

THE HISTORY OF THE AMAHLUBI TRIBE  
IN THE IZIBONGO OF ITS KINGS

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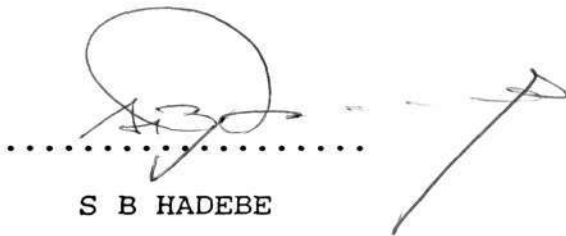
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DECLARATION

I, SELBY BONGANI HADEBE, declare that "THE HISTORY OF THE AMAHLUBI TRIBE IN THE IZIBONGO OF ITS KINGS" is a product of my own effort, both in conception and execution, and all sources I have used have been appropriately acknowledged.



S B HADEBE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

AmaHlub' amnyama

anzipho zinde ngokuqwayana.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. My Supervisors Mr E Zondi and Professor Preston-Whyte for their valuable guidance and constructive criticism.
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To all amaHlubi I say; Mangelengele!

## ABSTRACT

Histories of many non-literate societies in Africa have been reconstructed by analysing their oral traditions.

This thesis attempts to show that the forgotten history of the amaHlubi Tribe can be re-constructed by analysing imizekeliso (legends), izaga (proverbs), amahubo (songs), izithakazelo (clan-praises) and izibongo (praises). This is discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

The historical background of the amaHlubi tribe given in Chapter One is based on the izibongo of the two amaHlubi kings - Bhungane and Langalibalele.

The izibongo are the most important genre. This is highlighted in Chapter Four. The izibongo are not only a record of the past of the society and its kings, but they also have social, religious and political significance.

In Chapter Four, historicity of the izibongo is discussed. Orality-literacy contrasts are pointed out. The imbongi in the oral culture is compared to a historian in the literate culture.

Whilst the imbonqi and the historian perform the same function by preserving history, they use different methods when collecting and recording historical data.

Finally, Chapter Four attempts to give a critical analysis of the nature and functions of the izibongo.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

IZIBONGO are a very important part of the oral lore of the Africans in general and the Zulus in particular because in them, scholars agree, can be found a very strong thread of the history of the nation and the King.

Von Fintel (1932), writing about oral traditions and history of the amaHlubi tribe, remarked that:

"... the history of the Hlubis is shrouded in darkness"

(Von Fintel, 1932: 229).

Von Fintel was driven to say this because very little is known about the amaHlubi tribe before it settled in the Mzinyathi Valley. It may also be that he never understood why the tribe was easily crushed and divided into sections which are now

found in areas around Newcastle, Ladysmith, Estcourt and the Herschel district of the Transkei.

This thesis aims at throwing light on forgotten historical events of the amaHlubi tribe. It aims at showing that oral traditions can be used in the reconstruction of the history of non-literate peoples.

This thesis will show that although oral prose literature like legends, proverbs and songs have important historical data, the most important genre in this regard is the izibongo of the kings.

Most writers on the izibongo like Nyembezi (1948), Cook (1931), Finnegan (1977) and Awe (1974) all agree that the izibongo are significant as an historical document. Nyembezi says:

"... praises were a reservoir for historical events which took place from time to time"

(Nyembezi, 1948:iii).

Writing about the history and the izibongo of the Swazi chiefs, Cook says the izibongo have two characteristics which render them especially important to the students of Swazi customs and history:

"... their form is permanent and they abound with allusions to the important events in the lives of the chiefs so that they form invaluable historical evidence"

(Cook, 1931:184).

Emphasising the function of the izibongo, Finnegan also refers to praise poetry as

"... a vehicle for the recording of history as viewed by these poets"

(Finnegan, 1977:143).

Poets recorded praise names, victories, personal characteristics and exploits of the chiefs and kings. Mkhize, takes the imbongi as:

"... a historian who summarises the curriculum vitae of the king from his birth, during his reign, and up to the end of his reign ..."

(Mkhize, 1989:50).

According to Doke and Vilakazi, the word "izibongo" which is the plural form of isibongo means praises or praise name of a king, a hero or a prominent person or a favourite cow or dog.

The performance of these izibongo is called "ukubongela" which means singing the praises.

The term ukubongela is broader in meaning than ukubonga, which means to give thanks or offer a sacrifice, in that ukubongela includes not only praise, but also criticism and extracts from the history of both the king and the nation.

The izibongo, like the other aspects of folk-lore, have a very significant role to play in the life of the nation. They help the king to maintain political power, link the king and the nation with the ancestral spirits, provide entertainment and encourage creativity and serve as a symbol of national identity.

In this thesis the term "izibongo" will refer to praises of the chiefs or kings. With regard to clan-praises the term "izithakazelo" will be used.

### 1.3

#### IMBONGI

This is a person who specialises in composing and singing the praises of a chief or a king. It is remarkable that in the history of the amaHlubi no female has ever become an imbongi. This was so not because women could not match their male counterparts in skills but because being an imbongi was an exacting task.

The imbongi is an official poet whose task it is to celebrate national events. Zulu kings kept the izimbongi in their kraals and rewarded them with beasts. This custom is known as "ukuxoshiswa."

To succeed in their work the izimbongi needed a sound body and mind, a superb knowledge of the language and broad knowledge of the history of the King and the nation.

According to the writer's informants the amaHlubi kings never kept the izimbongi in their royal kraals. They came to the royal kraal only on special occasions when for instance there was a tribal gathering or festival.

#### 1.4 SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

This study will be limited to a review of the izibongo of two Kings of the royal house of the amaHlubi tribe, namely Bhungane and Langalibalele. Bhungane was Langalibalele's grandfather, and Langalibalele's father was Mthimkhulu. Although Mthimkhulu's izibongo will not be reviewed, his history will be included because it forms a transition between the two periods in the history of the amaHlubi tribe.

Initially the amaHlubi tribe occupied the uMzinyathi Valley, and later they lived in the Estcourt district under the British Colonial Government.



The izibongo collected by Ndawo (1928) and variants of these collected by the writer in the course of fieldwork at Bhekuzulu and Nsukangihlale in the district of Estcourt will be reviewed.

The choice of these izibongo was prompted by two considerations:

they belong to kings who made history and their izibongo are long.

Though Bhungane and Langalibalele had similar endowments in that they had knowledge of royal medicines and medicines for rain-making, contrasting factors shaped their history.

A brief history of the amaHlubi tribe will be given in order to lay the background of the izibongo. Primary and secondary sources will be used.

The history of the amaHlubi will also be related to oral lore in general: Imizekeliso (legends), amahubo (songs), izaqa (proverbs) and izithakazelo (clan praises).

Finally, the significance of izibongo and their historicity will be reviewed.

1.5

BRIEF HISTORY OF AMAHLUBI

Kunene (1976) points out that the knowledge of the language is no guarantee of an understanding of African Oral Literature. What is important is the knowledge of history of that nation because its oral literature is about

"... concrete events, concrete traceable social events."

(Kunene, 1976:27).

Cope (1968) and Awe (1974) emphasise the same point when they say that in order to understand and appreciate the izibongo one must understand the social system and culture that gives it its direction.

It is noted that the izibongo reflect the background not only of social life but also of the country itself. There are frequent references to mountains, ridges, rivers and forests.

Indeed there are many references to forgotten events, unknown people and places in the izibongo of the amaHlubi kings.

The events recorded in praises are not discussed but are simply referred to because as Kunene pointed out

" ... oral literature begins with the assumption that the events it seeks to comment on are universally known."

(Kunene, 1976:31).

In Langalibalele's praises the meaning of a line like this one:

"Unyama yamaZimu  
KaDuba, noMini no Lapalule"

"Meat of Cannibals  
of Duba and Mini and Lupalule"

can elude the reader if he has no historical background. The historical events alluded to here, are the destruction of the tribe (Izwekufa) and the drought that followed which made people cannibals. Langalibalele was nearly eaten by

cannibals from his own clan. A brief historical background to izibongo is therefore essential. As we are interested in Bhungane, Mthimkhulu and Langalibalele, the period between 1750 and 1889 will be reviewed.

Already during this period the amaHlubi occupied the Mzinyathi Valley, on their arrival from the vicinity of the Lebombo Mountains near Swaziland.

That amaHlubi once stayed near Swaziland is confirmed by Mabhonsa, the Hlubi oral historian who told James Stuart that amaHlubi are closely associated with AmaSwazi. This evidence is cited by Wright and Manson (1983:1).

A close relationship between the amaHlubi and the amaSwazi is noticed in the preference for Swazi maidens by the amaHlubi kings. The amaHlubi kings who married Swazi maidens are Mashiya, Bhungane, Langalibalele and Mziwenkosi, the current king.

#### 1.6 ARE HLUBI RULERS, CHIEFS OR KINGS?

The amaHlubi regard all the rulers who descend from the royal house which is now in the Estcourt

district as kings. Bhungane, Mthimkhulu and Langalibalele were kings because they were never subjects of the Zulu kings. They however formed what is referred to as a "tributary" especially during the reign of Mthimkhulu and Langalibalele. In this thesis they will be referred to as kings.

#### 1.7 HLUBI COUNTRY AND BOUNDARIES

It is reported that during Bhungane's era the amaHlubi occupied a country of some 5000 square kilometres. It extended from the mountains at the source of the Mzinyathi River in the Wakkerstroom area down to the vicinity of the Ncome (Blood) River in the south east and east towards what is now Vryheid. The Drakensberg (Undi) mountains formed the western boundary. These mountains provided shelter for people and stock in times of war.

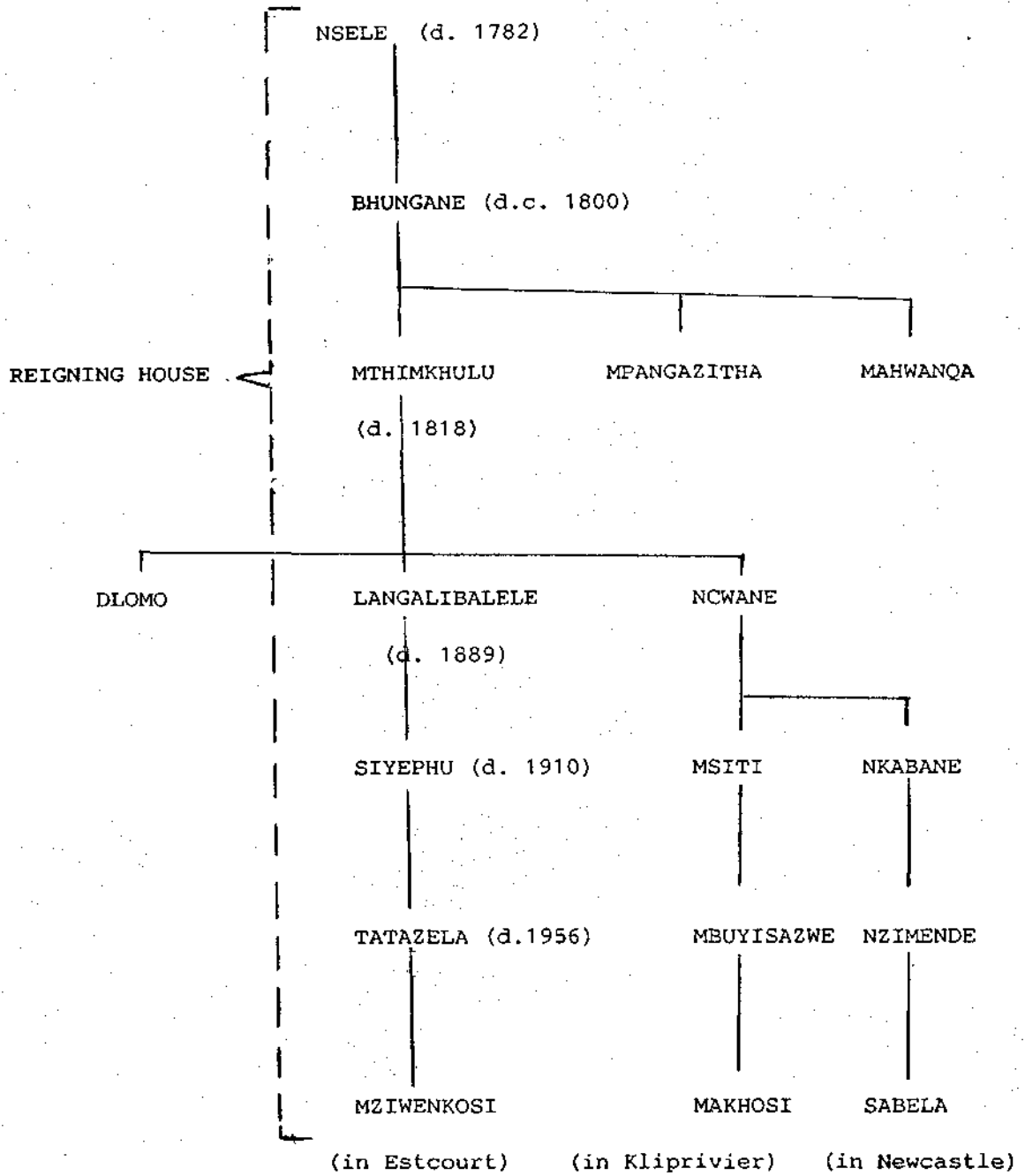
The amaHlubi occupied the open country which still undulates in treeless grassy swells. There are mountains but they are far apart.

In the old days it is reported that game abounded in great variety. In the izibongo, comparisons are made with elephants, lions, leopards, buffaloes, crocodiles, different sorts of buck and birds and poisonous snakes which were found in this country.

In this country the amaHlubi planted sorghum, (amabele) ground nuts, (izindlubu) gourds, (amaselwa) and reared cattle. During the time of Bhungane and Mthimkhulu mealies were unknown. Reference to the above crops and cattle is made in the izibongo. Sorghum, for instance, was so important that there was a ceremony which was known as the Ingodwane dance which was staged when the sorghum was about half a metre high.

