

CONCISE HISTORY OF AMANDEBELE

1. THE ORIGIN OF AMANDEBELE

AMANDEBELE ORIGINATE FROM THE GROUP OF BANTU SPEAKING PEOPLE KNOWN AS NGUNIS. THE NAME NDEBELE IS OFTEN CONFUSED WITH THE MATEBELE OF MZILIKAZI IN ZIMBABWE. THE NAME ITSELF IS OFTEN DENIED BY OTHERS AS THE ADOPTED NAME FROM THE SOTHO SPEAKING PEOPLE. HOWEVER, THIS NAME CAME FROM THE FIRST NOTABLE RULER OF AMANDEBELE, KING NDEBELE, THE SON OF NGUNI.

THIS NGUNI ARE SET TO HAVE COME FROM THE GREAT LAKES OF AFRICA IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND CONGO BRAZZAVILLE. IT IS RECORDED BY HISTORIANS THAT MANY NATIONS WERE LIVING IN THIS PART OF THE CONTINENT BEFORE THE GREAT MOVEMENT BY DIFFERENT NATIONS OR TRIBES TO VARIOUS DESTINATIONS.

THE NGUNIS WHO ASSUMED THE NAME NGUNI FROM THEIR FOUNDING FATHER UNGUNI LEFT THE AREA TOO. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT KNOWN WHEN DID THIS GREAT MOVEMENT OCCUR OR WHY, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT IS DURING THE LATE 1000 TO THE BEGINNING OF 1100. THE NGUNI WENT DOWN TO THE SOUTH OF THE CONTINENT MOVING ALONG THE EASTERN PART OF THE COAST OF INDIAN OCEAN TO THE AREAS AROUND THE DRAKENSBERG [KHAHLAMBA] MOUNTAINS IN THE PRESENT KWAZULU-NATAL AND LESOTHO.

NGUNI HAD FOUR SONS THAT FORM THE CURRENT NGUNI NATION OR SPEAKING TRIBES. THESE SONS ARE; (1) AMAZULU, (2) AMANDEBELE, (3) AMASWAZI AND (4) AMAXHOSA. HOWEVER, THERE ARE MANY SMALLER NGUNI GROUPS THAT ARRIVED IN THIS PART OF SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE THE MAIN GROUP ARRIVED.

AFTER A LONG TIME THIS GROUP SPLIT AND TOOK DIFFERENT ROUTE IN PURSUIT OF INDEPENDENCE FROM ONE ANOTHER BUT MAINTAINING THEIR SIMILARITIES OF BEING NGUNIS.

THE FIRST GROUP TO BREAKAWAY WAS THE GROUP OF AMASWAZI WHO WENT NORTH IN THE DIRECTION THEY COME FROM BUT SETTLING IN THEIR CURRENT LAND OF SWAZILAND. THE SECOND GROUP TO LEAVE WAS AMAXHOSA WHO WENT FURTHER DOWN TO THE SOUTH OF THE CURRENT KWAZULU-NATAL BEFORE SETTLING ALONG THE COASTAL AND INTERIOR OF THE EASTERN AND WESTERN CAPE. AMANDEBELE FOLLOWED THEIR BROTHERS, AMASWAZI, BUT WENT INTO THE INTERIOR BEFORE SETTLING NORTH OF THE VAAL [LEGWA] RIVER [IN THE THEN TRANSVAAL].

AMANDEBELE WHEN MIGRATING FROM THE DRAKENSBURG MOUNTAINS WERE BEING LED BY THEIR FIRST NOTABLE LEADER, UNDEBELE THE SON OF UNGUNI. IT IS HOWEVER NOT KNOWN DURING WHICH YEAR DID THEY LEFT OR WHEN DID THEY ARRIVED TO THE NORTH OF VAAL RIVER EXCEPT THE ESTIMATION THAT IT WAS DURING THE BEGINNING OF THE 1400. AS TO WHETHER THEY WERE STILL UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF UNDEBELE OR NOT IS NOT CLEAR.

