primitive Nation', 350.

(13) Sw.A., Honey, 'History', 43.

increasingly important part in national government and ritual. Mbandzeni, by contrast, knew nothing of these mysteries, and was forced into even greater dependence on the advice and experience of his adopted mother. Nor was it only to Sisile that he had to defer. Behind her stood the old regency junta of Thandile, Sandlane, Malunge and Maloyi - names which recur again and again in the surviving records of the period. How ruthlessly they would act in defence of their group interests had already been demonstrated after the death of Ludvonga, when many younger up and coming councillors had been liquidated. Surrounded by these, and denied any immediate infusion of new blood into his councils, Mbandzeni stood as a lonely and isolated figure in the first months of his reign.

Once safely installed in power, the first major hurdle facing the king and his regents was the problem of Mabhedla. About the time of Mbandzeni's installation Mabhedla had fled north, to try and raise the Hhohho districts in his support, and had established himself at the hill fortress of Mvubu in the chiefdom of Matsafeni Shongwe. Few, however, had rallied to his call, and when the royal armies marched out with orders to capture him he fled north to find sanctuary with Sekhukhune (14). The Swazi armies rashly followed, chasing Mabhedla into the heart of Sekhukhune's country, to Mosega Kop. Here they suffered their second major defeat at the hands of the Pedi in the space of five years. Confronted with Pedi guns, they were

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(14) Myburgh, Carolina, 99-100: interview Mhambi Dlamini.

again picked off like flies, and their bones were left to whiten Mosega mountain for years to come (15).

As if this was not bad enough, pressure also continued to mount from the Zulu in the south, which partly reflected the close connections being forged between them and the Pedi. As early as April 1874 Cetshwayo began talking of taking retaliation on the Swazi for the death of Ludvonga, and for the killing that followed, and a formal approach was made to the British to be allowed to do that in October of the same year (16). More or less simultaneously new attacks were also undertaken by Mbilini on the Swazi borders, so that the two became associated in the public mind of both the Swazi and the Transvaal as a plot to take over Swaziland and outflank the Republic. Mbilini, it was claimed, considered himself king of Swaziland, and New Scotland part of his patrimony, and would continue making incursions until its occupants either got out or acknowledged his rights. Cetshwayo, on the other hand, was supposed to be hatching a long-term plot, of which this was but a part, to conquer Swaziland and install Mbilini in charge (17). The truth of these allegations is not easy to judge. Cetshwayo claimed that he merely wanted to avenge an insult, and to "wash his spears" on his elevation as king. As for Mbilini, he said, he had no control over him, and was even prepared to allow a free

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(15) Aylward, Transvaal, 184; Hunt, 'Bapedi', 296, note 28.

(16) S.S. 176, 234, G.W. Rudolph to State Secretary, 23 April 1874; C.O. 179/115 Encl. in No. 189, Statement of messenger from Cetshwayo, 19 Oct. 1874.

(17) S.S. 176, 235-8, G.W. Rudolph to State Secretary 23 April 1874; S.S. 170, Bell to President, 23 April 1874.

hand to the authorities to go into Zululand to prise him out.

Cetshwayo's disclaimers are, however, singularly unconvincing, and it is unlikely that his ambitions were as limited as that. Although he no doubt did want to wash his spears in the manner customarily prescribed, it is equally possible that he was using this as a blind to conceal objectives of a directly political kind. The washing of the spears was after all something expected of a 'savage', and it might hopefully divert peoples' attention from probing deeper still. To a large extent it did. Some were completely taken in, while with others, such as Rudolph, sufficient doubt was implanted in their minds to leave them uncertain as to the appropriate thing to do. As a result, much of Cetshwayo's policy towards Swaziland, between 1874 and 1877, was allowed to unfold virtually unchecked.

To understand Cetshwayo's real objectives it is necessary to see them in the context of his earlier connections with Swaziland. These went back to 1852, when he had played a prominent role in the invasion of Swaziland of that year. From that point on, Swaziland seems to have exercised a powerful grip on his imagination, both as an arena for future military exploits, and as the nucleus of a new state in the event of his expulsion from Zululand. In the early 1860s the second consideration may have lost some of its force, as Mpande reconciled himself to his situation, and as the likelihood of white intervention

recede, but in the late 1860s and early 1870s it surfaced once again. The problem now lay not so much in the resurgence of internal divisions within Zululand, although these were still present in the person of Uhamu, as in the growing assertiveness of his white neighbours, and the prospect of an end to the competition between them that confederation would bring.

Confederation was doubly dangerous to Cetshwayo because it promised to create a united front between his white neighbours, and because it was baited with the offer that the S.A.R. be allowed to make good its claims against Swaziland and Zululand (18). Were it to succeed, Cetshwayo would have his room for political manoeuvre drastically curtailed, and all avenues of withdrawal to the north finally shut off.

Cetshwayo's answer to this dilemma seems to have been to try and break out of the tightening circle by a pre-emptive thrust towards the north. Even before confederation became an issue, Cetshwayo had become conscious of the need to do this, simply to counter the ambitions of the S.A.R. Immediately after the death of Mswati he had sent a Zulu force to confirm Ludvonga's accession in Swaziland, and had ordered the expansion of Zulu homestead across the Pongola, in an effort to shore up Zulu influence in the area (19). This last

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(18) C.J. Uys, In the Era of Shepstone, (Lovedale, 1933), 120-133; C.F. Goodfellow, Great Britain and South African Confederation 1870-1881, (Cape Town 1966), 63, 79-82, 94.

(19) Above, 220; T.S.C. Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement by Swazi messengers, 19 March 1866.

move was regarded particularly seriously by the Swazi. Much of the reason for the 1855 and 1866 cessions had been to interpose a Republican presence between the Swazi and Zulu along the Pongola River to insulate them from Zulu pressure, and now the Zulu were moving in force into the area vacated for that purpose. As time went on the threat that this represented became clearer still. First under the leadership of Ntabakayikonjwa and then, when he proved insufficiently forceful, under Sithambi, Zulu settlement in the area grew at an astonishing rate, until by the mid 1870s, when Cetshwayo was having to meet the threat of confederation, it comprised some thirteen chiefdoms and numbered somewhere in the region of 30 000 souls (20).

Parallel moves were taking place at the headwaters of the Pongola River. Between 1870 and 1878 Mbilini made four attacks into this region, striking terror into Boer and Swazi communities alike (21). Cetshwayo always denied complicity in these attacks and even gave a carte blanche to the Boers in 1874 and again in 1876 to go and prise him out. Yet some measure of responsibility almost certainly attached to him. For one thing it is inconceivable that Mbilini could have squatted on the borders of Zululand if Cetshwayo had been seriously opposed, which was something Cetshwayo himself more or less admitted a little later when he told the British that Mbilini had in fact already

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(20) Interview Tigodvo Hlophe; P.P. 1882, C. 3219, 57-61, Barlow's evidence; C.O. 179/94, Encl. in No. 51, Statement of Swazi messengers, 17 June 1869; C.O. 291/19, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix 16K, Encl. list of chiefs by Roberts, 16 May 1881; S.S. 190, R 1489, 70, Rudolph to S.S. 15 July 1875; G.H.Z., Vol. 781, Minutes and Memo's 1878-9, Vol. II, Min. by Frere, 13 Nov. 1878, paras 71-2.

(21) Above, 258, below, 306, 314, 319.

tendered allegiance to him (22). For another, it is hard to credit that Cetshwayo exercised no control over Mbilini, when he was prepared to make reparations for raids undertaken by him, and could restore the actual cattle seized by Mbilini, as was the case in 1874 (23). In one way or another he was Cetshwayo's man.

But if Mbilini's activities were part of a strategy that went well beyond some ritual slaughter on the accession of a king, the precise role allotted him within it is more difficult to pin down. In one breath Cetshwayo seemed content to make capital out of his activities; in the next he went out of his way to disassociate himself as completely as possible, so that in the end nobody in the area had any clear idea of what was really going on. Today's historian is in much the same situation, although he, at least, has the perspective of Cetshwayo's earlier ambitions in Swaziland to guide his conclusions. Perhaps the most informed guess is that Cetshwayo, although using any means that came to hand to put pressure on the Swazi and the S.A.R., was at the same time, taking care that a range of options always remained open. If Mbilini succeeded in inducing a failure of nerve in the S.A.R., then his activities could be acknowledged and Cetshwayo could assume control. If, on the other hand, they seemed to be precipitating a collision between Zululand and the Republic, then he could be discarded and his

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(22) De Volksstem, 23 Jan. 1875, De Inval van Umbilini.

(23) S.S. 182, 34-5, Rudolph to S.S., 22 Dec. 1874.

actions disavowed. Either way there was a bonus to be had, to the extent that any challenge to the spread of Zulu occupation on the north side of the Pongola would be further postponed. Much the same sort of reasoning seems to have been behind Zulu policy towards Swaziland. At best, Cetshwayo could have hoped to impose a puppet administration on all or part of Swaziland through conquest. At worst, he could use the combined pressures of Mbilini, Zulu encroachment across the Pongola, intrigues with Ndwandwe or whoever, and even marriage alliances with the Swazi king, to make Swaziland more responsive to Zulu demands. It all depended on the way things seemed to be working out.

The problem for the historian is to decide which option Cetshwayo was most seriously pursuing at any one time, and for the most part this is impossible. Perhaps the only exception to this rule is Cetshwayo's attempted invasion of Swaziland in May 1875. What decided him on this course of action is uncertain. It may have been talk of impending confederation; it may have been evidence of Swazi vulnerability, or it may simply have been a gamble on the strength of the S.A.R.'s resolve. Most likely it was a combination of all three. In any case, whatever the reasons, Cetshwayo's determination to espouse the more radical option on this occasion is clear. First messengers were sent to Natal to ask the authorities there for their permission (24). Then Cetshwayo sent to Rudolph to acquaint the S.A.R. of his decision, and finally, when the S.A.R. made known its opposition,

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(24) C.O. 179/115, Encl. in No. 189, Statement of messenger from Cetshwayo, 19 Oct. 1874.

he told them he would go ahead with his plan whatever they said (25). If Cetshwayo had been gambling on Republican hesitation he was badly mistaken. Joubert, the Acting President, knew as well as Cetshwayo that Swaziland held the key to the eastern Transvaal, and the S.A.R. pressed ahead immediately with preparations to resist. Commandos were called up in Wakkerstroom and Utrecht; artillery was summoned from Pretoria, and one of the biggest Republican forces to take the field for years began to take shape (26). Cetshwayo seems to have been prepared to ignore these warnings and go ahead with his plans for invasion, but by now important voices were being raised within his own council in opposition to the scheme. Not only was the S.A.R. intent on halting the invasion, they insisted, but Natal had also re-iterated its opposition. In the face of this growing reaction Cetshwayo's own determination now began to wilt, and on the eve of the invasion, with his forces already assembled, Cetshwayo was ignominiously forced to climb down (27).

The S.A.R., however, went ahead with its demonstration regardless. Only dimly aware of developments in Zululand, they still clung to the view that a show of strength was needed to quell

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(25) P.A. S.S. 185, 392-4, Rudolph to State Secretary, 17 March 1875.

(26) De Volksstem, 22 May 1875.

(27) S.S. 188, 284-5, Rudolph to State Secretary, 29 May 1875; De Volksstem, 11 Sept. 1875, R. Bell to Editor, 20 Aug. 1875. According to Rudolph one of Cetshwayo's leading indunas named 'Mkokwaan' was subsequently killed for his opposition - S.S. 213, 193, Rudolph to State Secretary, 24 Aug. 1876.

Zulu ambitions. However, increasingly significant as time went on was the determination of the S.A.R. to make use of this opportunity to impose some sort of control over Swaziland (28). Not since 1871 had conditions been so opportune. Mbandzeni was newly installed, and still relatively insecure, while recent Zulu movements had driven home the need for Republican support as never before. From another angle it was also not an opportunity to be missed. Under normal circumstances it was next to impossible to raise a burgher force for a demonstration like this. The average burgher, as De Kiewiet notes, expected his patriotism to be profitable, and a demonstration in Swaziland was manifestly not (29). Yet, without a substantial show of force, it was unlikely that the Swazi would be cowed to the point of giving way. What Cetshwayo's threats also provided, therefore, was an ideal pretext for the unpopular duty of imposing the Republic's control over Swaziland, and one which the S.A.R. was determined not to let pass.

Not surprisingly the Swazi greeted the expedition with a good deal of mistrust. While serving firm notice of the S.A.R.'s determination to protect Swaziland, it also heightened suspicions about what the S.A.R. wanted to protect Swaziland for. Why, for example, had such a large force been sent when the threat of invasion had all but vanished? And why, if it was meant to ward off Zulu aggression, was it descending on Ludzidzini rather than beating the marches between Swaziland

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(28) C.O. 879/9, No. 83A, 99, Incl. I in no. 75, Colley to Wolseley, 10 Aug. 1875.

(29) C.W. De Kiewiet, The Imperial factor in South Africa: a study in politics and economics, (Cambridge, 1937), 101.

and Zululand? As it straggled its way towards the Swazi capital, two miles in length, and with its complement of 350 men, 4 mountain guns and 58 waggons, the answers to these questions must have started seeming uncomfortably clear (30).

Swazi misgivings about the objects of the expedition were soon justified. Virtually its first public act was to organise a display of cannon and other fire, which, despite a counter demonstration of Swazi military strength, left the Swazi dispirited and cowed (31). Then the real business of the expedition was begun: the Government of the S.A.R., the regents were told, wanted a new treaty to be signed regulating relations between the two states. In the negotiations that followed Rudolph extracted virtually all the concessions that the S.A.R. demanded. The principal one was the acceptance by the Swazi of the status of subjects, which was something they had resolutely resisted before. But there were, in addition, other restrictions as well: the guarantee of military aid to the S.A.R. whenever it required it; a prohibition on any war undertaken independently by Swaziland without the prior permission of the S.A.R.; a promise to promote commerce, to keep trade routes and roads open and in good condition; and permission to build a railway through Swaziland. Most serious of all perhaps was their

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(30) C.O. 879/9, 93-9, No. 83A, Incl. I in No. 75, Colley to Wolseley, 10 Aug. 1875; De Volksstem, 31 July 1875, Report Ludidi, 28 June 1875; W.F. Butler, The Life of Sir George Pomperoy-Colley 1835-1881, (London 1899), 127-8, appears to be mistaken when he talks of 320 burghers, 4 guns and 65 waggons.

(31) Ibid; De Volksstem, 24 July 1875, Report from special correspondent, 1 July 1875; U.W.A., A 85, MSS, A.S. Dawson, 'Ten Years in the Transvaal 1872-1881: a story of stirring times by one who went through them', n.d., 107.

agreement that, "in the event of the Government of the South African Republic deeming it necessary to appoint in their midst a supervising official [they would] engage themselves to abide by his decision." Even the presence of the Republican cannon could not quell dissatisfaction with that clause, and it was only on the assurance that this meant general supervision to guarantee the provisions of the treaty, and not local rule by a white official, that the regents were persuaded to sign. In return, the Swazi obtained virtually nothing, which again serves to underline the threat of coercion present throughout the negotiations. The Swazi were granted the promise of protection against their enemies; the free and unrestricted right of possession and ownership of the lands occupied by them; "and the guarantee of self-government, though only as far as it was humanly just and defensible". The commissioners were hardly open to the charge of being over-generous (32).

On paper the Swazi had been forced to sacrifice a great deal, but much of what the S.A.R. had gained was more illusory than real. Without military coercion, the settlement could be neither policed nor enforced, and the S.A.R.'s shortcomings in this area became evident almost from the moment the treaty was signed. Indiscipline and discontent seem to have been rife on all the S.A.R.'s military enterprises, and the Swaziland commando showed itself in no way exempt. The Utrecht contingent

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(32) S.S. 190, 51-63, Minutes of activities of G.M. Rudolph and C.W. Joubert at Ludidi, 27 June 1875 to 3 July 1875; W.J. Leyds, The Transvaal Surrounded, a continuation of "The first annexation of the Transvaal", (London 1919), Appendix H, 507-8, translation of treaty between the representatives of the S.A.R. and Swaziland, 1 July 1875.

was disaffected because of the shortage of provisions, and because they felt Utrecht lay open to Zulu attack, and a steady stream of deserters made their way home while the commando was away. The Pretorians were annoyed at being conscripted for an expedition so remote from their local concerns, and vented their irritation in allegations of favouritism against their commanders. And to cap everything, Boer/Uitlander antipathies also made themselves felt, and eventually flared up in a fist fight between the two groups, only shortly before the commando left Ludzidzini for home (33). Hardly the sort of thing, as a correspondent to De Volksstem later wrote, to inspire the Swazi with any great respect for Republican strength (34).

The logistical difficulties of military ventures into Swaziland were also underlined by the commando's experiences, and must have come as something of a revelation to Swaziland's military planners. A secondary objective of the commando had been to 'beat the marches' between Zululand and Swaziland, and to iron out some remaining ambiguities of border definition, but such was the condition of the expedition's horses and oxen through want of adequate grazing, and so rebellious the men through the general inadequacy of provisions and ammunition, that the entire expedition had to be called off. In the end all that was accomplished was a minor border rectification in the south,

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(33) De Volksstem, 2 April 1875, Special correspondent, 1 Feb. 1875; C.O. 879/9, No. 83A, Incl. I in No. 75, Colley to Wolseley, 10 Aug. 1875; S.S. 190, 28, Rudolph to S.S., 4 July 1875; U.W.A., Dawson, 'Ten Years', 110-11; Butler, Colley, 132.

(34) De Volksstem, 4 March 1876, Letter 28 Feb. 1876 (prudently) unsigned.

which, although cheating the Swazi out of another sliver of territory, left the one remaining bone of territorial contention between the S.A.R. and the Swazi - the Komati winterveld - unsettled (35).

This familiar parade of weaknesses allowed Mbandzeni and his councillors to take new heart. It might not be possible to play on internal divisions within the Republic any more, but it could still be hoped that their continuing military shortcomings, coupled with diplomatic support from Natal, might be enough to keep them temporarily at bay. The first thing to do was to convince the British that the 1875 expedition was some sort of aberration, and that a binding treaty had never been signed. This, however, was easier said than done. Neither the treaty nor the expedition could easily be explained away, the more so since Colonel Colley, the personal representative of Wolseley, had been eye-witness to its preliminary dealings at the Swazi capital. The Swazi did, however, have two things working in their favour. First were prevailing notions of African ignorance and gullibility. Second was the willingness of British officials at various levels in the colonial hierarchy to be convinced of a grand deception in the wider interest of South African confederation. Between them, these two factors served to persuade the British of the truth of the Swazi allegations,

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(35) S.S. 190, 61-2, Minutes, 3 July 1875, Ludidi; S.S. 190, R 1489, 63-66, Rudolph to State Secretary, 15 July 1875; De Volksstem, 31 July 1875, Letter from Ludidi, 28 June 1875; ibid, 24 July 1875, Letter from special correspondent 30 June 1875; C.O. 879/9, 99, No. 83A, Incl. I in No. 75, Colley to Wolseley, 10 Aug. 1875.

and of the need to intervene on behalf of Swaziland to save them any such encroachment from the S.A.R., and on 21st January 1876 a warning was duly despatched to Barkly for transmission to the Government of the S.A.R., informing it of the British Government's opposition to any extension of Republican territory or influence in that direction (36).

For once it seems Swazi success owed more to good luck than good diplomacy. The stereotypes of black gullibility could be exploited up to a point, and Carnarvon and Herbert do genuinely seem to have believed that the Swazi had been duped, but in the absence of other reasons to make them turn a blind eye, it is unlikely that the likes of Shepstone and Bulwer would have been similarly deceived. The strength of these other reasons are best gauged by the feebleness of the Swazi case against the treaty. They had signed it, they claimed, on the understanding that Rudolph was a Natal official, and that all they were doing was re-asserting a long-standing tributary relationship to that colony. But any detailed examination of this argument would have shown that it simply did not stand up. Rudolph, it is true, had for some years been an official in the Natal service, but it is hardly credible that his presence for three years as the Republican magistrate of Utrecht could have passed unnoticed in Swaziland (37). Even in that unlikely event, both the character and objectives of the expedition were unmistakable.

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(36) P.P. 1877, C. 1748, 15-16, No. 5, Carnarvon to Barkly, 25 Jan. 1876.

(37) P.P. 1877, C. 1748, 55, Incl. No. 3 in No. 38, Minute by Shepstone, 3 June 1877.

Its co-leader (together with Rudolph) was C.J. Joubert, nephew to the Acting President; the expedition itself was composed of burghers from Utrecht, Wakkerstroom and Pretoria, many of whom must have been personally known in Swaziland; and its demands were framed unambiguously in the interests of the S.A.R. (38). The form of the protest alone should have sounded a warning. Since the Swazi alleged that they were unaware that the expedition had been promoted by the Transvaal, it was logically impossible for them to send a protest against it. They therefore had to resort to the convoluted formula of thanking the Natal authorities for sending Rudolph, with whom they had concluded a treaty, despite his being at the head of 350 Boers, adding almost incidentally that the S.A.R. had subsequently attempted to assert sovereignty over them (39).

It is hard to imagine the Colonial Office failing to pick up these contradictions, if they had made any serious effort to do so, and there seems little doubt that no such attempt was ever made. The reason can be traced to the exigencies of confederation. The idea of joining together the various states of southern African into one confederation under the British flag had cropped up intermittently throughout the nineteenth century. First Grey, then Buckingham and now finally Kimberley and Carnarvon had taken it up as a means of devolving imperial responsibilities, without relinquishing imperial control, each

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(38) S.S. 190, Minutes of activities of G.M. Rudolph and C.J. Joubert at Ludidi, 27 June 1875. For the terms of the treaty concluded see Leyds, Transvaal, 507-8.

(39) T.S.C., Case 22 (Swazi documents...), Statement of messengers from Umbandeni, 16 May 1876.

to be equally frustrated in turn. It is no part of this discussion to examine the wider ramifications of Carnarvon's federation policy. As applied to the S.A.R., however, it had a vital bearing on Swaziland's future development. The central premise of Carnarvon's policy as it affected the S.A.R. was containment, its principal elements being denial of access to the sea, either through St. Lucia, Kosi or Delagoa Bay; exclusion from new sources of diamonds and other wealth; and a prohibition on expansion into neighbouring African territories. Its impact, he hoped, would be of two related kinds. Negatively, he intended it would exclude the S.A.R. from the enjoyment of any real economic and political independence, and so coerce them into federation. Positively, he expected the prospect of securing otherwise prohibited spoils would prove too strong an inducement for the S.A.R. to resist (40). The Colonial Office response to the Swazi appeal was governed by precisely these assumptions. As Wolseley wrote in a memorandum to the Colonial Office, "If [the authorities of the S.A.R.] think they can exercise in the freest and fullest manner all the freedom of an independent State in their dealings with the Natives beyond their frontiers, and can make war with whoever they please without any reference to us, they will be less likely to accept confederation." The S.A.R. should, therefore, be made to stay its hand until it agreed to confederation, in which event, it should be told, "Her Majesty's Government would then be able to view in a different manner such questions as those involved in the action which the South African Republics would now seem

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(40) Goodfellow, Great Britain, 63, 79-82, 94.

inclined to adopt." (41) As long as confederation aborted, it seemed, the Swazi were safe.

They were indeed safe from two points of view, for as long as the S.A.R remained separate and independent they could also count on Boer military weakness, and their continued dependence on Swazi help against other African groups. This was borne out again by the events of 1876 among the Pedi. For some years before, the S.A.R. had been worried by the rapid growth of Pedi power on their borders. Throughout the late 1860s and early 1870s Pedi numbers had continued to expand as neighbouring peoples were either coerced into accepting Pedi control, or voluntarily placed themselves under Pedi jurisdiction to escape the exactions of Republican rule. As Pedi numbers grew, so too did Pedi defiance. Encouraged first by the disasters in the Zoutpansberg, and then by the example of Cetshwayo, they took an increasingly contemptuous view of the Republic's ability to retaliate, until in 1876 they openly challenged its authority by infiltrating settlers and rustling cattle on the Republican side of the Steelport River (42).

The Swazi, who had suffered in the past from these developments, benefitted from them now. Republican burghers were notoriously unwilling to scale defended strong points of the sort they commanded, and African auxiliaries were essential to press the battle home. Burgers was therefore obliged to request Swazi

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(41) C.O. 179/18 No. 214, 26 Oct., Encl. Memo by Wolseley, 21 Jan. 1876.

(42) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 190, 226-231; Berliner Missionsberichte, 1862, 92.

aid, and the diplomatic balance once again turned. Ironically, the British authorities totally misinterpreted the situation. Unaware of the previous history of Swazi relations with either the Pedi or the Republic, they imagined Swazi assistance to mean that their previous conclusions about the 1875 treaty were wrong (which they were), and that the Swazi were in fact effectively tributary to the S.A.R. (which they were not), and this temporarily weakened the support they were prepared to offer the Swazi against the Republic (43). Had the Swazi realised how this was threatening their principal line of defence against the S.A.R., they might have responded differently to Burgers's request. As it was they did not, and preparations to send the Swazi contingent still went ahead.

Even so, their decision to assist Burgers was not reached without some difficulty. The disasters of 1869 and 1875 had been enormously costly in men, and memories were still fresh in Swaziland of how Republican commandos had left the Swazi unsupported to take the full brunt of the attack on Maleo's fortress in 1864 (44). Still more serious was the danger of a Zulu attack on Swaziland's undefended rear. This was made all the more likely by the close relations established between Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune, and the interests on which this alliance was based. Since 1873, Swazi leaders had feared a

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(43) C.O. 179/121, No. 143, Bulwer to Carnarvon, 20 July 1876, and Minutes by Fairfield and Carnarvon 6 Nov. and 7 Nov. 1876.

(44) S.S. 209, R 1407, 423, Encl. Buchanan to Purcocks and Bell, 31 May 1876. On this occasion Mtshengu, insila to Mswati and a leading councillor, "wanted to know what sort of people we whites were, that when we went out to fight none of us got killed, nor did we go into danger".

pincer movement on Swaziland from Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune, and this had not been without considerable justification. Only two things were drawing Zulu and Pedi together, and these were hostility to the S.A.R. and hostility to Swaziland. In both cases, moreover, there was every chance of their hostility against the Republic being displaced onto the Swazi, so closely were they associated in the earlier history of the Transvaal (45). In Cetshwayo's case still other reasons applied. Swaziland was one of the major sources of dispute between the Zulu and the Republic, and one which could leave either of them partially encircled, depending on whoever won control. There was thus every chance of Cetshwayo attacking the Swazi rear if they helped against Sekhukhune. It would relieve pressure on Sekhukhune; it would give substance to long-standing claims on his neighbour; and it would be a powerful blow against his rivals in the Republic.

Nor did the danger stop here. Swazi enemies stretched the length and breadth of the eastern Transvaal, and there existed a real possibility of their paying off old scores under the cover of a Zulu and Pedi diversion. Of no-one was this more likely than Mzila. For over ten years his empire had suffered from the depredations of the Swazi in support of his brother Mawewe, whose son still remained in northern Swaziland hatching plans to return to power. A local trader in the area, in

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(45) See for instance S.S. 208, R 1009/76, Merensky to President and Ex. Co., 2 May 1876; S.S. 17, R 1792/57, 227, Verslag der Commissie, Oct. 1857; Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 107.

fact, claimed there was a formal pact in existence, whereby Cetshwayo, Sekhukhune and Mzila had agreed to launch a joint attack on the S.A.R. (46). Du Bois' report of a plot against the S.A.R. was perhaps a little far-fetched, but his story could have had more substance as far as the Swazi were concerned. At the very least, it indicates the rumours that were current in the area at the time, and the existence of the idea of attacking the S.A.R. through its association with the Swazi. At most, they lend weight to the talk of black confederation that was associated with Cetshwayo in the second half of the 1870s. In this case not the "unpremeditated community of affliction that related the natives to one another in spite of traditional tribal feuds", that De Kiewiet speaks of, but a confederation operating on a more limited regional level, and activated by African animus against a collaborator state (47).

The list of objections to participating in Burgers' s Sekhukhune campaign was clearly a formidable one, but against all the odds the Swazi were eventually won over. They need only summon the northern regiments, they were told, and the southern regiments could be left to protect the south. In addition the S.A.R. promised that a force of burghers would be posted on Swaziland's south-eastern flank to guard against any action Cetshwayo might take (48). Combined with the prospect of revenge for the 1870 debacle, it all proved too much for the Swazi to resist, and Swazi opinion in the capital slowly swung

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(46) G.H.N., Vol.1396 R.J. Du Bois to Shepstone, 3 April 1876.

(47) De Kiewiet, Imperial Factor, 148.

(48) S.S. 209, R 1407, 423, Encl. Buchanan and Purcocks to Bell, 31 May 1876; F.C., Vol. I, Burgers to Bell, 17 May 1874.

round in favour of taking part. Or so it seemed, until Burgers's plans were suddenly disrupted by a totally unexpected hitch. In the middle of June, the Swazi regiments which had been assembled to take part in the operation, and had in fact been doctored for the purpose, were suddenly dismissed. The explanation the regents gave was that this had been necessitated by the Umcwasho puberty ceremony, but this was palpably false. Bell, who was field-cornet in New Scotland, suspected sabotage by one of the border farmers from Lydenburg, which is not all that far-fetched when one considers the Republic's previous record in such matters. It is more likely, however, that the regents simply got cold feet. Sandlane and Maloyi had never been very enthusiastic about the project, and had made a point of being absent from the capital when the assistance was being negotiated, so as not to be associated with the decision. After the Commission's departure they returned, and from this point a noticeable cooling of Swazi enthusiasm began to set in. Swazi opinion was always fairly ambivalent, and their return seems to have strengthened the group that believed the pros and cons of the expedition to be too finely balanced to be worth the risk. As a result, feeling in the capital slowly hardened against participation, until, on the eve of their departure, the Swazi regiments were withdrawn (49).

What the regents seem to have planned was to try and wriggle free of their obligations, by deferring participation in the

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(49) S.S. 212, No. 1934, 114-20, Bell to Burgers, 29 June 1876.

expedition until it was too late; hence the story of Umcwasho. But the Republican authorities had no intention of letting the Swazi off the hook as easily as that. More to the point, they dare not. The Lydenburg contingent had already suffered setbacks as a result of the Swazi non-appearance, and if the Swazi continued to hold back, the whole future of the campaign would be put at risk (50). Within a matter of days, therefore, fresh Republican emissaries were at the royal capital, demanding to know what had happened to the Swazi aid. This time there was to be no dodging the Republican requests. By contriving to be absent in the initial negotiations, Sandlane and Maloyi had avoided being bound by the initial commitment, and had been in a position to exert counter-pressure to get the decision reversed. But the same tactic could not be used twice. There was a limit to how far they could disassociate themselves from the regents' collective decisions, particularly over an issue of this importance. Consequently, when the regents succumbed to Republican pressure a second time, they succumbed as a body, leaving Sandlane and Maloyi as committed as the rest, and with no leeway to secure a second reversal once the Commission had left. Belatedly, therefore, they and the council resigned themselves to the despatch of a two thousand strong Swazi contingent, which left for the Republic in the first week of July (51).

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(50) P.P. 1877, C. 1748, No. 51, 70, Barkly to Carnarvon, 2 July 1876.

(51) S.S. 211, No. 1743, 177, Bell to S.S. Swart, 5 July 1876; P.P. 1877, C. 1748, No. 61, 84, Barkly to Carnarvon, 4 Aug. 1876.