#### 1.7.1 The Hlubi Kings and Chiefs

There is no agreement with regard to the order of successive rulers of the amaHlubi in the earliest period. Eight variant lists have been recorded by Wright and Manson (1983). As earlier kings do not fall into this discussion the following genealogy will suffice.



This genealogy clearly shows divisions in the tribe which began during the reign of Bhungane. Today sections of the tribe are found in the Klipriver district, Newcastle and the Herschel district in the Transkei with the reigning house at Estcourt.

#### 1.7.2 Bhungane's Kingship

Bhungane, son of Nsele ruled during the last years of the 18th century and early years of the 19th century. He was a mighty king who possessed medicines which endowed the kings with majestic powers. He was also renowned for rain making. Tradition has it that he had 300 wives and that is why in his izibongo he is referred to as

"Bhungane Omakhulukhulu."

"Bhungane of hundreds and hundreds."

His chief kraal kwaMagoloza was at Alcockspruit, south of present day Newcastle. A small stream which cuts through Alcockspruit known as Bhungane was named after him. After his death he was buried at Bahlokazi, a mountain west of Alcockspruit.



1.7.3 Notable events during the reign of Bhungane

- a) Godongwane, son of Jobe, the Mthethwa Chief sought refuge with Bhungane.
- b) The amaHlubi Kingdom grew larger but the tribe began to divide into a number of jealously opposed factions.

This was caused by the lack of a strong central control. Senior sons from each house were allowed great independence when they grew up. They became sub-chiefs and competed with one another for followers.

This weakness was inherited by Bhungane's heir, Mthimkhulu who also tried to hold together a kingdom which was threatening to fragment into rival segments.

- c) Von Fintel (1932) recorded one of the amaHlubi legends which says;

"... a certain wanderor, a young man, once came to Bhungane to seek for "umuthi wobukhosi" (medicine for chiefship).

(Von Fintel, 1932.)

This turned out to be King Shaka who later on became a great king. This story is believed because Shaka conquered many tribes but never attacked amaHlubi.

#### 1.7.4 Mthimkhulu's Kingship

It was about 1819, when Mthimkhulu was the king, that wars broke out which split the chiefdom and permanently destroyed Hlubi solidarity and placed their independence in danger.

AmaHlubi were crushed by amaNgwane, driven away from their land and deprived of their cattle and food. Mthimkhulu was killed.

This event was known to amaHlubi as "Izwekufa" - destruction of the nation. The consequence of this event was the dispersal of the tribe to different areas like the Transkei, the Orange Free State and even the Transvaal. Many people hid in caves and forests without food, as a result they became cannibals.

#### 1.7.5 Langalibalele's Kingship

Langalibalele was not Mthimkhulu's heir. He took over the kingship because Dlomo, his elder brother had been killed by the amaZulu King, Dingane.

During this period amaHlubi were no longer independent. They were under the Zulu Kingdom. Installing a chief therefore meant reporting first to their overlords. When Dlomo was presented before king Dingane at his royal kraal he was immediately killed.

When Langalibalele was presented to Dingane, he was nearly killed also, but he escaped.

Although relations with Dingane improved later on, it is obvious that his aim was to destroy Hlubi leadership. When Mpande became king, relations with the amaHlubi were strained. Mpande attacked amaHlubi who eventually fled in desperation to seek refuge in Natal. The colonial government eventually settled Langalibalele and his tribe in the Estcourt district where they are found today.

Their stay in the Estcourt district was not a peaceful one. Relations with white farmers, magistrates and the Colonial Government ended up in a rebellion because Langalibalele could not force his people to produce guns which had been brought from Kimberley.

After skirmishes with the Colonial troops, Langalibalele was arrested, tried and banished from his country. He was sent to Robben Island, later on he was returned and kept in the Pietermaritzburg district under Chief Tetelegu. The tribe was displaced. Langalibalele died in 1879 and was buried at his home place in a traditional way.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. HISTORY IN ORAL LORE IN GENERAL

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Writing about traditional literature in Southern Sotho, Guma (1967) says;

"a people's past is its spiritual heritage and as such, it should not only be nursed and nurtured, but preserved and jealously guarded for all times."

Guma goes on to say that people's past provide stability. Without the knowledge of the past;

"... nation is like a tree without roots liable to be blown over by the gentlest of breezes, with it, it can withstand the strongest of hurricanes, because it is firmly rooted"

(Guma, 1967:1).

Such then is the value and social significance of oral lore which Guma says must be preserved and guarded for all times.

Von Fintel (1932) was emphasising the same point when he delivered his address on "Traditions and History of the amaHlubi Tribe" at the Weenen Vacation Course when he said:

"... one thing I would ask of everyone here is to collect and note traditions and what wisdom is very often contained in these traditions. They show us how your fathers lived and traded."

(Von Fintel, 1932:232.)

If we do not understand our past, it is more difficult to change the present or to look ahead to the future. The importance of knowledge of the past by any clan, tribe or nation cannot be over-emphasised.

It is for this reason therefore that this chapter aims at examining Imizekeliso, (legends) Amahubo, (songs) Izaga, (proverbs) and Izithakazelo (clan praises) as people's past that must be understood for the sake of the future.

## 2.2

### HISTORICAL DATA IN IMIZEKELISO (LEGENDS)

This section will discuss imizekeliso which are related to the amaHlubi history. Imizekeliso are called legends in English. They are prose narratives which contain some historical and some fantastic elements.

Canonici is right when he says imizekeliso are

"... told and believed as fact which took place in not so distant past, in the world as we know it today."

(Canonici, 1990:17).

In the following legends, tales of heroes and ancestors and stories regarding the birth and youth of extra-ordinary historical leaders who have a bearing on the amaHlubi will be reviewed.

#### 2.2.1 Legends Recorded by Von Fintel

Von Fintel (1932) recorded a legend the amaHlubi relate that:

"... a certain day a wanderer, a young man, came to Bhungane and said, "Father, give me umuthi wobukhosi - medicine of chiefship."

Bhungane replied, "My child climb up yonder mountains. There you will find a cow; milk her." The youth ascended the mountain, but returned breathless, and called out:

"King, there is no cow, but a lioness."

The king looked seriously at the young man and instructed him again to climb the mountain to milk the cow, which he did, and returned with the lioness' milk to Bhungane. He commanded him to drink it and he did so.

"Now my child," the king said, "go home, as you are now in possession of the umuthi wobukhosi." The young man later became a great hero and the creator of the Zulu nation. He was King Shaka.

(Von Fintel, 1932:231).



This story must have been told to extol Bhungane's knowledge of medicines. It might have been that the amaHlubi wanted and created an answer to the question why Shaka became so powerful. This story contains some historical truth that Shaka conquered all tribes but he spared Bhungane, his great inyanga (doctor).

#### 2.2.2 Death of Mthimkhulu : The First Legend

Mthimkhulu was killed by Matiwane, chief of the amaNgwane. Tradition has two narratives which explain why the amaNgwane killed Mthimkhulu.

The first story recorded by Wright and Manson (1983) is related by Mabhonsa, the Hlubi oral historian. According to Mabhonsa, Matiwane was incited to kill Mthimkhulu by a Hlubi diviner named Zulu kaMafu Hadebe. This man had formerly been one of Mthimkhulu's doctors but had left him to join Matiwane because he felt that the Hlubi king was not giving him enough cattle for his services. No sooner was he established among the Ngwane, than Zulu kaMafu plotted with Matiwane to kill Mthimkhulu.

An attractive Ngwane girl was presented by Matiwane to Mthimkhulu. After sleeping with the Hlubi king, the girl returned to the Ngwane country with some of his semen. This was used by Zulu KaMafu to make medicine which put Mthimkhulu in Matiwane's power.

Under the influence of the evil forces produced by the medicine Mthimkhulu one day in the autumn left his homestead accompanied only by a few boys and went off to inspect the crops ripening in his fields. Ngwane warriors who were hiding in the field emerged and killed him.

### 2.2.3 The Second Legend About the Death of Mthimkhulu

The second story explains the killing of Mthimkhulu as follows:

When Matiwane was to be attacked by the Mthethwa Chief, Dingiswayo, he asked Mthimkhulu to take charge of his cattle. Mthimkhulu agreed and hid Matiwane's cattle in the mountains until the war was over. When the war was over Matiwane asked for the return of his cattle. Mthimkhulu refused to give them back. The angry Ngwane then prepared

for war. The amaHlubi were attacked, their king was killed and they were then driven away from their land.

(Wright & Manson, 1983:14-15).

#### 2.2.4 A Legend Which Associates the AmaHlubi with Shaka

Another legend which associates amaHlubi with Shaka is about izindlubu (ground nuts). It is said Mthimkhulu, one of the amaHlubi kings, was a great medicine man and magician, hence his name Mthimkhulu (great medicine man and magician).

Shaka was very fond of ground nuts and Mthimkhulu performed his magical skills in the presence of Shaka. Ground nuts were produced and offered to Shaka by Mthimkhulu. It was after that incident that Shaka introduced the phrase, "undlubu zamila emthondweni" (ground nuts that grew from the penis) referring to King Mthimkhulu.

What is important in this legend is the relationship that existed between Shaka and amaHlubi. It will be remembered that Shaka by

this time had attacked and conquered many tribes but the amaHlubi, during the reign of Bhungane and his heir Mthimkhulu, were spared.

#### 2.2.5 Origin of the Name AmaHlubi

Nobody seems to remember how the amaHlubi got this name. In all known lists of the amaHlubi kings, this name does not appear. While Mzolo (1977) and Cope (1968) believe that a clan is named after its founder, Bryant (1929) came up with another answer. Bryant correctly says that the clan name or tribal name may originate from a certain incident in the history of a clan or tribe.

One of the writer's informants at Estcourt district had this to say about the origin of the name "Hlubi";

Ncobo, one of the earliest amaHlubi kings was a women killer. One of his wives was MaHlubi who was a Bhele. Because of his bad habits Ncobo was killed and his wife MaHlubi was taken by Hadebe who was Ncobo's brother. This custom is known as "ukungena". Children born out of this union belonged to the dead brother. It is said that

children disowned their father Ncobo and said they belonged to MaHlubi, they are "amaHlubi", they are Hadebes, and from then onwards Hadebes adopted the name "Hlubi".

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

The historical facts preserved in the above legends can be summarised as follows:

- 2.3.1 Shaka was a powerful king.
- 2.3.2 The amaHlubi kings were well-known for their knowledge of medicines for making powerful chiefs and kings.
- 2.3.3 Relationship between amaZulu and the amaHlubi tribe during the reign of Bhungane and Mthimkhulu was cordial.
- 2.3.4 According to tradition a widow was taken by the deceased's brother.

This custom is known as "ukungena". Children born out of this union belong to the dead man.

## 2.4 HISTORICAL DATA IN AMAHUBO

### 2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Like other tribes, the amaHlubi commemorate in song outstanding events in their history. The amahubo are rich in historical data. They are similar to the izibongo in their content and function.

Like the izibongo, the amahubo are used to mark important historic occasions like weddings, funerals, ceremonies and festivals.

### 2.4.2 DEFINITION OF IHUBO

Doke and Vilakazi (1958) in their English-Zulu Dictionary define ihubo as "ceremonial music."

It is, however, Xulu (1989) who gives a broader view of amahubo when he says an ihubo is a

"... sacred song belonging to a clan, region, or the nation which usually reflects its historical past and enhances its identity."

(Xulu, 1989:2).

Xulu (1989) further explains that ihubo is sacred because it is performed in order to maintain a positive relationship between the living and their ancestors. It is performed when there is a major ritual occasion, like a wedding or funeral as mentioned above.

As has been pointed out in the above definition, each clan had its ihubo which served to identify and unify it; the amaHlubi had likewise their own amahubo.

Only two types of amahubo will be analysed here. They were recorded in the Estcourt district. It has been noted in the above definition that amahubo are part of the oral history of a particular nation. They are strictly linked with the nation so much so that a listener or a reader needs to have a fair knowledge of a nation's traditions and history in order to understand and interpret them.

"Uban' obengathinta thina  
Obengathint' amaHlub' amnyama  
Siyizwile lendaba  
O, siyizwile lendaba."

"Who can dare to touch us  
Who can dare to touch amaHlubi who are Black  
We have heard this story,  
O, we have heard this story."

This ihubo must have evolved during the reign of Bhungane when the amaHlubi kingdom reached the height of its power. Singing of this ihubo served to identify and unify the amaHlubi army in their single purpose, to defeat the enemy. This ihubo implies that the amaHlubi warriors were brave like their ancestors. For that reason:

"Who can dare to touch us." (line 1)

As the sacred song was sung, the warriors had in mind their fore-fathers who are the source of inspiration, courage and power, and who also would guard and shield them from enemies.



Strong and powerful though the amaHlubi were during the reign of Bhungane and that of Mthimkhulu who succeeded him, they were not a united tribe. We are reminded of this by the second line which is not complete in the ihubo:

"amaHlubi amnyama ...  
Anzipho zimnyama  
Ngokuqhwayana."

(The Black AmaHlubi who have Black nails  
Because of scratching one another,  
Fighting among themselves.)

The line alludes to a very important historical event in the history of the amaHlubi.

This event is the division of the tribe which started during the reign of Bhungane when the authority of the king was flouted by dissident relatives and subordinate chiefs. It is said;

"quarrels with one another had become endemic."

(Wright & Manson, 1983:10).

Mthimkhulu, Bhungane's heir inherited this problem. During the reign of Mthimkhulu the divided tribe was easily crushed and scattered by Matiwane, chief of amaNgwane as briefly explained in Chapter One.

The researcher's informants confirmed that even to this day "scratching each other" still exists in the amaHlubi Kingdom. Petty quarrels over the nomination of the king's councillors were reported.

A disconcerting and saddening experience the writer had at Estcourt district was when the royal bard, Veleleni Nene refused to perform izibongo of the amaHlubi kings for the writer to record them because he had been criticised by those close to the king.

No amount of persuasion or offer of remuneration could make him perform izibongo because, to cite his words:

"Sengazihlanza izibongo zokhokho bamaHlubi."

"I have vomited izibongo of the amaHlubi ancestors."

The following war song also commemorates a very important historical event in the history of the amaHlubi. It was also collected from the Estcourt district.

1. "Wasilaya Nomntontwana  
Walithanda, Walithanda  
Walithanda ngempela iNtesha"

"You have let us down Nomntontwana  
You love him, you love him  
You really love iNtesha"

2. "Wasiqeda weShulwane  
Wasiqeda, wasiqeda  
Wasilimaza ngempela ngesibhamu"

"You have destroyed us Shulwane  
You have destroyed us, you have destroyed us  
You have really wounded us with a gun.

It was suggested that this ihubo was composed after the amaHlubi impi was defeated by Shulwane single-handed, who carried a gun. Shulwane was induna of the amaNtesha army.

The historical background to this ihubo however is important if it is to be understood. History alluded to in this ihubo is a very long one. It starts with Langalibalele's rebellion which ended with the dispossession of the amaHlubi of their land by the Colonial Government. Hlubi land was given to the Mlaba clan, "amaNtesha" as the amaHlubi call them.

This naturally infuriated amaHlubi and hatred developed between them and the Mlaba clan.

When Chief Tatzela's daughter, Nomntontwana fell in love with a certain Zondi who was a member of the "iNtesha tribe", an enemy of the amaHlubi, the amaHlubi were angry and war, known as "Impi" kaNomntontwane" ensued.

The amaHlubi army was, however, brought to its knees by Shulwane the induna of Mlaba's impi. It is said that Shulwane way-laid the amaHlubi's army in a deep gorge from which he shot and killed many warriors.

Chief Tatazela was the heir to Siyephu of Langalibalele of Mthimkhulu of Bhungane.

It is important to note that the amaHlubi fought against the Mlaba clan on several occasions until the government decided to remove the Mlabas from the land which was previously occupied by the amaHlubi. The amaHlubi decided to rename the area as "Ensukangihlale" which means "amaNtesha went away for amaHlubi to stay." The original name is Bhekuzulu, which was the name of Langalibalele's head kraal and the meaning of this name is "Watch the Zulus."

The mention of isibhamu (gun) in line 6 has a deeper meaning for the amaHlubi. To the amaHlubi the gun meant the loss of their land and their king in what was referred to as the Langalibalele Rebellion.

"We baba wangisiza  
Wangisiza wangikhulisa"

Oh! father you helped me  
You helped me by bringing me up.

"We baba wangisiza,  
Wangisiza wangihlabel' inkomo"

Oh! father you helped me,  
You helped me by slaughtering a beast for  
me."

The stages of development of a girl in olden times were marked by certain duties and ceremonies which were observed. When the girl reached the age of puberty she was considered as Samuelson put it;

"... to have commenced a new lease of life ... and an Emulisa beast was slaughtered in her honour."

(Samuelson, 1929:357).

Samuelson defines ukwemulisa as:

"to initiate into a new part of one's existence".

(Samuelson, 1929:357).

The above ihubo was sung by the honoured girl and girls of her own age when they emerged from the hut where they had been confined. The sitting or confinement in the hut is known as "Ukugongqa".

What is important about this ceremony is that the honoured girl wore on her shoulders umhlwehlwe. Umhlwehlwe is a net-like covering of fat over the entrails. It is put on the girl's shoulders. Xulu (1989) says;

Umhlwehlwe symbolises

assumed fertility and virginity of the girl."

(Xulu, 1989:54).

As umhlwehlwe is white, it symbolises a bright future and happiness. Wearing of umhlwehlwe could be a way of linking her to the family ancestors from whom blessings for her are sought.

The father is opening his daughter's way to a happy marriage in future which will be blessed with children.

Indeed the beast is always slaughtered to appease the ancestors and to ask for their protection and prosperity. The young girl's bright future is thus assured. And so girls sing in jubilation,

"Wangisiza baba wangikhulisa  
Wangihlabel' inkomo."

"You helped me father  
By bringing me up  
And by slaughtering for me a beast".

They praise and thank the head of the kraal who will in turn address the ancestors on their behalf.

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

Historical data is not only found in amahubo songs. Tracey (1948) collected 100 songs in his book "Lalela Zulu" some of which are based on historical incidents.



A song about the sinking of a warship in 1927, the S S Mendi during the First World War can be cited here. Songs about the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906 were once sung but they are now forgotten.

2.8.1 African religion and beliefs are preserved in amahubo.

2.8.2 Amahubo like izithakazelo (clan-praises) serve to identify and unify the clan.

2.8.3 We are reminded of the customs practised by our ancestors. "Rites of passage" like umemulo, the first fruits ceremony, ukweshwama, were solemnised in tribal amahubo.

2.8.4 Heroic deeds, and other events like quarrels are preserved in amahubo.

## 2.9 HISTORICAL DATA IN IZAGA

### 2.9.1 INTRODUCTION

Izaga are proverbs. A proverb is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as a:

"Short pithy saying in general use."

Krappe cited by Nyembezi (1954) stated that:

"A proverb represents, in its essential form some homely truth expressed in a concise and terse manner so as to recommend itself to a more or less extended circle."

(Nyembezi, 1954:1).

Nyembezi (1954) concluded that proverbs may be called aphoristic expressions which the Zulu call izaga.

Finnegan (1970) defines a proverb as:

"a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it".

(Finnegan, 1970:393).

What comes out of the above definitions is that proverbs, unlike izibongo or amahubo and even izithakazelo are short, terse aphoristic expressions which are generally used in speech.

Proverbs differ from other elements of oral literature mentioned above in that they have no specialised occasions for their use.

In an ordinary conversation you may hear a person use izaga to add weight to what he is saying. In the course of drinking beer one may say of the head of the kraal:

"Ubopha inja nogodo."

(He ties up the dog to fire wood -

He is very stingy).

The kraal head may bring a small pot of beer and his guests may retort by saying:

"Umlomo kaweyi"

(The mouth does not despise).

which means they are thankful for what they are given even if it is small in quantity and poor in quality.

## 2.10

### THE ORIGIN OF PROVERBS

What is relevant in this thesis is the origin of proverbs. There are no people whose special task is to evolve proverbs. Nyembezi says:

"... an individual may, quite unwittingly and quite unintentionally make a statement which may have a certain appeal to the listeners who will repeat it to others and in that way an expression becomes part of the privileged utterances of a language."

(Nyembezi, 1954:xi).

Some people have a rare ability of saying something clever. What they say becomes popular with people and when accepted, a proverb is evolved.

Proverbs have their origin in mythology, folktales, observation of the people and animal behaviour and in history. It is in the latter source that we are interested.

## 2.11

### HISTORY AND PROVERBS

The value of the proverb to us in modern times lie on what it reveals of thoughts of the past.

Ancient people observed with keen interest what happened in their environment. Human and animal behaviour captured their imagination and these impressions were stored for future use.

When a person cried incessantly, an important event in history was recalled. This event is the death of Shaka's mother. Shaka ordered the nation to mourn the death of his mother, Nandi. Those who failed to shed tears were killed. It was only after the intervention of Gala kaNodade, a brave warrior who pleaded with King Shaka that the mourning be suspended. The saying evolved is;

"Ukhal' esika Nandi."

(She cries as though she is mourning for Nandi).

(Nyembezi, 1954:214).

Another memorable historical event is that of a brave warrior Manyosi, son of Dlekezele Mbatha who lived during the time of Shaka. Manyosi could finish a carcass of a goat all by himself. He was allowed as much food as he wanted because he was a brave fighter. When the Zulus split into two factions, one following Mpande and the other

following Dingane, Manyosi made a blunder of following Mpande. With Mpande he could not get enough food. People started saying that his stomach would go down. The expression

"Sobohla Manyosi."

(It (the stomach) will settle down in time Manyosi).

was then evolved.

The proverb describes one who would have cause to regret his past actions. Today, it is also used of people who because they find themselves prosperous, live recklessly, not caring to provide for tomorrow.

(Nyembezi, 1954:79).

When Whites arrived in South Africa they introduced laws which were completely strange and incomprehensible to the Black people. The levy of the poll tax, (money paid by grown up males) and a hut tax - imposed on every African who owned a hut in the colony in 1849 caused dissatisfaction,

strained feelings, and resentment resulted in the Langalibalele and later the Bhambatha Rebellion. The proverb that evolved out of this is

"Insumansuman' imali yamakhanda."

(It is incomprehensible, it is the poll tax)

(Nyembezi, 1954:200).

The proverb is used to describe any extra-ordinary or absurd thing.

## 2.12 HISTORICAL DATA IN IZITHAKAZELO

### 2.12.1 INTRODUCTION

Izithakazelo constitute a type of izibongo common among the Black people of South Africa. In English they are referred to as clan-praises. It is true, and Mzolo (1977) confirms that:

"... izithakazelo are the property of a group of people, the members of the clan and that they are shared by every member of the clan."

(Mzolo, 1977:73).

Izithakazelo therefore differ from izibongo (praises) of the chiefs and other individuals because these are personal.

Izithakazelo consist of clan names. Cope (1968) and Mzolo (1977) confirm that clan names are personal names of particularly famous people in the clan's history, usually chiefs or, renowned warriors. These are founders of the clan.

Hadebe, Bhungane, Mthimkhulu and Langalibalele were famous founders of the Hlubi clan.

Izithakazelo like other elements of oral tradition are dying among the Africans. In the search to record izithakazelo of Hadebe clan the writer found that youth, especially those in townships have a very scant knowledge of izithakazelo of their clan.



The following lines were generally known:

1. Hadebe
2. Bhungane
3. Mthimkhulu
4. Ndlubu ezamila ebubini.
5. Mashiy' amahle anjengawenyamazane.

It is obvious that social conditions and urbanisation have made people forget their tradition. The adoption of foreign religions have made people change words which are considered vulgar like in line 4 in the above izithakazelo where instead of saying

"Ndlubu zamila emthondweni"

(Ground nuts which grew from the penis).

nowadays you often hear people say

"Ndlubu zamila ebubini"

(Groundnuts which grew in a bad place).

It will be shown later on how youth learnt izithakazelo of their clan. We shall start by reviewing one variant of izithakazelo of the Hadebe clan taken from Mzolo's (1977) work.

#### 2.12.2 Izithakazelo of Hadebe Clan

1. Hadebe
2. Mthimkhulu
3. Bhungane omakhulukhulu
4. Wena ondlubu zamila emthondweni
5. KaSothondose
6. Mangelengele anzipho zinde ngokuqhayana
7. Makhulukhulu
8. Hadebe omuhle, okhonza agoduke
9. Angaz' axakwe yithambo lasemzini
10. Wena kaLangalibalele
11. Sigoloz' esibuk' umuntu
12. Sengathi simjamele
13. Mashiy' amahl' anjengawenyamazane
14. Umkhulu Bhungane
15. Kodwa awungangoNkulunkulu.

1. Hadebe
2. Mthimkhulu
3. Bhungane of hundreds and hundreds
4. You the ground nuts which grew from the penis
5. Mr penis
6. The rough one with long finger nails because of scratching one another
7. Hundreds and hundreds
8. Hadebe, the good one who pays respects and goes home
9. Before he is placed in difficulties by the bone of the in-laws
10. You of Langalibalele
11. The starrer who stares at a person
12. As if threatening him
13. Eyebrows which are beautiful like those of a buck
14. You are great Bhungane
15. But you are not as great as God.

Although the izithakazelo seem to differ from the izibongo, their functions are the same. The izithakazelo are the izibongo of the chiefs or kings put together briefly.

As historical data in the izithakazelo overlap with that found in izibongo, history in izithakazelo will be treated briefly. Historically izithakazelo are known for the following functions:

- Maintenance of ties
- Teaching of social behaviour
- Linking the living and the ancestors.

### 2.12.3 Maintenance of Social Ties

All the clans know their izithakazelo or are expected to know them as part of their culture and heritage. Guma (1967) writing about traditional literature in Southern Sotho emphasised this.

It does not matter whether you spell your clan's name as Hadebe or Radebe, izithakazelo unite you because it is known that some of the amaHlubi tribe fled to the Cape Province during the wars that threatened to destroy the tribe (imfazwe) when Mthimkhulu was reigning. When izithakazelo are called out one is reminded of one's forefathers who are Hadebe, Bhungane, Mthimkhulu and Langalibalele and a strong sense of pride and

belonging is aroused. One begins to be aware of one's own blood relatives even if one is Xhosa and one is using the "ifani" or the "isiduko."

Izithakazelo have among the important functions, prevention of inter-marriage. All Hadebe's know that they are Mangelengele and that they are

"Mashiy' amahle anjengawenyamazane."

(Eyebrows that are beautiful like those of a buck"

and not

"Mashiy' amahle sengathi azohlabelela"

(Eyebrows that are beautiful as if they are going to sing), because these are Ngcobos.

#### 2.12.4 Social behaviour and izithakazelo

Through the use of izithakazelo courtesy, respect for adults and authority was or is shown. Children were taught izithakazelo informally when they were very young. They were consoled or comforted with izithakazelo when they were crying. The mother or grandmother would say

"Thula wena Bhungane  
Thula Makhulukhulu omuhle."

(Stop crying Bhungane  
Be quiet Makhulukhulu the beautiful one)

If the child for instance refused to eat he was  
coaxed by repeating izithakazelo in the following  
way:

"Dlana Bhungane wami,  
Idla Mthimkhulu omuhle."

(Eat my Bhungane  
Eat Mthimkhulu who is beautiful)

As the child grew up, he noticed how his mother  
addressed his father and how visitors announced  
themselves when they entered the homestead.

The mother then taught the child respect  
indirectly, the traditional way of showing respect  
for adults and those in authority. The mother  
would kneel in front of her husband and address  
him using, now and then, izithakazelo in a very  
polite manner as follows:

"Yebo Mthimkhulu ngiyezwa,  
Kepha Bhungane angiboni ukuthi  
Kosilungela Hlub' elihle".

(Yes Mthimkhulu, I understand  
But Bhungane I don't think  
It will work, beautiful Hlubi).

Before a man entered a Hadebe kraal, he announced himself by shouting izithakazelo. Once inside, the kraal head was greeted by using izithakazelo. When the visitor was offered food he expressed his gratitude by repeating izithakazelo.