According to Burgers's plan of operation, the Swazi were to join the Lydenburg commando in its assault on the fortress of Johannes Dinkoanyane. While Burgers campaigned against Pedi outposts in the west, the Lydenburg commando was to do the same in the east, before both joined with a third force in a final assault on Sekhukhune himself. As far as their part in this operation went, the Swazi acquitted themselves well, seizing control of Johannes's fortress and inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Their Republican allies however showed themselves much less committed. Instead of supporting the Swazi contingent as they stormed the slopes of Johannes's stronghold, they held back, preferring the loss of extra Swazi lives to any risk of their own. With casualties of thirty dead and over fifty wounded the Swazi were understandably enraged (52). Precisely the same thing had happened when Mswati had answered an earlier call to help against Mapoch, and now, despite all Republican promises to the contrary, it had happened again. This time, they vowed, would be the last, and without further ado they abandoned the expedition and returned home (53).

As the Swazi tramped belligerently homewards, amidst rumours of reprisals and pillaging on their way, discontent began to swell through the Republican ranks (54). Morale in any case was low,

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(52) De Volksstem, 29 July 1876, Cooper's report, 18 July 1876; S.S. 212, No. 2056, 316, Cooper to S.S., Aug. 1876.

(53) Ibid, 309-10. There also seems to have been a dispute about cattle - P.P. 1877, C. 1748, 81-2, Encl. 2 in No. 59, Extra to Natal Witness, 25 July 1876; ibid, 106, No. 76, Bulwer to Carnarvon, 22 Aug. 1876.

(54) The postcart driver had an incontrovertible hole in his hat to show where a Swazi bullet passed through - S.S. 212, No. 1936, 123, Bell to State Secretary, 23 July 1876; P.P. 1877, C. 1748, 88, No. 62, Barkly to Carnarvon, 11 Aug. 1876.

because of more general dissatisfaction with Burgers's Presidency. The extreme fundamentalist Doppers objected to him on grounds of his heresy (Burgers was previously a Dutch Reform Church predikant in the Cape, but had been suspended for his too "advanced" views), and a much broader spectrum of opinion opposed him on issues ranging from his Education Act to his railway loan (55). It was unfortunate under these circumstances that he had been obliged to assume command of the army, as he risked having his political unpopularity rub off onto the war effort as well. What was needed to overcome this was a combination of early military successes and a guarantee of black support, but the Dinkoanyane debacle denied him both of these. Despite urgent appeals to Mbandzeni, the Swazi refused any additional aid, and what little momentum the campaign gathered died gradually away. In its place there arose a corrosive spirit of mistrust. The Republic's other black forces now anticipated fresh acts of betrayal, while the Republican burghers began to suspect them of collusion with Sekhukhune. As each glanced nervously over their shoulder at the other, the campaign slowly ground to a halt. M.W. Pretorius carefully skirted the fortress of Sekhukhune's sister, Legolwana, on receipt of a transparently insincere pledge of loyalty, and left her commanding his lines of communication at the rear. Dinkoanyane's followers were allowed briefly to regroup themselves to pose a similar threat further east; and by the time it came for the attack on Sekhukhune, the army was so thoroughly disaffected

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(55) S.P. Englebrecht, Thomas Francois Burgers, n' Lewenskets (Pretoria, 1933), 137-43, 147-54, 171-4, 189-91.

that little more was attempted than a perfunctory firing of some grass huts on the lower slopes of Sekhukhune's mountain, before the cry "huis toe" ("back home") went up, and the army fell apart. With his authority shattered Burgers stood helplessly by, and was left with no alternative but to abandon that campaign and leave a small band of volunteer irregulars to salvage what little they could from the collapse (56).

The abandonment of the Pedi campaign came as a serious setback to the Burgers administration, but its importance is easily exaggerated for the S.A.R. as a whole. The Pedi had, it is true, repelled one of the largest military expeditions ever to have gathered on Republican soil, and this inevitably had repercussions on African attitudes both inside the Republic and beyond. However, against this it is worth remembering that Sekhukhune's victory was by no means unprecedented; Sekwati had had similar successes after 1852, and even the disunited Venda chiefdoms had achieved the same feat the following decade, so that its psychological impact was not nearly as great as the imperial authorities imagined. Nor was his victory by any means total. After the withdrawal of Burgers's forces, von Schlikkeman and his irregulars waged such an effective campaign of harassment that Sekhukhune had been compelled to negotiate a truce in which he was alleged to have accepted the status of subject, and the obligation to pay reparations. Of course, it would be equally wrong to take this submission too seriously.

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(56) Van Rooyen, 'Verhouding', 254-6; Uys, Shepstone, 203-6; Englebrect, Burgers, 199-207.

All Sekhukhune wanted was a respite from harrassment in which to plant his crops, and if he were ever acquainted with the terms demanded, which Hunt for one doubts, it is unlikely that he intended abiding by them (57). Rather what had happened was a reversion to the status quo ante. Both sides had shown their power to resist conquest, but neither had had the capacity to impose their control over the other. The balance of advantage, therefore, was struck by the sum of their respective weaknesses rather than by the sum of their respective strengths. What this meant in the context of the 1870s was that whoever was most vulnerable to guerrilla skirmishing was most likely to lose out. In the first years of the decade that advantage was clearly with the Pedi, and in the later 1870s it might have swung in that direction more strongly still. But in 1876, when Britain annexed the S.A.R., the situation was one of stalemate, with neither side holding any real advantage.

Unfamiliar with Republican history, and obsessed with notions of 'white prestige' the British understood little of this. They exaggerated the significance of Sekhukhune's victory, and overreacted to the news of the truce (58). No doubt this was partly because Sekhukhune had thrown out a life line to confederation when it appeared to be all but sunk, but there was more to it than that. Shepstone for one was genuinely puzzled by Sekhukhune's inaction after Burgers's retreat, and

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(57) Hunt, 'Bapedi', 298-9.

(58) P.P. 1877, C. 1776, 126-7, Incl. in No. 90, Shepstone to Barkly, 12 March 1877.

had to resort to racial stereotypes to escape his confusion. Pedi passivity now became rationalised in terms of their unwarlike tribal character, while the inevitable nemesis of Burgers's defeat was reserved for the hands of the more martial Nguni. "The Swazi," he explained, "[are] defiant and aggressive and they show signs of intending to occupy by force the lands which they consider to have been wrongly taken and alienated by the Republic." As for Cetshwayo, his "hatred of the Boers [was] notorious [and] since the Sikukuni fiasco he had assumed the exercise of sovereignty over a portion of Transvaal territory. The Government of Natal," he concluded, "has been the only obstacle to attacks on the Republic being made by those tribes, which....would....most assuredly have annihilated the State." (59).

As far as the Swazi were concerned, nothing could have been further from the truth. Although they stubbornly withheld any further help from the S.A.R., it was not out of sense of outrage or contempt, but because their earlier reasons for helping them had fallen away. Despite the risks involved, Burgers's initial plan had offered at least a chance of revenge against the Pedi at not too great a cost of men. The Dinkoanyane episode had however put paid to all that. More importantly, it had also put an end to fears of Republican retaliation should the Swazi opt out. Mbandzeni had sent military assistance and had been badly let down. Now he had an unassailable moral case for staying out. As the regents watched their soldiers trickle back

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(59) Ibid.

to their homesteads, relief rather than outrage must have been their dominant response.

The Swazi pushed home this advantage in two broad directions. Psychologically, they exploited it to take the offensive on a variety of outstanding border problems (60). Morally, they sheltered behind it to avoid any further military requisitions. That this created difficulties for the S.A.R. cannot be doubted, but it was a far cry from the sort of upheaval in relationships suggested by Shepstone. The border was only mildly disrupted, with the principal focus of activity again confined to the Komati, and so far were the Swazi from scorning Burgers's new appeals that they went to elaborate lengths to disguise their refusal and avoid giving offence. "Mataffin [Matsafeni]," explained Mbandzeni, "had acted wrongly. Finding the Lydenburg men did not treat him fairly he should have moved his men forward to join His Honour's [i.e. Burgers's] command so that His Honour could personally have seen he had kept faith with the Republic." For the moment, however, his hands were tied. Matsafeni had as yet not returned, and he would have to await his report before making any decision. A month later Mbandzeni's attitude was much the same. "The Swazi were friendly enough and treated us obligingly," reported the Republic's emissaries, "but the behaviour of Commandant Coetzer had produced a mistrust in them that was insurmountable in spite of all our

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(60) S.S. 213, 200-1, No. 2188, Bell to State Secretary, 14 Aug. 1876; S.S. 222, 325-6, No. 3637, Bell to State Secretary, 11 Dec. 1876; De Volksstem, 3 March 1877; T.S.C., Case 7, Letter Book, 1876-8, Shepstone to Frere, 12 Sept. 1877.

efforts." (61).

Up to a point, Mbandzeni's caution was a tribute to the Republic's well-attested powers of recuperation, but beyond that it was still another indication of the shadow that Zululand continued to cast over Swaziland's affairs. The S.A.R. might be ailing, but Zululand remained strong, and so long as that situation persisted the Swazi had to avail themselves of whatever allies they had. The dilemma this implied for Swaziland's leaders was a serious one. Swaziland needed Republican protection against the Zulu, and was obliged to supply military aid in return. At the same time the power of the S.A.R. was suspect, and the very act of giving it assistance exposed the Swazi even more. Uys even supposes it was rumours of Zulu invasion which sent Swazi regiments scuttling home in August 1876, and while this is in itself incorrect, it does point to a more general truth (62). As Bell reported even before the Dinkoanyane encounter, the Swazi dared not stay out for long for fear of Zulu reprisals, and there is little doubt that this lay at the back of Matsafeni's mind throughout his absence in Lydenburg (63).

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(61) S.S. 212, 349-50, No. 2079, Bell to State Secretary, 7 Aug. 1876; S.S. 212, 309-10, No. 2056, H.W.A. Cooper, Landdrost Lydenburg, to State Secretary, August 1876.

(62) Uys, Shepstone, 205-6. Reports coming from the Zulu border at about this time in no way support Uys's claim, see for example S.S. 210, No. 1951, J.F(?). Joubert to Pretorius, 22 June 1876; S.S. 210, Rudolph to State Secretary, No. 1739, 6 July 1876, 170-1; S.S. 211, No. 1805, Rudolph to St. Secretary, 13 July 1876, 308-9. Indeed as far as one can tell a piece of deliberate distortion is involved here, Uys being concerned to minimise the Republic's own responsibility for the Swazi withdrawal.

(63) P.P. 1877, C. 1748, 75, Incl. 2 in No. 53 extract of letter from Hamilton, 11 July 1876; see also S.S. 208, R 1009/76, Merensky to St. Secretary, 2 May 1876.

With the return of his army, rumours of this sort intensified and strengthened Mbandzeni's determination to lie low. Early in August Rudolph got wind of preparations for a new Zulu attack, and this story was apparently confirmed by Cetshwayo's request to Natal a little later in the month to be allowed to "wash his spears." (64) Cetshwayo's target, according to later reports, was Mtyelegwane, a semi-independent Swazi chief, living at the point where the Lusutfu River passes through the Lebombo (65). Mtyelegwane commanded fortresses which Cetshwayo was especially anxious to control, and which he had already assaulted in the middle of 1875 (66). Cetshwayo's motive in this instance was only partly defensive (i.e. the desire to control defensive fortresses as an insurance against military defeat), for what he also seems to have had in mind was to secure a strong point from which he could seize control of Swaziland south of the Lusutfu/Ngwempisi line (67). It was, in effect, Dingane's plan resurrected.

A combination of factors frustrated Cetshwayo's plans. Most visible were the combined protests of the S.A.R. and Natal, but

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(64) S.S.212, Rudolph to St. Secretary, 10 Aug. 1876; P.P. 1877, C. 1748, 129, Incl. I in No. 106, Statement by messengers sent to Cetshwayo by Natal government, 28 Aug. 1876; see also S.S. 213, 89, No. 2139, P.J. Henderson (Commandant) to J.C.L. Moll, Landdrost Wakkerstroom, 16 Aug. 1876.

(65) S.S. 213, 192-6, No. 2187, Rudolph to St. Secretary, 24 Aug. 1876.

(66) Ibid; S.S. 190, 25, No. 1488, Rudolph to St. Secretary, 4 July 1875; S.S. 190, 67, R 1489, Rudolph to State Secretary, 15 July 1875.

(67) S.S. 242, 362, No. 2961, Bell to Osborne, 24 July 1877.

these would not have had the influence they did were it not for cleavages within the Zulu political system which external pressures could lever apart. What made these all the more serious from Cetshwayo's point of view, and from the point of view of his Swaziland policy as a whole, was the broad north/south configuration of the rift. For years now Cetshwayo had had to count on the enmity of his half brother Hamu, living in the north-west of Zululand, beyond the Inkonjeni hills. By the time of Cetshwayo's coronation he was already identifiable as a leader of an opposition group, and was negotiating with the Swazi to flee out of Zululand and join them (68). Nor was Hamu's the only hostile grouping at Cetshwayo's coronation. Besides him, there was also the faction from the north-east led by Sibhephu, with whom there was nearly a headlong collision at Cetshwayo's installation (69). Over the years these two remained a perpetual thorn in Cetshwayo's flesh, particularly over the question of Swaziland. In May 1875, for example, an attack on Swaziland had to be called off because of a conjunction of outside protests and internal opposition, led in this case by a certain Mkokwane (70). Mkokwane was killed for his part in the affair, but opposition to Cetshwayo's Swazi policies carried on. In April 1877 Mnyamana (who also had a chiefdom in the north-west of Zululand, and who Dunn associated with Hamu's

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(68) S.S. 157, 42-3, R 718/73, Bell to Burgers, 29 March 1873.

(69) Moodie, John Dunn, 26-7, 39-42. For an earlier reference to these rifts see S.N.A., 1/1/21, D. Leslie to S.N.A., 28 July 1871.

(70) S.S. 188, 284-5, No. 1166, Rudolph to State Secretary, 29 May 1875; De Volksstem, 11 Sept. 1875, R. Bell to Editor, 20 Aug. 1875; S.S. 213, 193, No. 2187, Rudolph to State Secretary, 24 Aug. 1876.

faction at Cetshwayo's coronation in 1873), Gaozi, Hamu and Ziwedu (the latter being a chief in the north-east of Zululand) were supposed to have been responsible for Cetshwayo's calling off yet another raid into Swaziland (71), and three months later when Cetshwayo made still one more request to the Transvaal and Natal to be allowed to "wash his spears" - "I am no king", he said on this occasion, "but sit in a heap. I cannot be a king until I have washed my assegais." - Fynney reported that virtually all of the headmen were opposed to the plan, and specifically that he could not rely on either Hamu or Sibhephu (72).

The question that automatically springs to mind when surveying this succession of alarms and near excursions is why Cetshwayo persisted in his efforts when the opposition was evidently so powerful. Was it not perhaps some sort of extended hoax mounted by Cetshwayo for entirely different reasons, or even the figment of fevered outsiders' imaginations? The second part of the question is answered more easily than the first. If Mkokwane was executed for his opposition to Cetshwayo's Swaziland expedition, then it presumably follows that Cetshwayo was set on the idea, at least on this occasion, and that he was only deflected by fairly determined opposition. However, this still does not explain why he persisted in these efforts when they seemed to be perpetually blocked. A partial explanation

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(71) S.N.A., Vol. 1/7/13, Statement of 2 native residents of Eshowe Mission, 26 April 1877.

(72) P.P. 1878, C. 1961, 46-9, Encl. I in No. 12, Report by F.B. Fynney, 4 July, 1877; G.H.N., Vol. 1397, F.B. Fynney to Acting S.N.A., 13 July 1877.

may perhaps be found in the type of opposition which raised itself to Cetshwayo's plans. The main focus of this, as we have seen, was concentrated in the north, but that should not be taken to mean that it constituted a monolithic or cohesive geographical bloc. Hamu and Sibhephu could be counted unreliable in most situations, but this was by no means true of the other personalities involved (73). Mnyamana, for instance, was Cetshwayo's leading minister, and can by no stretch of the imagination be described as hostile to his regime. Nor for that matter can Ziwedu, who was Cetshwayo's half-brother and a close confidant of the King. Both, on the other hand, seem to have had particular interests in Swaziland - Ziwedu because of his geographical location, Mnyamana both because of this, and because of his marriage ties with the Swazi royal house (74). As far as Swaziland was concerned their allegiances must always have been torn. While Cetshwayo seemed set on invasion they must necessarily have muted their criticism, but the moment any extraneous obstacle appeared, such as the commandeering of burghers in the S.A.R., or the protests of the government of Natal, they could seize on them to bring their opposition out into the open. It is possible that it was the fluctuating responses of men like these which gave Cetshwayo's Swaziland

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(73) This does not necessarily mean that they would have been, as Sibhephu's behaviour in the Anglo-Zulu War showed.

(74) S.P., File 17, Notebook 2, 8, interview Xaba with Socwatsha present, 3 May 1910; G.H.N., Vol. 1398, Report by F.B. Fynney to Acting S.N.A. (? 1878).

policy its extraordinary volatility (75). With Hamu and Sibhephu automatically suspect, it required only their opposition, linked as it invariably was with outside protests, to tip the balance decisively against intervention. Conversely, because the issue was so finely balanced, it always held hope for Cetshwayo that he would be successful if he tried just one more time.

These broad contours of Zulu foreign policy only stand out when one steps back from the problem and views it over a period of years, and for this reason it has been necessary to look forward to 1878. Returning for a moment to the particular events of 1876 the same features stand out but in much less sharp relief. Cetshwayo continued to talk about invading Swaziland, but without ever doing anything about it, and one can only assume that his failure to act was because of the combination of pressures described above (76). The only exceptions to this inactivity were two attacks made by Mbilini into the disputed territory and into the S.A.R. at the turn of the New Year (77). Even here it is uncertain whether these were specifically authorised by Cetshwayo. Bell maintained that they were, and that they were designed to provoke reprisals from the Trans-vaal,

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(75) Which may account for the fact that Cetshwayo was supposedly contemplating ousting Mnyamana in favour of Mabemba, C.O. 879/42, Appendix I, 386, No. 9, Wood to Kimberley, 24 Sept. 1881. For subsequent rumours about Mnyamana's alleged unreliability see De Volksstem, 3 May 1877; Mac.P., Box 45A, Diary Feb. 1879.

(76) Above, 280, note 25; P.P., 1877, C. 1748, 216, Incl. in No. 165, reply of Cet. to messenger sent by Government of Natal, 21 Nov. 1876; ibid, 229, No. 177, Bulwer to Carnarvon, 13 Nov. 1875.

(77) The two attacks seem to have been on Dec. 30th and Jan. 2nd, P.P. 1877, C. 1776, 52, No. 42, Bulwer to Carnarvon, 12 Jan. 1877; De Volksstem, 13 Jan. 1877, Supplement.

and thus precipitate war, but Cetshwayo's subsequent behaviour in inviting Rudolph to come and seize Mbilini suggests that this was not so (78). An alternative argument would be that Cetshwayo was using Mbilini to intimidate the inhabitants of these areas into evacuating their land. More likely still, however, is that Mbilini was acting independently, at least in the detailed planning of the raid, in the expectation that it would gain Cetshwayo's approval (79). Cetshwayo certainly seems to have been embarrassed by Mbilini's deeds. In reply to Rudolph's protest about the raid he said that Mbilini deceived him by telling lies, and that he was just "a Schelmond like all Swazis", and assured Rudolph that he could enter unhindered into Zululand to attack Mbilini. Rudolph understandably felt less sure. Mbilini lived in the midst of other Zulu villages, and he preferred the less risky course of getting Cetshwayo to deliver Mbilini himself (80). Cetshwayo, however, was able to evade that responsibility after an unauthorised attack made by Field-Cornet Kohrs and a number of other Wakkerstroomers on Mbilini's village on 24th February (81). Although this was unsuccessful and Mbilini managed to escape deeper into Zululand, Cetshwayo henceforth disclaimed all responsibility for his

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(78) S.S. 228, 137, No. 367, Bell to St. Secretary, 13 Jan. 1877.

(79) U.R.5, U.R.B., No. 203, 17 Jan. 1877, and S.S. 228, 157-8, No. 377, Rudolph to State Secretary, 24 Jan. 1877. If this is to be believed Cetshwayo's target was Wakkerstroom's ward 3, and if this was the object it was partly achieved with the evacuation of a number of families from the area, P.P. 1877, C 1776, 53, Incl. in No. 42, Report by J.W. Shepstone, 10 Jan. 1877.

(80) S.S. 228, 155-8, No. 377, Rudolph to State Secretary, 24 Jan. 1877.

(81) S.S. 230, 345-6, No. 862, Rudolph to S.S., 26 Feb. 1877. Seven or eight whites and an unknown number of blacks were involved.

behaviour. Mbilini, he asserted, was no longer in his charge. He had given him over to Rudolph, and Kohrs had attacked him and forced him to flee. That had interposed Kohrs between Rudolph and himself, and if Rudolph still wanted Mbilini he would have to go to Kohrs. Rudolph fumed, "From this you can see how arbitrarily Cetshwayo acts, and that nothing is to be got from him by friendship." (82)

Cetshwayo had obviously been loathe to take action against Mbilini, and the chief reason for his repudiating him at all was probably information about Shepstone's impending visit to the Republic. Already by mid-December, Cetshwayo had some idea of what this was about, and this may have persuaded him to mark time over Swaziland and the disputed boundary, until he could see more clearly what it implied (83). It is, in fact, just possible that he may have had hopes of Shepstone in this respect, but if that was the case they were quickly dashed, when Shepstone, chameleon-like, took on all the policies and attitudes of his predecessors once he had annexed the Transvaal. As a result, within a few months, the situation on the boundary was just as tense as before. Confrontation returned to the disputed frontier; Zulu settlers continued to colonise along the Pongola; and the same threats and requests to invade were uttered against the Swazi. There was nevertheless one important difference.

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(82) S.S. 232, 341-2, No. 1196, Rudolph to State Secretary, 29 March 1877.

(83) T.S.C., Case 7, Letter Book 1876-8, 2, Shepstone to Barkly, 23 Feb. 1876.

Faced with a much more united front of whites on his western and southern borders, Cetshwayo was prepared to take a more flexible line with his Swazi neighbours. Thus, sprinkled among threats of invasion and encroachment one also finds overtures for alliances between the two Royal Houses, which allowed the Swazi to breathe a little more easily in the months before the war (84).

While Zulu attitudes froze back into positions of suspicion and hostility, Swazi reactions to the new administration remained much more ambiguous and supple. Annexation was welcomed for the greater protection it promised against the Zulu, but was distrusted for the greater rigidity it brought to Transvaal/Swazi affairs. The underlying ambivalence of Swazi policy is nowhere clearer than at the first Queen's Birthday celebrations to be held in the annexed Transvaal. In common with the other chiefdoms in the area, the Swazi had been invited to this to pledge their fealty to the Crown. Notwithstanding their earlier protestations of loyalty, however, they had no intention of being lumped together with other chiefdoms, as simple subjects of the Crown. Led by Sandlane Zwane and Mbovane Fakudze, the nation's two leading councillors, they insisted on a separate audience with Shepstone once the other representatives had

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(84) P.P. 1877, C. 1883, 19, Encl. 2 in No. 18, C. Boast, Acting Resident Magistrate Newcastle to M. Osborne, 15 May 1877; S.S. 259, No. 243, J. Dunn to Shepstone, 8 May 1877; S.S. 242, No. 2957, 346-7, Bell to Osborne, 8 July 1877; G.H.N., Vol. 1397, F.B. Fynney to Acting S.N.A., 13 July 1877; S.S. 242, No. 2960, 354-6, Bell to Osborne, 24 July 1877; T.S.C., Case 7, Letter Book 1876-8, 262, Shepstone to Frere, 12 Sept. 1877; *ibid*, 289, Shepstone to Frere, 16 Nov. 1877; G.H.N., Vol. 791, G. 400A/77, Shepstone to Bulwer, 6 Dec. 1877.

dispersed. At this "they stated the difficulty of their position and their attachment to Her Majesty's Government", as well as, "their satisfaction at the Transvaal having become British territory and their anxiety to be what they had always considered themselves to be under the British Government". The unspoken implication of all this was that they did not want to be what they had never been, that is, the direct subjects of the Crown, and Shepstone picked it up immediately. "I explained," he went on, "that hitherto the relations of the Amaswazi with H.M.G. had been from circumstances those of distant neighbours, but that by the recent change they had become either adjoining neighbours or subjects; which of these positions they wish to occupy they must themselves, as a people, determine... but... a clear and definite declaration they must soon make, because both the obligations and privileges of living inside the enclosure differed from and were greater than residence without" (85).

To their relief the Swazi were never called upon to take this delicate decision. Shepstone's first task on taking charge of the Transvaal was to repair the damage he felt had been done to white prestige within its borders, and the status of Swaziland was held over for future consideration (86). Because of this, and because a succession of political crises soon came thronging in on the administration, it was nearly three years

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(85) P.P. 1877, C. 1883, 13-14, No. 13, Sir T. Shepstone to Carnarvon, 27 May 1877.

(86) P.P. 1878, C. 1961, 63, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 31 July 1877.

before the British could again devote their undivided attention to Swaziland. Just thirteen months after Shepstone assumed control, fresh troubles flared up with Sekhukhune, and these in turn were overtaken nine months later by the most serious crisis Britain had yet had to confront in south-eastern Africa - the Anglo-Zulu War. As a result, for virtually the entire period of annexation, Swaziland was left in the same political limbo as it had held for the previous decade viz-a-viz the S.A.R.

This did not mean that they were left entirely to their own devices. As the Sekhukhune campaign unfolded, the British soon blundered into exactly the same morass of difficulties as their predecessors had done. Sekhukhune was strongly fortified on his mountain, and could not be physically dislodged without a frontal assault and a heavy loss of men. The alternative of a guerilla campaign was not much better. In that sort of warfare, mobility was essential, and this was effectively denied the British by the horse sickness which raged around Sekhukhune's stronghold for much of the year (87). To escape their predicament the British were eventually forced back on precisely the same expedient as the Republic had used. African auxiliaries were sought as a solution to the problem, and Captain George Eckersley was sent to Swaziland to solicit help. The reply Eckersley brought back with him was discouragingly negative.

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(87) T.S.C., Case 14, M. Clarke to Shepstone, 7 June 1878; ibid, M. Clarke to Shepstone, 21 Aug. 1878.

It was hardly reasonable, the Swazi pointed out, for the British to expect any help from them when the Zulu were busy occupying a great swathe of Swazi territory in the south (88). Equally unreasonable, they no doubt added to themselves, was to ask them to place everything at risk when the British could not even subdue Sekhukhune. Until the Zulu question was settled, they were keeping their options open.

The Zulu question was in fact rapidly coming to a head. Both Shepstone and Frere, for their various reasons, had decided that an independent Zululand could not be permitted to exist, and they were only waiting for a suitable pretext by which to destroy its independence. For a rather different set of reasons, the Swazi were also facing crisis in a similar direction. Between January and April 1878, there had been a brief lull in Zulu pressure on Swaziland, following the clash between Cetshwayo's Ngobamakosi and Hamu's Tolwana regiments at the annual First Fruits ceremony, but as the spectre of civil disturbances faded, encroachments and provocations across the Pongola River were again actively resumed (89). In the middle of May notice was served on farmers living in the Pongola ward, along the lower Mkhondvo River, to move, and towards the end

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(88) S.S. 305, R 3301, Captain Clarke to S.N.A., 9 Sept. 1878, Encl. Eckersley to Clarke, 5 Sept. 1878, (this is also reproduced in C.2220, 309-310).

(89) S.N.A., Vol. 1/4/2, No. 5, H.F. Fynn, Resident Magistrate Msinga Division, to S.N.A., 3 Jan. 1878; *ibid*, No. 20, Fynn to S.N.A., 9 Jan. 1878; *De Volksstem*, 22 Jan. 1878, 'Own Correspondent'; S.P., 'Miscellaneous', 29393, 145-6, Ndukwana, 29 Sept. 1900.

of the month building was resumed on the royal village at Luneberg, which had been abandoned, half constructed, the previous December (90). When Cetshwayo had begun building this in November 1877 it had come close to precipitating a crisis with the Transvaal. Shepstone had written to Frere that it jeopardised the whole of Utrecht and the greater part of Wakkerstroom, as well as giving Cetshwayo control of natural fortresses in the area, and would, for that reason, have to be stopped (91). When building restarted six months later, Rudolph put a less alarmist construction on the act, pointing out it was not a military village as such, and emphasising the peaceable demeanour of its induna, Faku, but it is more likely in this case that Shepstone's judgement was more sound (92). What mattered was not so much its alleged function, which was to provide an administrative centre for the remnants of Nyamainja's people in the area (93), nor its diminutive size, but the fact that by doing this Cetshwayo had stated a formal claim over an area he had already informally infiltrated. Bulwer, who was normally one of Cetshwayo's protagonists,

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(90) S.S. 281, R 1594, Rudolph to Secretary Government, 14 May 1878, encl. J.D. Engelbrecht to Rudolph, 11 May 1878; ibid, R 1593, Rudolph to Secretary Govt., 15 May 1878; ibid, R 1761, Rudolph to Secretary Govt., 25 May 1878.

(91) T.S.C., Case 7, Letter Book 1876-8, 289, Shepstone to Frere, 16 Nov. 1877.

(92) S.S. 281, R 1999, Rudolph to Secretary Govt., 1 June 1878.

(93) S.P., File 17, Notebook 3, 25, Lazarus Xaba, 7 May 1910.

understood this, and any doubt on the question was dispelled by Cetshwayo's actions over the next six months (94). After backtracking briefly in early June, Cetshwayo began July by occupying Mtyelegwane's territory in the east, and by building right up to Swaziland's royal graves and strongholds in the Mahamba, Mozaza River and Ngwavuma River region (95) (Map 3).

In September a new attack was launched by Mbilini into Swaziland, again possibly without Cetshwayo's direct consent (96), and by November, if a surveyor's comment is to be believed, Zulu occupation stretched right up to the Mhlangavula (97).

These events have never been accorded the significance they deserve. Partly because they were used as a pretext for a war, which was so obviously undertaken for other reasons, partly

(94) "This of course is an act of assertion of authority and it is evidently the thin end of the wedge, inserted with [the probable]... object of placing the king in a position to raise future questions should the opportunity favour" - G.H.Z., Vol. 780, No. 123, Bulwer to Frere, 3 Aug. 1878.

(95) S.S. 322, 16, Rudolph to S.N.A., 18 June 1878, Encl. Statement by Swazi messengers, 18 June 1878; The Net, October 1878, Letter from Jackson, 28 June 1878; De Volksstem, 2 July 1878, letter 21 June 1878; ibid, 9 July 1878; ibid, 30 July 1878, Own Correspondent, 15 July 1878; S.S. 306, R 3466, Rudolph to Secretary Govt., 27 Sept. 1878.

(96) S.N.I., No. 6/78, Rudolph to S.N.A., 12 Oct. 1878 (This is reproduced in C. 2260, 52-3): ibid, No. 24/78, Rudolph to S.N.A., 27 Oct. 1878 (reproduced in C. 2222, 105); Dunn claimed that Cetshwayo was furious over this last attack, but that Umnyamana had given him warning so that he could escape, C. Vijn, Cetshwayo's Dutchman, translated by J.W. Colenso (London, 1880), 106, Note 13.

(97) S.S. 316, R 4297, G.E. Fawcus to Govt. Secretary, 18 Nov. 1878.

because of ignorance about Cetshwayo's earlier ambitions, historians have tended to draw the opposite conclusion that they had little or no aggressive intent. Instead, the explanation generally preferred has been that Zulu villages spilled over the Pongola because of the protracted drought which gripped south-eastern Africa in 1877-1878 (98). This may indeed have played a part in the movement, but a more thorough ecological analysis would be necessary to show why this drought should have had precisely these effects. Besides that, the drought thesis only holds for 1878. Zululand, according to Coupland, was spared the drought that affected most of the rest of southern Africa in 1877, which means that other explanations have to be found for Zulu encroachments before 1878 (99). These, as we have shown, are largely strategic and political, and that being the case, it seems fair to presume that political motives played a significant part in the movement of 1878 as well.

It is against this background of encroachment that Swazi reactions to the Zulu war must be judged. Swaziland was, in Swazi eyes, in the front line of conflict, and nothing would induce them to lend help to Britain for anything other than their own self defence. Indeed, to begin with, they seemed

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(98) De Kiewiet, Imperial Factor, 206-8; D.R. Morris, The Washing of the Spears, (London, 1966) 267; R. Coupland, Zulu battle piece, Isandhlwana, (London, 1948), 30-31. There is an element of contradiction in De Kiewiet who implies that pressure on fertile border lands was for pasturage for cattle, but who also notes Zulu herds had become decimated by lung sickness and red-water disease.

(99) Coupland, Isandhlwana, 30-31.

unwilling to do even that. Despite English promises of support, the Swazi refused to take any action that might in any way antagonise Cetshwayo. As Mbandzeni sarcastically observed to the Swazi Border Commissioner, MacLeod in November 1878, he was sure that the British would help the Swazi push back the Zulu across the Pongola, the only problem was "which year" that would take place. Sandlane elaborated on this theme the following day. "I told him of the power of the English," MacLeod notes,

[and] they [Sandlane and two other indvuna] said that might be true. They hoped so, but they had never seen the English fight. They were always saying they would but never did. They thought they never would. If we did we should be beaten. They had seen the Zulus fight. Until they saw the English fight the Zulus and beat them they could not believe it possible. They would not fight the Zulus until they saw them running away to their caves, then they would come and help the English burn them out. When the English were ready to go into Zululand they might tell the Swazis so that the Swazis might be ready in case the English proved the stronger, which would make them very glad. (100)

While this remained the basic Swazi attitude, it did soften a little as hostilities approached. Towards the end of December, MacLeod returned to Nkanini to inform Mbandzeni of the British ultimatum, and to make another plea for Swazi assistance in the event of war. MacLeod had been authorised to offer a bribe of horses and cattle, but he decided, probably correctly, that blackmail would get better results. Thus, when Mbandzeni stonewalled on the question of military assistance, MacLeod

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(100) Mac. P., Box 62C, Official Communications, 1878-80, MacLeod to ?, n.d.

threatened him with unfavourable border delimitations once the war had been won (101). Had his superiors got to hear of this MacLeod would almost certainly have been disciplined, as Frere had specifically vetoed the idea only three weeks before (102). But as it was, it was enough to make Mbandzeni sit up and take notice, and he promised to help, provided he was supported by British troops (103).

MacLeod returned from Nkanini in high spirits, little understanding how elastic Mbandzeni's proviso might be. White support, after all, could be variously interpreted and it could easily be argued that it was insufficient or wrongly placed. MacLeod's threats had nonetheless been a source of dismay, and their effects can be seen in messages that passed back and forth between Pretoria and Nkanini over the next two weeks. Shortly after MacLeod had left Nkanini, messengers had arrived from Shepstone's Commissioner in Pretoria informing Mbandzeni of the suspension of hostilities against Sekhukhune, and the movement of troops to Derby in New Scotland. They returned with the message that Swazi headmen were on their way to Pretoria to ask for immediate definition of the boundary so that the Swazi "could die with the white men in holding it".

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(101) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, E. Wood to MacLeod, 17 Dec. 1878; ibid, MacLeod to his brother Johnny, 26 Dec. 1878.

(102) N.A., E. Wood Collection, File II/2/2, Chelmsford to Wood, 3 and 4 Dec. 1878.

(103) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, Wood to MacLeod, 17 Dec. 1878, note by MacLeod, 25 Dec. 1878.

Bound by instructions to avoid all discussion of the border, Clarke could do nothing to oblige, and despite repeated requests by the Swazi delegation for information about the British policy on the Swazi/Zulu border, they went home with the question unclarified (104).

Whether these fears would have been enough to bring the Swazi into the war is difficult to say, but the probability is that they would not. The test should have come late in January 1879, when Mbandzeni was instructed to send an army to expel the Zulu living on the north bank of the Pongola. After giving his assent to MacLeod's messengers, Mbandzeni retreated from this position when visited by MacLeod himself, telling him that he had already sent an army to Mtylegwane's, but would summon his council about this latest request. On the face of it this looks like evasion, but MacLeod was never given the chance to find out, as on his way back from delivering these instructions he heard of the defeat at Isandhlwana, and further action had to be postponed (105).

Britain's defeat at Isandhlwana should have shaken Swazi confidence, but its effects turned out to be oddly mixed. To the surprise of Shepstone, who expected demoralisation to set

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(104) P.P. 1878-9, C. 2252, 67-8, Encl. in No. 20, His Excellencies Commissioner to S.N.A., Pretoria, 13 Jan. 1879.

(105) P.P. 1878-9 C. 2260, 65, sub. encl. in No. 10, MacLeod to Col. Wood, 25 Jan. 1879; T.S.C., Case 18, File "M", No. 24, MacLeod to ?, 28 Jan. 1879; Mac. P., Box 45A, Diary, Jan. 1879.

in once the news became known, the Swazi seem to have drawn a quiet satisfaction from the defeat. For once they felt Britain was fully committed, and could not back out. For once too, according to MacLeod, they had gained some idea of the full destructiveness of British arms. The army third column may have been annihilated and the British advance checked, but in this and the following engagement at Rorke's Drift something like two and a half thousand Zulu had been killed, leaving Zulu morale seriously undermined. Not that this meant the Swazi were any more likely to help; indeed, quite the reverse was the case. Although Mbandzeni reiterated his willingness to supply troops on more or less the same conditions as before, those conditions were now virtually impossible to satisfy (106). No British commander dared denude the south eastern Transvaal to protect Swaziland, and the Swazi could rest assured that their offer would not be taken up.

Much as Chelmsford and Wood would have liked to secure Swazi participation on the northern front they were prepared to accept Mbandzeni's case (107). Swaziland was obviously vulnerable in the south, as an attack by Mbilini showed the following month, and it was as unreasonable to expect them to protect

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(106) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, MacLeod to father, 2 Feb. 1879; ibid, Box 45A, Diary, Jan. 1879 and Miscellaneous loose leaf, draft letter, n.d.; For Zulu casualties at Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift see Morris, Washing, 387, 417.

(107) E. Wood Collection, File II/2/2, Chelmsford to Wood, 27 Jan. 1879; T.S.C., Case 19, File "R", Rowlands to Shepstone, No. 25, 31 Jan. 1879.

Utrecht and Wakkerstroom, as it was for Wood to shield southern Swaziland and so expose Utrecht (108). What Wood and Chelmsford failed to realise however was the improbability of the Swazi helping in any event. Although Mbandzeni might have been prepared, with the appropriate backing, to clear the northern Pongola strip, there were no circumstances whatsoever in which he would have participated in a full scale invasion of Zululand (109).

This became apparent in the final phases of the war. In the middle of June, MacLeod rode to Nkanini to ask Mbandzeni to move against Cetshwayo's followers north of the Pongola, but Mbandzeni again declined on the grounds that he would not be getting white support (110). On his return to Utrecht, however, he found a telegram waiting from Wolseley, who had just arrived in Cape Town to take command of the Zulu campaign. Wolseley wanted to know how MacLeod could activate the Swazi front, and MacLeod replied that the Swazi would only fight if supported by British troops. Ignoring MacLeod's qualification, Wolseley ordered him to mass Mbandzeni's forces along the Pongola River

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- (108) P.P. 1878-9, C. 2308, 65, Encl. 5 in No. 14, Col. Schembrucker to E. Wood, 11 Feb. 1879; T.S.C., Case 29, H.C. Shepstone to H. Commissioner, 13 Feb. 1879, Encl. Rudolph to H.C. Shepstone.
- (109) At the end of April 1879 for example, the Swazi repeated their offer to help, provided the British operated from Mahamba due south, S.N.I, N 63/79, Rudolph to S.N.A., 29 April 1879, Encl. Statement by Makwazidile, 29 April 1879. The Swazi objective in this case appears to have been to regain the north bank of the Pongola.
- (110) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, MacLeod to ?, 13 June 1879, Lotiti; P.P. 1880, C. 2482, 109, Encl. 2 in No. 48, MacLeod to Rudolph, 16 June 1879.

and create a diversion in the north (111). MacLeod was privately sceptical about his chances of success, but rode back to Nkanini to present Wolseley's request (112). By this stage MacLeod's own position was becoming increasingly delicate. Although he had a shrewd idea that the Swazi would never take part in any invasion of Zululand, he could not express this directly to his superiors for fear that this was seen as a reflection on himself. British commanders expected their officers in the field to be resourceful, and Swazi reluctance was something he would have been expected to overcome. As a result MacLeod engaged in what was almost a three-way deception. When the Swazi expressed their familiar reservations to Wolseley, he misrepresented Wolseley's plans and assured them they would not have to do anything which would involve them in any serious danger (113). And when Mbandzeni was eventually cajoled into agreeing, on the basis of those conditions, he merely told his superiors that eight thousand Swazi were gathering, giving no indication of how little they were likely to help (114).

Even with these qualifications, the Swazi had left themselves a way out. Although MacLeod gives little sign of realising it, the British forces had already advanced well into Zululand,

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(111) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, G.M. Sive-wright, Telegraph G.M., Pmb., to Rudolph, 25 June 1879; ibid, Wolseley to MacLeod, 29 June 1879 (also reproduced in C. 2454, 150); ibid, Box 45A, Diary, June 1879.

(112) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, Mac. to his mother, 29 June 1879.

(113) Ibid, MacLeod to Aunt Emily, 5 July 1879.

(114) Ibid, Box 45A, Diary, June 1879; C.O. 179/132, W.O. to C.O. 3 Sept. 1879, Encl. Wolseley to S.S. War, 10 July 1879.

and a decisive battle with Cetshwayo could not be far off. Certainly not as far off as July 15th when the Swazi agreed to have their forces ready, as was confirmed when the decisive battle took place at Ulundi on July 4th. With that the Swazi breathed a sigh of relief, and positively demanded to be set loose on the Zulu; and it was here that they made their first serious mistake. What Mbandzeni wanted to do was to loot Zulu property along the Pongola, but with Cetshwayo still free the British had other plans. On his own initiative, to begin with, and then at the request of Wolseley, MacLeod asked Mbandzeni to supply forces to track down Cetshwayo, who had taken refuge in the Ngome forest after the battle of Ulundi. MacLeod's initial request caught Mbandzeni completely off his guard. His army was assembled and going through the final stages of doctoring, and he himself had just asked to attack the Zulu living along the Pongola. Deprived of all his usual excuses, therefore, he was forced to come clean and admit he was still too afraid of Zulu strength to risk his army that far into Zululand (115).

Instead of exposing Mbandzeni's refusal, MacLeod again chose to hide it, and simply told Wolsely that there were five thousand Swazi gathered at Mbandzeni's capital awaiting orders (116). This in turn allowed the Swazi to turn the tables on MacLeod. Conscious of the potential damage they had done themselves by refusing MacLeod's request, they sent

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(115) Mac. P., Box 45A, Diary, July 1879.

(116) P.P. 1880, C. 2482, 226, Encl. in No. 75, Wolseley to S.S. War, 2 Aug. 1879.

messengers to Rudolph, Landdrost of Utrecht, to say that they were afraid of compromising themselves by not sending an army after Cetshwayo, but that when their army was collected some days before, MacLeod had instructed Mbandzeni not to send it out until he received instructions from the government (117).

Having received one fright over MacLeod's request, Wolseley's subsequent appeal for help found them better prepared.

Wolseley's hope was that Cetshwayo would be "disposed of as Dingane was, or killed in some Swazie skirmishes.... his death [being] a much better solution to....our difficulties than his capture", but with the Swazi armies now dispersed Mbandzeni had more solid grounds for refusing (118). It was contrary to Swazi custom, he explained, to send out an army on the waning moon, and it would be impossible to provide a force within the next two weeks (119). By that time of course Cetshwayo was on the point of being captured, and Wolseley had already sent to Mbandzeni to say that his help was no longer required (120). For the Swazi the war was now over.

The Swazi performance during the war had been a truly masterly display of fence-sitting. Without actually doing anything they had managed to project an image of loyalty, which won them tributes from all sides once the fighting ceased. Whether this

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(117) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, Statement of Swazi messengers, 6 Aug. 1879, Utrecht.

(118) Ibid, Wolseley to MacLeod, 31 July 1879.

(119) Ibid, Box 45A, Diary, 7 Aug. 1879.

(120) C.O. 179/132, W.O. to C.O., 3.9.1879, encl, telegram Wolseley to S.S. War, 3 Sept. 1879.

would have stood up to closer scrutiny is perhaps open to doubt. MacLeod, for one, was drafting letters, now that he was freed from the need of producing results, which presented the Swazi in a much less glowing light. But in the end it did not matter. Before their image could become even the least bit tarnished, the Swazi were given the opportunity to prove their loyalty in an operation far more to their liking - that is, in a new campaign against the Pedi.

Since October 1878, operations against Sekhukhune had dragged on in desultory fashion, with an almost total lack of success. Clarke explained his failure in terms of the ravages of horse disease and the absence of African support. With horses, he felt, his forces would have achieved relatively easy success, but without them his white troops were next to useless unless supported by African - which in practice meant Swazi - auxiliaries (121). Wolseley echoed this view when he took charge of operations in October 1879. Instructing MacLeod to assemble two thousand, and if possible five thousand, Swazi soldiers he wrote, "I place so much importance to having the Swazis that I will wait for your arrival with them." (122) Anxious to make amends for their earlier shortcomings, the Swazi were only too eager to oblige (123). To the amazement of MacLeod,

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(121) T.S.C., Case 14. M. Clarke to Shepstone, 7 June 1878.

(122) Mac. P., Box 62E Official Communications (Wolseley).  
Wolseley to MacLeod, 3 Nov. 1879.

(123) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Comms., W.F. Fairlie, Commanding Officer Swazi Police, to Rowlands, 22 Feb. 1879; P.P. 1878-9, C. 2318, 77, Encl. in No. 17. M. Clarke, Commander Lydenburg to Secretary to Government, 3 March 1879; Myburgh, Carolina, 101-3. And also to take revenge for a Pedi attack on Feb. 8 of the same year on outlying Swazi villages on the Komati. This had however been largely unsuccessful, and the Pedi lost most of their force - see Mac. P., Box 62E. Official Communications.

who assured Wolseley this would take at least three weeks to do, they managed to muster three thousand men within the week, and in the middle of the planting season at that. En route from Nkanini to Lydenburg this doubled, and then nearly trebled in size as new units joined the force, and by the 18th November when they arrived in Lydenburg they numbered between eight thousand and eight thousand five hundred - five hundred bearing guns (124).

The place allotted the Swazi in Wolseley's strategy was an important one. In his diary entry for the 10th October he had noted Clarke's gloomy forebodings that, "every time he looked at the mountain the less he liked it, as he knew that taking it meant many lives lost," and two weeks later he was remarking how, "even brave men like Clarke and Carrington view the mountain and its defenders with superstitious awe." (125) The Swazi presence was designed to help banish those fears. Where his British officers might flinch, the Swazi were to be thrown in as shock troops to storm the rear of Sekhukhune's mountain and take its defenders from behind (126). The Swazi lived up

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(124) This is MacLeod's figure of Swazi numbers, and probably the most reliable one - Mac. P., Box 45A, Diary: October/November 1879; ibid, MacLeod to father 17 Nov. 1879; C.O. 291/9, Chief of Staff's Journal of Military Operations in the Transvaal, 23. Other estimates range from 6 000 (P.P. 1880, C. 2505, 103, Encl. 2 in No. 32, Major Creagh to Chief of Staff 11 Dec. 1879) to 10 000 (C.R. Low, General Lord Wolseley - A Memoir, (London, 1883) 376).

(125) A. Preston (ed.), The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley 1879-1880, (Cape Town, 1973), 13, 15; see also Wolseley's entry for Nov. 20 on pages 170-1, "all my scheme hangs upon them [the Swazi] as the centre....".

(126) C.O. 291/9, Chief of Staff's Journal of Military Operations in the Transvaal, 1879, 16.

to expectations in every way. Contrary to Wolseley's subsequent assertions that they hung back until white soldiers moved first, and that it was the wing under Ferreira which had cornered Sekhukhune, the Swazi delayed only until it was light enough to receive covering fire, and had hunted down Sekhukhune one and a half hours before Ferreira's arrival (127). "No white men could have swept over that hill as the Swazi did," MacLeod subsequently wrote, and their casualty figures of five to six hundred dead and a similar number wounded bear witness to his claims (128). So too, more volubly, did Wolseley's Chief of Staff. Echoing earlier Republican views on the subject he wrote in his journal of the campaign, "It is difficult to overrate the political value of the Swazi factor in our future relations with the Northern native tribes." (129) And in these sentiments Wolseley heartily concurred (130). Despite the change in government, Swaziland's position as the principal collaborator state in south eastern Africa seemed to be assured.

Swaziland's aid against Sekhukhune created a debt of gratitude

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- (127) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, MacLeod to Editor of Natal Witness, 9 Jan. 1880; MacLeod to Aunt Emily, 10 Jan. 1880; ibid, Box 45A, Letters from Africa, MacLeod to Mother, 20 Dec. 1879.
- (128) Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, MacLeod to Father, 8 Dec. 1879; ibid, Box 45A, Diary, November/December 1879; ibid, Box 45A, MacLeod to Mother, 20 Dec. 1879; S.P.G., Series "E" 1880, Vol. 35, J. Thorne to S.P.G. 31 Dec. 1879, 1525.
- (129) C.O. 291/9, 49, Chief of Staff's Journal of Military Operations in the Transvaal, 1879.
- (130) P.P. 1880, C. 2584, 39, Encl. in No. 30, Wolseley, to S.S. War, 2 Jan. 1880.

which, try as they could, British politicians could never feel they had discharged, and established a fund of public good will in England that the Swazi were to draw on for another two and a half decades. As MacLeod remarked drily to his mother, "To the British mind in general Russians and Zulus are fiends, Turks and Swazis angels", only spoiling the illusion of impartiality by adding that he personally, "place[d] the Boers decidedly below the lot" (131). Surprisingly the Swazi never really grasped the strength of their position. Well versed in the intricacies of South African diplomacy, they were novices when it came to dealing with Whitehall, and only extracted a fraction of the concessions they might have obtained. The most striking illustration of this can be seen in the Transvaal/Swazi Boundary Commission of January 1880. The instructions given to the Boundary Commission were ambiguous to the point of self contradiction. In one breath its president (Alleyne) was told to secure Swaziland's assent to the existing beacons, and to tell them that through want of sufficient evidence the British government could not recognise Swazi claims on the Komati Valley (132). In the next he was instructed that, "While it is desirable to re-establish the old Boer boundary in the Komati Valley, it is still more desirable that the Swazis should look upon us as firm and honest friends incapable of spoiling them of their just possessions." (133)

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(131) Mac. P., Box 45A, Letters from Africa, MacLeod to Mother, 27 Sept. 1879.

(132) P.P. 1880, C. 2505, 126, Encl. 2 in No. 50, Wolseley to Alleyne n.d.

(133) P.P. 1880, C. 2695, 19, Encl. 2 in No. 17, Herbert to Alleyne, 3 Jan. 1880.

'Clarifying' the position three days later, Wolseley's private secretary, Herbert, clouded it still further. Alleyne was now told that although the Swazi might complain about a restriction of their territory to the north, they should recognise that they had profited from the extension of their territory down to the Pongola in the south, secured them by the Zulu boundary settlement (134). In some agitation Alleyne telegraphed back asking whether the Swazi were in fact to be given any territory south of the southern boundary line, in response to which Herbert executed a further somersault by ruling that the existing line of beacons should be adhered to as the boundary (135).

Apart from confusion, what emerges from these exchanges is that the Swazi could have obtained a great deal more from the boundary settlement than they ultimately did. All that was restraining the British government was fear of a backlash from the Boers, but as Herbert had made clear to Alleyne, if it came to the choice, the Swazi were the more important. This was especially true in the Pongola River region where there was virtually no Boer settlement to speak of. What possessed Herbert to 'concede' this in his earlier instruction is hard to imagine, but it was a revealing slip. When congratulating the Swazi some months earlier on their loyalty during the Zulu War, Wolseley had told MacLeod to inform them their loyalty would prove to their

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(134) Ibid, 19, Encl. 3 in No. 17, Telegraph Herbert to Alleyne, 6 Jan. 1880.

(135) Ibid, 19-20, Encl. 4 in No. 17, Telegraph Alleyne to Wolseley; Encl. 5 in No. 17, Telegraph Herbert to Alleyne, 8 Jan. 1880.

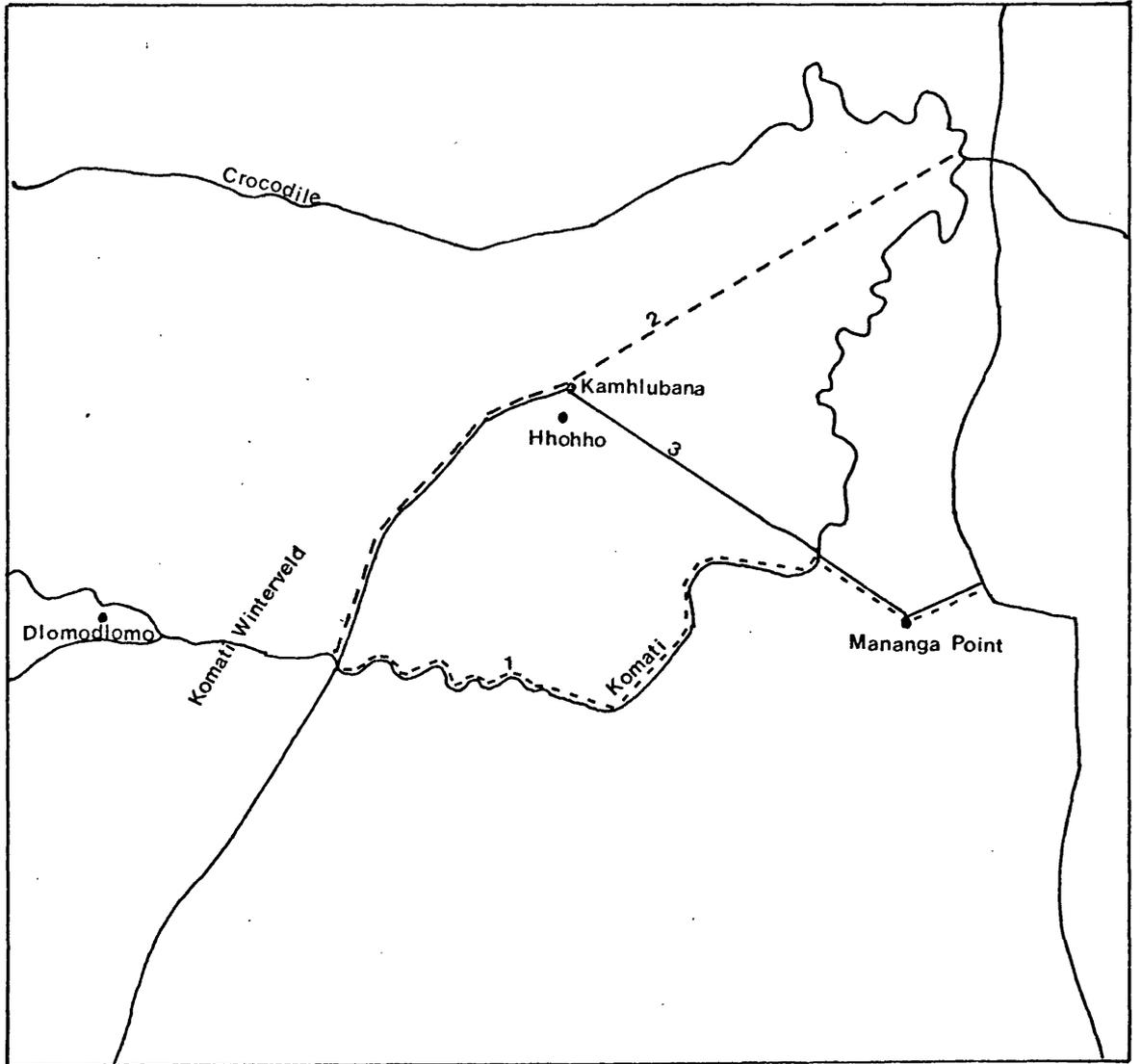
advantage in the final settlement of the country, and that Wolseley hoped to give them "a considerable extension of territory beyond what they now occupy." (136) This offer was subsequently retracted, but it remained at the back of British minds until the retrocession of the Transvaal. Provision was even made for it in the recast instructions sent by Wolseley to the Boundary Commission to clarify earlier communications, and it is hard to escape the impression that had the Swazi really pressed for it the British would have caved in (137). The same is true for Swaziland's northern boundary. The Komati boundary has already been mentioned, but an even more likely candidate for compromise was the Hhohho border further north. When Alleyne reached this point at the close of his investigations he found the beacons disputed and the earlier treaties unclear. Three different interpretations seemed possible (Map 10). Firstly, a line along the Komati River to the Lebombo's Mananga Point, which was in practice unacceptable since it would have excised the homesteads of the most recent generation of royal princes in Hhohho. Secondly, a line along the edge of the mountains to Kamhlabana peak, and then on to the junction of the Crocodile and Komati Rivers, which would have included a substantial slice of the modern Transvaal in

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(136) P.P. 1880, C. 2482, 258, No. 87, Wolseley to Hicks Beach; Mac. P., Box 62E, Official Communications, Chief of Staff to MacLeod, 15 Sept. 1879. Even this last offer was qualified however by reference to Boer farmers who had fulfilled the conditions of the 1855 cession and had actually occupied the land.

(137) P.P. 1880, C. 2695, Encl. 6 in No. 17 Herbert to Alleyne, 10 Jan. 1880.

DISPUTED BORDER AREA - 1880



Swazi territory. And thirdly a line to Kamhlabana Peak, and then to Mananga Point in the Lebombo (the present boundary). Undecided Alleyne telegraphed Wolseley for further instructions, to be told that he should plump for the second line unless the Swazi were firmly opposed (my emphasis) in which case he should award the third (138). In effect the extra territory was there for the taking.

The Swazi however made no such protest and the opportunity slipped away (139). Whether one should take this to mean they acquiesced willingly in the decision is difficult to say. To argue from silence in this case would be dangerous, as there is evidence that the Swazi may have tried to register a complaint shortly afterwards, when they asked to send an embassy to Natal (140). Once this was refused, however, they seem to have realised the futility of trying to drive a wedge between the Transvaal and Natal now that they were both under British control, and for the final months of British rule in the Transvaal they appear to have been relatively content with a status which guaranteed independence and freedom from taxation, provided they supply military aid whenever requested to do so (141).

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(138) F.C., Vol. 2, M. Barlow Special Commissioner Swazi Border to D. Forbes, 18 Aug. 1880.

(139) P.P. 1880, C. 2695, 28, Encl. 9 in No. 17, Alleyne to Herbert, 7 April 1880.

(140) F.C., Vol. 2, M. Barlow, Special Commissioner Swazi Border to D. Forbes, 18 Aug. 1880.

(141) S.N. 102, S.N.A. to MacLeod, 17 Jan. 1880.

Swazi reaction during the Anglo-Boer war of 1881 can be read as at least a partial confirmation of this view. On the basis of earlier experience, one would have expected them to wait on the sidelines and see who would come out on top, but instead they committed themselves wholeheartedly to the British, and categorically rejected Boer overtures of alliance (142).

Whether this can be taken as evidence of any more than a greater hostility towards the S.A.R. is debatable. Not wanting to involve 'native races' in a confrontation between whites, the British authorities never put Swazi promises to the test, and one wonders whether they would have proved more substantial than those offered during the Zulu War. Even if they had - and it seems that they might have, as they were less hedged round with qualifications than before - one is no closer to proving the point, for what must have weighed most heavily with the Swazi was their calculation as to who would win. At the outset of hostilities there appeared to be only one answer to that question, and the Swazi acted accordingly. Like many others who made the same calculation they were to be rudely awakened. Following Colley's defeat at Majuba Hill the British appetite for the fight vanished, and within two months the two sides were negotiating the Transvaal's return to self rule.

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(142) P.P. 1882, C. 3098, 2, No. 2, Wood to Kimberley, 30 May 1881; P.P. 1881, C. 2866, 25, Encl. in No. 12, C.F. Spring to P.S. Colley, 28 Dec. 1881, encl. Barlow to H.C. Shepstone, 10 June 1881.

The chief significance of these negotiations for the Swazi was the proposal put forward by Carnarvon to cut off a slice of Transvaal territory somewhere east of the 30th parallel, to protect the Zulu and Swazi from the Transvaalers, and prevent incidents between the two sides. Despite reservations on the part of the Boer leaders, this had been inserted into the instructions of the Royal Commission appointed to oversee retrocession (143), but was thereafter gradually whittled down during the Commission's proceedings, by the combined representations of the Boer delegation and those British officials who felt that the more completely Britain washed her hands of the Transvaal the better. "The sooner we get rid of contingent responsibilities," minuted Lanyon, "the better for Imperial interests", to which Bellairs added the specious argument that these kingdoms could hold their own against the Transvaal anyway (144). But it was the leaders of the Boer deputation who presented the heart of the case. The eastern Transvaalers, they argued, could not possibly accept this limitation. These were the oldest settled parts of the Republic, as well as the most wealthy, and neither "national feeling" nor "sound political economy" would tolerate their exclusion. Should the British press ahead with the plan they would run the twin risk

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(143) C.O. 291/18, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix No. 3, Agreement between Wood and Boer Commanders on 21 March 1881; P.P. 1881 C. 2892, 4-5, No. 1 Kimberley to Robinson, 31 March 1881.

(144) C.O. 291/19, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix 16h, encl. Minute by Lanyon, 10 May 1881; C.O.;291/10, No. 31, Bellairs to Secretary State, 2 May 1881, Encl. Bellairs to Wood, 1 May 1881.

of armed resistance in the short run, and a festering sense of bitterness in the years to come (145). Robinson and Villiers (two of the Royal Commissioners) were inclined to agree. It would be better, they felt, for Britain to secure concessions for the other half million blacks within and to the west of the Transvaal who were, "weak... split up and without unity or strength", and on other outstanding issues between the two parties: the Zulu and the Swazi were strong enough to look after themselves (146). Wood, the third Royal Commissioner, dissented vigorously from this view. In a separate telegram to Kimberley, the new Colonial Secretary, he urged that at the very least the land north of the Drakensburg and south of the Komati should be retained. On the basis of the Secretary of State's earlier communications, he claimed, he had already informed the Swazi that a buffer would be created between them and the Transvaal, and if the same was not done for the Zulu, the consequences would be fatal (147). Kimberley, however, was unimpressed by Wood's argument, and adopted the majority recommendation almost clause for clause. The Transvaal became independent within its former bounds, and with no loss of territory to the east, and the only protection Swaziland secured was a formal recognition by both parties of her independence, and the ultimately unenforceable oversight of

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(145) C.O. 291/18, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix No. 7, B. Leaders to Commission, 17 May 1881.

(146) C.O. 291/18, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix 7(a), telegram Robinson to Kimberley, 22 May 1881.

(147) Ibid, Appendix 7(b), telegram Wood to Kimberley, 22 May 1881.

border relations by a British Resident (148). With only minor modifications in 1884, this was to provide the framework for Transvaal/Swazi relations for the next eight years - eight years in which the independence of the Swazi was finally undermined.