Through this social behaviour izithakazelo were transmitted to the youth which grew up knowing the izithakazelo of their clan and their significance in society.

#### 2.12.5 Religious significance of izithakazelo

Gunner (1984) writing about significance of praising says:

"praising is in many ways closely associated with the ancestors, and in many performance contexts, there is an intricate association of praise and prayer."

(Gunner, 1984:50).

The act of calling out izithakazelo is considered tantamount to calling on ancestors, of speaking to them and is, as Gunner puts it:

"A solemn and sacred occasion not to be taken lightly."

(Gunner, 1984:50).

The relationship between the dead or ancestors and the living warrants some explanation for those who are not familiar with African culture. The amaZulu believe that the living and the ancestors cannot be separated. They are as Berglund noted:

"closely and very intimately tied together in kinship bonds which make the individuals and shades of a lineage interdependent."

(Berglund, 1976:197).



Ancestors are called or spoken to on many occasions. They are spoken to on happy occasions like marriage ceremonies. On occasions such as this one ancestors or "shades" as they are sometimes referred to are notified about the bride who is the new member of the clan and are called upon to guard her against misfortunes of, for instance, not having children in her marriage.

Izithakazelo are also performed during sad times like when the member of the family is ill. The head of the family who is by tradition the religious head of the kraal performs izithakazelo outside. This is ukuthetha amadlozi<sup>1</sup> as the kraal head literally scolds and blames the ancestors who are considered to be failing in their duty.

Walking this way and that way in the yard the kraal head would complain and scold the "shades" by repeating izithakazelo at the same time talking to them like this:

---

1. Ukuthetha amadlozi means to propitiate ancestors.

Nina bakwaBhungane,  
Nina bakwaMthimkhulu  
Makhos' amakhulu  
Senenzani manje, ingane yenu  
Yadliwa ukufa.  
Uma nimthatha izingane zakhe zizophila kanjani?  
Nisihluphelani kangaka?  
Nisolani Mangelengele?  
Nina bakaLangalibalele.

You of Bhungane  
You of Makhulukhulu  
Kings who are great,  
What are you doing now?  
Why is your child being eaten by  
Illness in your presence?  
If you take him now how will his children survive?  
Why do you trouble us so much?  
What is your complaint Mangelengele?  
You of Langalibalele.

CONCLUSION

In this section izithakazelo of the Hadebe clan have been reviewed in order to reveal their historical nature. It has been revealed that izithakazelo are clan names of famous figures who made history.

It has been shown also that izithakazelo were used for greeting, appreciation and for uniting the members of the clan.

Lastly, it has been revealed that izithakazelo were used as a form of a "prayer" which was used in addressing the ancestors.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at reviewing the views of scholars cited in Chapter One regarding izibongo.

Cook (1931), Von Fintel (1932), Nyembezi (1954), Awe (1974), Finnegan (1977) and others all agreed that the izibongo are significant as historical documents. Awe (1974) also says that:

"... students of Yoruba oral literature agreed that poetic genre constitutes the largest and most important single item; for almost every aspect of Yoruba life finds expression in poetry, and poetry is the most popular literary form for making important occasions - weddings, births, funerals, naming ceremonies, festivals etc in Yoruba life."

(Awe, 1974:331).

There is a great similarity between the Yoruba oral literature and Zulu oral traditions. Like izithakazelo, the izibongo are used to mark important occasions like weddings and funerals. Their importance however, lies in their use as a repository of historical material.

Philip Bagby, cited by Marwick (1987) says:

"... historians play the same role in our society as the bards of less-developed people, they revivify and remould the past in order that it may serve as an inspiration for the present."

(Marwick, 198:24).

The above quotation compares and recognises the role of the bards and the historians. Both have a function of recording past events, but this is done in a different manner because bards and historians belong to different societies; one to a literate and the other to a non-writing tradition.

Compared to a historian, the bard does not collect historical facts from different sources in order to write them down. He merely notes in his mind what happens during the lifetime of the subject. History which is preserved in the izibongo was thus kept in the memory of the people before the izibongo were written down.

This brings us to the following very important questions: What is history? and, how historical are the izibongo? The definitions of history will be of assistance in answering these questions.

### 3.2

#### HISTORY DEFINED

The Concise Oxford Dictionary, new edition (1987:383) gives the following definition:

"... history is a continuous chronological record of important or public events, the study of past events especially human affairs, the total accumulation of past events relating to human affairs or the accumulation of developments connected with a particular nation, person, an eventful past, a systematic or critical account of research into a past event or events, similar record or account of natural phenomena."

The New Book of Knowledge Volume 8 Incorporated, Danburg (1989:136) and the World Book Encyclopaedia Volume 9, Chicago (1989:232) say this about history: Historians study all aspects of past human life, social and cultural conditions as well as political and economic events. Some historians study the past simply to understand better how people of other times acted and

thought. Others seek to draw lessons from these actions and thought as a guide for decision and policies today.

Some examine economic and social conditions, some trace the development of religion, the arts or other elements of culture.

Commager (1989:1) cited by Esterhuizen, Gunning and Mocke draws the following conclusions:

"... it means the past and all that happened in the past. It means too the record of the past. All that men have said and written of the past."

Clarke (1989:1) cited by Esterhuizen, Gunning and Mocke states that:

"... history is the record of what had happened in the past, however long ago or however recently."

"... it refers to past events, to a written reproduction of the past - events which portray the lifestyle and experience of people."

What is emphasised in the above definitions is that history is a record of past events and that history is a study of recorded events.

### 3.3 RELATING DEFINITIONS OF HISTORY TO IZIBONGO

Having learnt the different definitions of history, one is obliged to ask the following questions:

- 3.3.1 Are the izibongo a continuous chronological record of important or public events?
- 3.3.2 Are the izibongo a study of past events, especially human affairs?
- 3.3.3 Are the izibongo a total accumulation of past events relating to human affairs?
- 3.3.4 Are the izibongo a systematic or critical account of a research into past event or events?



3.3.5 Are the izibongo a study of all aspects of human life, social and cultural conditions as well as political and economic events?

3.3.6 Are the izibongo past events which portray the life style and experience of people?

The izibongo will prove themselves to be historical documents if they have answers to these questions.

There is a strong possibility that izibongo may not answer all these questions, considering the fact that the bard is or was a quasi-historian. All the same let us get the answers from izibongo themselves. We shall start with Bhungane's izibongo. The historical background of this great king has been given. The writer regards him as great because the izithakazelo of the Hadebes are incomplete without Bhungane's name. Even though his history is somehow forgotten, the name still remains important to the amaHlubi.

3.4 KING BHUNGANE'S IZIBONGO

In answering the questions posed above the writer will narrate the story of this great tribe, selecting historical verses and interpreting allusions.

Indeed when one examines Bhungane's izibonqo one finds oneself reading about a tribe which once occupied a certain land which was characterised by certain vegetation and infested with certain animals. This hint comes from izibonqo themselves:

In line 4 and 45 it is said:

"Yinhlabathi yo <u>Ndi</u> no <u>Thukela</u>	1.4
Ngokuwelawela uMzinyathi."	1.45

(It is the sand of the uNdi and the Thukela	1.4
By now and then crossing uMzinyathi river)	1.45

It is a known fact that the amaHlubi occupied the uMzinyathi Valley, a country which stretched from the source of the uMzinyathi river near the

present day Wakkerstroom to the south where the uMzinyathi enters the Thukela river. The Undi mountains formed the western boundary.

Izibongo then reveal that Bhungane ruled a large tribe which occupied a vast country.

As imbongi was praising the king, citing his outstanding qualities much information of historical value was revealed. In lines 12, 21, 22 and 25 we hear imbongi saying:

"Yindlovu yakwaMazibuko.	1.12
Ngu-Gengelezi ukwakhisa kwenyathi	1.21
Ukhoz' umaxul' umaphakamisa	1.22
Yisilo sako Mbikazi".	1.25

(It is the elephant of Mazibuko.	1.12
Broad flat face like that of a buffalo.	1.21
The eagle that pounces on its prey and takes off	1.22
It is the lion of Mbikazi.)	1.25

Bhungane is compared to an elephant, a buffalo, an eagle and to a lion in the above lines. What the imbongi is revealing here is that the Hlubi

country was infested with these animals. Most important is the portrait of the king which is drawn by the imbongi here. By comparing Bhungane to the above-mentioned animals, the imbongi tells us that Bhungane was a mighty king. He was powerful, ruthless, fearsome and unpredictable and that such qualities were expected of a king. A king was expected to be brave. The imbongi commends this quality when he says of Bhungane:

"Yindlovu yakwaMqadi eluphondo lunye  
Elikhanisel' ezimpondo ngambili (15-16)

(The elephant of Mqadi which has one horn  
But that took a stand against those with  
two horns.)

In describing the qualities of Bhungane, the imbongi also tells us about social values during that period. The imbongi describes how Bhungane killed his enemies. It could be said he was brutal and ruthless as in lines 48-49.

"Umlawuli womkhonto osanda kulolwa,  
Umvuni wabantu njengamabele."

(The wielder of a spear that has just been sharpened,  
The one who reaps people as he would reap sorghum).

But this was not so. By today's standards Bhungane's behaviour may seem to have been brutal, but at that time such heavy-handedness was justifiable. Bhungane, we are told, because of his greatness became famous. He became known far and wide by strong as well as weak tribes as revealed in lines 10 and 11.

"UBhungane yindikinda yindaba uze waba  
yindaba nakuzikhundlwana."

(UBhungane is spoken about, he is famous  
even among ordinary people)

Bhungane was not known only for valorous deeds.  
The imbonqi also tells us that:

"NguBhungane wamakhulukhulu"

(It is Bhungane of hundreds and hundreds)

What is implied here is that Bhungane was prosperous. He had many cattle, goats and wives. What he had he had in hundreds. One of the writer's informants estimated that Bhungane had 300 wives.

Tradition also reports that Bhungane was a great inyanga (traditional doctor). His knowledge of royal medicines and medicine for making rain made him famous. It is said herds of cattle from as far as Zululand were driven to Bhungane in exchange for medicine to make rain when there was drought.

It is also said that during Bhungane's time good rains were the order of the day and crops were plentiful. People ascribed this to Bhungane's power to make rain.

Wright and Manson (1983) say:

"... such was his renown among his people that a hundred years later their descendants still remembered him in the expression uttered especially when good rains fell;

"uBhungane wenza ngakuningi"  
(Bhungane creates abundance),

Wright & Manson: 1983:10).

3.4.1 POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Izibongo tell us very little about political conditions during Bhungane's time. The reason for killing of Mafu of Dwala of the Hadebe clan in line 23 is found in secondary sources.

Although Bhungane was regarded as a powerful king he does not seem to have had a stronghold over his people. The tribe was divided. The division was caused by lack of control over senior sons who made themselves chieftains and ruled their followers independently. He is reported to have tried in vain to exert his authority on dissident relatives by killing Mafu kaDwala in line 23.

"Wabulal' uMafu kwabakwabo."

(He killed Mafu his own relative).

Wright and Manson (1983) report that the cause of division was the fact that Bhungane did not have amabutho - (age regiments) and isigodlo (an establishment of girls given as a tribute to the king.) The izibongo however suggest that an isigodlo existed. In line 8 imbongi says:

"Ubabaz' eseSigodlweni."

(He exclaimed whilst in the upper part of the royal kraal reserved for the king's wives and his children).

#### 3.4.2 War Expeditions

The history that abounds in oral tradition is mainly political incidents, wars and revolutions. The imbongi preserved the valorous deeds and events which were important to the amaHlubi tribe in the izibongo.

In describing the expeditions against the enemies in lines 29 and 30;

"Uyoshis' imizi yama-Vimbela  
yabo Jabanq' umntaka-Mpila."

(He is going to burn the kraals of amaVimbela of Jabanq' son of Mpila)



Military tactics adopted during this period are revealed. Houses were burnt and people were killed. Women and children were usually spared or taken back as trophies.

Bhungane was attacked by enemies but they failed to conquer him. Imbongi puts it metaphorically in lines 38-40;

"Isihlahla sentshungu sombhelebhele  
kade bethi bayasigawula pho,  
siyawunqinda amazembe".

(Bush of an unripe bitter herb which, they have been trying for a long time to chop down, but it blunts the axes).

In these lines the strength and power of Bhungane is revealed.

during the reign of Bhungane. On arrival in Hlubi country Godongwane changed his name to Mdingi or Dingiswayo which means the homeless one\one in exile.

Langalibalele was a contemporary of two Zulu Kings, Mpande and Cetshwayo. It was through Mpande's attack that he fled his traditional country in the Mzinyathi valley with the whole tribe and settled in Natal under the Colonial Government in 1848.

The history of the amaHlubi tribe in Langalibalele's izibongo can be divided into two periods:

- The period when the amaHlubi occupied the uMzinyathi Valley, their traditional home and,
- The period when they occupied land in the Estcourt district.

### 3.6 EVENTS WHEN THE AMAHLUBI WERE AT MZINYATHI

#### 3.6.1 Introduction

We know that Langalibalele was the younger brother of Dlomo who was supposed to succeed Mthimkhulu. Dlomo was killed by the Zulus as explained in Chapter One.

It is reported that before Langalibalele ascended the throne he went to the Swazi king to ask for "uselwa", an important medicine which makes kings strong. He was warned that "uselwa" would kill him if he did not belong to the royal house.

It was mentioned in Chapter One that many Hlubi kings married Swazi maidens and that the amaHlubi historically were close to the amaSwazi.

In Nene's version it is said Langalibalele is:

"Umqomboli ongakhohlwa zindlela zasekhabonina  
Ingani abadala bese zibakhohliwe"

(The traveller who has not forgotten the road to his mother's place whilst the old people have forgotten them.)

The imbongi is reminding us that the amaHlubi originated near uBombo mountains which were part of Swaziland.

### 3.6.2 HISTORY OF SUCCESSION

Izibongo give us details of Langalibalele's road to chieftainship. It is history of valorous deeds, bravery and alertness.

Knowing how Langalibalele's brother Dlomo was killed the imbongi tells us that (line 41 and 42).

"Ubengasakuya KwaZulu  
Wabizwa ngumkhonto wesibhamu"

(He wouldn't have gone to Zululand.  
He was called by a spear of the gun.)