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(148) C.O. 291/10, telegram Robinson to Kimberley, encl. Draft reply, 30 May 1881.

CHAPTER VIII  
 REPUBLICAN PRESSURE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF  
 CONCESSIONS 1881-1886

Two themes dominate the 1880s in Swaziland, and one ceases to have the same central importance. With Cetshwayo's defeat by the British in 1879, the Swazi were able, for probably the first time in living memory, to enjoy the luxury of disengagement from Zulu affairs. Although rumours circulated in the first half of the 1880s about Swazi support for one or other of the contending factions in Zululand, and although the civil war there occasionally spilled over into the Pongola valley or the southern Lebombo, the Swazi kept themselves largely aloof from the conflict, and Zululand faded from the forefront of Swazi leaders' minds (1). However, if Zululand lost its central significance, two other problems came much more to fore. The first was Mbandzeni's quest for personal authority; the second, the 'paper conquest' of his country through concessions, and the diplomatic complications to which this gave rise. It is with these that this chapter will be concerned.

For much of this period the two questions are closely interwoven, but as the Transvaalers wrested their independence from the British in the summer of 1881, it was the first which took the lead. Mbandzeni, it will be recalled, began his reign from a position of exceptional weakness. He had been chosen

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(1) G.H.Z., Vols. 677-709 (1879-1888); C.O. 179/142-8 (1882-3); C.O. 427/1-3 (1888).

as king less for his exceptional qualities than for his exceptional lack of them, his lack of mother included, and the best that could be said of him was that he was "a quiet puff-adder", itself a notably ambiguous metaphor (2). With the passage of time, the very exercise of kingship drew out unexpected qualities. Almost imperceptibly Mbandzeni became more kingly; his decisions more crisp, and by the early 1880s observers were unanimous on the transformation that had taken place (3).

Besides Mbandzeni's own ability to rise to the part, two other factors aided in his transformation. In 1874-5 both Thandile and Malunge died, having dominated Swazi politics for the last two and a half decades, and, with their passing, an important thread of continuity in Swazi life was snapped (4). The added fluidity this lent to Swazi politics, and the extra freedom it gave Mbandzeni himself can be seen in the reactions of white observers to the news. From Utrecht, Rudolph openly exulted at the passing of "that old Jezebel", while to Jackson, on his return to Enhlozana nearly a year later, it held out fresh hope that the missionary logjam in Swaziland might at

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(2) Interview Maboya Fakudze.

(3) See for example C.O. 879/42, Appendix I, 387, No. 9, Wood to Kimberley, 24 Sept. 1881, in which Wood relates Rudolph's opinion; P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 112, Report of Rutherford's Secretary to British Resident on mission to Swaziland, 25 March 1884.

(4) S.S. 177, 160, Bell to State President, No. 1681, 1 Nov. 1874; S.S. 178, 171, Rudolph to State Secretary, No. 1850, 3 Dec. 1874. The exact date of Malunge's death is not known. A prominent signatory of official documents in Ludvonga's reign, his last public act was to preside over Mbandzeni's nomination (Honey, 'History', 42), after which he fades from view completely.

last be breaking up (5). For the moment, however, these hopes were some what premature. Mbandzeni was still officially a novitiate, and it was not until he donned the headring in the middle of 1876 that this formally came to an end. Only now, as Mbandzeni proudly proclaimed to the S.A.R., was he fully in charge of the nation's affairs (6).

That at least was the formal position; the reality was rather different. Despite the departure of such formidable upholders of the conciliar tradition as Thandile and Malunge, there were still others of the calibre of Sandlane, Maloyi and Sobandla, not to mention Sisile herself, to take up their mantle, and it needed more than the amiable self-indulgence of Mbandzeni to loosen their grip. And yet things could not be quite the same as they were. For all his limitations Mbandzeni was king, and he did periodically assert himself, so that it was necessary to find some area in which he could be given his head. In foreign affairs the field that was ultimately settled upon was the allocation of grazing, hunting and wood cutting concessions. The poor relation of foreign policy, this could be more confidently entrusted to Mbandzeni, because of the lower order of decision making it involved. At the same time

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(5) S.S. 178, 48, Rudolph to State Secretary, No. 1775, 18 Nov. 1874; S.P.G., Series "E", Vol. 31, 1876, 1229, Jackson to S.P.G., 31 Oct. 1876; *ibid*, Jackson to S.P.G., 31 March 1876. Earlier Jackson had described Thandile as the most difficult person he had to deal with and the "most bigoted, superstitious, tenacious of old 'customs'", S.P.G. Series "E", Vol. 27, 1871-2, 1552, Jackson to S.P.G., 30 June 1872.

(6) S.S. 212, 350, Bell to State Secretary, No. 2079, 7 Aug. 1876.

it was an area in which Mbandzeni himself had shown a special interest and would perhaps not have brooked opposition. He evidently liked whites better than most Swazi (7), and the power to dispense concessions, together with the gifts he received in return, seem to have flattered his vanity and conferred the illusion of power (8).

It is from this point on that the concession era may be said to have got truly underway. Grazing concessions were dispensed with increasing regularity; an Anglican mission was allowed to gain a toehold on the southern border; and the first tentative steps were taken towards the parcelling out of Swaziland's mineral wealth (9). For the most part Mbandzeni's councillors watched these developments unmoved. Most benefitted in some measure from the traffic, and in the late 1870s there were more pressing matters to claim their attention. Nevertheless, even at this early stage, there were times when Mbandzeni's behaviour created friction. Occasionally he made grants which were wildly excessive, and these were invariably a source of conflict within his councils. The first such incident took place almost the moment he came of age, when he granted a grazing concession of thirty-six thousand acres in southern

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- (7) S.P.G., Series "E", Vol. 31, 1876, 1226, Jackson to S.P.G., 31 March 1876.
- (8) The Wesleyan missionary, Underwood, hints at something like this in 1886 - see W.M.M.S. Records, Transvaal, Box 1886-1891, File Underwood to Kilner, 15 May 1886.
- (9) Miller, Swaziland, 20; S.P.G., Records, Series "E", Vol. 31, 1876, Jackson to S.P.G., 31 Oct. 1875. According to Miller (Swaziland, 17), T. MacLachlan moved permanently into Swaziland to prospect in 1878.

Swaziland to Joachim Ferreira and Ignatious Maritz (10).

Mbandzeni's councillors unanimously opposed the grant, but having made it Mbandzeni stubbornly refused to back down. As tempers rose, Sandlane seems to have signified his displeasure by refusing to visit the king, after his meeting with Shepstone in Pretoria, and tensions only eased after fighting broke out between soldiers from Sandlane's and Mbandzeni's residences, in which a number of Sandlane's men were killed (11).

Mbandzeni's behaviour in 1876 set the pattern for the 1880s. Periods of dull passivity would be accompanied by mounting resentment at being excluded from the exercise of effective power, and would finally be broken by a brief bout of self-assertion, after which the whole cycle would resume. The early 1880s saw the climax of just such a sequence. Shortly before Ludvonga's death the young king had been betrothed to a daughter of Langalibalele called Undumo or Somdlalose (12). Because of Ludvonga's death the marriage was never formalised, but Somdlalose stayed in Swaziland where she eventually caught the fancy of Mbandzeni, and a liason was struck up. Sisile is supposed to have warned against the relationship because of Somdlalose's close association with Ludvonga, but Mbandzeni

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(10) S.S. 212, 121-2, No. 1936, Bell to State Secretary, 23 July 1876; *ibid*, 349, No. 2079, Bell to St. Secretary, 7 Aug. 1876; *Watson*, 'Little Free State', 5-6.

(11) S.S. 242, No. 2958, Bell to Osborne, 16 July 1877.

(12) The first is the name given by Rudolph (P.R.O., C.O. 879/42, 38, Appendix 1 & 2, Encl. in No. I, Rudolph to Wood, 4 May 1881); the second that given by Maboya Fakudze, (interview Maboya Fakudze). *Matsebula (History)* gives no name at all.

went ahead regardless. The extreme foolhardiness of his behaviour was brought home when in about 1879 a son was born of the union, and it became whispered that Mbandzeni had raised up seed to Ludvonga, and that the baby, Mdzabuko, was now the real king (13). If this were not serious enough, the child also became a pawn in a broader struggle for power between Mbandzeni and his mother. Since Mbandzeni's installation, Sisile had been the effective head of state. Her voice predominated in council, while communications with the outside world were sent out in her name (14). Mbandzeni's resentment at this state of affairs was not long in developing, as is most obviously seen in his refusal to heed Sisile's warnings about Somdlalose, and similar antipathies also began to build up among his councillors (15). Here, however, the reasons were of a slightly different kind. In the structure of Swazi politics the position of the queen mother is significant, not only because of the enormous power she wields, but also because she was so often imported from the outside. This often meant

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- (13) Matsebula, History, 29-30; S.P., Large notebook of Articles 30091, 91, Zibokwana, 4 Jan. 1899.
- (14) The Swazi deputation that visited Shepstone in Pretoria (above, 309-10) placed particular emphasis on this point - S.P., File 17, Notebook 3, 3-4, Lazarus Xaba, 6 May 1910 (Lazarus Xaba was a messenger of Shepstone.)
- (15) Towards the end of 1878, for example, Sisile tried to stop Mbandzeni building his own homstead (Mbekelweni presumably) and, according to popular rumour, withheld her co-operation in rain-making when he refused, S.P.G., Box C/AFS/7, S. Africa, Wigram Letters, No. 29, Mrs E. Carlsen to ?, 30 Oct. 1878. When MacLeod visited Swaziland all business was still being done at Sisile's village, MacLeod Papers, Box 45A, Diary, 21 Dec. 1878.

that that the queen mother would act as an innovative force in Swazi politics, injecting new ideas and new practices into Swazi life. Thandile provides a classic example of this tendency, but in her own way, Sisile also carried on the tradition(16). The main difference with her was in the sorts of goals she espoused, for whereas Thandile attempted to alter the distribution of power between the centre and the periphery, Sisile sought to reallocate it at the centre itself. She expanded her own power in a disproportionate fashion, and what was worse in Swaziland's male dominated society, sought to involve women far more in the decision making processes (17). The type of opposition that raised itself to the two women reflected these different approaches. Thandile's took the form of a provincial revolt; Sisile's that of a growing disenchantment among the councillors of state, paralleling that against Mbandzeni himself.

The birth of Mdzabuko brought these tensions to a head. Sensing Mbandzeni's growing hostility, Sisile is supposed to have looked to Mdzabuko as the means of perpetuating her power. The young child was doctored in the rites of kingship, and his claims to succeed Mbandzeni were discreetly noised about. Only now was Mbandzeni jerked out of his customary lethargy. A young indvuna named Magungubeyane was sent to Mdzabuko's nurse with poison milk, and within hours the young child was dead.

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(16) For Sisile's history, Above, 215, note 11.

(17) S.P., 30091, 120, Large note-book of articles, Gama, 18 Dec. 1898; ibid, 91, Zibokwana, 4 Jan. 1899.

With that the struggle came out in the open. Accusations and counter-accusations flew, and eight days later Mbandzeni removed all his relatives, except for Sisile and Somdlalose, from Nkanini. The likely fate of the two women was now plain, and together with some members of the Ndlavele and Lohegu regiments, who were stationed at Nkanini, they fled towards the Transvaal. That night they reached a cave near the Gobholo stream, where they were overtaken by Mbandzeni's pursuing forces. A battle ensued in which Sisile's army inflicted heavy losses on her opponents at little cost to themselves, the exploits of Mancibane Dlamini being remembered to this day. Nevertheless, Sisile was trapped, and, realising this, the company fled on under cover of night. It was a head start, but it was one that proved to be too short. Sisile was corpulent and slow, and when the pursuing soldiers caught up with her at Mpholonjeni (18), her own forces left her behind to be strangled, while they made their escape into the Transvaal (19). Once this became known, other figures who had been associated with Sisile also took flight, the most important being Mtyce, who fled from Hhohho with two thousand followers and a Swazi

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(18) The Dube chiefdom a few miles west of modern Mbabane.

(19) The above account has been pieced together from the following sources, Matsebula, History, 30-31; Kuper, Aristocracy, 100-101; P.R.O., C.O. 879/42, 381, Appendix I, Encl. in No. I, Rudolph to Wood, 4 May 1881; S.P. 30091, 91, Large Notebook, Cloepas Kunene, 21 Dec. 1898; interview Maboya Fakudze; interview Mandanda Mtetwa (who between them supply the names of persons and regiments); interview Makhoti Mkhathwa.

army in pursuit (20). At this point, however, Mbandzeni showed the restraint that earned him his subsequent reputation for kind-heartedness and tolerance. Mancibane was allowed to return in honour, and the young soldiers accompanying Mtyce were soon trickling back. Within a month things were virtually back to normal, and with the installation of Tibati Nkambule as Queen Mother, constitutional equilibrium was once again restored (21).

The struggle between Mbandzeni and Sisile climaxed in February 1881, when the attention of the rest of South Africa was distracted by the first Anglo-Boer War - a coincidence which set the few remaining Swazi-watchers speculating that it reflected disagreements among the Swazi over whom to support in the war (22). While there is no evidence of this sort of split, Mbandzeni was still fortunate in having suppressed these divisions before a reconstructed Republic could take advantage of them in the way it later did in Zululand. As it was, the penalties of Mbandzeni's earlier indiscretions were

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(20) C.O., 879/42, Appendix I, 380, Encl. in No. I, H. Fletcher to Lanyon, Feb. 1881. In addition Mgomi and Mtatusa both relatives of Sisile also fled out (ibid, B. Hamilton (Secretary to Wood) to Rudolph, 4 May 1881), as did Seshela, a half brother of Mbandzeni, some 5 months later (ibid, Encl. in No. 2, teleg. Acting Quartermaster, Fort Amiel to Fraser, 1 July 1881; P.P. 1882, C. 3098, 80, No. 25, Wood to Kimberley, 17 Aug. 1881; P.P. 1882, C. 3182, 62, Encl. in No. 35, Roberts to Rudolph, 3 June 1881).

(21) Matsebula, History, 31; according to Honey, (Sw.A., 'History', 47) Mbandzeni himself favoured Makubati, younger sister to Sisile, but he was over-ruled by the council who nominated Tibati.

(22) S.P.G. Box C/AFS/7, South Africa, Wigram Letters, No. 29, Rev. G.F. Carlsen to Bishop Mackenzie, 24 May 1881; E.P. Mathers, Golden, 57.

already making themselves felt. Scarcely had the two sides downed arms in the Transvaal, than a flood of winter graziers swept over Swaziland, inundating its winter pastures and leaving the Swazi to wonder how best to stem the flow.

That at any rate was the impression given to the British authorities in May and June 1881, and considerable embarrassment it caused them too (23). At the time the Royal Commission had only just discarded Kimberley's earlier proposal to annex part of the eastern Transvaal, and now the very situation this was designed to avert was already beginning to develop. As usual, the Royal Commissioners disagreed on what to do. Wood argued for expulsion of the graziers but De Villiers and Robinson were less sure, and in the end it was decided to see what the Boer Triumverate could do. Charged with laying this request before Kruger, Wood found him surprisingly eager to assist. An undertaking was given to expel all graziers who had entered Swaziland since the ending of the war, and J.S. Joubert was given instructions to see the order carried out (24). Joubert, however, interpreted his instructions in an exceedingly liberal

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(23) C.O. 291/19, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix 16 h, Mins. proceedings, 14 May 1881, encl. in encl. Roberts to Rudolph, 4 May 1881; S.N, 103, Letter Book, 118-9, S.N.A. to Roberts, 30 June 1881; P.P. 1882, C. 3182, 62, encl. in No. 35, Statement by U'bulana and 5 others, messengers from Umbandine; ibid, encl. in No. 35, Roberts to Rudolph, 3 June 1881; S.N..4 A, Ongeregisteerde inkomende stukke, Memo by E. Wood, 13 July 1881.

(24) Ibid; C.O. 291/20, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix 16x, Mins. of Proceedings, 24 June 1881; ibid, Appendix 16y, Minutes of Proceedings, 27 June 1881; P.P. 1882, C. 3090, 55, Encl. 2 in No. 17, Kruger to J.C. Joubert, n.d.

way, and it is doubtful whether Kruger anticipated anything else. Instead of expelling recent graziers from Swaziland, he simply investigated specific complaints, and the basic questions agitating Wood remained untouched (25). Already a pattern was emerging of half-hearted Boer investigations following half-hearted British complaints, and this was confirmed a short while later when fresh allegations from the Swazi were simply referred to the new Republic to take what action it saw fit (26).

The flood of complaints accompanying retrocession give the impression of a grazier invasion set free by the lifting of British control, but a close look at Mbandzeni's allegations, and the investigation that was subsequently made into them, leave one wondering whether there was a decisive break (27). Examined critically, the Swazi complaints certainly do not suggest a dramatic change in the situation. Admittedly the grazier influx may have been larger, and it may have included some who entered without permission, but this does not seem to add up to the talk of war and occupation to which the Swazi messages gave expression. What was different, however, were the circumstances in which the influx was taking place. During annexation, grazing licences had been given out with a mis-

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(25) S.N. 4A, Ongeregisteerde inkomende stukke, Memo by Wood, 13 July 1881, encl. account of interview between Umbandine and J.S. Joubert, 9 July 1881; C.O. 291/20, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix 16 ww, Encl. J.S. Joubert to S.J.P. Kruger, 15 July 1881.

(26) G.H.Z., 1881, Jan-Sept, Drafts and Copies of Correspondence, No. Transvaal 5, Wood to Secretary of State, 17 Aug. 1881.

(27) Above, 345.

placed sense of security, the government having shown its opposition to the acquisition of permanent rights by graziers in Swaziland in the case of Ferreira and Maritz (28). With the return of the Transvaal to independence, however, the premises on which these grants had been given were suddenly changed. Ferreira, Maritz and their associates became a potential fifth column, and a rapidly growing one at that, while the annual grazier influx in itself held the prospect of future grazier occupation. Even this probably exaggerates the sense of urgency the Swazi felt. It is easy enough from here to see that the Swazi were facing a transformed situation, but there was little to show at the time that the new S.A.R. would prove that much more powerful than the old. Instead, the Swazi seem to have anticipated a return to the situation of pre-annexation days - a situation in which there were more overt dangers, but in which there were more potential rewards as well, and it is in this spirit that their messages should be read; partly apprehensive because of the uncertainties involved, but part hopeful and speculative in anticipation of a return to more fluid political relationships.

This idea of a tentative probing of the new order - of an attempt to come to terms with both its weaknesses and its strengths - finds support in later events. Barely a month

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(28) Ferreira and Maritz had acquired a massive cession in the south of Swaziland in June 1876 (above, 340), but the British Government had always refused to recognise it, and had consistently encouraged Mbandzeni to evict them. For a brief account of this see S.N.A., 4A, Ongeregisteerde inkomende stukke, Memo by Wood, 13 July 1881, and Watson, 'Little Free State', 5-7.

after Joubert's mission, the Swazi themselves took the initiative by approaching Wood with the proposal that the Pongola strip should be returned (29). Wood predictably declined to consider this, and the issue seemed closed until Mbandzeni surreptitiously re-opened it in the winter of 1882. The occasion was a border incident in May, in which a Swazi border indvuna named Mbenge (Mabele?) seized cattle from a Swazi refugee in the S.A.R. Ferreira, the Republican Border Commissioner, retaliated by entering Swaziland and seizing the same cattle and more, whereupon Mbandzeni protested to Pietermaritzburg. On one level he was well justified: Ferreira's men had entered Swaziland illegally, and had exacted an arbitrary fine. Mbandzeni, however, went further and accused Ferreira of absorbing Swazi territory into the S.A.R. (30). While the claim was not impossible, it is difficult to believe. Besides Mbandzeni's subsequent denials to Ferreira (31), which must obviously be taken with a pinch of salt, the beacons in the area had been carefully surveyed and changes would have been subsequently found out. Of course, it is possible that these beacons

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- (29) P.P. 1882, C. 3098, 80, No. 25, Wood to S.S., 17 Aug. 1881. Mbandzeni had in fact raised this issue in a tentative manner with Rudolph in May, C.O. 291/19, Transvaal Royal Commission Report, Appendix 16h, Mins. of Proceedings, 12 May 1881, encl. in encl. Umbandine to Rudolph, 12 May 1881.
- (30) P.P. 1882, C. 3419, 32, Encl. 2 in No. 14, Statement of messengers from Umbandeen, 21 June 1882; P.P. 1883, C. 3486, 32, Annexure C in Encl. I in No. 26, J.J. Ferreira, Native Commissioner, to P.J. Joubert, 19 Sept. 1882; S.N. 124, J.J. Ferreira to P.J. Joubert, "Staat van naturelle Zaken", May 1882, No. 37.
- (31) P.P. 1883, C. 3486, 33, Annexure D in Encl. I in No. 26, Statement of messenger from Umbandeen at Derby to J.J. Ferreira, 19 Sept. 1882.

were later shifted back, but on balance it is more likely that they were never moved at all. That being so, the same pattern emerges as before, but the accent in this case was much more firmly on attack, and on a systematic effort to blur border jurisdiction in the south.

A still clearer example of this latter trend in Swazi diplomacy can be found on Swaziland's north-western border the following year. The Swazi had never been fully reconciled to the loss of the Emjindini (Komati Winterveld) region, and in the middle of 1883 they demonstrated the versatility of the concession in an effort to get it back. In May, permission was given to J.H. Wyld and C.B. Kestall to prospect for gold in a huge tract of land north-west of Hhohho, which embraced the entire Emjindini district down to the Crocodile river. The language of the concession leaves little doubt as to the objective. "In making [it]", it ran, "I do not alienate from my kingdom this or any other portion of it, but reserve intact the sovereignty of my dominion. Mr. Wyld and Mr. Kestall engage not to make any claim contrary or injurious to my right as Sovereign of the country, but to recognise my authority as King, and to apply to me for such protection as they might require, and I engage to grant such protection to them." (32) And to underline his determination further, Mbandzeni also sent representatives into Kaap Valley to visit gold diggers in the area, and

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(32) P.P. 1884, C. 3841, 29, Encl. in encl. in No. 19.  
Ratification of grant by Umbandine to J.H. Wyld and  
C.B. Kestall, 24 May 1883.

demanded licences for the right to prospect (33).

The news created a ripple of consternation in the S.A.R. State Secretary Bok wrote to the British Agent that he intended investigating immediately, and was despatching instructions to J.J. Ferreira on the following day. In some haste the British Agent, Hudson, drafted a letter to Mbandzeni - to be delivered at the same time - in which he outlined the government's charges, and counselled against precipitate action until he could investigate himself (34). The government courier reached Mbandzeni on July 26, but Mbandzeni was understandably suspicious of a letter which arrived in this way. In an effort to verify its authority, the missionary Jackson was called in, but the move backfired on Mbandzeni in an unexpected way. Jackson not only vouched for the letter's authority, but was also present during the subsequent discussion, and it is possible that his presence made Mbandzeni admit what he might not otherwise have done. He told J.J. Burgers, the government courier, to inform Hudson that he acknowledged doing everything complained of in the letter; that he had done so in full awareness of where the official boundary line lay; but that since no-one had collected taxes in the area since its demarcation, he had assumed the boundary no longer held. And with that he had Jackson draw up a new document annulling the Wyld Concession (35). Small

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(33) Ibid, 29, Encl. in encl. in No. 19, Vernon Webb and 2 others (to Bok?), n.d.

(34) Ibid, 30, encl. in No. 19, Hudson to Umbandine, 13 July 1883.

(35) Ibid, 42, Encl. in Encl. in No. 29, J.J. Burgers to Hudson, 28 July 1883.

wonder that Mbandzeni never allowed Jackson or any other third party to be present in his subsequent dealings with Republican officials, or that he steadfastly refused, from this point, to direct any of his protests against the S.A.R. through the British Resident in Pretoria.

The Swazi continued in their efforts to blur border jurisdictions right through until 1887, but by the middle of 1883 a marked change of attitude can be detected. Prior to this, a degree of confidence can be sensed in their actions, a feeling that the new S.A.R. might not prove that much more formidable than the old, but within a month of Burgers's departure this optimism was already beginning to wane. The reason was the success of Republican forces in the so-called Mapoch War. Facing opponents and a terrain which had so often proved their undoing, the Republic had crushed the insurrection in a nine month campaign. To Mbandzeni and his councillors this event had a significance comparable to retrocession itself. Without visible strain, the new Republic had shouldered a £40 000 war bill, and had maintained a commando of between fifteen hundred and two thousand for nine months in the field. Suddenly the Republic appeared vastly more powerful than before. It only added to Swazi discomfiture that they had refused military assistance when Joubert had asked them to help in the campaign, and the symbolic significance this came to hold for the Swazi is captured in their messages to the Republic over the next four years, asking whether their attitude during the conflict was responsible for

the S.A.R.'s hostility since (36).

The first signs of Swazi anxiety at the Republic's newly disclosed strength became apparent to observers shortly after the war. Early in September, De Volksstem's correspondent in Komati spoke of a much more accommodating attitude among the Swazi ever since "Nyabel's" defeat, and a few weeks later Joel Jackson reported a sudden upsurge of anxiety about a possible grazier attack (37). Jackson himself discounted the rumours as the idle talk of frontier Boers, but this was not a view that found much sympathy among the Swazi. When he put it to a neighbouring chief, he was told that he was simply ignorant of outside developments, and the Swazi remained on tenterhooks until early the following year (38).

Other observers took a more serious view of the Swazi fears. Wilkinson for example, who was Jackson's superior in Zululand, wrote personally to Robinson to advise him of the danger the Swazi were in, while Robinson, on what were ultimately rather flimsy grounds, came to the conclusion that the Swazi were in

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(36) P.P. 1882, C. 4037, 114, Encl. in encl. in No. 107 Report by Rutherford, Secretary to the British Resident, on a mission to Swaziland, 25 Mar. 1884; G.H.Z., May-Sept. 1885, Vol. 694, Cardew to Bulwer 4 Aug. 1885, encl. I, Ingram, special correspondent to Natal Mercury to Cardew 16 June 1885; P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 24, Encl. in encl. 2 in No. 14 letter from Jacob Steyn signed by Umbandine and 14 captains, 26 Feb. 1886; ibid, 25, encl. in encl. 2 in No. 14, mins. of conversation between Kruger and 9 Swazi representatives, 20 March 1886.

(37) De Volksstem, 18 Sept. 1883, Correspondent Dalumanutha, Komati, 7 Sept. 1883.

(38) S.P.G. Records, Series "E", Vol. 38, 1883, 1455, Letter from Jackson 30 Sept. 1883; P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 114, Encl. in encl. in No. 107, Report by Rutherford, 25 March 1884.

urgent need of protection (39). Robinson's decision was probably also influenced by the presence at this time of a Republican deputation in London, which was seeking revision of the terms of the Pretoria Convention, and in particular a relaxation of controls over its relations with African people. The principal object of this exercise was to open the way for westward expansion, but Robinson realised that the east's fate would also ultimately be involved. It was this which seems to have led Robinson to exaggerate Swaziland's danger, and to recommend a border resident and police force on the eastern border, as well as in the west (40).

Robinson's request fell on the deaf ears of the liberal establishment, but he had pinpointed embarrassing obligations, and required a careful reply. "For Parliamentary purposes", the one that was drafted was that his recommendation "appear[ed] to involve the permanent presence of Imperial officers and men on the frontier of the Transvaal State, and the assumption of responsibility for the conduct of the Transvaal citizens and of native tribes which neither this country nor the Transvaal could consent to ", and that Derby did not think, "at present" that they "could enforce on the Eastern boundary Transvaal's undertakings in the Pretoria Convention" (41). Derby's reply indicated the matter was now closed, but Robinson was unwilling

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(39) P.P. 1884, C. 3841, 105, No. 87, Robinson to C.O. 23 Nov. 1883, London.

(40) Ibid.

(41) C.O. 179/148, Conf. Dulwer to Derby, 1 Nov. 1883, minute by Herbert, 7 Dec. 1883, encl. reply to Robinson, letter of 23 November by Derby, 11 Dec. 1883.

to let the matter rest. If the government would not take any active measures to enforce observation of the part of the Pretoria Convention, he said, there seemed to be no point in putting them into the new Convention at all, as there was "very little prospect that [they would] be spontaneously observed." Nor could he understand why the government should feel any greater sense of obligation in the south-west than they did with the Swazi. "The assumption on this subject which underlay all negotiations with reference to retrocession," he emphasised, "was that H.M.G. had, whilst in possession of the Transvaal Government, conquered and disarmed the Zulus and employed the Swazis as allies in the field, and were accordingly under a peculiar obligation to take care that in restoring the Transvaal to the Boers, the Zulus and the Swazis were for the future protected from Boer depredations." Ultimately, he claimed, the British authorities would still be obliged to act, and would then have to provide, "an expensive and only partial remedy for an evil which might have been prevented altogether by timely and comparatively inexpensive precautions." At the very least, he urged, the Government should secure in the new Convention the right of appointing border agents and police on the eastern frontier. Hopefully, the very knowledge of that would then deter Boer trespasses, which would otherwise never be prevented by the existing "paper promises". Robinson had spoken strongly, and Herbert, in particular, was annoyed. He misrepresented Robinson's argument by claiming that Robinson wanted to commit the British Government, "to the expensive undertaking of keeping

the Transvaal people within their borders and of protecting all adjacent natives from them," and then concluded with a passage of extraordinary sophistry, "... are we bound for ever," he asked, "to repair the damage caused by the internal dissensions of the Zulus who could keep out the Boers in conjunction with the Swazis. And may not the Zulus prefer Transvaal rule to the present anarchy?" Derby preferred not to comment, and Robinson's proposed amendment to the constitution went through without further discussion (42).

Robinson's campaign on Clause 2 of the London Convention was not his only response to the Swazi complaints that reached him in the last few months of 1883. Besides this, he also passed the allegations through the normal channels to Pretoria, and by early the next year the normal assurances were coming back (43). Ironically, at the very moment the Vice President was assuring Hudson that he himself had just returned from the Swazi border and had found it, "all quiet and no complaints", a fresh batch of allegations was being levelled about Joubert's own behaviour there. According to a letter from David Forbes, written at Mbandzeni's request, Joubert had given a speech to local burghers hinting at action in Swaziland in the not too

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(42) C.O. 179/150, Robinson to C.O., 14 Dec. 1883, minute by Herbert, 15 Dec. 1883; see also H. Robinson, 'The Swazi-land Question,' Fortnightly Review, Vol. XLVII (New Series), (Jan.-June 1890), 284-6.

(43) P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 2, Encl. in No. 4, British Resident, Pretoria, to Acting High Commissioner Smythe, 7 Jan. 1884.

distant future. According to Forbes, this was only the latest of a series of similar threats from border burghers, and the Swazi were now anxious for the British Resident to come and investigate (44).

Joubert predictably, denied the charges, but there was obviously something there (45). Mbandzeni was convinced that a speech of this sort had been made, as were many border burghers.

Indeed, Landdrost Krogh of Wakkerstroom was sufficiently unsure of Joubert's position to write informing him of the intention of certain burghers to take possession of part of Swaziland, and asking him whether it was, in fact, government policy to seize part of Swazi territory, "voor boete of anderzins."

The unspoken question behind Krogh's report was whether the government or Joubert was implicated, and whether he should discourage the movement or stand aside, and although Joubert firmly denied any such government intention, this did not fully settle the matter (46). It was obviously inconceivable for the government to have openly encouraged a move of this sort at the very moment they were attempting to renegotiate the Pretoria Convention, but this need not necessarily have deterred Joubert from publicly speculating, in his private capacity, on the future status of Swaziland. This, after all, was Joubert's

(44) Sw.A, Folder No. 6, Hudson to High Commissioner, 26 Jan. 1884, Encl. Forbes to Hudson, 14 Jan. 1884.