This means that though he feared for his life, he had no option but to go and report his succession to the throne to King Dingane. Failure to report

meant death. When an attempt to kill Langalibalele whilst at King Dingane's kraal was made, it is said (line 44 and 46):

"Washiya izinja zaKwaZulu  
Ebezimlom' ubomvu  
Ngokuphuz' igazi lamaḍoda"

(He outran the dogs of Zululand which  
had red mouths from drinking men's blood)

This means that Langalibalele had a narrow escape. He flew away like a dove that escaped from a number of kierries, hence the lines (8 - 9)

"Ijub' abalijukujele ngezagila  
KwaNodwengu lagwija"

(The dove they hurled knobkerries  
At Nodwengu but it dodged).

Nodwengu is in the district of Mahlabathini. Later on Mpande built his royal kraal which was called KwaNodwengu.

### 3.6.3 FIGHT OVER SUCCESSION

Writing about the izibongo of the Zulu kings, Cope (1968) says:

"Succession to chieftainship is seldom without dispute."

(Cope, 1968:20)

Succession to the throne in the amaHlubi kingship also suffered the same fate. Senior sons from different houses contested the kingship.

In the izibongo of Dlomo, one of the earliest kings of the amaHlubi there are following (lines 13 - 14).

"uDlomo akabunikwang' ubukhosi  
Wabuzuza ngenyanda yemikhonto."

(Dlomo was not handed the kingship  
He wrestled it with a bundle of assegais).

Dlomo was not given the kingship but he seized it by force.

Langalibalele managed to silence his rivals and as a result of this it is stated in his izibongo that (line 18 and 20)

"Ngu-Sombangeli  
Wabang' umuzi wamfanela."

(The great contesteer  
He contested Kingship and it suited him)

He was a great contesteer who contested the kingship and gained it.

#### 3.6.4 ENCOUNTER WITH CANNIBALS

The origin of the cannibals is important in the history of the amaHlubi. The destruction of the tribe or "Izwekufa" which occurred during the reign of Mthimkhulu forced people to live in caves and forests. These people became destitute when drought ensued and food became scarce.

Driven by hunger people resorted to eating other people. Langalibalele escaped being eaten by cannibals by swimming across the flooded Mzinyathi river. In his izibongo it is said (line 16 to 18)

"Unyama yamaZimu  
kaDuba, noMini, noLuphalule  
Bayidla beyidonsisana"

(Meat of cannibals  
of Duba, Mini and Luphalule  
Which they helped one another to eat)

Duba, Mini and Luphalule were Langalibalele's half-brothers who plotted to have him killed and eaten up by cannibals.

According to the writer's informants Duba's mother, Njomose, was a Bhele. The amaBhele, whose chief was Mahlaphahlapha were cannibals.

Duba asked Langalibalele to accompany him to his mother's place at the Amajuba mountains.

Once there, Duba plotted to have Langalibalele killed and eaten by the cannibals. Langalibalele was tied up against a pole. It is said he was saved by girls who saw Langalibalele and reported the matter to Gxiva his friend. Gxiva managed to



release Langalibalele who escaped during the night and crossed the Mzinyathi river which was in flood.

### 3.6.5 History of Escapes

Langalibalele has a long history of escapes. He escaped from cannibals as explained above.

Twice he escaped from being killed by the amaZulu as explained in lines 8 and 9 and also line 44 and 45. Line 34:

"uMashikizela, umashiy' impi yakhe"

(The restless one, one who left his regiment)

tells us also about Langalibalele's escape from those who were chasing him. The second major escape occurred when king Mpande threatened to attack the amaHlubi.

It will be remembered that Zulu kings were friendly to the amaHlubi kings especially to Bhungane and Mthimkhulu. King Shaka and Dingane never attacked the amaHlubi. It is reported that Langalibalele was helped to the throne by Dingane,

Mpande's enemy. When Mpande became a King it was natural to regard all those who were friendly to Dingane as his enemies.

When Mpande prepared to attack the amaHlubi, Langalibalele responded by rounding up the entire tribe and fleeing to Natal which by then was under the control of the British Colonial Government.

Langalibalele however, did put up a fight before he fled away and a number of amaZulu were killed. That is why in line 52 it is said:

"Uvalelise ngomkhonto kuZulu"

(He bade the Zulus farewell with a spear)

Phapha Hadebe, one of the writer's informants in the Estcourt district had one line of the izibongo which is not found in other versions. Referring to Langalibalele's flight he said:

"Usimba mthombo kusale

Kuphuz' uZulu"

(Digger of fountains and

the amaZulu stay behind to drink therefrom)

### 3.7 HISTORY OF THE AMAHLUBI IN THE ESTCOURT DISTRICT

#### 3.7.1 Introduction

On arrival in Natal, the amaHlubi were allocated land in the Estcourt district, which comprised mainly the western part of Estcourt where they formed a buffer zone, protecting white farmers from Bushmen raids.

#### 3.7.2 Relations with Whites

Other history sources elaborate on the social activities and relations with white farmers and magistrates during this period. The amaHlubi, as a subject of the colonial government were subjected to Colonial laws which were foreign to the amaHlubi. The magistrate would demand people to build roads without pay. The king would be asked to provide men for the colonial armies. All this irritated the king.

Langalibalele was asked to collect guns from his people for registration and this was the last straw. Langalibalele refused to do so.

The guns were received as payment or were bought from Kimberley. His failing to respond to instructions led to the conclusion that Langalibalele was rebelling against the government.

What followed was war between the colonial army and the amaHlubi. A few Whites were killed and the imbongi reports this in one line:

"Wavalelisa ngomkhonto koka Sonjica"

(He said good-bye with a spear to the son of Sonjica)

Sonjica is the Zulu name for Shepstone the Colonial Secretary. Whites who work with or who have any contact with amaZulu are given Zulu names. Usually these names are descriptive, describing certain noticeable characteristics or behaviour. Bishop Colenso, who was fatherly to people was called Sobantu, meaning father of the people.

Langalibalele was eventually arrested and sent to Pietermaritzburg for trial. His trial attracted the attention of many people, but it was Bishop Colenso who was very prominent in the defence of Langalibalele.

When Langalibalele was sentenced to banishment he was taken in a ship from Durban to Cape Town. And here the imbongi says (line 60 to 63):

"Ingungu kaMthimkhulu  
Abayingenis' emkhunjini  
Zonk' izizwe zabikelana."

(The sheltered one of Mthimkhulu  
whom they put on a ship and all the  
nations whispered one with another)

This means it was heard far and wide that Langalibalele had been banished from his land, and that he was taken in a ship. Lines 64 and 65 state the following:

"ubanjwe ngabazana nenkwenkwezi"  
nenyanga, nelanga nezilimela"

This means that he was caught by those who are superior, those who know stars, the moon, the sun and pleiades that mark the coming of spring.

3.8

#### CONCLUSION

Langalibalele's izibongo end on this note when he was separated from the izimbongi and the tribe. He spent 13 years in banishment, until through the efforts of Bishop Colenso he was returned to Natal. He was never allowed to join his people. He was kept under Chief Tetelegu on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg until his death. His corpse was transported to Estcourt district where he was buried like all amaHlubi Kings in the crevice of a rock.

It has been explained under amahubo what happened to the tribe after Langalibalele was arrested.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. HISTORICITY OF IZIBONGO

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at examining historicity of izibongo. Research methods used by historians and izimbongi will be compared.

It will be shown that imbongi uses crude methods of research which make izibongo quasi - history.

Izibongo could not answer all questions posed in the previous chapter about history. Some of these questions are the following:

- Are the izibongo a continuous chronological record of important public events?
- Are the izibongo a systematic or critical account of or research into past event or events?
- Are the izibongo a study of all aspects of social and cultural conditions as well as political and economic events?

This chapter will endeavour to provide answers why a scholar like Msimang is convinced that;

"The praises are even less than history because the primary objective is to praise and the recording of history is of secondary importance."

(Msimang, 1980:233)

#### 4.2 RESEARCH METHODS USED BY THE HISTORIANS

It is in the working of the historian, his collecting, selecting, evaluating and ordering of the historical facts before writing them down that we realise how limited the izibongo are as historical documents.

The facts of history are available to the historian in documents and inscriptions.

Carr summarises the work of a historian as follows:

"The historian collects them (historical facts) takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him."

(Carr, 1983:9).



The historian selects facts which are significant for his purpose. His main task however is not to record, but to evaluate what is worth recording. In other words, the historian does not only record facts or events, but also assigns a multiple causes to events.

Historians always ask the question, "why?" which make them give a multiple of causes to events.

"Information, provided for the sake of information", Marwick says, "is not really information at all; the historian himself must be aware of its significance and make that significance clear to his reader."

(Marwick, 1987:152).

Once a corpus of facts has been ascertained and selection made, the report is systematically and orderly written or presented. In the following paragraphs it will be shown how the traditional imbongi differs from the historian.

#### 4.3

#### RESEARCH METHODS USED BY IZIBONGI

It has been mentioned above how the imbongi "composes" the izibongo. The term "compose" here has been used as if the imbongi sits down and creates the work of art.

The imbongi however uses known information to build up izibongo. The question is, how does he collect information he uses in izibongo? Does he follow the same methods used by historians?

##### 4.3.1

#### The Imbongi's Source of Information

Whereas the historian relies on documents, inscriptions, archaeological findings and other sources, the imbongi relies on personal experience, eyewitnesses and hearsay only.

The Imbongi is almost always in close contact with the king or chief. He monitors his activities, his reaction to problems and his relations to his subjects and neighbours.

Where the imbongi was not present like during war expedition, the imbongi relied on eyewitnesses.

The Imbongi also relied on hearsay. In the society without writing or mass media, where speech is the medium of information, rumour or hearsay is one of the main sources of information. Many rumours are untrue even though some are based on facts. They are transmitted by word of mouth in a sensational way.

#### 4.3.2 Selectivity

The bard, like the historian selects information. Selectivity implies discarding certain information one has about the past and from that pool of information keeping only what is significant for the present.

It has been said that the imbongi uses information that is known to the society. This information may not be reliable. Vansina says:

"Eyewitness accounts are always a personal experience as well and involve not only perception but also emotions."

(Vansina, 1985:4).

Witnesses are often participants in the events. That is why reports of soldiers in the battle are often deficient because they cannot see everything while at the same time engaged in war.

#### 4.4 CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE IZIBONGO WERE RENDERED

Carr, remarked that:

"When we take up a work of history, our first concern should not be with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it."

(Carr, 1983:22).

The above statement is also true for izibongo. Our first concern should be with the imbongi before the izibongo can be studied.

Questions like (a) What was the status of the imbongi in the society? (b) Why did he compose the izibongo? (c) When were the izibongo performed? should concern us before the facts in the izibongo.

The primary objective of the izibongo will be discussed under the following headings:

- Religious significance
- Social significance
- Political significance

#### 4.5.1 Religious Significance

Belief in ancestors is very strong among Africans. Even those who have adopted other religions like Christianity, still believe that the living are not totally cut off from the dead. There is a strong belief that those who have passed away, the heads of the kraals and kings have a duty to protect and give blessings to the living.

The writer's personal experience in rendering of the izibongo was on the occasion of his visit to Vana Hadebe's kraal. The purpose of the visit was to record the izibongo and the history of the amaHlubi from this great oral historian.

Vana stays at Nsukangihlale, which is also known as Bhekuzulu. On his arrival the writer was taken to a traditional hut where all traditional customs are performed. The special hut, which is usually

occupied by elderly people if they are still alive, is found in many kraals. It is like a temple amongst Christians.

When we were all seated on mats the writer was introduced to the family members. A goat was brought in and presented to the writer and the kraal head announced that:

"Abakwa Hadebe,  
Abakwa Mthimkhulu  
Bayakwemukela, bathi  
Dlana nakhu ukudla."

(Those of Hadebe,  
Those of Mthimkhulu  
They welcome you, and say  
Here is your food, eat it).

The writer responded, assisted by all those who were present by calling out the izithakazelo of the Hadebe clan:

"Bhungane!  
Mthimkhulu!"

The kraal head then went out and performed izibongo of the amaHlubi kings, starting with Dlomo, and followed with Mashiya, then Nsele, then Bhungane, then Mthimkhulu, then Langalibalele, then Siyephu and then Tatazela; appealing to them to receive the writer kindly and to shower him with blessings. We all remained seated quietly in the hut until he finished. By the time he finished performing izibongo it was already drizzling and he remarked:

"Yingoba sengithinte abaphansi."

(It is because I have touched the dead)

It was a moving occasion, to listen to the performance of this great grandson of Langalibalele, of Mthimkhulu, of Bhungane, the rain makers. He had touched his ancestors and he believed as the writer believed what he thought, that Hlubi kings were endowed with majestic powers.

It is true, as Gunner remarked that:

"The act of calling out the praises of an ancestor is considered tantamount to calling on him, speaking to him, it is therefore a solemn and sacred action not to be undertaken lightly."

(Gunner, 1984:150).

One of the writer's informants told him that calling out of the izibongo enabled the imbongi to find the right spot where the dead king was to be planted. When the cave was found, spears and not crow-bars, were used in preparing the grave. Izibongo were recited whilst the cave was being prepared and also when the corpse was put in the cave.

#### 4.5.2 Social Significance

The imbongi is a link between the nation and the king. When he performs the izibongo, he represents both the nation and the king. When imbongi presents the king to the people in his performance he also presents the opinion of the people to the king. The izibongo therefore contain criticism as well as praise. The imbongi is, therefore, a mediator between the king and the people whom he represents.



Khathi says:

"Imbongi is a national "prefect" who keeps the king's behaviour under surveillance, he is the foremost critic and evaluator of all the things the king does."

(Khathi, 1985:3).

By pointing out irregularities in the king the social order was maintained. Izibongo provide an effective means of social control because on certain occasions they are shouted out for all to hear. In the following lines Bhungane is criticised and warned (line 14, 52 and 54 and 61 to 63.)