(45) P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 60, Encl. in encl. in No. 57, Memo of instructions to Rutherford, 18 Feb. 1884.

(46) S.N. 10, S.R. 43/84, J.C. Krogh to S.N., 21 Jan. 1884, minute Joubert to Krogh, 25 Jan. 1884.

own political constituency, and collective responsibility within the government was not nearly so strong as to prevent him playing up to one of the favourite projects of the area, to boost his personal support. No doubt he only did this in the very vaguest of terms. According to Forbes's letter, the precise words were that, "he hoped they would be able to remain at their ploughs, but he expected they would soon have to take up their rifles again', and plainly pointed to the Swazie country as the place to be attacked" (47). Harmless enough really, apart from the construction that Forbes himself placed on them, but then that was precisely the understanding of the rest of the gathering, and that, in turn, was enough to set in motion an agitation, which only Joubert's subsequent rebuttal to Krogh ultimately curbed.

The British authorities in Pretoria and Cape Town seem, on the whole, to have taken a less serious view of these developments than anyone else. Nevertheless, perhaps with a view to disarming criticism of the ineffectual provisions for preserving Swaziland's independence in the London Convention, they authorised an investigation of the complaints to be made by the secretary to the British Resident in Pretoria, R. Rutherford. Rutherford's report of his mission, which he undertook late in March 1884, is not a particularly helpful document. He was

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(47) Sw.A., Folder No. 6, G. Hudson to High Commissioner, 26 Jan. 1884, Encl. David Forbes to Hudson, 14 Jan. 1884. Part of this letter is reproduced in C. 4037, 35, Encl. in encl. 3 in No. 32, but without the quotation cited above.

able to confirm that rumours were circulating about the eventual annexation of Swaziland, but was able to furnish only his own rather vague impressions that he had no indication of Republican officials being involved. For the rest his report merely comprises some disparaging remarks about Mbandzeni, more complimentary ones about James Forbes, and a few comments about the changed attitude of Republican burghers towards Swaziland since the Mapoch war (48).

Ultimately, the most significant thing about Rutherford's report was the use to which it was put. In a covering letter to the High Commissioner, Hudson wrote of the gold and mineral wealth of Swaziland, of the steady influx of grazing and mineral concessionaires, and of the likelihood of these making common cause with the turbulent element on Swaziland's borders, whose activities Rutherford had just investigated, and ended with the recommendation that the British Government, "should begin to exercise a practical restraining, advising and to some extent directing influence and supervision by means of some British representative or agency." (49) On receipt of the two documents, Robinson took up the refrain and used them as a means of reopening the question in London (50). Derby however

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(48) P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 110-116, Encl. in encl. in No. 107, Report by R. Rutherford, 25 March 1884.

(49) P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 110, Encl. in No. 107, Hudson to High Commission, 29 March 1884.

(50) Ibid, 109, No. 107, Robinson to Derby, 22 April 1884. Robinson also used the same argument when the Zulu Reserve, shortly afterwards, seemed similarly threatened - C.O. 471/1, Robinson to S.S., 14 May 1884, telegram.

refused to be drawn. He concurred with Robinson and Hudson on the advantages of a British agency on the Swazi border, but then slammed the door on the proposal by saying that the Government had no intention for the moment of appointing one. He did, however, leave room for a glimmer of hope. Although the Government had decided not to take the step at present, he told Robinson, it would be as well for him to find out whether Mbandzeni would be prepared to defray the cost of a Resident, and small frontier police force. That, at least, he seems to have reasoned, would help deflect any humanitarian criticism of his otherwise stony refusal to act (51).

Derby's reply, although discouraging, did at least keep hope alive. The Assistant and Under Secretaries at the Colonial Office had been broadly favourable to Robinson's proposal, and Robinson could now use Derby's final suggestion to bring pressure to bear again (52). That, of course, assumed that Mbandzeni would be agreeable to the idea, but then Robinson had little doubt on that score. Had he not proclaimed his devotion to the British Crown often enough, and had he not even agreed to pay taxes if necessary when Rutherford visited him? Unfortunately for Robinson, Mbandzeni's attitude was not as straightforward as that. If he had looked a little more closely

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(51) *Ibid*, 119-20, No. 116, Derby to Robinson, 21 May 1884.

(52) C.O.417/1. High Commissioner to S.S., No. 16, 22 April 1884, Minutes by Hemmings, Bramston, Herbert and E.A., 15 and 16 May 1884.

into the past history of the Swazi case, he would have found that when Wood had visited Mbandzeni in September 1881, to inform him of the terms of retrocession, he had asked Mbandzeni whether he would be prepared to pay taxes to support a British Resident, and Mbandzeni had refused. The way in which Wood put the question, and the reasons Mbandzeni gave for refusing, were particularly instructive, for they explain much of Mbandzeni's later reluctance to accept a British presence on Swazi soil. Wood had asked whether the Swazi would be prepared to pay taxes for a British Resident like the Zulu, to which Mbandzeni had replied that the Zulu were different since they had no king, and that his people would not understand if they paid money for a Resident, and would go directly to him over the head of the king (53). Mbandzeni's fears in this case were clearly related to the insecurity of his own position in Swaziland, and these seem to have grown rather than diminished with the passage of time. Immediately after retrocession Mbandzeni had been keen to retain the services of the Border Commissioner, Roberts, as a British Resident in Swaziland, even though he was unwilling to pay taxes to support him (54). The reason was at least partly because of the personal rapport which had developed between the two men, and which offset the sense of insecurity with which Mbandzeni was generally beset when thrust into contact with the representatives of an outside

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(53) C.O. 879/42, Appendix I, 389, Encl. in No. 9, Minutes of Conference between Sir E. Wood and 'Umbandeen' 5 Sept. 1881.

(54) Ibid, 388; P.P. 1882, C.3098, 80, Wood to S.S., 17 Aug. 1881; ibid, 82, Encl. 4 in No. 25, J. Jackson to E. Wood, 9 Aug. 1881, and 82-3, encl. in encl. in No. 25, Message from Umbandeen to Wood.

authority. When Roberts departed, so did Mbandzeni's confidence that a British Resident would not enter in collaboration with his councillors and undercut his position, as in fact would almost certainly have happened if the views of the British visitors who met Mbandzeni during this period are anything to go by. Rutherford himself almost certainly helped resurrect these fears. When he visited him he found Mbandzeni with, "very little influence... upon the counsels and conduct of the country's affairs.... Listless in manner and trifling in business.....; not seeming even to affect any great interest in what was going on; almost childish often in demeanour," and it is unlikely, despite Mbandzeni's seeming vacuity, that Rutherford's contempt was entirely lost on him (55).

Thus, by the time Robinson instructed Rutherford to find out whether, in the probable event of a British agency being established in Swaziland, Mbandzeni would be prepared to defray the costs, Mbandzeni was already set against the idea (56). As he told Forbes, who was commissioned to convey this request to Mbandzeni, he was unwilling to have anyone he did not know, and would prefer to stay as he was rather than have someone he did not like. His councillors, for similar, though not

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(55) P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 112, Encl. in encl. in No. 107, Report by Rutherford, 25 March 1884. Wood had also probably had the same effect with his, "Usanhlana will see", when the King obviously did not, ibid, 389-90.

(56) I have not come across the original instruction of Robinson to Rutherford, but its substance is contained in Rutherford's letter to Forbes, transmitting Robinson's request - see F.C., Vol. I, R. Rutherford to D. Forbes, 10 July 1884, Confidential.

identical, reasons, agreed. Sandlane commented that there had been a British Resident in Zululand ever since the war, and this had not prevented the Boers occupying it, and both he and Mbovane seem to have felt that any agent would have to be somebody in whom they personally had confidence, and who would (by implication) be responsive to Swazi interests rather than those of the protecting power (57). The reply stopped the unsuspecting Robinson in his tracks, and Herbert voiced what was probably their common irritation by commenting, with a certain malicious satisfaction, that since Mbandzeni did not think British Residents did much good to the natives elsewhere, "He will no doubt soon be under a Republic." (58)

At the very same time that Robinson's initiative was bogging down, a totally independent, and to some extent rival attempt, was being made to foist a white adviser on Mbandzeni. Just before Rutherford had arrived at Mbandzeni's capital at the end of March 1884, an African messenger had arrived at Nkanini claiming he had been sent to announce the arrival of Shepstone, and to say that the Swazi should have nothing to do with Rutherford on his forthcoming visit to Swaziland. The messenger in question was Mhlopekazi, and the visitor he announced was Arthur Shepstone, and while he may have exceeded his instructions in what he said about Rutherford, the conflict this anticipated

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(57) P.P., 1884-5, C. 4214, 95, Encl. in encl. in No. 65, D. Forbes to Rutherford, 12 Aug. 1884.

(58) C.O. 417/2, High Commissioner to S.S., No. 206, Minutes by Herbert, 8 Oct. 1884.

between the Shepstones and the British Resident, and between Arthur Shepstone and David Forbes, were soon to become all too real (59).

Arthur Shepstone's visit to Swaziland brings together two important strands of Swazi history in this period - the gathering momentum of Swaziland's conquest by concessions, and the ambition of the Shepstone family to cash in on its influence to take a share in an increasingly lucrative sphere of operations. To understand exactly what the Shepstones hoped to gain by this mission, it will help to fill in some of the background of mining and mineral concessions in Swaziland up to this point. From the moment gold had been discovered in the eastern Transvaal in 1873, Swaziland had excited the interest of prospectors by the highly auriferous appearance of its northern sector. Early in 1875, a party of Australian prospectors from Pilgrim's Rest prospected for gold on the north-western borders of Swaziland, but without success, and three or four years later Tom MacLachlan moved permanently into the area to continue the search (60). MacLachlan, in common with other prospectors who tried their luck in this area, was greeted with suspicion by the Swazi authorities. He was

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(59) P.P. 1884, C. 4037, 113, Encl. in encl. in No. 107, Report by Rutherford, 25 March 1884; for Mhlopekazi see above Mbandzeni's reaction to Rutherford is partly confirmed by J. Forbes later - see F.C., Vol. 2, J. Forbes to Robinson, 6 May 1885.

(60) W.C. Scully, Further reminiscences of a South African pioneer, (London, 1913), 247, 261; T. Baines, The Gold Regions of South Eastern Africa (London, 1877) 74-5, 128-142.

refused a written concession, and seems to have been confined primarily to territory falling outside the Swazi boundary. In addition, the Swazi leaders anticipated Lobengula's later action by restricting the number of white gold diggers who could work MacLachlan's finds to five, and even then remained suspicious that he might be intriguing with the border chief Hvovu, of whose loyalty they were uncertain (61). MacLachlan nevertheless prospered, and in the course of the next two years the political climate also began to change. Once Mbandzeni had rid himself of Sisile, a far more accommodating attitude began to prevail towards concessionaires, and MacLachlan was able to worm his way into Mbandzeni's confidence and gain exclusive rights to the land north of the Komati River. Where MacLachlan led others soon followed: David Forbes acquired rights to prospect on the Ngwenya mountain and also rather vaguely throughout Swaziland as a whole; Thomas Wyld was accorded the same privileges in the far northern tip of Swaziland and over the border to the Crocodile River; and a host of others flocked in to try their luck (62) (Map 11).

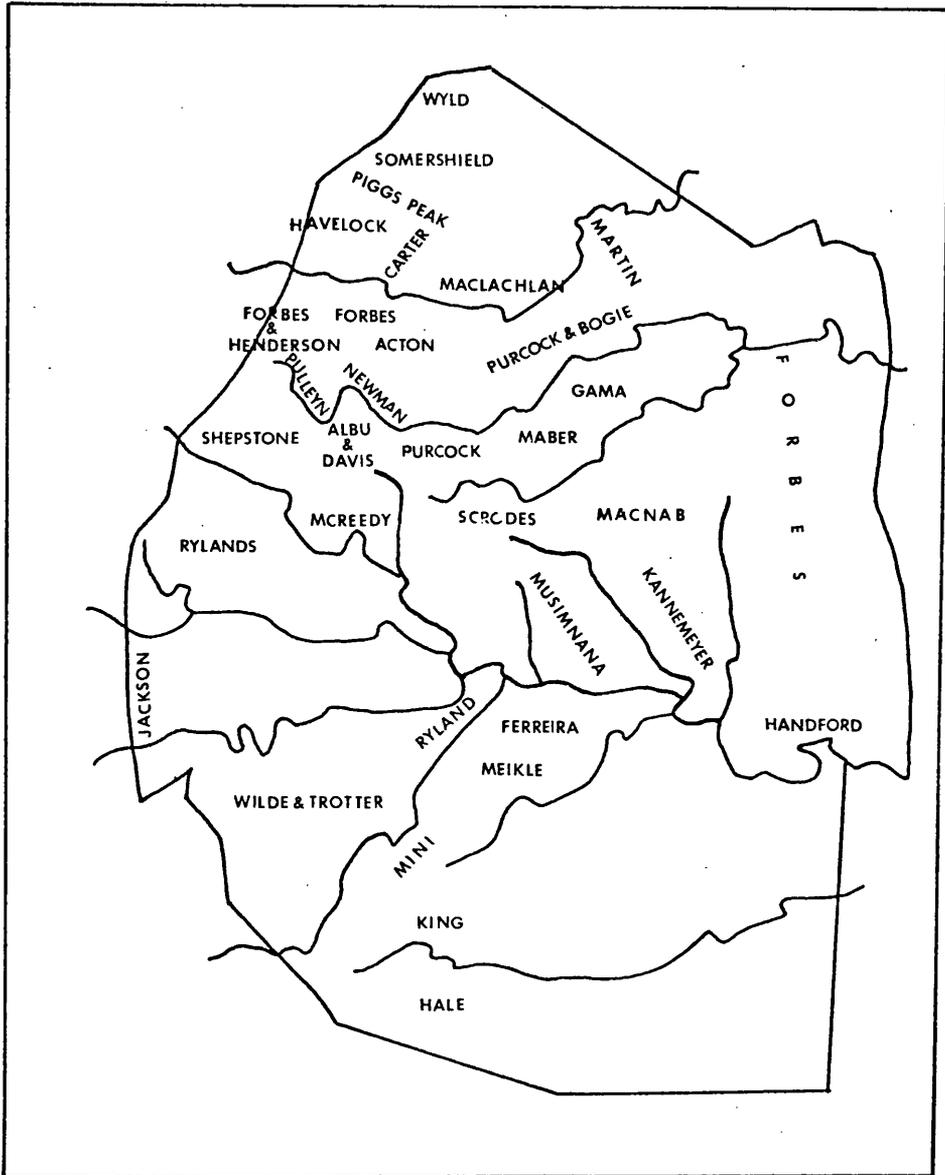
As the pace of concessionaire activity quickened, Mbandzeni's councillors seem to have become increasingly worried that the

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(61) G.H.N., Vol. 791, encl. in encl. in G. 435a/80, W. Barter Chief Constable, Pilgrims Rest, to Colonial Secretary, 15 Aug. 1880; De Volksstem, 4 Sept. 1880; De Volksstem, 11 Sept. 1880, Extract from Natal Mercury.

(62) T.S.C., Case 20, File Arthur Shepstone, Arthur to Sir Theophilus Shepstone, 21 May 1884, 24 June 1884; 23 July 1884., above, 349.

MINERAL CONCESSIONS GRANTED IN 1880s



(Adapted from Matsebula, History, 37)

situation might get entirely out of hand. What they needed now, they seem to have reasoned, was a single trustworthy white who could regulate this potential anarchy, and ensure that Swaziland would extract at least a share of the new wealth that was being created. That of course was a very tall order, for disinterested whites were few and far between, but with the possible prompting of Mhlopekazi, they eventually plumped for the house of Shepstone, to which distance had hitherto lent a degree of credibility. Mhlopekazi and Mnikina, who were already in Swaziland, were accordingly sent back to Shepstone's household to ask for one of his sons to take charge of matters in Swaziland, and this was confirmed by Mbandzeni's official messengers to Natal shortly after (63).

It was in response to these requests that Arthur Shepstone arrived in the Swazi capital in mid-May 1884, in high hopes of making his fortune. To begin with, events seemed to justify his optimism. Within two weeks a meeting of the libandla had been called, and despite reservations expressed by some that Shepstone might become another Allison, the substance of the powers previously offered to Shepstone were formally conferred, together with the individual right to prospect for gold in Forbe's Ngwenya concession (64). From the moment the libandla

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(63) Ibid, 24 June 1884, Minutes of meetings between Arthur Shepstone, Umnikina and Mhlopekazi with Mbandzeni and the Libandla of Ngwane, 26 May 1884, and 28 May 1884 (in Zulu).

(64) Ibid.

dispersed, however, things began to go sour. After a conversation with David Forbes, Mbandzeni revoked the promise to allow Shepstone to prospect in the Ngwenya, as well as his general oversight of mineral affairs, and would only grant him the informal right to prospect on MacLachlan's concession to the north of the Komati. There for a month matters stood, until by the middle of June, with matters no further advanced, Shepstone had had enough. As he was about to leave, however, Sandlane and Mhlaba intervened, and persuaded Mbandzeni to offer the land granted MacLachlan in May 1882, which they claimed had been cancelled by a subsequent concession of November the following year. Shepstone was dubious because the 1883 concession seemed to include everything granted in 1882, but, with the prospective rewards so glittering, he agreed to see what he could work out with MacLachlan. Even there he had not reckoned with the continuing obstinacy of Mbandzeni, for whatever the liqoqo or libandla said, Mbandzeni was convinced Shepstone would become a rival focus of authority. Shepstone was too powerful to have near him, he confided on one occasion. It was bad enough with Forbes and MacLachlan, "Even [they] he now [saw] had the advantage of him, and how much more power [he] would have than those people." Mbandzeni consequently continued to stall, until Shepstone eventually gave up in disgust some four months after he had arrived (65).

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(65) T.S.C., Case 20, File, Arthur Shepstone, Arthur to Sir T. Shepstone, 24 June 1884, 23 July 1884, 4 Sept. 1884. The same point was made in a message to the S.A.R. in which Mbandzeni complained of Shepstone suborning his principal men, see P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 12, Encl. in No. 10, Bok to Robinson, 14 July 1885.

Mbandzeni's refusal to accept either a mineral commissioner or a British Resident illuminates an important aspect of Swaziland's conquest by concessions, as well as an important facet of the practice of Swazi politics as opposed to the political theory by which they were supposed to run. However theoretically unconstitutional it may have been, Mbandzeni could grant concessions in defiance of his councillors' wishes, and whatever the consensus arrived at in the libandla, Mbandzeni could override it by refusing to implement its decisions. Ultimately the only sanction they had was his assassination, but since they were reluctant to employ that, the centre of decision making in Swaziland was largely paralysed, and the concession invasion proceeded unchecked.

The other critical element in determining Swaziland's failure to withstand concessionaire pressures is the extraordinary hybrid form those pressures took. As Jackson later remarked, in a memorandum to de Winton, "Every Boer in the eyes of the Swazies has at least a semi-official character, because if he be not an official himself, some one of his relations probably is, and he himself may be one tomorrow, or he may come down in company with an official, which makes the Swazies afraid to deny any request lest they should offend someone in power." Many border graziers did all they could to blur those distinctions further and to foster the impression that the Swazi could buy off official intervention by the grant of private concessions (66). This was so even when the practice

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(66) P.P. 1890, C. 6201, 21, Annexure "A", Memo by Reverend Mr. Jackson, n.d.

was frowned on by the government. In January 1885, the Republican authorities are supposed to have sent out a circular to all land-drosts, instructing them to do what they could to prevent the annual movement of graziers into Swaziland, and at other times it positively prohibited any meddling by graziers in political activities (67). But group discipline was not strong enough within the central government, let alone its local branches, to prevent breaches in these regulations being committed wholesale, as an episode involving Vice-President Joubert and Landdrost Krogh of Wakkerstroom in April 1885, clearly illustrates.

Between April and October 1885 a string of messages reached Bulwer and Robinson, speaking of an attempt by Vice-President Joubert and Landdrost Krogh to secure a Republican Protectorate over Swaziland. With minor variations these all told the same tale. Joubert had sent a message from the eastern Transvaal in the middle of April, instructing Mbandzeni to have his councillors gathered together the following week. On the 27th April Joubert and Krogh arrived, accompanied by a large retinue, and had proceeded to demand that Mbandzeni recognise a Boer protectorate over Swaziland. Taken aback, Mbandzeni had stalled, claiming that some of his councillors were unwell, and that a decision of such magnitude could not be taken without their presence. For two days Joubert had argued and threatened, claiming the British would never help Mbandzeni because they always acted too late, and only left after giving instructions that he should be called for once the councillors regained their health. That, however, was not the end of the story. While Mbandzeni was

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(67) Leyds, *Transvaal*, 239; S.N. 104, 59, M. Stiemens to C.J. Tosen and P.J. van Schalkwyk, March or April 1884.

still rushing off appeals to Natal requesting protection against the S.A.R., Krogh returned to Mbekelweni, ostensibly on the same mission, but in practice to acquire a concession. Wearily, Mbandzeni agreed, and conceded a huge tract in the south of Swaziland on a ninety year lease (68).

A variety of interpretations have been made of this episode. At the time many were convinced that the attempt had been made, and that it was an extension of Joubert and Krogh's land-grabbing activities in the New Republic, but since then historians have tended to take a more cautious view (69). Mouton, Joubert's biographer, suggests that a move of this sort was highly improbable given Joubert's fear of a British annexation of Swaziland, while Garson cites correspondence between Leyds and Beelaerts van Blokland as evidence that there was no official intention to annex (70). The problem with both these views is that they tend to focus on Joubert the Vice-President as opposed to Joubert the politician, or Joubert the land baron, and largely ignore the question of why the Swazi should have bothered to make these allegations at all. The moment one turns the question round, however, and looks at the Swazi rather than the S.A.R., or at Joubert's private rather than his public concerns, a different set of possibilities begin to emerge.

(68) P.P. 1886 C. 4645, 3, Encl. 2 in No. 3, James Forbes to Robinson, 6 May 1885; *ibid*, 5-6, Encl. in Encl. 8 in No. 3, J.B. Rathbone, J.H. Wyld, T. Corry to Bulwer, 4 May 1885; G.H.Z., May-September 1885, Vol.694, S.C.38, Encl. in Cardew to Bulwer 9 June 1885, extract of a letter from Jackson to Cardew, 19 May 1885; *ibid*, Encl. I in Cardew to Bulwer, 4 Aug. 1885, Ingram (special correspondent, Natal Mercury) to Cardew, 16 June 1885; C. 4645, 64-5, Encl. 1 in No. 4, Statement by messengers from Mbandine, 7 Oct. 1885.

(69) See for example C.O. 179/157, Conf. Bulwer to Derby, 10 July 1885.

(70) J.A. Mouton, 'Genl. Piet Joubert in die Transvaalse Geskiedenis' A.Y.B., I (1957) (Parow, 1957), 180; Garson, 'Swaziland', 286-7.

As far as the Swazi were concerned, there seems to have been as little reason for them to have fabricated these complaints as there was for the S.A.R. to attempt to get a protectorate over Swaziland, and the tone, reiteration and detail of the messages all suggest that the Swazi believed a demand for a protectorate had been made. However, even accepting this to be true, it does not necessarily mean that a protectorate was Joubert's real aim. Garson points out the improbability of Britain's ever recognising a Republican protectorate, and Joubert must presumably have been conscious of this (71). Equally improbable as he must also have known, was the idea of the Swazi voluntarily accepting his proposal. To persuade them would require force, and as State Secretary Bok remarked at the time, the use of force on the pattern of the New Republic was impossible, as there were no civil disturbances on which to base any similar move (72).

The probability is then that Joubert was acting neither officially nor unofficially in the interest of the Republic, but was pursuing private or, at best, sectional ends. The nature of these ends is revealed in Krogh's return shortly after Joubert's departure to obtain a massive grazing lease at nominal rent, for what Joubert had done, and probably intended to do, was to soften up the Swazi in preparation for this request. In addition, the entire exercise can also be seen

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(71) Ibid, 286.

(72) P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 12, Encl. in No. 10, Bok to Robinson, 14 July 1885.

as serving Joubert's broader political interests. The core of Joubert's political support was concentrated in Wakkerstroom, and the news of his attempt to acquire a protectorate could not fail to consolidate that. It would be politically popular in its own right, and even if formally unsuccessful, would soften up the Swazi for other concessionaire demands. Even the Swaziland concession itself had its political uses. Subdivided and leased at low rents it would create clients for Joubert and reinforce the patriarchal structure of his political support, which was characteristic of Republican politics at that time (73). Indeed, in the end what one can perhaps see in this is the land baron and the politician joining hands to solve the problems of white landlessness, which might otherwise have eroded his political support.

The main point of the foregoing analysis is that Joubert's visit to Swaziland in 1885, and other similar visits at other times, weakened Swazi resistance to concessionaire demands, and it is not necessary to accept the argument about Joubert's objectives on this occasion for that to stand. This certainly is how the Swazi seem to have seen it. As one councillor helplessly confessed to Jackson when the latter remonstrated with him about Krogh's grant, "we see we are ruining our

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(73) See for example R. Cornwell, 'Land and Politics in the Transvaal in the 1880s,' S.S.A., Vol. 4 (London, 1974), 29-40; Trapido, 'Class Formation', 53-65.

country by such concessions but what can we do." (74)

Mbandzeni's only answer was to appeal for British intervention, but in this case, as in others, it was a forlorn hope. Unless Mbandzeni would accept a British Commissioner they could only forward complaints for investigation, to which the reply inevitably came back that there was no substance to the complaints.

Up to a point Mbandzeni may even have been satisfied with this procedure. As yet he showed little sign of having grasped the full gravity of the situation, and this at least gave reassurance that Republican officials knew they were being observed (75). Some awareness of Swaziland's true position began to sink in in 1887, as the S.A.R. began to make a more determined bid to entrench its influence in the area, but up until then Mbandzeni seems even to have entertained hopes that he might escape some of the territorial restrictions imposed in recent years, by judicious appeals to the British. This happened both in Hhohho and in the south, but the former

(74) G.H.Z., May-September 1885, Vol. 694, S.C. 38, Encl. in Cardew to Bulwer, 9 June 1885, extract of a letter from Jackson to Cardew, 19 May 1885.

(75) Mbandzeni's comment somewhat later suggests precisely this. In a conversation with two Natal messengers who had just witnessed Joubert and Krogh make another attempt to secure a protectorate over Swaziland (unbeknown to them of course), Mbandzeni thanked the messengers for the message they brought from the British Government and added, "...he trusted that now the Boers saw that the Government listened to and enquired into their causes of trouble, they would cease to trouble them further by stealing their cattle." It was almost as if he could visualise his words on the pages of a Blue Book. P.P. 1887, C. 4890, 147-8, Encl. 1 in No. 71, Statement by messengers to Swaziland, 27 Nov. 1886.

provides the clearest example of the process (76). The unwillingness of the Swazi to relinquish territory in that area had been demonstrated repeatedly over the years, the most recent being with the Wyld concession in 1883, and the same issue was raised on a number of other occasions prior to 1887. In 1884, the first attempt to levy taxation in the area brought a howl of protest from the Swazi, in which they accused the Border Commissioner, Erasmus, of illegally trespassing on their land. At the time the Republican Government was still anxious to avoid incidents with the Swazi, which might be used as a pretext for British intervention, and a mollifying reply was sent back that an investigation would be mounted and compensation would be paid for any illegal action(77). Whatever the findings of the investigation, the Swazi did not find them satisfactory, and within a few months they were asking for Pretoria to beacon the disputed border in the north (78).

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- (76) For examples on the southern border see above, 348-9. and also P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 64, Encl. I in No. 41, Statement by messengers from Mbandine, 7 Oct. 1885; G.H.Z., Oct.-Dec. 1885, Vol. 695, Acting Sub-Commissioner Cardew to Mitchell, 27 Oct. 1885, transmitting information from Jackson; *ibid*, Cardew to Bulwer, 15 Oct. 1885, encl. Ingram to Cardew, n.d. Both of the above despatches are reprinted with names omitted in C. 4645, 65-66, 66-68; P.P. 1887, C. 4980, 145, Encl. in encl. I in No. 70, J. Gama to Havelock, 17 Oct. 1886.
- (77) S.N. 104, 120, Joubert to J.J. Ferreira, 31 July 1884.
- (78) P.P. 1884-5, C. 4213, 137, Encl. in No. 84, Rutherford to Secretary to High Commissioner, 20 Sept. 1884.

This was, on the face of it, a perfectly reasonable request. When the British Boundary Commission, under Alleyne, had surveyed the Swazi border, they had failed to beacon any further north than the Komati Gorge, and this left the whole of the Hhohho district in urgent need of definition (79). Swazi motives for all that may well have been more devious. According to David Forbes, the Swazi were hoping that this would place the matter sub-judice, and that Erasmus would thereby be precluded from raising taxes in the area (80). This in itself was a relatively short-term expedient, but it was a potentially elastic one. If later Swazi behaviour is anything to go by, there was every chance that they would have refused to co-operate with the beaconing, by demanding the presence of Alleyne, or some other such condition, and so try to defer the matter indefinitely into the future. The S.A.R. however refused to be drawn, and continued to collect taxes in the area in the following years (81).

A further factor which may have stiffened Swazi resistance to border delimitation, was a serious clash which took place between the Swazi and the Republican Border Commissioner in August 1885. Tempers were already strained from the previous year when

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(79) C.O. 291/6, Encl. in No. 18, Diary of the Swaziland Boundary Commission, Jan.-Feb., 1880.

(80) G.H.Z., Oct.-Dec. 1884, Vol. 692, Sec. State, Conf., Derby to Bulwer, 9 Dec. 1884, Encl. in Encl., D. Forbes to Rutherford, 8 Oct. 1884.

(81) P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 70, D. Forbes to Sir R. Herbert, C.O., 22 Dec. 1885; P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 28, Encl. in encl. 2 in No. 14, Report of P.J. Joubert, N.J. Smit, G.R. von Wielligh, 11 Nov. 1886.

Matsafeni Mdluli, Mbandzeni's Hhohho indvuna, had advised people to resist paying taxes, and at least one person had been killed in the ensuing affray (82). In August 1885, matters took a further turn for the worse when Erasmus, the Border Commissioner, seized Swazi cattle along the entire northern boundary. This time the resistance was fiercer again, as Hanyane Mkhathshwa (the successor Mawewe (83)) battled it out with Erasmus's police (84). In messages to Pietermaritzburg, Swazi messengers laid the blame for this incident squarely on the shoulders of Erasmus, who, they claimed, was seizing cattle along the entire length of the Komati. If true, this would have placed Erasmus clearly in the wrong, as it would have meant that he was trying to absorb the whole of Hhohho into the S.A.R.. The question, however, was by no means as clear-cut as the Swazi tried to make out. When a Republican Boundary Commission visited Swaziland in November 1886, in answer to Swazi complaints of September 1885 and March 1886, the Swazi are supposed to have claimed a line from Kamhlabana to the Crocodile River, and to have refused to accept the beaconing of Alleyne's border because it was the area to the north that was the basis of their complaints.

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(82) P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 65, Encl. I in No. 41, Statement by messengers from Umbandine, 7 Oct. 1885; S.S. 969, R 3884/84, 156-171, J.A. Erasmus to P.J. Joubert, 18 Aug. 1884; ibid, R 3885/84, 178-80, Complaint of Erasmus against Mataffin, 18 Aug. 1884.

(83) For Mawewe see above, Chap. V.

(84) S.S. 1105, R 4752/85, 87-93, J.A. Erasmus Report 15 Sept. 1885; G.H.Z., Oct.-Dec. 1885, Vol. 695, Cardew to Bulwer, 15 Oct. 1885, encl. in encl. T. MacLoughlin (i.e. MacLachlan) to Ingram n.d.; ibid, Vol. 697, S.N.A. to Mitchell, 29 April 1886, encl. message from Umbandeen, 16 April 1886; P.P. 1887, C. 4913, 105-6, Encl. in Encl. I in No. 63, Havelock to H. Commissioner, 23 April 1886; Von Wielligh, Lebombo, 238-9; Myburgh, Barberton, 79-80.

Once again one faces the problem of flatly contradictory accounts, but what little independent evidence there is tends to support the Republican case. In April 1886, Swazi messengers arriving at Pietermaritzburg complained of Erasmus's taxation in an area bounded by the Dlomodlomo mountains, the Crocodile River, the Lebombo mountains and the Komati, which would have meant that the Swazi were complaining primarily about the area outside Alleyne's boundary line (85) (Map 10). A protest from MacLachlan, the gold-pro prospector, further reinforces that impression. MacLachlan's complaint was that the S.A.R. had seized a portion of Swazi territory, sixteen by forty-five miles in size, which though not explicitly identified seems to indicate an area between Alleyne's boundary line and the Crocodile River, which has roughly the same dimensions (86). One last fragment of evidence which also seems to point in the same direction, is that it was Hanyane rather than anyone else who offered resistance to Erasmus, for while part of Hanyane's chiefdom included the far northerly part of Swaziland, the vast bulk of it fell outside the 1880 boundary line (87). To sum up then, it would appear that while Erasmus may have encroached over the boundary in some areas, the real basis of the dispute was land further north - land which the Swazi had lost through the 1880 boundary delimitation, and which they were now desperately trying to win back.

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(85) P.P. 1887, C. 4913, 47, Encl. in encl. I in No. 47, Statement by 'Umkonkoni', messenger from the Swazi, 30 April 1886.

(86) G.H.Z., Oct.-Dec. 1885, Vol. 695, Cardew to Bulwer, 15 Oct. 1885, encl. in encl., T. MacLoughlin (sic) to Ingram n.d.

(87) Myburgh, Barberton, 76-7.

There are a variety of reasons why Mbandzeni should have been so preoccupied with this problem at the very moment he was signing away much of the remainder of his country in concessions. In his conversations with the Republican Boundary Commission of November 1886, he had pointed out that many of the cattle seized belonged to himself, and while the commissioners seem to have scoffed at the idea, there was probably some justice to his claim (88). Hanyane's father, for example, had arrived in Swaziland virtually destitute of cattle, and Mswati had provided the stock which helped him rebuild his herds. Hence Mbandzeni had a genuine claim to all of his stock, and probably similar rights over the cattle of the other chiefdoms over the border (89). Nor was that all, besides meaning wealth, cattle also under-pinned political authority, and this again was being cut away by taxation and so on. In October 1883, Ingram remarked how Mbandzeni's control was visibly slipping in these outlying areas, and the cases of Hvovu and Ndlaluhlaza Mkhathsha seem to offer additional evidence of how Mbandzeni's authority was being eaten away (90).

Perhaps the most striking example of the subversive influence of these developments however is offered by Hanyane himself.

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(88) P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 28, Encl. in encl. 2 in No. 14, Report of P.J. Joubert, N.J. Smit, G.R. von Wielligh, 11 Nov. 1886.

(89) Certainly when refugees fled from Swaziland into the S.A.R. Mbandzeni always demanded the release of their cattle.

(90) G.H.Z., Vol. 695, Oct.-Dec. 1885, Cardew to Bulwer, 15 Oct. 1885, encl. Ingram (Special Correspondent, Natal Mercury) to Cardew n.d. (largely reproduced in C. 4645, 66-7); for Hvovu see above, 364, note 61. Ndlaluhlaza Mkhathsha is also supposed to have contemplated leaving Swaziland at about this time, Interview Mahloba Gumede.

In May 1881 Ndlemane, the regent to Hanyane, had already asked the British Government to be allowed to leave Swaziland and take up an independent position between the Shangane and the Swazi, and the activities of Erasmus in mid-1885 seem to have reawakened that desire (91). It was at this point that Charlie Du Pont entered the picture, to suggest the means by which this could be accomplished. Du Pont was one of that notorious band of 'border ruffians' who had lived a semi-bandit existence in Swaziland since the late 1860s, and of whom much has been written else where (92). At this point Du Pont had just returned from a trading trip to the Shangane, where he found Mzila recently dead, and his councillors still worried about a possible move by Mawewe's successor to recover the throne. They had therefore suggested to Du Pont - or Du Pont had suggested to them - that Du Pont should lure Hanyane back from Swaziland to Gaza with the promise of white support to restore him to power, and that he should be quietly disposed of along the way. Du Pont would then get Hanyane's cattle, as well as a handsome reward from themselves, and they would be freed of a fear that had haunted them for years. On his return, Du Pont set the plan in motion, though whether he was intending to back Hanyane or to murder him is difficult to say (93). Hanyane

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(91) S.N. 7, S.R. 51/81, British Resident to Joubert 6 Sept. 1881. No action seems to have been taken on this. For Ndlemane see also Myburgh, Barberton, 78, whose dates are a little astray.

(92) For example, Forbes, Life, 109-14; D. Barker, Swaziland, (London, 1965), 24-6.

(93) According to 'Mantayi' Bennett, Du Pont was a frequent exponent of this type of hijacking, waylaying Shangane labourers on their way back from the mines, and shooting them for their pay packets. His father is supposed to have seen the donga where their corpses were left - interview 'Mantayi' Bennett, 14 June 1970, Manzini, Swaziland.

was contacted and found agreeable; white mercenaries were raised on the goldfields, and the plan was about to move into action when Mbandzeni learnt of it, and had Hanyane detained. Du Pont was incensed and stormed up the Swazi border demanding seven hundred and fifty cattle as compensation for Hanyane's arrest. These were naturally refused, but Mbandzeni did not come off unscathed (94). First, Erasmus seems to have taken action against Mbandzeni or Hanyane and extorted a considerable fine (95). Then, on top of that Hanyane fled, and took refuge for the rest of his life in southern Mozambique (96). The moral of the story was clear, and explains Mbandzeni's dogged resistance to the S.A.R.'s claims: unless he could prevent the policing of these areas by the officials of the Republic, his authority over his subjects that lived there was virtually at an end.

As in his earlier brushes with Piet Joubert and Abel Erasmus, Mbandzeni appealed about Du Pont's behaviour to the British in Natal, although exactly what he expected to achieve by this

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(94) On the 23 July 1886 Cardew received information from Central Zululand about a conflict between Sandlane and Mbandzeni, in which both were appealing to White volunteers (P.P. 1887, C. 4980, 16, Encl. in No. 7, Cardew to Havelock, 31 July 1886). Cardew's correspondent was evidently confusing the names Sandlane and Hanyane, but his report helps fix the date for these disturbances in early to mid-July 1886. For the details of Du Pont's attempt see P.P. 1887, C. 4980, 18, encl. in No. 11, extract of letter from a resident of Swaziland to Cardew, 28 July 1886; P.P. 1887, C. 4980, 20-21 Encl. I in No. 13, message from Umbandine, 19 Aug. 1886; S.N. 12, S.R. 512/86, interview between Kruger and 3 Swazi reps, 2 Aug. 1886. This is also reproduced in English in C. 5089, 26-8, encl. in encl. 2 in No. 14.

(95) P.P. 1887, C. 4980, 145, Encl. in encl. I in No. 70, J. Gama to S.N.A. Natal, 17 Oct. 1886 (Gama was a Shepstone retainer); F.C., Vol. 7, Sarah (Forbe's sister) to Kate, 1 Aug. 1886.

(96) Myburgh, Barborton, 79-81.

manoeuvre is not very clear (97). The customary 'motions' of the High Commissioner forwarding Swazi complaints to the State Secretary for investigation were plainly inadequate, as the State Secretary invariably denied the allegations, and the British authorities had no machinery for making an independent check. Moreover, while these had had some influence to begin with, they were becoming increasingly ineffectual the more often they were used. The only effective alternative would have been the establishment of a British protectorate or a British Commissioner on the Swazi border, but that neither party was particularly eager to accept. True, Mbandzeni had made a formal request for a British Resident in October 1884, and supposedly reiterated it to one of the Forbes's in May 1885, but these seem to have been made under the pressure of impatient advisors or events, and when it came to a decision Mbandzeni invariably drew back (98). Thus, successive attempts by Robinson in October 1884 and May 1885 to find out whether Mbandzeni would pay for a British Resident were politely ignored, and it was not until David Forbes paid a visit to Britain in December 1885 that any response was elicited at all (99). Even then the reply that Forbes brought was probably as much his doing as Mbandzeni's. Some five months later, when the trader, Rathbone, asked Mbandzeni what he thought about Robinson's

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(97) Above, 355-6, 369-70, 376-8.

(98) G.H.Z., Oct.-Dec. 1884, Vol. 692, Secretary State Conf. Derby to Bulwer, 9 Dec. 1884, Encl. in Encl. I, Forbes to Rutherford, 8 Oct. 1884; P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 3, Encl. 2 in No. 3, James Forbes to Robinson, 6 May 1885.

(99) G.H.Z., Oct.-Dec. 1884, Vol. 692, Secretary State conf. Derby to Bulwer, 9 Dec. 1884, Encl. in Encl. I, G. Bower (Imperial Secretary) to Rutherford, 28 Oct. 1884; P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 4, Encl. 4 in No. 3, G. Bower to James Forbes, 30 May 1885.

message, he answered that, "he had not thought much about it, and could not see his way clear to pay the Resident," (100) and it was probably only Forbes's prodding that got him to reply at all. Nevertheless, the reply that Forbes did extract probably comes closer than anything else to revealing Mbandzeni's true position. Since the Swazi people had, "not been in the habit of going out to work," this went, "they [were] very poor in cattle and money." Consequently Mbandzeni asked whether it would not be possible for the British just, "to proclaim a Protectorate for the present to prevent any other power establishing a claim there, until they saw their way to paying for the expense of a Resident" (101). In effect, what this meant, was that Mbandzeni, as well as his councillors in various degrees, feared the power a Resident Commissioner might wield, but wanted more protection than protests alone could confer. As a compromise it would have been masterly, had it not been for one vital flaw in their reasoning - Article XIII in the London Convention guaranteeing Swazi independence, guaranteed it against the British as well as the S.A.R, and it would therefore require the S.A.R.'s consent before it could be breached.

British thinking on the subject was, if anything, more woolly still, and there was a tendency throughout just to let matters drift. Indeed, it is Garson's contention that their only concern was to keep up appearances, which could usually be

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(100) P.P. 1887, C. 4913, 110, encl. in encl. in No. 65, Rathbone to Savage, encl. Hill, 9 May 1886.

(101) P.P. 1886, C. 4645, 70, No. 46, D. Forbes to S.S. R. Herbert, 22 Dec. 1885, Edinburgh.

satisfied by the token investigation of complaints (102). While this is true up to a point, it oversimplifies Britain's position, which was influenced more than Garson realises by the attitude Mbandzeni took up. The minimum effective protection that Britain could have offered was the appointment of a Border Commissioner to investigate Swazi complaints, but this was hamstrung from the beginning by Treasury intransigence, and by Mbandzeni's own reluctance to help defray any costs. Admittedly, Derby and his cabinet colleagues were in principle unwilling to do anything that might involve future complications and expense, but with the Colonial Office and Robinson strongly supporting intervention, a positive response from Mbandzeni would have greatly strengthened their hand. As it was, Derby and his successors could simply cry "Treasury", and the case for intervention fell at the first fence (103). This point becomes clearer from the subsequent development of the argument as the situation grew more acute in 1886 and 1887. Another obstacle Derby had raised to any action in Swaziland was the need to link it to some decision about the region as a whole, and for a time this had proved fertile ground for evasion and debate. By 1886 a decision on Zululand had become urgent, however, as fears of German intervention began to gain ground, and with that the question of Swaziland was scrutinised anew. To many, the logical answer seemed to be a protectorate over Swaziland, but at this point it was discovered that this would

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(102) Garson, 'Swaziland', 285.

(103) See for example C.O. 417/2, High Commissioner to Secretary State, 29 Oct. 1884, Conf. Minutes by J.A., Fairfield, Herbert.

require the assent of the S.A.R. to abrogate Articles II and XIII of the London Convention (104). Since this was clearly not forthcoming, attention focussed again on the idea of a Border Commissioner, only to run up against the problem of finance once more. As the new Secretary of State minuted on the opinion of the Law Officers, "to this step we should immediately address ourselves, but the difficulty in our way is to provide for the expense as I fear the Treasury and House of Commons will not allow the English tax payers to be taxed for these Commissioners" (105).

As 1886 closed, therefore, Swaziland was entering a new phase in its internal and external relations. The British Government became increasingly inclined to follow Robinson in washing its hands of Swaziland, while the S.A.R., deprived of St. Lucia Bay, began to see it as its only road to the sea. As a result, Republican pressure became that much more overt and intense, and the extent to which the Swazi had mortgaged their independence to concessions became that much more clear Mbandzeni's response was to appoint Theophilus Shepstone as his resident advisor, in an attempt to regulate and escape the new pressure being applied. It is with the consequences of this, and the final conquest by concession, that the next chapter will be concerned.

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(104) C.O. 179/166, Bulwer to C.O., 14 Jan. 1886, Draft Stanley (Secretary State) to Havelock, Jan. 1886; Sw. A., Folder No. 5, Conf. Knutsford to Acting High Commissioner 2 Aug. 1889, Encl. Law Officers to C.O., 8 Feb. 1887; C.O., 417/12, High Comm. to S.S., No. 346, 15 Dec. 1886, Min. by R.G.U.H., 7 Jan. 1887.

(105) C.O., 417/18, Law Officers to S.S., 8 Feb. 1887, Minute by Holland, 10 Feb. 1887.

CHAPTER IX  
THE CONQUEST BY CONCESSIONS

1886-1889

By the end of 1886 pressures were building up on Mbandzeni from all sides. In Hhohho and Mahamba the S.A.R. was levying taxation on Swazi subjects in complete disregard of any protests the Swazi might make, while along Swaziland's eastern boundary the Portuguese were preparing the way for the occupation of the fertile and reputedly mineral-rich Lebombo (1). Again, in roughly the same twelve months, the Swazi were subjected to a concessionaire influx which dwarfed previous proportions, as the Komati and De Kaap goldfields were opened up. New towns mushroomed on Swaziland's western borders, and this in turn spilled over into Swaziland proper as supplicants streamed into Swaziland for mineral concessions on an unprecedented scale (2). To add to his troubles Mbandzeni was also confronted at about this time with the consequences of an earlier act of folly, when the sixty or so Boer families on the Ferreira and Maritz concession began agitating to be allowed to administer themselves and to be absorbed into the S.A.R. In March 1886 they took the first preliminary steps in that direction, by establishing a skeleton administration for what was now called the Little Free State, and two months later a delegation waited on Mbandzeni to acquaint

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(1) S.S. 1270, 39-43, R 4219/86, J.A. Erasmus to P.J. Joubert, 19 Aug. 1886, encl. J.A. Erasmus report; P.P. 1887, C. 4890, 145, encl. in Encl. I in No. 70, Gama to S.N.A., 17 Oct. 1886; P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 4, Encl. I in No. 2, message from Umbandine to Gov. Natal, Jan. 1887.

(2) Mathers, South Africa, 106-198, 208.

him of their decision. The reception they received was evidently frosty, but they were only briefly deterred, and seven months later a new deputation was visiting Mbandzeni to tell him that the concession had been lawfully purchased by Ferreira and Maritz, and that the king could lay no further claim (3).

By themselves this array of problems would probably have been enough to make Mbandzeni revise his earlier refusal to call in outside assistance, but the final straw which tipped him in this direction seems to have been another visit from Joubert and Krogh in October 1886. As with their earlier visit they wanted Mbandzeni to sign a document placing Swaziland under the wing of the S.A.R. Again Mbandzeni refused, and again Joubert rode away in a huff, leaving Krogh behind as before to submit a mineral concession. Here, however, the pattern begins to change. Mbandzeni would have nothing to do with Krogh's request for a concession, and Krogh went off in a rage (4). Mbandzeni may at last have realised the connection between official demands for a protectorate, and the private requests for concessions by S.A.R. officials. If so, he must also have begun to appreciate the need for outside support, and in November 1886 he decided to ask a representative of the Shepstones to take on that role (5).

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(3) Watson, 'Little Free State', 13-14.

(4) P.P. 1887, C. 4890, 147-8, encl. in Encl. in No. 71, statement by Ungahbonkulu and Mancinzane to Gov. Natal on return from Swaziland, 27 Nov. 1886; *ibid*, C. 5089, 14, encl. in Encl. I in No. 8, Savage and Hill to G. Brown, 25 Jan. 1887.

(5) Mathers, South Africa, 225-6.

The decision to call in the Shepstones was logical and obvious. Not only was Mbandzeni being subjected to unprecedented pressures which demanded specialised support, but he was also unwilling to use a British Commissioner who would act in British interests and not his own. In the Shepstones he could hope to reconcile these demands by securing an advisor who would be responsible to himself, and who would also, by virtue of his family connections, carry weight in Natal. Yet even this may not fully explain his decision. Some time before Mbandzeni ever requested the Shepstone's help, two of Sir Theophilus's Edenvale retainers (John Gama and Stephen Mini) were already in Swaziland, and it is possible that they had been briefed by their patron to suggest the idea (6). Certainly the Shepstones had good reasons for wanting this done. Offy was on the brink of bankruptcy in Natal, which would have been a terrible blow to his father Sir Theophilus, while Sir Theophilus's own financial position does not seem to have been particularly strong, after the refusal of the Imperial Government to grant him an adequate pension when he retired. What could have been more natural, therefore, than for Sir Theophilus to look to Swaziland to restore the family fortunes, and to intimate to the Swazi that this might be one way of acquiring the political

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(6) P.P. 1887, C. 4890, 145, encl. in Encl. I in No. 70, J. Gama to S.N.A. Natal, 17 Oct. 1886, H.C. Shepstone to Havelock, 25 Nov. 1886; see also Forbes Life, 118. Forbes however is perhaps not the most reliable source in this instance, as he claims that the White Governing Committee was in existence before Shepstone arrived in February 1887, ibid, 115-8. For the White Governing Committee see below, 391-2.

leverage they had been lacking before (7).

Whether this was so, or whether Offy visited Swaziland, as he and Sir Theophilus later maintained, with no other intention than the acquisition of a gold concession from the King, Offy was offered the post after he arrived in the country late in November 1886 (8). Offy was not formally appointed to the position until February the following year, and in the interval both parties sought to underwrite the advantages they hoped to gain from the arrangement. Offy had the Libandla convened, and secured its sanction to his control of concessions (including their revenues) and white affairs as a whole, while the Council sent messages to the Natal Government (or more precisely to H.C. Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs), and to Sir Theophilus, to secure British approval for the move. The idea was obviously to get a British commitment of support for Offy's assumption of the office, but that attempt fared not nearly so well. Although Sir Theophilus gave his assent and whatever authority this had, and although

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- (7) That Sir Theophilus was not above this sort of behaviour is indicated in a letter he sent to Offy in September 1890. At this stage Offy was still in a desperate financial position, and his wife was having the greatest difficulty in preventing his estates being sequestered. "That" wrote Sir Theophilus, "would be a calamity that I cannot contemplate without horror at the humiliation it would bring upon us all," and he explicitly used all the influence he could bring to bear to persuade a Swazi delegation then in Pietermaritzburg to pay £10 000, or face having Offy leave them, T.S.C., Case 31, File "S" Sir Theophilus to Offy, 28 Sept. 1890.
- (8) T.S.C., Case 14, Draft Conf., Sir T. Shepstone to Sir D. Currie, 20 Jan. 1887; Mathers, South Africa, 225-6; P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 68, Encl. 3 in No. 39, Natal Mercury, 25 May 1887.

H.C. Shepstone made a strong plea on Mbandzeni's behalf, the High Commissioner would have no truck with what was going on. Offy, Mbandzeni was told, was acting in his own private capacity and was in no way accredited to either Britain or Natal (9).

Offy's appointment was greeted by a storm of protest from the grazier community in Swaziland, and was the cause of a minor crisis which blew up the following year. Since retrocession many grazing concessionaires had held hopes of quietly converting their grazing leases into freehold tenure, but Shepstone's appointment as government secretary immediately snuffed them out. Up until now Mbandzeni's defence against grazier ambitions had been to grant out separate mineral concessions over the winter pastures the graziers leased. In so doing he was continuing a time-honoured Swazi tradition of setting his enemies at loggerheads over the same resource, for while it was the Boers who for the most part became the grazing concessionaires, he permitted prospecting rights for minerals almost exclusively to the British. Shepstone's appointment seemed to set the seal on this division, as it left little prospect of the graziers achieving change by means of subterfuge or of fait accompli. At one further remove, it seemed also to smack of British or Natal intervention, and to represent a check to Republican interests in Swaziland as a whole.

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(9) P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 8, encl. in Encl. in No. 3, Gama to S.N.A., 23 Dec. 1886; ibid, 9, Encl. 2 in No. 3, telegram Havelock to High Commissioner, 17 Jan. 1887; ibid, Encl. 3 in No. 3, High Commissioner to Havelock, 19 Jan. 1887, telegram; ibid, 4-5, Encl. in Encl. I in No.2, message from Umbandine to Governor Natal, Jan. 1887; ibid, 9, Encl. in No. 7, Havelock to Robinson, 25 Jan. 1887.

Consequently the news of Shepstone's appointment set in motion a campaign of agitation, laced with talk of a filibustering invasion of Swaziland the following spring (10).

The first threats of this kind were uttered while Shepstone was away in Pietermaritzburg setting his affairs in order before coming to reside permanently in Swaziland, and these took on a more ominous note when he returned to have his appointment confirmed the following February (11). Twice in February and again in March, a party of graziers, under the leadership of Stoffel Tosen, descended on Mbekelweni issuing threats about Shepstone and demanding the extension of their concessions to include mineral rights as well (12). It was widely rumoured at the time that the graziers were angry because Shepstone's arrival had obstructed plans for a filibustering invasion of Swaziland the following April, but eye-witness accounts of the March meeting between the graziers and Mbandzeni make it clear that they had more limited aims. What they wanted above all was to expand their grazing rights to include minerals as well. They had the money they claimed, and they would pay, but they would never tolerate anyone else digging on their land. The Swazi countered with expressions of injured innocence. Mbandzeni asked whether the country was no longer his, adding that he would have to ask the

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- (10) P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 15-17, encl. in Encl. I in No. 9, T. Shepstone to S.N.A. Natal, 29 Jan. 1887; ibid, 49, encl. in Encl. in No. 34, J. Gama to S.N.A. Natal, 16 Jan. 1887.
- (11) Ibid; ibid, 15-17, encl. in Encl. I in No. 9, Shepstone to S.N.A. Natal, 29 Jan. 1887; ibid, 32, encl. in Encl. in No. 18, Capt. A. Hulley to Havelock, 21 Feb. 1887.
- (12) Ibid, 37, Offy Shepstone to State Secretary, 20 Feb. 1887; Mathers, South Africa, 226-7.

two governments whether this was so, and when Tosen began fulminating about Shepstone's appointment Sandlane took up the refrain. Had the Boers accepted grazing concessions on condition that one of Shepstone's sons should not come into the country, he asked? To this, of course, the graziers had no adequate reply, and the meeting broke up in mutual recriminations about Mbandzeni's request for British protection, and the grazier's rumoured intention to invade on April 5th. Tosen's parting shot was that, "If you call in a Government your time is up", and with that he stalked off (13).

The Republican government, at Britain's insistence, put a stop to the grazier threats, and by the end of the year the agitation had died down (14). However, a further, and in the long run a far more damaging, source of opposition to Shepstone were sections of the English-speaking concessionaires themselves. Until Shepstone's arrival several of these had enjoyed the confidence of the King, and they inevitably resented being relegated to a secondary role. Shepstone tried to neutralise their hostility, and to legitimise his power, by setting up a White Government Committee shortly after he arrived. While Shepstone retained control over the revenues arising from concessions, as well as all business transacted between whites and the King, this was to

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(13) Mathers, South Africa, 227-30. An almost identical report is also reproduced in P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 58-61, Encl. 2 in No. 39, Natal Witness, 11 May 1887; P.P. 1890, C. 6200, encl. in Encl. 2, Report of C.J., F.Y. and J.F. Joubert, May 1887.

(14) Below, 421.

take charge of the organisation of a police force and the courts and the collection of non-concession revenues like licences and dues (15). For a brief while Shepstone's plan seemed to be working. Concessionaires like Rathbone, who had previously had the ear of the King, judged it wiser to hitch themselves to Shepstone's obviously rising star, while for the bulk of the English community the memory of the recent filibustering scare was still too fresh to permit in-fighting among themselves. This honeymoon period was nevertheless soon passed. Other concessionaires like Thorburn never reconciled themselves to Shepstone's rise, and they held a major asset in Thorburn's Mbekelweni liquor canteen. Miller points rather flippantly to the significance of this, when he notes that the prime determinant of his initial allegiances was the availability of ice-cold lager at Thorburn's rather than Shepstone's after a hot day's trudge to Mbekelweni, but this devalues what is in fact a more significant point (16). Thorburn's canteen offered a natural meeting place for malcontents, and could be used to corrupt and suborn Mbandzeni's leading men (17). Soon it was the nucleus of steadily growing opposition to Shepstone. Even then Shepstone might have been able to isolate it had he not been so obviously corrupt himself. "We all knew Shepstone was an adventurer," Forbes writes, "to a greater extent I mean, than we were", and Shepstone became an obvious target for resentment when he refused concessions to others at the same time as he

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(15) Mathers, South Africa, 245; P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 68-71, Encl. 3 in No. 39, Natal Mercury, 25 May 1887.

(16) M.P. 1.08.1, MS 602, 'Incidents in the early history of Swazieland', by A.M. Miller, 5.

(17) See for example, The Net, 11 Sept. 1887, Letter from Bishop Mackenzie, May 1887.

acquired many for himself, and in the name of his friends (18).

Allister Miller, who was subsequently secretary to the White Committee, conveys the growing fractiousness of the times in an unpublished manuscript on the early history of Swaziland;

There was something very exhilarating..... in the atmosphere at the Embekelweni in those days. Native and European alike were divided into three camps - Shepstonites, Thorburnites and spies... Suppose you were visiting the Embekelweni and you wrote first to Mr. Shepstone, then you were a Shepstonite, but if you went to Mr. Thorburn's you were a Thorburnite. If on the other hand you went to Mr. Thorburns and after staying there [a] ½ hour or so went down to say good-bye to Mr. Shepstone....you were a spy. (19)

As Miller points out, it was not just the concessionaires who polarised into factions on this issue, but Swazi notables as well. In part this was because individual councillors became agents for individual concessionaires in the scramble for concessions, but other factors entered into it as well (20). It did not take long, for instance, for Mbandzeni to realise that his revenues were being systematically milked by Shepstone for his own private use. Up to a point this was permissible, as specific provision had been made in a separate agreement for Offy to receive one half of the concession revenues in payment for his services, but the indications are that Offy did not stop

(18) Forbes, Life, 119; T.S.C., Case 30, File "G", Declaration Charles Garden, 2 Feb. 1887; ibid, Case 20, File "Offy S", Offy to Heien, 13 Jan. 1889; Sw.A., Folder No. 5 (from Lesotho), No. 100, Knutsford to Robinson, 31 July 1888, encl. Adcock to C.O., 19 May 1888; T.S.C., Case 31, File "Offy S", Offy to A. Henderson, 29 June 1890.

(19) M.P. 1.08.1, MS 602, Miller, 'Incidents', 5.

(20) Forbes, Life, 106-7; A. Davis, Umbandine. A Romance in Swaziland, (London 1898), 131-2, 138-142, 147-9, 154-6.

there (21). According to David Forbes, Mbandzeni's annual revenue from concession rentals and transfers should have been something like £15 000, and it is clear that Mbandzeni saw only a tiny fraction of that (22). Forbes was of course a hostile witness, because of the way his uncle had been ousted from the confidence of the King, and it can be argued in Shepstone's defence that the revenues for mineral and monopoly concessions could not have reached anywhere near that inflated figure in the first months that he held in office, and that he was probably not receiving all the rentals from winter graziers, who did not recognise his position until the middle of 1888 (23). Nevertheless it is hardly credible that the £150 Mbandzeni is supposed to have received from Shepstone in the first six months of 1888 represented a half of the revenue collected, or that the sum which he claimed to have set aside for himself during the same period was as little as £420 (24). Again, Shepstone's own financial circumstances in this period make his enemies' accusations ring all the more true. In November 1887 Offy's creditors were virtually hammering on his wife's door in Pietermaritzburg, and she was writing frantic letters to Offy's associates to lend her £500 to stop her furniture being sequestered (25). Small wonder then that Mbandzeni saw so little of his revenues being transmitted into his hands.

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(21) G.H.N., Vol. 688, 132-3, Conf. Robinson to Havelock, 29 June 1888, Encl. Capt. Ewing to Capt. Bower, 19 June 1888.

(22) Forbes, Life, 118.

(23) G.H.N., Vol. 857, No. G. 239, Umbandine to Havelock, 6 July 1888, encl. Komatie Observer, 11 July 1888, 5.

(24) G.H.N., Vol. 688, 132-3, Conf. Robinson to Havelock, 29 June 1888, Encl. Ewing to Bower, 19 June 1888; Sw.A., Folder No. I (from Lesotho), R.C. Williams to Robinson, 23 Oct. 1888, Encl. Ewing to Williams (extract n.d.).

(25) T.S.C., Case 31, File "S", Helen Shepstone to Alfred Henderson, 7 Nov. 1887.

With ammunition of this sort, it was not difficult for Shepstone's enemies to discredit him with the King, and this was further facilitated by suspicions that came to be felt about Offy's relations with the S.A.R. The first hint of anything improper came to light in July 1887, when Offy secured a railway concession over Swaziland for agents acting on behalf of the S.A.R. (26). Once this became public knowledge it gave rise to widespread speculation that Offy was acting in collusion with the S.A.R., and this was further fuelled by a visit Shepstone made to Pretoria in November 1887 (27). Shepstone had in fact been commissioned by Mbandzeni to lay before Kruger a series of complaints about the flight of Matsafeni Mdluli from Hhohho with the king's cattle; Portuguese encroachments on the Lebombo; grazier threats of invasion; and the Republic's taxing of Swazi subjects on the northern and southern borders, and this he did with a considerable degree of success. Kruger was conciliatory on all points, and promised that the ring-leaders of the grazier agitation would be summoned to Pretoria for a warning, and would be punished if they continued upsetting the peace (28). In a sense, however, Shepstone had been almost too successful. There must be some secret agreement with the S.A.R., his detractors urged, for him

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(26) G.H.N., Vol. 615, No. 8, Encl. Railway Concession granted by Umandine, 20 July 1887, transferred 23 Aug. 1887.

(27) Barberton Herald, 7 Feb. 1888; Sw.A., Folder 5 (from Lesotho), F. Adcock to Robinson, 14 Feb. 1887; G.H.N., Vol. 688, 136-7, Robinson to Havelock, 29 June 1888, Encl. Ewing to Bower, 19 June 1888.

(28) C.O. 417/17, No. 472, High Comm. to Sec. State, 19 Dec. 1887, encl. extract Cape Argus, 14 Dec. 1887; S.S. 1953, R 5358/87, 118-213, minutes of meeting Exec. Co. with Shepstone, 18 Nov. 1887; ibid, 216-250, minutes of meeting between State President and Shepstone, 18 Nov. 1887.

to secure concessions of this kind, and speculation continued unabated throughout the following months.