"U-Mashayw' alile njengesikhundlwane	1.14
Isiroro sakwa MaMazibuko	1.52
Sidla silila zonk' izinsuku	1.53
Sililel' imihlambi yabantu	1.54
Bhungane phez' abantu	1.61
Abantu akuzuba Mbatha ngubo	1.62
Abantu bazidondakazana"	1.63

(He who cries like a toddler when punished	1.14
The ugly one of Mazibuko	1.52
He grumbles whilst eating everyday	1.53
Longing for other peoples'	
Herds of cattle	1.54
Bhungane let people alone	1.61
You cannot wear them as a blanket	1.62
People are growing impatient	1.63

In the above verses Bhungane was criticised for appearing a weakling and greedy. He was also warned against excessive killing of people. The izibongo therefore act as a reward and incentive to socially approved actions. Their recital is a reminder to all present what qualities and conduct are considered praiseworthy.

Bravery, martial power, strength, and fighting spirit were lauded and encouraged in the izibongo.

In line 15 it is said Bhungane is:

"Yindlovu, yakwamQadi eluphondo lunye  
Elikhanisel' ezimpondo ngambili."

(He is the elephant of Mqadi with one horn  
which stands up against those with two  
horns.)

By comparing Bhungane to an elephant with one horn  
the imbongi was telling us that Bhungane was  
strong, and had a fighting spirit. When the  
imbongi says:

"Ngu-Manqamula ntshinge njengesibande" 1.27

(He is Mr Breaker and throw away like  
a squirrel) 1.27

the imbongi whilst praising bravery, martial power  
and high handedness, was also criticising the king  
for cruelty. Bhungane was also criticised for  
being excessive and cruel when the imbongi said:

"U-Mvuni wabantu njengamabele" 1.49

(Reaper of people as if they were  
sorghum) 1.49

#### 4.5.3 Political Significance

The popularity, the ability to control the tribe and the good image of strength and achievement of a king were reinforced by the imbongi.

When the imbongi recited the izibongo the status and political authority of the king was validated.

Praising is an indispensable way of celebrating status and the right to rule not merely of the present ruler but of the whole line of the ruling house.

Whereas the izibongo of Zulu kings were used to symbolise unity and nationhood, the izibongo of the amaHlubi kings were not used effectively as revealed by the history of Bhungane and Mthimkhulu.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

It has been shown above that the izibongo served many purposes. Besides extolling the king, they were used for social control. Through izibongo the king was criticised when his behaviour was not

commendable. His authority as a ruler was confirmed and loyalty of his subjects was fostered.

It has been shown also that the izibongo are a form of prayer. They are used in communicating with the ancestors who look after the welfare and prosperity of the living. The next section will examine limitations which make the izibongo quasi-history.

#### 4.6 LIMITATIONS OF IZIBONGO AS HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

This section begins with comforting and encouraging words of a historian, Marwick, who says:

"A history based exclusively on non-documentary sources, as say the history of an African community may be sketchier, less satisfactory history than one drawn from documents; but it is history all the same."

(Marwick, 1987:150).

There is no doubt that the izibongo are historical documents as confirmed by many scholars. Scholars also agree that the izibongo as historical documents have many limitations.

#### 4.6.1 One-sided History Presented

Gunner (1984) related an interesting case of the Zulu bard Hoyo, who gave his testimony to Stuart when Zululand had been annexed by Natal in 1888, and large coastal areas had since been given over to European farmers and all Zulu men had to pay tax.

It is said Hoyo's evidence gave no hint of these changes but presented, rather, a picture of untroubled continuity. Gunner concludes that:

"It is doubtless true that bards are in one sense very unreliable sources of evidence because they have strong vested interests."

(Gunner, 1984:42).

Indeed, evidence found in the izibongo is evidence favourable to the king and the nation. The bard is interested in painting a beautiful picture of the king and the nation.

The izibongo contain a history of victories and deaths caused to enemies.

In Bhungane's izibongo Bhungane killed Mafu and burned Vimbela and Jabanga kraals. He killed many people, for example, line 48.

"Umvuni wabantu njengamabele"

(Killer of people as if he is reaping corn)

It is never revealed that he was ever attacked or defeated or that any of his warriors were ever killed.

Langalibalele is portrayed as a great fighter who fought and defeated all his rivals. He escaped from many plots which were contrived to kill him. He escaped from the amaZulu and the cannibals, he escaped from the Government army but was eventually arrested by those who have magical powers as stated in lines 64 and 65:

"Ubanjwe ngabazana nenkwenkwezi, nenyanga  
nelanga, nezilimela"

(He was caught by those who know the morning  
star, the moon, the sun and spring star).

The imbongi tells us that Langalibalele was only  
caught by those with evil magical powers -  
implying the Whites.

The bard does not reveal the grief and sadness  
experienced by the tribe when their king suffered  
humiliation.

Even though the imbongi played an important role  
by hiding the truth in order to boost the tribe's  
morale, and give it confidence in their king, the  
future generations have been denied a fuller  
history of their tribe.

#### 4.6.2 Failure to Relate a Full Story

Msimang is right when he says instead of giving  
full description of historical events;



"The bard frequently makes historical allusions without furnishing his audience with any details."

(Msimang, 1989:233).

Awe, (1974) writing about the "Oriki" of the Yoruba, which is similar to the izibongo also says:

"It does not tell a story, it only delineates a portrait which is often an incomplete one, such a portrait only highlights those aspects of a subject's life which contemporaries think important."

(Awe, 1974:348).

In Bhungane's izibongo we have these lines:

"Ngu-Bhungane wamakhulukhulu"

(He is Bhungane of hundreds and hundreds).

What is alluded to here is Bhungane's possessions. Bhungane had many wives, children, goats and cattle. These details were not provided in izibongo. Langalibalele is said to be:

"Ijub' abalijukujela ngezagila  
KwaNodwengu lwagwija."

(The dove at which they hurled knobkierries  
at Nodwengu but it escaped).

These lines refer to the escape of Langalibalele from Zululand when they plotted to kill him. Again details have not been given. The historical allusions have been presented in a succinct, highly figurative and compressed language which require hints from other historical sources for full understanding. Langalibalele is compared to a dove, a very deceptive bird which is not easy to catch because of its quickness and its ability to dodge missiles.

#### 4.6.3 Ease of Misinterpretation

Scholars of oral tradition all agree that izibongo are difficult to read and understand.

The language of izibongo is concentrated, figurative and very often archaic. The izimbongi adopt a more or less obscure and allusive style.

Cope however feels that:

"The obscurities in the praise - poems are due to references to forgotten events, unknown places, rather than to linguistic difficulties."

(Cope:1968:15).

What Cope says here is partly true. Even if the reader is an expert in the African Languages and knows the structure, form and stylistic devices which professional bards use, the poetic language always poses a comprehension problem.

The rules which control the use of the language are violated in poetry. The izibongo are presented in a condensed and compact manner. The material is not presented in a leisurely, expansive form with sub-ordinating conjunctions. The information is marked by the absence of the wide range of tenses of the verb available in ordinary speech.

Besides reference to forgotten events, unknown people and places which make izibongo obscure as Cope has correctly asserted above, the writer

considers the use of allusions and figurative language as primary causes of obscurity in izibongo.

The following lines taken from Bhungane's izibongo will illustrate this. In lines 1 to 3 it is said:

"NguBhungane wamakhulukhulu  
NguSothondose  
u-Ndlubu zamila ngaphambili"

(It is Bhungane of hundreds and hundreds  
It is Mr Penis  
Ground nuts which grew from the penis)

The language of the above verse is obscure and allusive. What is alluded to in this verse is Bhungane's possessions. It is reported that Bhungane possessed many wives, children, cattle and goats.

The metaphor of ground nuts refers to children. Bhungane is "Mr Penis" and this metaphor carries a connotation of fertility and virility. Bhungane

produced many children like the seed of ground nuts which produce many ground nuts when planted. This was because he had many wives.

The legend given in Chapter Two about Mthimkhulu's magic of making izindlubu (ground nuts) for King Shaka does not provide a correct explanation because according to this legend Shaka started calling the amaHlubi "Ndlubu" when Mthimkhulu was the king. Bhungane was the first to be referred t o a s "N d l u b u ."

Mzolo gives the following translation of line 3:

"The ground beans which took root on the ground where people urinate."

(Mzolo, 1977:152).

Mzolo gives the meaning of "emthondweni" a locative of "umthondo" (penis) as a place where people urinate.

It is this type of ambiguity which obscures historical data in the izibongo.

Many of the amaHlubi interviewed on this issue could not concur with Mzolo.

4.6.3.1 Reference to forgotten events, unknown people and places

In Bhungane's izibonqo the following events and names of people are forgotten:

"Ligeng' eladl' imithi  
Yakwa Bhunga." 1.17

(White ant which ate Bhunga's forest) 1.17

and

"Uyoshisa imizi yama-Vimbela  
Yabo Jabanqa umntaka Mpila." 1.29

(You go and burn Vimbela's kraals  
of Jabanqa of Mpila) 1.29

In Langalibalele's izibonqo it is said  
Langalibalele:

"Udabul' ePhunguphunu  
Wadubul' eMalibeni."

1.37-38

(He crossed at Phunguphunu  
and crossed at Malibeni)

Nobody seems to remember the events, the names of people and places mentioned in the above lines.

#### 4.6.4 Adequacy and Expertise of the Imbonqi

Among the izimbonqi there are specialists and non-specialists. A specialist or professional bard stayed in the royal kraal with the Zulu king and had a special status. He received special grants from the king.

The professional bard had ample time to listen and to witness the activities of the King. He then selected appropriate historical facts which suited the occasion. These details were cleverly strung together to form izibongo which he kept in memory.

The bards in the Estcourt district are non-specialists. Veleleni Shabalala, for instance, rendered what he heard from other bards during his stay at the royal kraal. He did not compose his own version. Vana Hadebe's versions do not differ much from Ndawo's collection. The difference is that his variants are very short. This implies that many events have been forgotten.

The professional praiser had an excellent memory. He was able to recall the praises of the king and his ancestors perfectly on occasions of tribal importance. He could spend over five minutes of concentration pouring out izibongo which are rich in history.

#### 4.6.5 Concern About the Present

During research historians collect evidence about the past and interpret it. This involves studying the material closely. The historian must master the past in order to understand the present.

The bards on the other hand are interested in recording current events. They never peer back into the twilight out of which they had come. The



definition that history is about developments that took place in the past is not supported by izibongo.

In line 23 in Bhungane's izibongo it is said:

"Wabulal' uMafu kwaba kwabo."

(He killed Mafu one of his relatives).

but nothing is said about the past events which led to this killing. In Langalibalele's izibongo lines 41 and 42:

"Ubengasakuya KwaZulu,  
Wabizwa ngumkhonto wesibhamu."

(He was not to go to Zululand

He was called by the spear of the gun)

Again here imbongi told what had happened without bothering to tell past events. It is for this reason that Msimang complains that:

"Little did the bard know that centuries after his death academics would "exhume" him and demand him to account for his omissions and his flaws."

(Msimang, 1989:234).

The izibongo also tell us nothing about the future and yet interest in the past and interest in the future are interconnected. Carr, says:

"History begins with the handing down of tradition and tradition means the carrying of the habits and lessons of the past into the future."

(Carr, 1983:108).

The imbonqi does not ask himself the question why historical events took place, and also the question what they are likely to lead to.

#### 4.6.6 Chronology

The Concise English Dictionary defines chronology as

"An arrangement of events according to dates or times of occurrence."

Vansina says Chronology:

"Need not be based on an absolute calendar, it can be a relative sequence of events and situations only."

(Vansina, 1985:173).

A notable author, Ngubane pronounced this half-truth about izibongo -

"... each praise poem is composed of a number of short "essays" on the most important developments in the reign of a king. These events happened in time and consecutively. The stanzas in which they were recorded had to follow one another consecutively in the whole poem."

(Ngubane, 1951:3).

As the imbongi relied on memory it is likely that he forgot or omitted some parts or verses which he inserted later on during the performance.

It is therefore incorrect to say that when the izibongo were performed stanzas followed one another chronologically in the whole poem.

Msimang is right when he says that:

"The bard is not duty bound to make his allusions into history in a chronological sequence of events."

(Msimang, 1980:233).

Omitting and adding new stanzas or old stanzas later on however cripples chronology and understanding.

This weakness in chronology will be shown by examples from Langalibalele's izibongo.

Different versions of Langalibalele's izibongo, for instance, do not start in the same way.

In Ndawo's (1928) collection the opening line is:

"Ngujuba ququbala  
Enkundleni kwaNjomose"

(The dove that sits quietly  
At Njomose's yard)

(Ndawo, 1928:13)

A version recorded by Cope, opens with these lines:

"uMdingi kaJobe  
Inkos' enamanxeb' omkhonto"

(U-Mdingi of Jobe  
Chief who have wounds from a spear)

(Cope, 1968:135).

A version by Pamu Nene, one of the informants who refused to be recorded opens like this:

"Ilang' elaphum' endlebeni yendlovu"  
(The sun that came out of the ear of an  
elephant)

A short stanza recorded by Cope, (1968:135) will show that events recorded in stanzas do not follow one another consecutively.

1. Umdingi ka Jobe!  
Inkos' enamanxeb' omkhonto  
Sembatha mkhonto njengobhedu;  
Lab' abaka Qili beza benhliziyo zimnyama.

5. Bathi bewuthatha bewukhandela,  
Bethi kananyongo kanamehlo  
Kanti nguyen' omehl' ababakazi  
Nsimu zayidl' amazansi zayishiy' umunhla  
Ibe ilindwe ngu Sekethwayo

10. Nyama yamazimu kaMahlaphahlapha,  
Benoduba beyidla beyidonsisana  
Isigoloza esimehl' angolo,  
Esikhangel' umuntu sanga simjamele  
Mwelela kweliphesheya.

15. Sixha simnyama nemizi yaso

1. Mdingi, son of Jobe!  
Chief who has the wounds of a spear,  
Who is clothed with arms like heart - fat  
Those of the clever one came with black hearts.

5. As they took and pounded it  
Thinking he had no strength and no eyes.  
Whereas it was he who had keen eyes  
Field of which they ate  
The south part and left the northern;  
Though it was guarded by Sekethwayo.