What was the truth behind all these allegations? In one sense at least they seem to have had some substance. A railway concession was largely worthless unless the owner could exercise some physical control over the area traversed, and Offy must have realised this before he secured it from Mbandzeni for the S.A.R. (29). But this is not in itself to say that Offy had become a tool of the S.A.R. The S.A.R. did, it is true, make overtures for his services, but it was by no means clear at that stage what Swaziland's ultimate fate would be (30). Offy's policy, therefore, seems to have been one of keeping a foot in both camps. He would store up credit with the S.A.R. through such things as the railway and similar concessions, but he would not compromise himself by becoming entirely their creature. Indeed it might be argued in some respects it benefitted Swaziland, since he could use this limited credit to secure concessions on other issues. Speculating still more rashly, it is possible the Swazi saw this as well. Certainly, they do not seem to have been very responsive to attempts to blacken Shepstone's name on that count.

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(29) See for example S. Kanya-Forstner, The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism, (Cambridge 1969), 61-72.

(30) Miller, for example, found documents in Shepstone's safe after he took control of the official papers, which showed that approaches had been made to him in September 1887 by the Landdrost of Barberton, and by J.A. Keiser, who, interestingly enough, was one of the purchasers of the railway concession - G.H.N., Vol. 616, 21, No. 19, Encl. J.A. Keiser to Shepstone, 10 Sept. 1887, 22, Encl. J.Z. de Villiers to Shepstone, 6 Sept. 1887.

Rather, what they were concerned with was Shepstone's misappropriation of revenue, and it was this, together with his failure over the Portuguese boundary delimitation, which finally precipitated his fall.

Concern had been growing about the Portuguese since the end of 1885. Towards the end of the year rumours had been rife that the Portuguese had granted land to about two hundred Boers, just to the east of the Lebombo, and this was raised at an interview with Kruger in March of the next year (31). That particular project fell away, but on April 14th a deputation from Lourenço Marques arrived at the Swazi capital on a not unrelated quest. The rival accounts of this visit are completely at odds. In the Portuguese version their delegation asked for a concession of coal rights on the west of the Lebombo, and explained that there was never an intention to sell any territory to the Boers. The territory east of the Lebombo was, however, a Portuguese possession with which they would do whatever they liked. To all this Mbandzeni allegedly acceded, even though he refused the presents proffered by the Portuguese, and he concluded by asking them to drive away the white community living on the Lebombo who had been molesting his subjects. The following month, still according to the Portuguese account, a Swazi delegation visited Lourenço

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(31) G.H.Z., Vol. 695, Cardew (Acting sub-Commissioner, Nqutu) to Gov. Natal, 10 Nov. 1888, encl. Jackson to Cardew 29 Oct. 1885, 69-70; *ibid*, 697, No. ZA, 130, C. Evans to Gov. Natal, 26 April 1888; P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 25, Encl. in encl. 2 in No. 14, minutes of meeting between Swazi messengers and Kruger, 20 March 1888.

Marques, confirming to the Governor that this was what had transpired, and accepting various gifts for the King (32). The Swazi account tallies with the Portuguese only in regard to the concessions and the gifts, and thereafter tells a quite different tale. The Swazi had not recognised or been asked about any border on the Lebombo, and had merely protested about the sale of land to the Boers, with whose proceeds they alleged the gifts had been bought. Thereafter, in a visit of Swazi representatives to the fort at Lourenço Marques, the Portuguese had recognised Swazi suzerainty as far as the Tembe, in accordance with their normal practice in the past (33).

It appears from all this that both sides were blurring the issue in anticipation of pursuing their claims at some future date, and nothing more happened after that, until May the next year, when the Portuguese evidently advertised farms on the top of the Lebombo. The Swazi protested about this to the Governor of Lourenço Marques and to Natal, and when a new Portuguese delegation was on the point of arriving they appealed for a Joint Commission on the

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(32) C.O. 879/29, Africa 359, Evidence to the Portuguese Swazi Boundary Commission, Minutes of 2nd meeting, 4 June 1888, evidence of J.J. Monteiro Liborio; Minutes of 11th meeting, 21 June 1888, evidence of J. Appolonio Carvalho; *ibid*, document No. III, extract despatch No. 64, 1886, Gov. L.M. to Secretary Gen. Mozambique.

(33) *Ibid*, 5th meeting, 8 June 1888, evidence of E.C. du Pont, Ugwababa, Uhofusa; 9th meeting, 18 June 1888, John Gama; document No. XII, statement of Umbandeni, 18 June 1888; U.W.A. A 74, Machado Papers, Transcript of interview between Swazi king and Col. Machado, attributed to c.1880, but in fact September 1887; P.P. 1887, C. 4913, 70, encl. in encl. in No. 44, message of Umbandine to Gov. Natal, 29 April 1886.

boundary, including representatives from Britain and the S.A.R. (34). The Swazi evidently felt they had a fairly strong case, as indeed they had when one looks at the evidence they led (35). However, in the subsequent Boundary Commission which convened in the middle of the next year, it was decided that the 'raids' of 1860 did not amount to a conquest, and that their settlement was too recent for the Swazi to have a claim. What was more, the Commissioners concluded, with Shepstone dissenting, the treaties of 1846 and 1875 between the S.A.R. and the Swazi, together with the treaties between the Portuguese and the Republic in 1869 and 1875 (in neither of which were the Swazi represented), defined the eastern border of Swaziland as the summit of the Lebombo, and that was to be the basis of their award (36).

The decision of the Boundary Commission put an end to Shepstone's first period of personal ascendancy in Swaziland. Although the Commissioners' decision was not communicated to Mbandzeni until October of that year, he sensed at its sittings that it would go Portugal's way, and this proved utterly fatal to Shepstone's

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(34) CO.0 879/29, Africa No. 354, Evidence to Portuguese Swazi Boundary Commission, Document No. V, T. Shepstone to Lieutenant Gov. Lourenço Marques, 25 May 1887, and encl. L. de Bois, Offy Shepstone, 22 May 1887; Sw.A., Folder No. 5 (from Lesotho), No. 175, Holland to Robinson, 11 Oct. 1887, encl. in encl. translation Diary do Governo, 20 Sept. 1887, Royal decree; G.H.N., Vol. 688, 33-4, Robinson to Havelock, 19 Aug. 1887, Offy to S.N.A., 30 Sept. 1887; *ibid*, 829, Desp. No. 40, Drummond V/C Lourenço Marques to Havelock, 26 Oct. 1887.

(35) C.O. 879/29, Boundary Commission. The Portuguese delegate to the Commission also thought so when he initially rested his case on the treaties with the Republic, and Britain's subsequent ratification in 1882, rather than on the evidence of occupation - *ibid*, Minutes of 12th meeting, 23 June 1888. Finally, Offy also thought he would get the S.A.R.'s support - T.S.C., Case 20, "Offy S", Offy to Sir Theophilus, 10 Oct. 1887.

(36) C.O. 879/29, Africa No. 359, Minutes of 13th and 14th meetings, 27-28 June 1888.

political credibility (37). Not only had he failed to keep control of Swaziland's turbulent white population and pocketed most of the King's revenues, but now he and his family had proved incapable of combating the feeblest imperialism of them all. Shepstone's detractors were not slow in seizing on these shortcomings and demanding a redistribution of political power, but even then it was not easy to prod Mbandzeni into action. In the short space that Shepstone had held office in Swaziland his influence on royal authority had come close to realising Mbandzeni's worst fears. Already a faction had emerged which grouped itself around his leadership, and this may have even included members of the regiments who despised Mbandzeni's rule (38). Much as Mbandzeni might have wanted to rid himself of Shepstone, therefore, he was even more afraid of the internal repercussions that this might provoke. Externally, too, he was in a sense the prisoner of his advisors. The Shepstone family might have proved incapable of resisting Portuguese expansion, but it was still a force to be reckoned with in the politics of Natal. However inadequate they might have proved diplomatically, therefore, their enmity might leave Swaziland in a position which was even more exposed.

Plagued by these worries, Mbandzeni moved against Shepstone only slowly and reluctantly, and it was not until Shepstone had refused repeated requests to explain his financial management,

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(37) Sw.A., Folder No. 5 (from Lesotho), No. 100, Knutsford to Robinson, Encl. Adcock to C.O., 16 June 1888. Mbandzeni was apparently also angered at Shepstone's resistance to Thorburn's banking concession. P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 148-9, encl. in Encl. in No. 90, Memo. by Sir T. Shepstone, 1889; U.W.A., A. 82, B. Nicholson's Papers, W.C. Penfold, 'The Romance of Swaziland', Mss of Article for the Star, 4-5.

(38) G.H.N., Vol.688, 134, Robinson to Havelock, 29 June 1888, encl. Ewing to Bower, 19 June 1888; above, note 37; below, 414.

and to allow Mbandzeni and the White Committee to examine the concession records, that Mbandzeni despatched a document which formally restricted Shepstone's powers (39). Even then it was a question of them being restricted rather than annulled. Shepstone retained his position as Resident Advisor, as well as many of his political powers, and he was even able to renegotiate the terms of his remuneration. In this he showed his customary guile and finesse. Not only was he provided with an annual salary of £600, but he was also able to persuade the King to grant him transfer dues payable to the Crown. "Of course they are muffs," Shepstone noted, after this had been agreed, "as the revenue from duties will be very considerable shortly as several large companies will soon be out ... By this too I get £3 000 Cobolondo money... " (40).

The Portuguese Boundary Commission and the ensuing palace revolution ushered in the final phase of the concession conquest of Swaziland. According to Miller, the ease with which Swaziland had been divested of its eastern borderlands left Mbandzeni mentally and spiritually crushed, and this in turn seems to have reacted adversely on his already precarious health (41). It is from this point on that one can date Swaziland's final descent into anarchy, with the political health of the nation closely mirroring the physical health of the King. Feeling his own life

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(39) G.H.N., Vol. 857, No. G, 239, Umbandine to Havelock, 6 July 1888, encl. Komatie Observer, 11 July 1888, 5. The concession documents etc. were not in fact handed over until February the next year - M.P. Diary of A.M. Miller, Dec. 1887-April 1894, T/S, 11-14, 13-15 February 1888.

(40) T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 7-8 August 1888.

(41) Miller, Swaziland, 30; T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 11-12 Jan. 1889.

ebbing away from him, and his country slipping out of control, Mbandzeni seems quite simply to have given up. "Why should I not eat before I die", became his motto, and with that the concessionaire conquest slid completely out of control (42).

By weakly surrendering the initiative in this way, Mbandzeni must bear some of the responsibility for his country's subsequent fate, but as much, if not more, rests with the squalid intrigues of those whites who posed as the King's advisors and friends. In this respect the transition from the personal rule of Shepstone to the collective rule of the Committee assumes critical importance, for the effect of this as Ralph Williams, the British Resident in Pretoria, noted was that, "Instead of being plundered by one [Swaziland was] now the prey of many." (43) With no single person in authority to regulate the rush, concessionaires literally scrambled over one another to grab whatever they could.

There were dozens of men walking about the king's kraal, with concession papers .... in their pocket ready to be put before the king to be signed... We all walked round the kraal, or sat in the shade of a tree, to all outward appearance for no other reason than for the sake of our health. Only with our friends did we discuss concession [sic] in case other people might be after the same piece of land. We were keeping our eyes open for our respective agent, or special chief. He would at long last show himself and make a sign, as obscure as possible from the vision of the other white men. We strolled around as unconcerned as possible in the direction he had indicated, and there meet your chief [sic], who would tell you he had spoken to the king... (44)

Mbandzeni's deteriorating health merely accelerated these

(42) Miller, Swaziland, 20.

(43) Sw.A., Folder No. I, R.C. Williams to Robinson, 4 Oct. 1888 (Confidential).

(44) Forbes, Life, 106-7.

developments. By early 1889 it was clear that Mbandzeni had not much longer to live, and the concessionaires entered into a final frantic scramble to secure what resources were left (45). At the head of the pack was the White Governing Committee. Sensing a growing reaction against them among the ordinary Swazi, they realised that their authority could not possibly survive the King's death, and with their help concessions of every conceivable description were wheedled out of the King, and the economic assets of the kingdom progressively stripped.

This rapid descent into anarchy is most graphically represented by an analysis of the volume and type of concessions granted during this period, and by the way in which they were secured from the king (see Appendix). Already by 1886 most of the available winter pasturage in Swaziland had been parcelled out, and by the end of 1887 the same had happened to Swaziland's imagined mineral wealth as well (46). While alienating much of Swaziland's economic wealth, however, these did not necessarily in themselves jeopardise Swaziland's political independence. The grazing leases were for limited periods of time, and like the mineral concessions had saving clauses about rights of Swazi occupation being preserved. The same is not true of the monopoly concessions which make their appearance in significant numbers in the middle of 1888, after the sitting of the Portuguese

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(45) T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 11-13 Jan. 1888.

(46) P.P. 1889, C. 6201, 59-65, Appendix K, Registration of Concessions, 71-73, Appendix K2, Concessions. The first of these tables is reproduced in the Appendix.

Boundary Commission and the elevation of the White Committee to its new powers. Ranging from exclusive control over pawn-broking and patent medicines, to sole rights over the King's revenue, these made effective government of Swaziland progressively less possible, and reduced Swazi independence to a hollow, empty shell. The most pernicious of all these from the Swazi point of view were the revenue concessions, which granted away the King's revenue; the customs concession, which did the same for customs dues; and the unallotted lands concession, which ceded ownership over all unallotted lands south of the Komati River, and those that fell vacant once earlier leases had lapsed. These were doubly subversive of Swazi independence because they had been secured on behalf of the S.A.R. (47). Backed by loans from Eckstein and Porges, the Kimberley and Rand mining capitalists, the S.A.R. ploughed upwards of £50 000 into the acquisition of these rights in the hope of presenting the British Government with a fait accompli, and so gaining a vital link in their road to the sea (48). What Eckstein and Porges hoped to gain out of this is unclear. In Swaziland the rumour was that they meant to emulate Rudd's and Rhodes's activities in the north, but it is just as likely that they were seeking to ingratiate themselves with the S.A.R. for more limited ends (49). The objectives of the third party

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(47) P.P. 1890, C. 6201, 14, Report on Swaziland, by Sir F. de Winton, Feb. 1890.

(48) P.R. Botha, Die Staatskundige Ontwikkeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek onder Kruger en Leyds, Transvaal 1844-1889, (Amsterdam 1926), 344; J.B. Taylor, A Pioneer Looks Back, (London 1939), 67, 143.

(49) M.P. 1.08.1, MS 577a, 'Swaziland in the 80s', by A. Miller, 6-7. Like the government's support in their mining ventures in the Republic. This would presumably include labour supplies, although it is unlikely that it was specifically Swaziland labour that they were concerned with in this transaction.

to these transactions are considerably more clear. Endowed with few scruples at the best of times, the White Committee found the sort of money on offer from the S.A.R. too much to resist. Ewing for instance, who was for a time the chairman of the Committee, is alleged to have got some thousands of pounds for his part in securing the revenue concession, while Thorburn and others obtained similar sums for acquiring customs and other concessions on behalf of the S.A.R. (50). The White Committee officially deprecated these moves. In June 1889, for instance, the Committee condemned the "unofficial advisors" who had induced Mbandzeni to sign a customs and revenue concession, but this, in fact, seems to have been as much out of pique at being left out of a deal, which was both lucrative and cut away the basis of the Committee's own financial position, as out of any principled stand (51). Miller and Thorburn for instance had already been to Pretoria in 1889 with the object of selling similar concessions to the S.A.R., and a few months later Miller himself was instrumental in obtaining the unallotted lands concession for the same power (52). According to Miller's subsequent testimony to the Swaziland Concessions Commission, he was not acting consciously on this occasion as an agent for the S.A.R., but on his own evidence to the same tribunal he stands condemned when he admits having received a third share of its

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(50) M.P. 6942, Letter Book 'B' of Forbes Reef Gold Mining Co., 179, F.B. Doering to F.N. Faviell, 24 June 1889.

(51) Sw.A., Folder No. 2 (from Lesotho), Mitchell to Smyth, 27 July 1889, Encl. Swaziland Government Committee, copy of resolution n.d.

(52) Sw.A., Folder No. 2 (from Lesotho), Conf. R.W. Williams to Robinson, 8 Feb. 1889; M.P., Diary of A. Miller, 10-11, 12-13 Feb. 1889.

proceeds a mere two months later for the services he had rendered (53).

The plundering of Swaziland's economic resources had a more generally subversive effect on Swazi society than a narrow economic analysis suggests. Just as the penetration of mercantile capital not only bled but disrupted other parts of the continent, so too in Swaziland it had a politically corrosive effect (54). In the late 1850s and 1860s, the Swazi had partly evaded these pressures by redirecting them outside, and had spread impoverishment and destruction into the lowveld and to the north. The changing pattern of the 1880s foreclosed on this option. The S.A.R., after retrocession, was a far more formidable force, now that its administration had been restructured by a major imperial power, and its economy was revolutionised by the discovery of gold, and it was able to impose itself more effectively on the region as a whole (55).

As a result, rather than mediating mercantile and colonial pressures, Swaziland found itself more and more the object of their attentions, with all the disruption that entailed for its society as a whole. As the rush for concessions accelerated, in

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(53) M.P. 1.08.23, MS 549(b), 'Report of the Swaziland Concessions Commission', 22 May 1908, para. 37.

(54) S. Amin, 'Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa - Origins and Contemporary Forms', Journal of Modern African Studies, X, No.4, (1972), 511-16; W.G. Clarence-Smith and R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and Class Formation in Ovamboland, 1845-1915', Journal of African History, 16, (1975), 365-381; C. Meillassaux (ed), The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa, (Oxford, 1971), 50-59; For a more general discussion see G. Kay, Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis (London, 1975), 96-124.

(55) Arndt, Banking, 100-119; M.H. De Kock, Selected Subjects in the Economic History of South Africa, (Cape Town/Johannesburg, 1924), 113-116.

step with the quickening economic tempo of the Rand, leading aristocrats were sucked into an endless round of competition for the ephemeral resources offered in return. As part of this process, individual aristocrats became associated increasingly with individual concessionaires, and less wittingly with the governments and syndicates for whom they often held briefs, until it became an index of power who could secure what concession for whom. While this became one basis for division, the aristocracy also fractured along entirely different lines, as a reaction set in, among those who were rooted in an earlier economic order, against dealing in concessions at all.

The tensions associated with these divisions coalesced in a spate of political killings in late 1888 and 1889. Carried out under the guise of rooting out those responsible for Mbandzeni's deteriorating health, they reached such proportions by August 1889, that Shepstone was able to assert, no doubt with considerable exaggeration, that the whole of Hhohho was depopulated through people fleeing from the raids (56). The most significant episode took place in November 1888, when Sandlane Zwane and a number of other leading councillors were executed for conspiring to overthrow the King. The plot, according to Sandlane's accusers, was that, together with Nkopolo, a senior son of Mswati, he intended to assassinate Mbandzeni and seize control of his heir, after which they would establish a regency under their joint personal

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(56) G.H.Z., Vol. 725, No. 2, 835, Bower to Herbert, 3 Oct. 1889, Encl. Shepstone, 16 Aug. 1889, in encl. memo by Offy.

control (57). The truth of these allegations is, as usual, impossible to judge. According to Miller, who had an interest in blackening Sandlane's name, because of his own close association with his chief rival Tikhuba, Sandlane had approached the senior councillors Mvelaphasi and Logcogco to broach an iNcwala-time coup d'etat (58). Now the notion of an assassination attempt during the iNcwala celebrations is inherently implausible. For one thing, it is the most sacred event in the Swazi political calendar, during which the nation is explicitly equated with the king, and most Swazi would surely have recoiled from such a grossly sacrilegious act. For another, it attracted a huge concourse of people, which would have been thrown into turmoil of, quite possibly, bloody proportions. Against this it might be argued that the iNcwala was the only occasion when enough warriors were assembled to offset the preponderance of the royal regiments at the capital. But, in the end, it is more likely that the idea of an iNcwala -time plot got around because at the iNcwala ceremonies the previous year Nkopololo had been involved in a disturbance, from which he had had to be rescued by Sandlane's men, and which he was allegedly still burning to avenge (59).

There was no necessary connection between this and a plot against the King, yet it may provide a clue to the subsequent killings,

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(57) S.N. 15, S R 22/89, Interview Umjobela, Umbozia, 7 Jan. 1889; P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 104-5, encl. in encl. in Encl. in No. 64, Umbandine to Havelock, 11 Dec. 1888. A further reason for the execution, according to Mbandzeni, was because of Sandlane's adultery with one of Mswati's wives - P.P. 1890, C. 6201, 9, encl. in No. 3, Report on Swaziland by F. de Winton, Feb. 1890.

(58) M.P. 1.08.1., MS 602, Miller, 'Incidents', 12-13.

(59) M.P. 1.05, MS 154, Miller's Diary for part of 1888, Dec. 10, cutting from Gold Fields Times, 14 Dec. 1888.

since it pinpoints an aspect of Nkopolu's character which was a source of concern to black and white concession hunter alike. By common consent Nkopolu was the most turbulent of Mbandzeni's brothers. In part this persona was structurally pre-determined, insofar as his status as the first son of Mswati's sisulamisiti wife gave him an inviolability not accorded to any of the other King's sons. Even so, Nkopolu seems to have had a character to match; he was openly impatient with Mbandzeni's flabby political leadership, and condemned the influx of whites that this had allowed. Of course, the more these views were aired, the more he became an object of suspicion to all those involved in the acquisition of concessions, and was gradually elevated in their minds to the leadership of a party of reaction, comprising the younger 'hotheads' in the regiments who resented the way their country was being overrun by whites (60). It would be interesting to know how much substance there was to these accusations, for if there was any at all, there might be evidence here of a non-aristocratic reaction being articulated through the regiments, which had previously been one of the main instruments for legitimising Dlamini rule, and which may now have been becoming increasingly restless through the cessation of raiding and the loss of spoils to offset surplus extracted by the dominant class. In any case, from the point of view of Nkopolu's ultimate fate, all this was probably immaterial, since both parties to the concessions seem to have felt a sufficient sense of guilt to

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(60) Ibid; ibid, 1.08.1., MS 602, Miller, 'Incidents', 12-13; Sw.A., J 50/03, D. Forbes to Res. Commissioner, 21 Jan. 1901; Davis, Umbandine, 156-9.

assume a reaction of this kind. Mbandzeni's poor state of health, and the attendant political uncertainty, merely heightened these anxieties, and it only needed the circumstantial detail of the iNcwala episode to transform it into a fully fledged plot.

Once Nkopolo had been branded in this way, Sandlane could not escape being tainted by association. Sandlane's daughter was Nkopolo's chief wife, and Nkopolo was permanently domiciled at Sandlane's village Ludzidzini (61). Like Nkopolo moreover, he was credited with being more hostile to the flood of concessionaires than any other leading councillor. Although he continued to sign the concession documents as the chief councillor of the realm, he invariably did so after they had been granted at Mbekelweni, and so remained uninvolved in the squalid scramble for preferment round the King (62). By the very fact of remaining aloof, however, Sandlane became an object of resentment. To councillors like Tikhuba, who were fighting for precedence at Mbekelweni, he represented an obstacle to their ambitions, as well as a living rebuke. While to Mbandzeni, who was constantly having to defer to his superior judgement, he was the embodiment of all the slights he had suffered in his reign. The Nkopolo plot, therefore, offered the perfect pretext for his removal: to Tikhuba and his associates, one that was perhaps cynically constructed in anticipation of Mbandzeni's early demise; to Mbandzeni, one that enabled him to reconcile his basically amiable and tolerant

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(61) Forbes, Life, 91; M.P. 1.08.1, MS 602, 'Incidents', 12-13.

(62) Davis, Umbandine, 148.

nature with a sense of grievance that had developed over the years. Thus, while Nkopolo escaped on horseback to the S.A.R., Sandlane was taken out from his homestead on 10th October and clubbed to death (63).

The other group of councillors who lost their lives at this time did so for separate, although not entirely unrelated, reasons. In contrast with Sandlane, Kwababa, Bulana and Juako were in the thick of the concession hunt at Mbekelweni, and it was the heightened factionalism which this bred that helped hasten their deaths. According to David Forbes, Kwababa and Bulana were Tikhuba's chief rivals, and he took the opportunity of the Nkopolo 'conspiracy' to despatch them as well (64). Such rivalries were closely tied up with their alignments with concessionaires. After the death of Sandlane, Tikhuba threw in his lot unreservedly with the group of Miller and Thornburn, and Miller was appointed as the King's secretary early the following year. Shepstone, by contrast, found himself further out in the cold. He was relieved of his duties as secretary to the King, and was complaining soon after that no headmen were left at the capital with whom one could deal (65). What he meant, of course, was that there were no headmen at the capital with whom he could speak, the most prominent members of his faction being either silenced or dead.

(63) Others executed because of their connection with Sandlane were his brothers Makabene and Mtambo, together with Mzwele and Nomadabo - P.P. 1889, C. 6200, 230, Encl. in encl. in No. 151, Annexure X, extract Smit's Report; G.H.Z., Vol. 725, No. 2, 835, Bower to Herbert, 3 Oct. 1889, encl. in encl. Memo by Offy Shepstone, 16 Aug. 1889.

(64) Forbes, Life, 93.

(65) P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 143-4, encl. in Encl. I in No. 86, interview Umbandeni and J. Gama, n.d.; T.S.C. Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 10 Jan. 1889.

As the flood of concessionaires grew to still more outrageous proportions under the stewardship of Miller and Thornburn, with rights to lobola and hut tax even being granted away, Shepstone was able to stage a partial recovery by posing as the champion of Swazi liberties and rights. Assisting him now was Mbandzeni's deteriorating health. As the year wore on, few believed that Mbandzeni could have much longer to live, and many officials at the capital started hedging their bets in anticipation of a back-lash against the excesses of the Miller/Thornburn regime, which might sweep a rehabilitated Shepstone back into power (66). As early as mid-January 1889, Shepstone was reporting that revulsion was setting in over the death of Sandlane, and shortly afterwards Mjubeka, who was a councillor hostile to Shepstone and who was apparently tied up in Sandlane's death, was somehow 'accidentally' killed (67).

Nevertheless, for the time being, such opposition as there was could not come out in the open, and either stayed passively on the sidelines, or removed itself entirely from the scene. Faced with the self-serving servants of the calibre of Miller and Tikhuba, and sullen non-cooperation of those outside of that group, Mbandzeni began to doubt the good faith of everyone he met (68). In the middle of February Miller returned to Swaziland

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(66) Thus Miller was writing to Rathbone in April expressing his unease about Offy, but saying they were safe as long as the king stayed alive - Sw.A., Folder No. 2 (from Lesotho), Havelock to High Commissioner, 14 May 1889, encl. in encl. I, Miller to Rathbone, 29 April 1889.

(67) T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 11, 13 January 1889. Mjubeka was also a close associate of David Forbes, although Forbes attributes his death to Mjubeka's misappropriation of cattle - Forbes, Life, 120-123.

(68) F.C., Vol. 8 (1889-1895 Letters), D. Forbes Jr. to D. Forbes Snr., 3 March 1889.

from Pretoria, where he and Thornburn had been peddling a variety of concessions, to learn that "Kannemeyer had turned traitor and broached the Dutch proposals to the King", and whatever these were, they cannot have been anything other than sinister (69). With confidants and supporters like these, Mbandzeni had little need of enemies. Yet there were plenty who were sufficiently luke-warm in their support to qualify as such, as can be seen two months later when Mbandzeni berated even his councillors for being too afraid of Shepstone to open their mouths in his presence (70).

As diplomatic pressures built up in May and June of that year, these tendencies became all the more pronounced. Factionalism intensified, killings grew worse, and Mbekelweni became a place that many regional chiefs shunned (71). Increasingly a new party began to crystallise around Shepstone. As early as April 1889 the tindvuna, Kwahlakwaha and Mhlonitwa, had returned from Natal with a report that when they arrived in Pietermaritzburg Sir Theophilus had sent for the Governor of Natal, and that they had both ordered that Offy be re-instated, saying that an English army was on its way to take control of the country. This was, as Miller noted, "a cock and bull story", but it shows how these two figures were slowly gravitating into the pro-Shepstone camp (72). It may also tell us something of the composition of the group.

(69) M.P., Diary A. Miller, 10-11, 12-13 February 1889.

(70) Ibid, 19, 1 April 1889.

(71) G.H.Z., Vol. 725, No. 2, 835, Bower to Herbert, 3 Oct. 1889, encl. in encl., 16 Aug. 1889.

(72) Sw.A., Folder No. 2 (from Lesotho), Havelock to High Commissioner, 14 May 1889, Encl. in Encl. I, Miller to Rathbone, 29 April 1889.

Kwahlakwahla had for years been Mswati's representative to Natal, and can probably be counted among the elder indvuna of the land, and it was among these possibly erstwhile supporters of Sandlane that opposition was coalescing to the actions of the King (73). Other members were Maloyi and Mancibane Dlamini, but most important of all was the Queen Mother, Tibati, who began lending her support in the middle of the year (74). Early in August there were meetings between Shepstone and her council, at which they reputedly refused to admit his dismissal from office, and by September he was sufficiently buoyed up by these contacts to be expecting a "hatful of money" relatively soon (75). Offy may lastly have been able to count on some regimental support. Ralph Williams, the British Agent in Pretoria, reported that several of the regiments were under the influence of Shepstone, and it is likely that he enjoyed in particular the Indlavela's support (76). By the time Mbandzeni died at the beginning of October, it all added up to an almost impregnable position. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that Miller and his companions indulged in a last feverish scramble for concessions, only transferring the

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(73) T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 21 Oct. 1889.

(74) Ibid, 10 Jan 1889, 21 Oct. 1889. In July Offy told the British Commissioner, Martin, that there were "two or three chiefs who would do anything for him but are not now in the King's favour, and that these chiefs are powerful enough to take the country any day". Sw.A., Folder No. 2 (from Lesotho), Mitchell to Smythe, 27 July 1889, Encl. Martin to Smythe, 21 July 1889.

(75) P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 193, Encl. in encl. in No. 132, Martin to Smythe, 11 Aug. 1889; T.S.C., Case 31, File "Offy S", Offy to Barnes, 9 Sept. 1889.

(76) Sw.A., Folder No. 2 (from Lesotho), R.C. Williams to Smythe, 20 June 1889; T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, various dates Oct.-Nov. 1889.

notorius public revenue concession thirty-six hours before his death, or that Tikhuba and his followers became increasingly regular habitués of Thornburn's liquor canteen (77).

Offy's own reactions to the situation were contradictory and confused. In a letter to his wife in January 1889, he wrote,

I expect a row tomorrow with the Committee and am prepared for them to take a very strong position as I am now [established] in the country, and besides have the S.A.R. Govt. to fall back upon (failing the British Government) in case of necessity.

After complaining about the non-payment of £7 000, and his determination to get it off the governments if Mbandzeni died, Offy went on to mention,

Another [Dutchman who] is here in my house begging me to side with the S.A.R. Govt. and use my influence. I shall be President and be paid in cash what the king owes me. What a fix to be in. For 3 hours we have been discussing the thing. As I feel the British Govt. will not do anything I am tempted to agree to it. But I must see tomorrow what line the king adopts and if he tries to sell me I'll sell him straight out.

The final paragraph indicts him still further. "Cohen has left here", he wrote,

with the dynamite concession for Pretoria. He will I fancy get some thousands for it. I am in several things indirectly with him in which I do not appear of course, but he'll send me a cheque when he succeeds, as he will do in some of them. Electric and Telegraphs has gone through [i.e. to the S.A.R. Government], and I'll have some money on that in a few days and also on the dynamite concession. (78)

(77) P.P. 1890, C. 6201, 68-70, Encl. in Encl. in No. 3, Shepstone to de Winton, 3 Dec. 1889; T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 11 Nov. 1889.

(78) T.S.C., Case 20, File "Offy S", Offy to Helen, 13 Jan. 1889.

Eight months later, when his position was immeasurably stronger, Offy was writing in similar vein to his solicitor Barnes,

I'll be able to wire you the money in a few days so I hope you'll be able to stave it off for a bit. As you know from my wife I suppose the S.A.R. will pay me the whole amount the king owes me (say £ 15,000) [!/] and they want me to remain. I would not take it yet but in a very few days I fancy I shall hear the B.G. [i.e. the British Government] mean the S.A.R. to have it and I'll accept the money. I could have got £ 2,000 or £ 3,000 [immediately] but I would not take it then as things stood, although God knows I needed it badly enough. (79)

It is clear from all this that Offy was not exactly scrupulous in his dealings with the Swazi, yet there is another side of his character which is perhaps hinted at in these passages, and which emerges more clearly after Mbandzeni's death. Mbandzeni died on October 6th, and almost immediately Offy was elevated to a position of astonishing power (80). He imposed calm on the regiments at the funeral of the King, preventing a collision of possibly bloody proportions (81); he ordered the promotion of the Indlavela regiment to the councils of the realm (82); and he was given sole authority and control over European and concessionaire affairs. It was after the meeting that ratified that decision that Offy reveals an unimagined side to his personality. "I shall never forget the scene", he wrote in his diary,

Alone with the whole nation represented. All looking to me, treating me as their king for Father's sake, and clinging to me because Father was owner of the Nation...Never in a savage country has the whole nation done as they did and sign such a document...I am in a fix with a tremendous burden on my shoulders

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(79) T.S.C., Case 31, File "Offy S", Offy to Barnes, 15 Sept. 1889.

(80) M.P. Diary of A. Miller, 6 Oct. 1889.

(81) T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 17, 18, 20 Oct. 1889.

(82) Ibid, 3 Nov. 1889.

to carry now. I only hope I shall carry  
it right and save the Nation. (83).

Offy was an unsuspected sentimentalist, and was showing signs of  
even developing a mission!

While this internal wrangling worked its way through to a  
conclusion, two Anglo/Boer Commissions had visited Swaziland,  
which between them put the seal on Swaziland's loss of independence,  
although not the precise form that the subordination would take.  
It remains in this chapter to outline the steps which led to  
this result.

Sometime towards the end of 1886 the High Commissioner, Robinson,  
had lost patience with the equivocations of the British Govern-  
ment or Mbandzeni, and came down firmly against the idea of the  
British assuming control. In a memorandum written to the  
Secretary of State, Stanhope, in October of that year, he argued  
that the British were under no treaty obligation to maintain the  
independence of the Swazi, and would find it extremely difficult  
for themselves to take control. Swaziland was difficult of  
access, being surrounded on three sides by Republican territory,  
and all that was permitted to the British in terms of the London  
Convention was to appoint a Border Commissioner, who would then  
be saddled with great responsibility but not the slightest  
control. The British Government should therefore reconsider its  
attitudes to the likely alternatives, which were an independent  
digger or grazier Republic, or eventual annexation to the Trans-

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(83) Ibid, 20-21 Oct. 1889.

vaal (84). Robinson never thereafter strayed from this view, pushing it forward time and time again when Swaziland was discussed, and was a major influence on Britain's failure to assume any responsibility in the area.

The permanent officials at the Colonial Office took the diametrically opposite view, and it is a measure of his influence that their voice was never adequately heard. While they recommended the establishment of a British Resident or a British Protectorate with every new incident in Swaziland, Robinson inveighed repeatedly against the assumption of "responsibility without jurisdiction", and undercut much of the ground on which they might otherwise have stood (85). Robinson was also powerfully supported by imperial inertia and by the Law Officers of the Crown. In an opinion handed down in February 1887, the Law Officers concluded that Britain was precluded by Article XII of the Convention of London from declaring a Protectorate over Swaziland, and this guided British thinking until 1889 (86). Other intervention was ruled out by a seeming incapacity to act. Holland, who succeeded Stanley as the new Secretary of State, was

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(84) C.O. 879/25, Africa No. 33, 1-2, Robinson to Stanhope, 12 Dec. 1886, encl. memo by Robinson on Swaziland, 9 Oct. 1886; Robinson, 'Swaziland', 286-7.

(85) P.P. 1887, C.5089, 3, No. 2, Robinson to Stanhope, 26 Jan. 1887; ibid, 31, No. 18, Robinson to Holland, 2 Feb. 1887; ibid, 10, No. 5, Robinson to Holland, telegram, 19 Feb. 1887; ibid, 18, No. 11, Robinson to Holland, 7 March 1887; C.O. 417/13, High Commissioner to S.St., No. 24, 26 Jan. 1887, minutes by Hemming and Herbert, 16 Feb. 1887; ibid, No. 44, minutes by Hemming, Bramston and Herbert, 3 March 1887; ibid, telegram 19 Feb. 1887, minutes by Herbert, Holland, 21-22 Feb. 1887; C.O. 417/14, H.C. to S.St., telegram, 7 March 1887, minutes by Hemming, Herbert, Holland, 8-9 March 1887; below, 420.

(86) Sw.A., Folder No. 5 (from Lesotho), Conf. Knutsford to Acting High Commissioner, 2 Aug. 1889, encl. Law Officers to C.O., 8 Feb. 1887; C.O. 417/13, No. 84, H.C. to S.St., 9 Feb. 1887, minute by Holland, 1 April 1887.

in theory predisposed to help the Swazi against the Republic, if only to escape the philanthropic and capitalist pressures which a Republican takeover would bring, yet he postponed decisive action in the matter on an endless succession of trivial or spurious grounds. At the beginning of 1887 it was the misplaced hope that Shepstone would be able to regulate the anarchy which had arisen from concessions, and the wish to discover whether the mining capitalists in the country would foot the bill for a British Resident (87); in March/April it was the need to consult the South African representatives to the Colonial Conference being held in London (88); in April/May the more substantial argument that the Cabinet could never act without a crisis (89); and in September the hope, carefully cultivated by Robinson, that the White Committee might be establishing a viable administration in the country (90). Nevertheless, Holland was conscious, in a way that Robinson never needed to be, of the pressures that could be brought to bear by philanthropic and speculative interests if Swaziland were to be thrown to the wolves. As Herbert minuted on Robinson's first reiteration of his memorandum to Stanhope, Sir Hercules "strangely misapprehends 'public opinion'", and in this view Holland evidently concurred, as can be seen from his subsequent efforts to stall a decision either one way or the

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- (87) Ibid, No. 24, H.C. to S.St., 26 Jan. 1887, minute by Holland, 22 Feb. 1887; ibid, H.C. to S.S. telegram, 19 Feb. 1887, minute by Holland, 22 Feb. 1887.
- (88) C.O. 417/14, H.C. to S.St., telegram, 29 March 1887, minute by Holland, 31 March 1887.
- (89) Ibid, No. 161, H.C. to S.St., 20 April 1887, minute by Herbert, 12 May 1887.
- (90) C.O. 417/15, No. 319, H.C. to S.St., 18 Aug. 1887, minutes by Fairfield, Herbert, Holland, 7, 10, 13 Sept. 1887.

other (91).

The policy that Holland therefore adopted was one of procrastination on the issue of British involvement on the ground, combined with a firm discouragement of Republican efforts to extend their control, and while in the long run these two objectives were clearly incompatible, it was enough to put the brake on Republican pressure, at least for a time. The last of P.J. Joubert's personal visits to Swaziland took place in October 1886, and during 1887 it was a quasi-autonomous grazier agitation which made the running for the Transvaal. In January, J.C. Krogh, a Republican official of New Republic fame, was issuing threats about the super-imposition of mineral on grazing concessions, and spreading panic about a grazier invasion in April; and in March, as we have seen, Stoffel Tosen and his party descended on Mbekelweni with a similar object in mind (92). When Mbandzeni reported these attempts at intimidation to Natal, Robinson was all in favour of replying that Britain had not undertaken the policing of his country, and he himself would have to repel any invasion that occurred, but the Colonial Office and Knutsford took a more belligerent view, and telegraphed the Republic to keep its subjects under control (93). The S.A.R. replied sanctimoniously that it had always respected the Convention, and sent affidavits 'proving' the falsity of the charge, even though

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(91) C.O. 417/13, No. 24, H.C. to S.St., 26 Jan. 1887, minute by Herbert, 16 Feb. 1887.

(92) Above, 390.

(93) P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 30, No. 16, Robinson to Holland, 29 March 1887, telegram; C.O. 417/14, H.C. to S.St., telegram, 29 March 1887, minutes by Hemming, Bramston, Holland, 30-31 March 1887. Holland had also in fact ordered similar action in relation to a previous complaint about Krogh in January - P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 18, No. 10, Holland to Robinson, 5 March 1887, telegram.

these, if anything, left the opposite impression, but the protests nevertheless had had their effect (94). On 13th April, State Secretary Stiemens instructed J.J. Ferreira, the Border Commissioner at Piet Retief, to make sure that Republican subjects did not involve themselves illegally in Swazi affairs, and the agitation against Mbandzeni and Shepstone immediately died down (95).

Final proof of the collapse of the agitation came when Tosen was assaulted by two of his followers, and the party that had grouped itself around him comprehensively collapsed.

The agitation did, nevertheless, have a longer term result, since it led Holland to broach the question of a Joint Commission of investigation together with the Republic (96). Robinson's familiar objections, together with the equally familiar problem of cost, meant that the proposal was speedily dropped, but, having seen this as a means of re-opening the question, the S.A.R. refused to let the matter rest (97). Towards the end of 1887, moreover, it added a new string to its bow, when with Shepstone's assistance it acquired a railway concession over Swaziland, and added quickly those for electricity and telegraphs as well (98). The 'Swaziland question' was now assuming its full intractable form. On the one hand Britain would not assume control for reasons of economy and fear of alienating the Republic,

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(94) *Ibid*, 33, No. 21, Robinson to Holland, 11 April 1887; *ibid*, 47-8, Encl. in Encl. I in No. 34, Krogh to State Secretary, 6 April 1887; G.H.Z., Vol. 704, ZA 158, Robinson to Havelock, 21 April 1887, encl. memo by H.C. Shepstone, 3 May 1887.

(95) S.N. 105, Letter Book, M. Stiemens to J.J. Ferreira, 18 April 1887.

(96) P.P. 1887, C. 5089, 50, No. 35, Holland to Robinson, 19 May 1887.

(97) P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 9, No. 3, Robinson to Holland, 6 July 1887; C.O. 417/15, No. 267, H.C. to S.St., 6 July 1887, minutes by Hemming, Herber, Holland, 28-29 July, 2 Aug. 1887.

(98) Above, 394, 415.

as well as because of the various monopolies the Republic now controlled. On the other, the Republic was prevented from realising its ambitions because of the need under the London Convention to secure the consent of both Britain and the Swazi before it took control, of which the latter in particular was impossible to gain. And all the while, of course, Swaziland was becoming progressively less governable, as white and black became locked in factional strife.

1888 opened with a fresh attempt by the Republic to secure a Joint Commission of investigation. As early as September the previous year the grazier party had made clear its refusal to accept the credentials of the White Committee, and the Committee had responded at the beginning of 1888 by proposing that such persons should be stripped of their rights (99). The Republic used this evidence of discord to revive the idea of a Joint Commission of investigation, and requested that the resolution should not be implemented by the Swazi until an investigation was made. Somewhat bewildered Mbandzeni agreed, and the Republic then coupled this with the threat of new grazier agitation, and Mbandzeni's appeal the previous year, together with Holland's earlier idea of a Joint Commission, to insist that an investigation must be launched (100). It was pretty flimsy stuff, as the

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(99) P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 27-30, Encl. in No. 11, extract, Barberton Herald, 18 Oct. 1887, encl. in Encl. in No. 12, Offy Shepstone to S.N.A., 10 Oct. 1887; C.O. 417/17, No. 472, H.C. to S.St., 19 Dec. 1887, encl. extract Cape Argus, 14 Dec. 1887.

(100) Sw.A., Folder No. I (from Lesotho), Bok to Robinson, 16 March 1888, encl. Bok to Umbandine, 20 Jan. 1888, encl. Shepstone to Bok, 31 Jan. 1888; P.P. C. 6200, 56, Encl. 1 in No. 26, Bok to Robinson, 20 Jan. 1888; ibid, 64, Encl. 1 in No. 32, R. Williams to Robinson, 1 March 1888; ibid, 71, Encl. 1 in No. 41, telegram Kruger to Robinson, 6 April 1888, 75, No. 43, Robinson to Knutsford, 14 April 1888 and subsequent enclosures.

Colonial Office soon saw, and they refused to take any action until they had received confirmation from Mbandzeni. Seeing what lay behind the Republic's proposals, Mbandzeni now refused to accept an investigation, and the Joint Commission and grazier agitation withered a second time (101).

There was now a lull in activity until the turn of the year, apart from Mbandzeni's renunciation of his rights over the old Little Free State concession, which had been the seat of the grazier agitation, and his agreement to its incorporation into the Republic should the appropriate authorities agree (102). Then, in the latter part of December, the State President Kruger visited the border, and told a group of Swazi representatives that the document had become "old and faded" that had been signed at the crowning of Mbandzeni, and that he wanted him to sign another in its place (103). The approach Kruger used was not exactly subtle, and little progress was made on that particular tack. Indeed, in the following months, the Republic's initiative became, if anything, even further becalmed as Offy Shepstone refused various lucrative offers for his services, and Mbandzeni

(101) Ibid, 57, Encl. 3 in No. 27, Robinson to Kruger, 21 Jan. 1887; ibid, 60, Encl. I in No. 29, Havelock to Robinson, 8 Feb. 1888; Encl. 2 in No. 29, Robinson to Havelock, 13 Feb. 1888, 63, encl. in Encl. in No. 31, S.N.A. Natal to Offy Shepstone, 16 Feb. 1888; ibid, 78, encl. in Encl. in No. 45, Offy Shepstone to S.N.A., 16 April 1888.

(102) Watson, 'Little Free State', 112-121.

(103) P.P. C. 6200, 100, Encl. I in No. 60, telegram, Havelock to Robinson, 22 Dec. 1888; ibid, 107, encl. in Encl. in 65, Umbandine to Havelock, 5 Jan. 1889; M.P. Diary of A. Miller, 3, 6 Jan. 1888. (This should in fact be 6 Jan. 1889, as the reference to Mjubeka's death on 12 Jan. 1889 makes clear).

sent off an appeal for protection to Natal (104). It was with a view to restoring some movement to the situation that the Republic made its famous offer in May to renounce its ambitions to the north and west of the Republic, in return for a free hand between the Swazi border and the coast (105). The Colonial Office typically sat on the proposals, pending Robinson's arrival in London, and were not shifted until Offy Shepstone made a somewhat exaggerated appeal for the intervention of the governments, in view of the generally unsettled state of the country, and disturbances that might arise at the White Committee elections in July (106). The Republic seized on Shepstone's message with great joy and jubilation, while the Colonial Office as usual tried to weather the storm. This time, however, the Republic was not to be balked, and sent their own Commissioner, Smit, in spite of the Colonial Office's request to confer. The Colonial Office's hand was finally forced, and it sent its own Commissioner, Martin, hot on Smit's heels (107).

The results of the Commission have been documented fully elsewhere, and only need the barest summary here (108). The White

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- (104) T.S.C., Case 23, Swaziland Diary, 11 Jan. 1889; *ibid*, Case 20, File "Offy S", Offy to Helen, 13 Jan. 1889; G.H.N., 857, No. G. 71a/89, Miller to Havelock, 28 Feb. 1889, encl. Petition to Robinson from Umbandine, 28 Feb. 1889.
- (105) P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 53, Encl. in No. 93, Bok to Smythe, telegram, 3 May 1889.
- (106) S.N.A. Vol. 1/1/300, No. 1147/1903, Encl. Offy Shepstone to Mitchell, 25 May 1890.
- (107) P.P. 1890, C. 6200, 161-2, No. 99, Smythe to Knutsford, 5 June 1889, telegram; No. 100, Smythe to Knutsford, 6 June 1889; 163, Knutsford to Smythe, 12 June 1889, telegram.
- (108) Garson, 'Swaziland', 292-6, 302-6, 312-415.

Committee elections were postponed sine die, although the meeting itself took place on July 29th, and Mbandzeni was persuaded to extend the existing Committee's term of office for another three months. With the situation stabilised to some extent, the Commissioners left, and three months later a Joint Commission, comprising Sir F. de Winton and P.J. Joubert, arrived in Swaziland. Sir Francis had been given instructions only to investigate and report, but while in Pretoria he had reached a provisional agreement with the Republic, whereby the Commissioners would establish a provisional administration for whites in the country, and would leave over concessionaire claims to a special concessions tribunal. When the Commissioners finally set foot in Swaziland they found the situation already changed. Mbandzeni was dead; Shepstone had been re-instated; and the White Committee was defunct. Consequently, in accordance with the desires of the Queen Regent and her council, they co-opted Shepstone onto a provisional Government Committee, in which Martin of Britain and Esselen of the S.A.R. were the other two representatives. This remained essentially the situation for the next five years, even though it had been intended to be a purely 'stop-gap' arrangement, until a final decision was reached. Nevertheless, the change in Swaziland's status that this implied was in another sense decisive and final. All that remained was the diplomatic horse-trading over the terms under which the Republic would take control. The political and economic subversion of the country by concessionaires had ensured that it could never revert to its previous independent status.

### CONCLUSION

The Swazi kingdom grew out of the pressures associated with competition for trade, particularly with the Tembe, and competition for the rich resources of Shiselweni. While centred on this area from c. 1760-1820, it acquired some of its characteristic features, notably the dominance of a Dlamini based aristocracy; a dual monarchy sharing power between the king and his mother; and a partially developed regimental system. Towards the end of that period the Swazi came under growing pressure from the south, and were forced to colonise the land lying north of the Lusutfu River. Here they remained for some while a nation under arms, as they plundered the other peoples living in the area and were themselves swept about by the currents of the Mfecane.

In time, a more settled administration developed as the aristocracy spread out from the royal capitals at Ezulwini, to assume physical control over the land that it ruled, and the process gathered speed in the reign of Sobhuza's successor, Mswati, as he attempted a fuller integration of the country through the regimental system, and reduced the autonomy of regional chiefs. It is in this period that one can talk of Dlamini power being entrenched, and of the Swazi developing an apparatus of state. On the one hand one sees the appropriation of surplus on an institutionalised basis, as opposed to the predatory looting that had previously been the case, and the emergence of a single stratified society, as against a number

of societies living in proximity, of which the strongest raided from the rest. On the other, one perceives the developing institutions of state as the means of representing the interests of various classes in society, and of legitimising the existing distribution of power (1). In this context the role of the regiments was particularly critical, since they were in themselves a means of labour appropriation, yet also operated to redistribute the surplus appropriated through raiding, and provided an avenue of upward mobility to the dominated class (2). As a result, by the time of Mswati's death in 1865, Dlamini power was sufficiently entrenched for there to be no serious convulsions with the transfer of power, and for a regency to function effectively and stably for the following decade.

Political developments were also moulded by pressures from outside. Zulu invasions continually threatened the political and economic order, and it is no accident that a full consolidation of state had to await the end of the Zulu raids. The Swazi were also forced by these attacks to look for allies in the Boers, and to grant a number of territorial concessions between 1846 and 1875. Nevertheless, the relations that were established were not markedly unequal, since the Republic was

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(1) Hindess and Hirst, Pre-capitalist, 21-41, 198-200, 225.

(2) Two of the most famous warriors rewarded in this way were Ndlaludzaka Dlamini and Gija Mabuza, Nxumalo, 'Oral Tradition', 20-21, Ngobozane Dlamini 13 Oct. 1973, 35, Joseph Dlamini, Jan. 1974, 37-41, Mfolweni Dlamini, 10 Feb. 1974; interview Mpholweni Dlamini (who is the same person as the above).

equally dependent on the Swazi in various ways. As a result the Swazi were able to take control of the lowveld, as far north as the Limpopo, and in the 1860s reached the pinnacle of their power.

The consolidation of the Republic following the discovery of gold, and its annexation by Britain, meant that this freedom was gradually lost, and in the 1880s pressure began mounting on Swaziland itself. The clearest index can be seen in the country's conquest by concessions, which may in turn have been helped by its highly stratified society, and these were eventually so subversive of political order that they provided the pretext on which the Republic and Britain could intervene.

## APPENDIX

REGISTRATION OF CONCESSIONS

Registered by	Name of Concessionaire	Description of Concession	Date of Grant
	Lessack, Ephraim	Sole right of auctioneering	22 Feb. '89
	Lessack, Ephraim	" " photography	"
	Eckersley, Fred	Farm and right to sulphur springs, Inkanini Valley	"
King	Jackson, Rev. Joel	Mineral rights	12 Oct. '86
	Rudolph, G.J.	Farm	27 Feb. '89
	Pigg's Peak Co.	Renewal of mineral lease	28 Feb. '89
	Gordon, Charles	Electro-chemical gold and silver process	"
	McNab, Robert	Renewal of old right to Lebombo farm	6 Mar. '89
	McNab, Robert	Monopoly for tanning and tanneries	"
Mr. Shepstone	Murray, Alexander	Mineral	26 Feb. '87
	McNab, Robert	Monopoly for sale of patent medicines	6 Mar. '89
	Wells, Michael	Insurance and Assurance	12 Mar. '89
Mr. Shepstone	Bothma, C.J., Steyn, H. and J.	Grazing right	29 Jan. '84
Mr. Shepstone	McCrudy	Mineral right	..
Mr Shepstone	Davis, Alexander, Morris, James	Mineral	30 April '87
	Wilson, W.G.D.	Monopoly for lotteries	28 Mar. '89
Mr. Shepstone	Bird, William	Mineral	30 Mar. '87
Mr. Shepstone	Forbes Reef G.M. Co.	Mineral	..
Mr. Shepstone 14 Feb. '89	Maber, G.L.D.	Printing	20 Jan. '89
	Simpkins, S.H.	Rights to deal in spirits on How and Wyldesdale Mineral Concessions	3 April '89
	Harrington, J.R.	To manufacture and import diamond drills	20 April '89
	Harrington J.R.	To build townships	"
	Cohen, N.H.	Customs (to collect and receive)	"
	Cohen N.H.	Tobacco (manufacture and import)	"
	Wells, N.	Wood and farming, Mananga	23 April '89
	Meikle, Alexander	Farming right over mineral concession	29 Oct. '89
	Campbell, R.M.	Steam power	26 April '89
Mr. Shepstone	Stone, Max	Horo townships (erection of)	30 Oct. '89
	Porges, Jules, Eckstein, H.	Agreement re protection of properties	1 May '89
Mr. Shepstone	Renny Tailcur, E.R.	Manufacture cement	7 May '89

REGISTRATION OF CONCESSIONS

Registered by	Name of Concessionaire	Description of Concession	Date of Grant	
Mr. Shepstone	Ewing, Andrew	Milling	8 Sept. '89	
	Orton, J.H.	Mineral	8 June '87	
	Thorburn, M.F.	Gas Manufacture	10 May '89	
	Thorburn, M.F.	Advertising and Gov. Gazette	"	
Mr. Shepstone 13 May '89	Maber, G.L.D.	Mineral	22 June '87	
	Miller Allister, M.	Farm Lebombo	8 Dec. '88	
Mr Shepstone	Forbes and Henderson	Mineral	28 May '88	
	Gordon, Charles	Oil extraction	18 May '89	
	Scott, W. (Havelock)	Agreement re taxation	"	
	Verrall, C.H.	Pawnbroking and Orphan Chambers	28 May '89	
Mr. Shepstone	Freeman, C.V. )	Trading and store rights on Mdimba	17 Oct '89	
	Maber, G.L.D. )			
	Henwood, J.C.	Farm	3 June '89	
	Henwood, James C.	Store right	"	
	McNab, Robert	Right of wood on western slopes of Lebombo from Umbelosi South. The wood around caves not to be cut.	21 June '89	
	Fraser, James	Trading right south of Usuto	21 June '89	
	Botha, T.J.	Grazing	5 Jan. '80	
	Steyn, H.J.	Grazing	"	
	Mr. Shepstone	Tosen, C.J.	Grazing	10 Sept. '84
		Hutchinson, Geo.	Farm over Kobolondo Concession	20 June '89
Leadley, Fred		Farm Pigg's Peak	26 June '89	
Pigg, William		Farm Black Diamond Creek	18 June '89	
27th June '89		Towson, William	Grazing rights	15 June '80
		Forbes, David	Wood right over Acton's and Lebombo Concession	18 June '89
Forbes, David		Wood right over Forbes' Coal Concession	"	
Forbes, David		Wood right over Necoman's Concession	26 June '89	
Mr. Shepstone		Trent, S., Maber, G.L.D.	Farm (renewal of old grant)	27 June '89
		Rathbone, Thos. B.	Wood right over Seaforth Concession	27 June '89
	Cohen, N.H.	Importation of machinery	6 July '89	
	Cohen, N.H.	Importation of cement	"	
	Harington, J.R.	Central reduction Mills	"	
	Mr. Shepstone	Botha, J.P. and M.	Grazing	4 July '81
		Vandermerwe, J.P. and G.	Grazing	7 July '80
		Middleton, Henry	Farm	6 July '89

REGISTRATION OF CONCESSIONS

Registered by	Name of Concessionaire	Description of Concession	Date of Grant
	Lessack, R.	Right to apply for concessions	9 July '89
	Harington, J.R.	Power of Attorney to collect King's private revenue	6 July '89
	Parkinson, J.	Farm and store	7 July '89
	Ewing, Andrew	Farm	"
	Major, J.A.	Farm and store rights	19 July '89
	Pincocks and Bogie	Extension for 50 years of mineral right	18 June '89
	Vandermerwe, P.J.J., Van Rensburg, H.W.J. Van Rensburg, F.J.J.	Grazing rights	2 July '89
	Delange, H.D.		
	Labuschagnie	Grazing right	27 July '88
Mr. Shepstone	Van Rensburg	Grazing right	7 July '80
Mr. Shepstone	Grobelaar, S.F.	Grazing	4 July '88
Mr. Shepstone	Joubert, D., Joubert, P.	Grazing right	22 June '82
Mr. Shepstone	Veldtmann, F.J.		
	Botha, J.	Grazing right	22 June '82
Mr. Shepstone	Klupper, C.C.	Farm	3 March '88
	Maritz, T.J.	Grazing	15 June '88
Mr. Shepstone	Cumming, George	Farm, also trading right	8 Sept. '89
Mr. Shepstone	Kemp, J.J.	Grazing right	20 Oct. '85
Mr. Shepstone	Groening, C.	Farm Usutu	6 July '88
Mr. Shepstone	Nel, S., Nel, J.P.	Grazing right	7 June '87
Mr. Shepstone	Maritz, F.	Grazing right	22 June '87
	Joubert, D.S.		
	Joubert, G.	Grazing right	25 April '88
Mr. Shepstone	D.J. Joubert, G. Joubert, S. Bothma, M.J.J. Grobelaar, J.N. Grobelaar, Jacob Steyn W.F. Joubert C.G. Steenkamp J.H. Bothma		
	J.S. Joubert	Grazing right	11 May '88
Mr. Shepstone	McNab, Robert	Farm, Jobbe's	5 July '88
	Faddy William	Wood right	21 June '89
		Grazing	
Mr. Shepstone	Joubert, C. Gerhardus, Joubert, P.C., Bekker, J.C.		19 May '88

REGISTRATION OF CONCESSIONS

Registered by	Name of Concessionaire	Description of Concession	Date of Grant
Mr. Shepstone	Bester, H.	Grazing	6 Aug. '80
Mr. Shepstone	J. Englebucht, C. Englebucht, G. Englebucht, G.P. Englebucht, and D. Englebucht	Grazing	21 June '87 6 Aug. '80
Mr. Shepstone	Hatting, C.J.J.		6 July '87
20 July '89	Klaas Gnamel, Mabilica	Farm	26 July '80
	Purcocks, V., Purcocks, B., Bogie, A.	Mineral	15 Oct. '86
	Dupont, E.C.	Farm	July '88
Mr. Shepstone	Schruer, John	Mineral	20 Feb. '87
	Mayoss, W.F.	Farm	6 Oct. '89
	Ewing, Andrew	Wood right, Nomahashes	2 Oct. '89
	Cruering, C.	Farm, Shlangwana	22 Aug. '80
	Wyld, Joseph Herbert; Kidson, John Carlton; Simpkins, Samuel Hy.	Mineral	15 Sept. '86
	Great Ophir	Kannemeyer's Mineral Concession	"
	Gowrie Concession	Mineral	"
	Horo Farms	"	"
Mr. Shepstone	Meyer, T.; Lammerding, F.A.	Grazing	20 April '88
31 July '89	Arnoldi, Bernard	Grazing right	10 July '89
31 July '89	Joubert, J.F.	Grazing right	7 July '87
5 Aug. '89	Breed, J.H.P.	Grazing right	4 Aug. '80
	Wyld, J.H.	Farm over Wyldesdale	7 Aug. '89
5 Aug. '89	Mini, Stephen	Planting farm	27 Aug. '89
	Halle, Gustave	Mineral, Mdimba	17 Sept. '88
	Craufert, F.M.H., and Grobelaar S.	Grazing	30 July '83
5 Aug. '89	Middleton, H.R.	Farm Lebombo	25 Aug. '89
Mr. Shepstone	Amoretti, Alex.	Farm Lebombo	1 Dec. '89
	Joubert, M., Joubert, J.	Grazing	12 July '86
	National Manufacturing Co.	Manufacture of Cotton, Linen, &c.	5 July '88
	R. McNab and Alex. Meikle		
	Rathbone, T.B., Shepstone, W.S.	Dynamite and gunpowder	31 March '87

REGISTRATION OF CONCESSIONS

Registered by	Name of Concessionaire	Description of Concession	Date of Grant
	De Klercq, H.	Grazing	11 July '89
	Klaas Suamels	Building licence	5 April '87
Mr. Shepstone	Rathbone, T.B.	Store and farm	6 July '87
	Van Rooyen, R.T.J., Junr.	Grazing right	24 July '89
	Pienaar, N. (Piet Retief)	Grazing right	"
25 July '89	Rathbone, T.B.	Wool washing and pressing	18 July '89
25 July '89	Darke, G.	Farm	31 July '88
	Rivers, E.		
	Krutzinger, J.J.		
	Steenkamp, T.C. and T.J. and G.J. Rudolph	Grazing	25 July '89
	Krutzinger, P.H.	Grazing	25 July '89
26 July '89	Badehhorst, F.L.L. and W.J.J.	Grazing	18 April '88
	Watkins, Frank	Concession for all vacant lands south of Komati for farming purposes	26 July '89
	Thorburn, John	Right to bill batteries, to trent bailings and concentrates	"
Mr. Shepstone	Krogh, J.C.	Grazing	9 June '84
	Davel, J.A.H.	Grazing	5 May '88

Part of a table in P.P. 1890, C. 6201, Appendix K, Registration of Concessions.

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- Maduba Dlamini, 15 May 1970, Ezulwini.
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- Maboya Fakudze, 23 May 1970- 10 June 1970, Lobamba. Maboya was for a time Regent of the Nkanini village near Lobamba. He

possesses a seemingly inexhaustible fund of knowledge about Swazi history, and was my single most important informant.

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\* Chief Makhubu, June 1970, Luyengo.

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Mphundle Maziya, 5 July 1970, Maphungwane.

Mabuntana Mdluli, John McoSHA Zulu, 22 June 1970, Hhhhho.

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