10. Flesh of the Cannibals of Mahlaphahlapha  
Which they ate with the help of one another  
Starer with wide open eyes,  
Who looks at a person  
As if he were staring right into him.  
He who crossed over to the other side.

15. Great one who is black and also his kraals.

It would be preferable if the historical events in  
Langalibalele's izibongo should follow one another  
chronologically as follows:

- a) Fight over succession - whilst at the Mzinyathi  
Valley - the traditional home.
- b) Activities in Estcourt which led to the rebellion.
- c) Banishment of Langalibalele to Robben Island.

This version opens with Langalibalele already in  
the Estcourt district under the Colonial  
Government. The activities which led to  
"Langalibalele Rebellion" are alluded to in lines  
4 and 5:

"Laba abakaQili beza benhliziyo zimnyama  
Bathi bewuthatha bewukhandela"

(Those of the clever one came with black  
heart as they took and pounded it).

The event that follows refers to Langalibalele's  
fight to become a king - lines 10 and 11. This  
happened when the tribe occupied the Mzinyathi  
Valley. This should have preceded lines 4 and 5.

A correction should be made in lines 10 and 11  
with regard to Mahlaphahlapha and Duba since  
history is distorted if they are read and  
understood as explained by Cope.

Mahlaphahlapha was the chief of the amaBhele who  
were cannibals. The correct name in this version  
is Duba and not Dube who belonged to the Qadi  
section of the Ngcobo tribe. Duba's mother was  
Njomose who was one of Mthimkhulu's wives.

This version should have ended with line 14 which  
refers to Langalibalele's banishment.



"Mwelela kweliphesheya"

(He who crossed over to the other side)

(Cope, 1968:135).

The problem of arranging the sequence of events is left to the listener or to the reader when izibongo have been recorded.

In izibongo there is no mention when events took place and what followed thereafter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. CONCLUSION

In this thesis it has been shown that oral lore, whilst it serves other purposes, it also preserves history. There is no doubt that without oral traditions we would know even less about the past of large parts of the world.

Izibongo have been singled out as the most important genre in which historical data have been preserved. Many scholars have confirmed that izibongo constitute a significant source material for the reconstruction of the oral people's past.

The historical data examined in the izibongo of Bhungane and Langalibalele cover the period between c. 1750 and 1900 and these izibongo reveal that the amaHlubi underwent great changes during this period.

The changes were brought about by the division of the tribe which made the amaHlubi an easy target to their enemies. Mthimkhulu was killed during the attack by the amaNgwane and the tribe was crushed and dispersed from the Mzinyathi Valley. As a result of the defeat many people hid in the caves and forests without food. Hunger turned them to cannibalism. They lost their independence and became tributary of the Zulu kingdom.

Threats from Mpande made Langalibalele migrate from the Mzinyathi Valley to Natal where he became a British subject.

In the Estcourt district the tribe suffered yet another misfortune when the colonial government dispossessed the amaHlubi of their land and the tribe was again dispersed. Langalibalele was banished for life from his people. The institution of kingship was deliberately demolished by the British in order to destroy the tribal unity.

Izibongo also reveal the following historical facts: the social and cultural background of the amaHlubi kings, the land they occupied, their social values and social activities, their political activities and their war expeditions.

Though the izibongo are very significant as historical documents, they have been found to have the following limitations:

They only present history which is favourable to the king and the tribe. They hide truth, for instance, defeats suffered by the tribe are never mentioned. Only headlines are given; historical facts are not discussed. Allusions to places, names and historical events not known even to indigeneous people make it very difficult to interpret data in the izibongo.

The poetic language of the izibongo which is condensed, figurative and sometimes archaic is difficult to interpret.

Izibongo which were composed by non-specialists have less history. Bards who are specialists or who are professional use mnemonic devices which enabled them to string up long poems which they retained in memory.

The izimbongi are said to be chroniclers of the present and storers of the past. This means the izimbongi kept in memory the old and newly recorded historical facts. The izimbongi never bothered to ask the question why? and whither? which would give them causes of events and also reference to the future.

It has been shown that verses or events in the izibongo do not follow one another chronologically. This makes the izibongo difficult to understand. It has been shown also that izibongo alone cannot give a detailed history because they have limitations. Other sources are required to supplement them.

A few variants of the izibongo of each king were collected in the Estcourt district.

This became necessary because historical facts missing in one version were supplemented by other versions, or historical facts mentioned in one version were confirmed by another variant. This thesis is based mainly on the variants recorded by Ndawo in 1928 because they are longer and richer in history.

Ndawo's versions, which are longer, have their historical contents made obscure by the fact that he translated them into Xhosa.

During his time there were no tape recorders. He therefore relied on listening and writing at the same time.

As the izimbongi keep on changing the order of events each time they recite, Ndawo must have faced a big problem in recording. There is no doubt that many lines were omitted.

The history of the amaHlubi tribe before Bhungane is shrouded in darkness; very little is known.

The izibongo of the early kings of the amaHlubi like Nsele, of Mashiya, of Dlomo, of Hadebe and of Mthimkhulu I, are almost all lost.

With the death of many old people the izibongo of these kings are not easy to obtain. The writer was informed that the last well-known professional imbongi, Mthembeni had recently died. The non-specialists recorded, Veleleni Shabalala and Vana Hadebe rendered very short versions.

It is possible that some variants can still be found among the amaHlubi. This will mean a longer stay in the Estcourt district and even a visit to Matatiele and Herschel where the amaHlubi migrated to during the wars.

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### 3.4.3 Cattle Raids

Cattle gave the king and the tribe the required dignity, fame and pride. Cattle were everything to the tribe. They provided milk, meat, horns and skins and every ceremony required a beast to be slaughtered for ancestors.

In lines 42-54 we are reminded of the cattle raids which took place during that period.

Bhungane, however, seems to have been regular with cattle raids as the imbongi tells us:

"Isiroro sakwa MaMazibuko  
Sidla silila zonke izinsuku  
Sililel' imihlambi yabantu"

(The ugly one of Mazibuko  
He cries whilst eating everyday  
Crying for other people's  
Herds of cattle.)

#### 3.4.4 Crop Specialisation

The reference to "Ndlubu" (ground nuts) in line 3 and sorghum in line 49 reveal the crop specialisation among the amaHlubi during that period.

The above paragraphs have portrayed the social and cultural activities during Bhungane's time. People believed in polygamy and traditional doctors. They believed that there was medicine for making rain.

### 3.5 HISTORY IN LANGALIBALELE'S IZIBONGO

#### 3.5.1 Introduction

Langalibalele was the son of Mthimkhulu and his grandfather was king Bhungane. His mother was Mtambose of Mashoba. He was also known as Mthethwa or Mdingi.

These two names commemorate one important event in the history of the amaHlubi; the arrival and sojourn of Godongwane the son of Jobe, chief of the Mthethwa in the Hlubi country. This happened

IZIBONGO ZIKABHUNGANE

APPENDIX A

Recorded by: H M Ndawo (1928)

1. Ngu-Bungane wamakulukulu  
Ngu-Sotondoshe.  
UNdlubu zamila ngapambili.  
Yintlubati yo-Ndi noTukela.
  
5. Ngifike beyihlenga beyipalaza,  
Ngifike ngayihlenga ngaguzubala.  
UBungan' uyababaza,  
Ubabaz' ese-Sigodlweni  
Kwaf' izitsha zisemadoden' ebandla.
  
10. UBungane yindikinda yindaba,  
Uze waba yindaba nakuzikundlwane  
Yindlovu yakwa ma-Mazibuko.  
Yinkamisa mlom' onganga zibuko;  
U-Matshayw' alile njengesikhundlwane.
  
15. Yindlovu yakwaMgad' elupondo lunye,  
Elikanisel' ezimpondo ngambili  
Ligeng' eladl' imiti yakwaBunga.  
Sabe sesibona ngebudulelo.  
U-Bungane ngu gobodisa -

20. Ukwakisa kwendlovu,  
Ngu-Gengelezis' ukwakisa kwenyati.  
U-Koz' umaxul' umapakamisa.  
Wabulal' u-Mafu kwaba kabo'  
Nanamuhl' akwaba ndaba zaluto!
25. Sisilo sakulo Mbikazi  
Esimapuml' anzinzinini,  
Umaqula ngaw' emazibukweni.  
Mlotshwa twal' usiba lube lunye  
Uyotshis' imizi yama-Vimbela!
30. Yabo Jabang' umntaka-Mpila  
Waute kosal' awanjanina?  
Kosal' antsiba zibutakataka -  
Kwasal' u-Baqile we-Swazini  
Sengisitsho kwizihlobo zake,
35. Kwasal, u-Mtilingwane,  
Sengisitsho kwaba kwa Kesa  
Amakhubal' abuy' adliwa nguye.  
Isihlahla sentshungu sombelebele!  
Kade beti bayasigaula.

40. Po, siyawunqind' amazembe!  
Ngu-Hlaz' oduna bo-Tondoshe  
Izembe lisemsamo kwaMnxanga  
U-Nomawezi-wezi kwaba ka-Nsele.  
Inkomo zake zimaqat' amhlope.
45. Ngokuwela-wel' u-Mzinyati.-  
Ngu-Sosolani, bayadla bayasola,  
Akasenamuny' ongasoli  
U-Mlauzi ka mkont' osandukulolwa.  
U-Mvuni wabantu nje ngamabele.
50. U-Msiki wezitoto zaba Landakazi;  
Kazi bazala ngan' ubaruna nje?  
Isiroro sakwa ma-Mazibuko  
Sidla silila zonk' insuku,  
Sililel' imihlambi yabantu.
55. Incinin' eyongam' esizibeni,  
Izakiwa ngaba njanina?  
Izakiwa ngu Mgidi ka-Nsele.  
U-Mt' ose Yenge nase Tobozi,  
Owati' Okuwa wasambateka.

60. Wabekis' amaseb' ekabo nina.

Bungane pez' abantu

Abant' akuzuba mbata ngubo,

Abantu bazindondokazana.

Awu! Yebo-ke Mlotsha wabo Zingelwako.

65. Aofi kukufa kwamany' amadoda.

Recorded by: H M Ndawo (1928)

5. He is Bhungane of many hundreds  
He is Sothondoshe.  
Ground nuts which grew from the penis.  
The soil of uNdi and Thukela.
10. I came when they were retrieving and levelling it,  
I also came and retrieved and rested.  
Bhungane is exclaiming,  
He exclaims from eSigodlweni.  
Dishes with men at a gathering broke.
15. Bhungane is talked about seriously,  
He has become popular even among ordinary people.  
He is an elephant of Mazibuko,  
Open-mouthed like a ford;  
He who cries like a toddler when punished.
20. He is the elephant of Mgadi that has one horn,  
Which challenged the one with two horns.  
He is the ant which ate trees which belong to Bhunga.  
Then we saw the tracks.  
Bhungane is squatting -

25. Built like an elephant.

He has a broad flat face like that of a buffalo.

The eagle that pounces at its prey and takes off.

He killed Mafu of his own family,

Even on that day it did not matter!

30. He is the lion of Mbikazi

Which has an ugly mouth,

That roars at the fords.

Mlotshwa wear one feather,

And go and burn the kraals of Vimbelas.

35. Those of Jabanga son of Mpila.

Which ones did you say should remain?

Those with frail feathers will remain.

Bhaqile of Swaziland remained.

I mean those who are his relatives.

40. Mtilingwana remained,

I mean those of Kesa.

Purification medicines were again eaten by him.

Tree of a bitter unripe plant!

They have been trying for sometime to chop it.



45. Indeed, it blunts the axes!

He is the black one of Thondoshe

The axe is at the back part of Mnxanga's kraal,

The restless one of Nsele,

His cattle are fat because,

50. They now and then cross Mzinyathi

The suspicious one, they eat and suspect,

There is not a single one who is not suspicious.

Sharpener of a spear which is recently sharpened.

Reaper of people as if he is reaping corn.

55. Castrator of the in-laws,

How will they breed if you castrate them?

The ugly one of Mazibuko.

He cries whilst eating everyday.

Crying for other people's herds of cattle.

60. Grass that overhangs the deep pool.

Who will cut it?

Mgidi of Nsele will cut it.

Mthose Yenge and at Thobozi

Who when he fell became confused.

65. And ran towards his mother's home.

Bhungane stop killing people.

People are not going to be worn like clothes.

People are nothing.

Oh! indeed Mlotshwa of Zingelwayo

70. Yo don't die by other men's sickness.

Recorded by H.M. Ndawo (1928)

1. Ngu-Juba ququbala  
Enkundleni kwaNjomose!  
Ngu-Sigoloz' esimehl' abomvu  
Isigoloz' esibek' umuntu ngat' simjamele  
Sisigoloza sakwa ma-Matshoba.
  
5. Inkondlo ka-Dikida beno Ngenela  
Abati beyishaya bebeyifinggel' amadolo.  
Ijub' abalijukujela ngezagila  
Kwa Nodwengu lagwija.  
u-Mphuhlan' ophuhl' ezulwini.
  
10. Onga mpondo zamatole,  
Wapuhla wavelela pezu kwama-Hlubi,  
Uphuhl' emfundeni zo-Ndi,  
Wapuhla nakwe zo-Khahlamba,  
Wapuhla nakwe zo-Thukela.
  
15. U-Nyama yama Zimu,  
Ka-Duba, no Mini, no Lupalule,  
Bayidla bayidonsisana!  
Ngu-Sombangeli,  
Wabang' umzi wamfanela.

20. U-Langalibalel' uyesabeka  
 Ungangamaqand' engonyama  
 Nangamaqand' engwe.  
 U-Qongqo ngiyambuka  
 Ngokukwela kwezind' intaba;
25. Mnyaka umbe um' umgadile -  
 Uzaku kwela kweye bubesi.  
 Ngu-Manqamla ntshinge njengesibanda  
 Ngu-Langa puma sikote.  
 Ngabezizwe bodw' abazakubalekela.  
 U-Langa ngokuswel' inkonyeni.  
 Kwezamany' amadoda;  
 Ngob' inkonyen' ikwezika Langandaba.
30. Ngu-Nkomo zidla nezesiroyi senyati,  
 Ngoba zidla neza kwa Songiya  
 Obemtandabuzela njengomnyama.  
 Udabul' e-Pungupungu,  
 Wadabul' e-Malibeni,
35. Kwaza kwasa ngelosuku  
 Ingonyama nendlovu zibovula.  
 Ubengasakuya kwa Zulu  
 Wabizwa ngumkhonto wesibham.  
 U-Matshingizel' umashiy' impi yake;

40. Washiy' izinja zakwa Zulu  
 Ebezimlom' ubomvu.  
 Ngokupuz' ingazi zamadoda.  
 Ngu-Mapa kulahla ku-Majikijela  
 Wawela Mpozam' emhlope  
 Ingeyase-Matshobeni.
45. Owap' u-Mpelana  
 Ezalwa nguMendela  
 Uvalelise ngomkhonto ku Zulu  
 Izizwe zonke zambalekela  
 Wadl' ababomvan' abazond' ilanga.
50. Wavalelisa ngomkhonto koka Sonjica,  
 U-Piva ndlebede lingezwa ndaba  
 Lingezw' indaba lizampangel' e-Nggokweni.  
 Ngu-Nobengul' ikakasi.  
 Isilumek' esibuya nehlwili.
55. Ingungu kaMtimkulu  
 Abayingenis' emkunjini  
 Zonk' izizwe zabikelana!  
 Zat' "U-Langalibalel' ubanjiwe,  
 Ubanjwe ngabazana nenkwenkwezi,  
 Nenyanga, nelanga, nezilimela."

Recorded by H.M.Ndawo (1928)

1. He is a cuddled dove  
At the yard of Njomose!  
Starer who looks at a man  
As though challenging him.  
The aggressive one of Matshoba.
  
5. He is the song of Dikida and Ngenela.  
The singing of which is accompanied by knee-bending.  
The dove at which they hurled knobkierries  
At Nodwengu and it dodged.  
One who stands above all in the heaven.
  
10. Like the horns of the calves,  
He stood well above the Hlubis.  
He stood in the meadows of the Ondini mountains  
He also stood well among those  
Of the Drakensberg mountains  
And even stood well among those of the Tukela.

15. Meat of the cannibals  
Of Duba, Mini and Lupalule,  
Which they eat in competition with one another  
He is the great tester,  
He contested Kingship and it suited him.
20. Langalibalele you are fearsome.  
You are as big as lion's eggs  
And the leopard's eggs.  
Qongo I admire you,  
For climbing the tall mountains.
25. In time if you keep an eye on him  
He will climb the lion's hill.  
He cuts and throws away like a squirrel.  
He is charming like the winter sun.  
Only the foreigners shall shun him.  
Langa failed because he lacks cattle.  
Cattle are with those of Langandaba.
30. He is cattle that graze with the herd of buffaloes.  
Because they graze with those of Songiya,  
Who was doubting him like darkness.  
He swept across Phunguphundu  
And swept through Malibeni.

35. Till dawn that day,  
Lions and elephants roared.  
Never did he intend to return to Zululand,  
Were it not for the White's gunfire.  
The restless one who foresook his regiment.
40. He outran the dogs of Amazulu which had red mouths,  
From drinking men's blood.  
One who gives as if he is throwing away to Majikijela.  
He crossed White Mpozama River  
It belonged to Mashobeni.
45. He gave gift to Mpelana,  
Who was born of Mendela.  
He said farewell to Zulus with a spear  
And many tribes fled from his war path.  
He fought the redish one who hate the sun.
50. He said farewell to the son of Sonjica with a spear.  
Piva with long ears which do not hear anything.  
When he hears stories he will act hurriedly  
For him at Ngqokweni.  
The piercing one,  
The sucker who draws clots.



55. The great one of Mtimkhulu  
Who was taken into a ship,  
And all tribes informed each other about it.  
They said, "Langalibalele has been arrested,  
He has been arrested by those who know  
The morning stars, the moon, the sun and pleiades."

NGU: VANA HADEBE

1. Mdingi kaJobe!  
Sembatha mkhonto njengengungu.  
Abakwaqili babeza benhliziyo zimnyama,  
Bemthatha bemhleka bethi kananyongo kanamhlwehlwe,  
Kanti unomhlwehlwe ubhabhanana.
  
5. Umqomboli wendlela zokhabonina,  
Ingani abadala sebazikhohlwa  
Kaziwa ukuthi yena uzazi ngani.  
Ijuba elahlala enkundleni  
kaSibhenya balithela ngezibi laququbala.  
Isihalahala sezinja zikaSibhekane  
Ezimlomo ubomvu ngokudla izingazi zamadoda.
  
10. Umpondo ezamaduna ezamathole  
Ezelanga elaphuma endlebeni eyendlovu  
Mhlambe liyophuma endlebeni yengonyama.  
Umbalekelwa owabalekelwa zinduna zikayise.  
Ubalekelwa zinduna zakhe;  
Ubalekelwe uManzulwa owayezalwa uManqamu.

15. Wabalekelwa uMpangele owayezalwa uSigodlo.  
U-Sibhamu esidume ekuseni kwaNobamba.  
Bathi uNobamba kangibambanga ngani?  
Izulu elidume ekuseni labuyisa abafazi ekuthezeni  
Unobanga izwe azalifumane.  
Elibanga nosMtseu uyise akangalifumana.
20. Izigqoko ezamaNgisi ezama Frenchman.  
Ufulathele imbali azamfanela.  
Uth' esefulathele noMlapo naye kazamfanela.  
Umbasi wamakloba amabili,  
Elithe elinye lisavutha le kwaPhosihawu,
25. Elinye lalivutha eSibubulundu.  
Kuzwakele ukuthi bayishaya  
Indlovu kaMthimkhulu emkhunjini.  
Kuthe esabaleka ehamba evalelisa wathi,  
Ngithe ngibalekela kozongisiza angifihle,
30. Kanti ngibalekela esilwaneni esinguMlapo kaMshweshwe.  
Yasho njalo indlovu kaMthimkhulu  
Seyemuka sebehamba nayo amaNgisi.

LANGALIBALELE'S IZIBONGO

by: VANA HADEBE

1. Mdingi son of Jobe.  
Who wears arms like heart-fat.  
Those of the cunning one came with black hearts.  
Thinking he was powerless and had no suet,  
Whereas he has lots of suet.
  
5. Traveller of the routes to his mother's home,  
Whereas the old people have forgotten them.  
It is not known how he remembers them.  
The dove that settled at the yard  
Of Sibhenya and they threw refuse at it  
But, it remained quiet.  
The spirited dogs of Sibhekane  
Which have red mouths from drinking men's blood.
  
10. Horns of the male calves.  
Sun which came out of the ear of the elephant  
Perhaps it will come out of the ear of a lion.  
The deserted one,  
Who was deserted by his father's indunas.  
He was deserted by Manzulwa son of Mangamu.

15. He was deserted by Mpangele son of Sigodlo.  
The gun that exploded in the morning at Nobamba.  
They questioned why Nobamba did not catch me?  
Thunderstorm that broke in the morning  
And forced women who were collecting wood to return home.
20. The one who fought for the land until he gets it.  
He contested it with Somtseu but,  
His father failed to get it,  
Hats of the English and the French  
He turned his back on imbali and they did not suit him.  
When he turned his back on Mlapo
25. He too, did not suit him.  
Kindler of two glowing fires,  
When one was burning at Phosihawu,  
The other was burning at Sibubulundu.  
It was heard that they assaulted
30. The Elephant of Mthimkhulu on the ship.  
Preparing for his escape and bidding farewell, he said:  
"Running to a person who I thought would help me  
I found I had run to a heartless person,  
Mlapo son of Mshweshwe.

35. So said the elephant, son of Mthimkhulu  
When he was going away taken by the English.

Hadebe,  
Mthimkhulu,  
Bhungane kaNsele,  
Mntungwa,  
Mlotshwa,  
Nkabane,  
Nzimande,  
Wena kaLangalibalele,  
Kandlubu ezamila endaweni embi.

Ngoba zamila emthondweni.  
Amangelengele anzipho zinde  
Ngokuziqhwandela.  
Makhulukhulu!  
Hadebe omuhle okhonza agoduke  
Angaze axakwe yithambo lasenzini.

Sigoloza esikhangel' umuntu  
Sengathi simjamele,  
Umkhulu Bhungane  
Kodwa awungangoNkulunkulu.

Hadebe,

Mthimkhulu,

Bhungane son of Nsele

Mntungwa,

Mlotshwa,

Nkabane,

Nzimande,

You son of Lngalibalele,

Of the ground beans which took root on a bad place,

Because they germinated on a place of urinating

The long-finger-nailed Hlubis by scratching for themselves.

Makhulukhulu!

Hadebe, the good one who pays respects and returns home

Before he is placed in difficulties by the bone of the in-laws.

The starrer who stares at a person

As if threatening him.

You are great Bhungane

But you are not as great as God.



HADEBE

Mthimkhulu,

Mashiya amahle anjengawenyamazane

AbakwaThondo kwabakaSothondose.

AbakwaDlomo-dludlu kwezindlu nezindlwana.

Abakwazitho zimhlophe, mashiya amahle,

Niye nabuthathaphi ubuhle obumhlophe obunje?

AbakwaMaxovaxova umthombo wenkosi.

AbakwaVangane, kazi sengoneni namhlanje?

UNduku - zimakhulukhulu,

Sehla ngomnyama entabeni, kuyagongoka.

Kumnyama phansi.

Abakwandlubu zamila emthondweni

KwaSothondose.

Amangelengele anzipho-zinde ngokuqwayana.

Umkhulu Bhungane

Kodwa awungangoNkulunkulu.

HADEBE

Bhungane,

Mthimkhulu.

Nice eyebrows like those of a buck.

They of Thondo among the Thondos

They of Dlomo among the big and small houses.

They of white legs, the nice eyebrows,

Where did you acquire such beauty?

They of Maxovaxova at the fountain of the chief.

They of Vangane, what have I done today?

The sticks are in hundreds,

We descended from a mountain in darkness, it was slopey.

It was dark below.

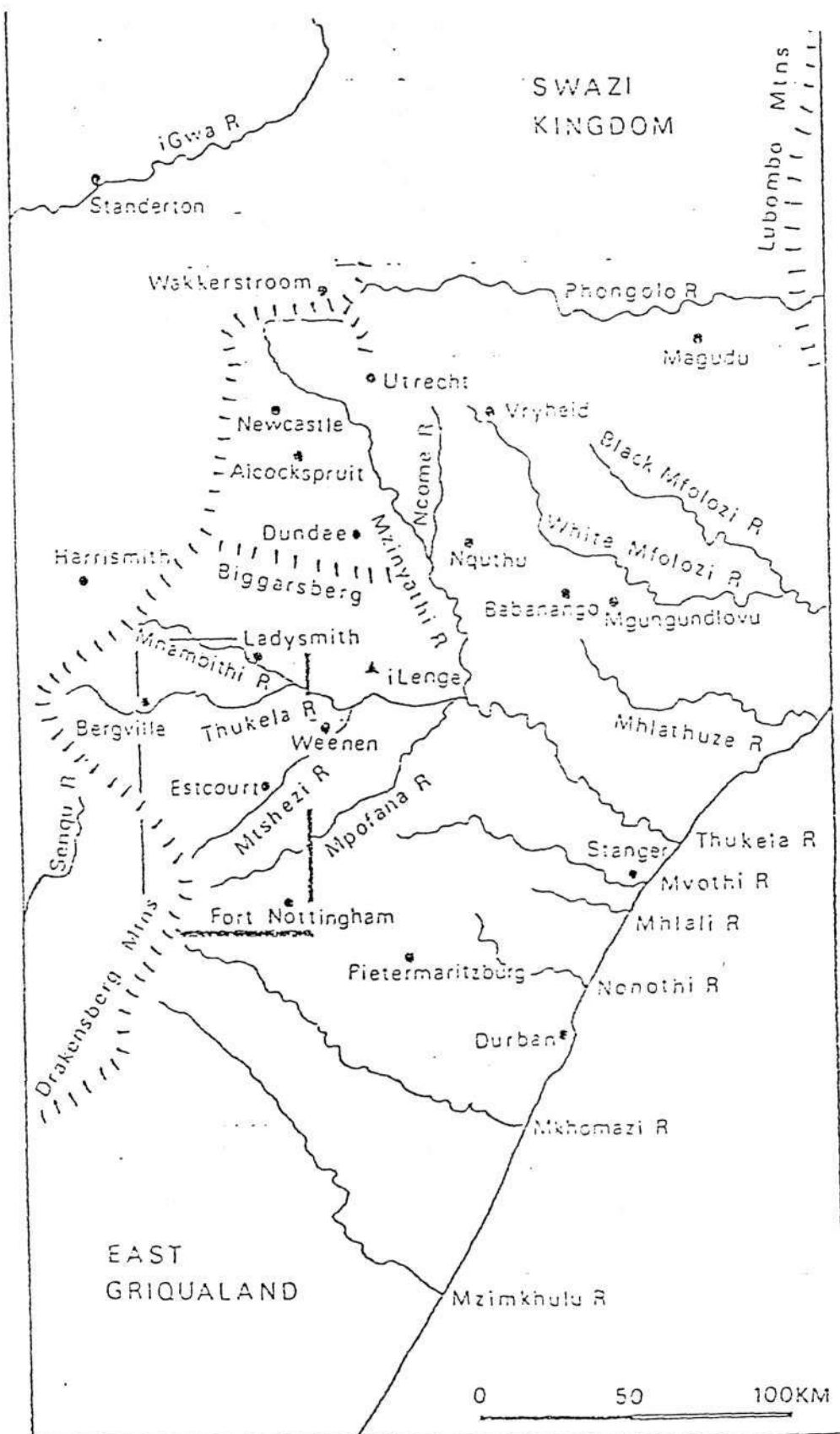
They of the ground beans which took root at the place

Where urinating at Sothondose's place.

The long finger-nailed Hlubis because of scratching.

You are great Bhungane.

But you not as great as God.



Map showing places and geographical features mentioned in the thesis. The broken rectangle indicates the area that amaHlubi occupied during Langalibalele's reign.