THE ORAL HISTORY INDICATES TO THE EFFECT THAT AMANDEBELE WERE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF UMHLANGA THE SON OF UNDEBELE. TO BE MORE EXACT AMANDEBELE WERE LIVING IN AN AREA CALLED EMHLANGENI ALSO KNOWN AS RANDFONTEIN IN JOHANNESBURG. THE ONLY KNOWN SON OF KING MHLANGA IS KING MUSI.

NOTHING MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT KING MHLANGA BESIDES THE PRAISE SONGS OF MUSI THAT HE IS HIS SON. UPON HIS PASSING ON, KING MUSI ASSUME THE POSITION OF KINGSHIP OF AMANDEBELE AND SOON MOVE TO KWAMNYAMANA, THE LAND OF DARK CLAY FERTILE SOIL IN THE CURRENT PRETORIA/ TSHWANE. THE PERIOD OF ARRIVAL IS ESTIMATED TO BE DURING THE MID 1500 TO THE BEGINNING OF 1600 LONG BEFORE THE DUTCH COLONISERS ARRIVED IN THE CAPE.

KING MUSI'S SETTLEMENT OR ROYAL KRAAL WAS AT THE PLACE KNOWN AS SWAARTKOPPIES/ DOORNPOORT IN KWAMNYAMANA NORTH OF THE PRESENT PREOTIA/ TSHWANE. HE FATHERED SEVEN SONS THAT ARE WELL KNOWN AND ARE THE NOTABLE SOUTH AFRICAN NDEBELE. HIS SONS WERE THE FOLLOWING;

1. MANALA/ MABHENA

2. MASOMBUKA/ SKHOSANA
3. NZUNDZA/ MAHLANGU
4. GEGANA/ KEKANA/ YAKALA OR MTHOMBENI
5. RHWADUBA/ MHWADUBA OR MATHIBE
6. SIBASA/ MPHAPHULI
7. DLOMU

BEFORE THE DEATH OF KING MUSI HIS SONS QUARREL OVER SUCCESSION AS A RESULT THEY TOOK DIFFERENT ROUTE AND SETTLED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF SOUTH AFRICA, SEE THE FULL STORY OF THE SPLIT.

THE SONS OF KING MUSI ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES AS CHIEFTAINCIES AFTER HAVING LEFT THEIR FATHER'S ROYAL KRAAL KWAMNYAMANA.

1.1 MANALA

THE SON FROM THE SENIOR HOUSE [HEIR] OF KING MUSI AFTER A LONG FIGHT WITH HIS OTHER BROTHERS HE CAME BACK AND BURIED HIS FATHER. HE TOOK OVER THE REIGNS AFTER HIS FATHER AND CONTINUED TO LEAVE IN KWAMNYAMANA SPREADING TO THE EAST OF THE CURRENT PRETORIA/ TSHWANE IN GAUTENG, MPUMALANGA AND NORTH WEST PROVINCE, SEE THE GENEALOGY.

1.2 MASOMBUKA/ SKHOSANA

MASOMBUKA DURING THE FIGHT LEFT TOWARDS THE BASOTHLAND BUT LATER CAME BACK TO JOIN NZUNDZA. HE IS THE ONLY SON OF KING MUSI WHO DID NOT ESTABLISH HIS CHIEFTAINCY.

1.3 NZUNDZA

AFTER THE PEACE BROKERED BY A LONG BREASTED WOMEN OF MSIZA AT OLIFANT [BHALULE] RIVER NORTH OF THE PRESENT GROBLES DAL TOWN HE WENT FURTHER TO THE EAST AND SETTLED AT KWA SIMKHULU IN THE BELFAST DISTRICT. NZUNDZA'S FOLLOWERS SPREAD UP TO THE PRESENT ROSSNEKAL [KONOMTJHERHELO] AND MANY OTHER AREAS WITHIN THE PROVINCE OF MPUMALANGA AND LIMPOPO.

1.4 GEGANA

ALSO FOUGHT AGAINST MANALA FOR CHIEFTAINSHIP UPON HIS DEFEAT HE LEFT TO JOIN NZUNDZA BUT LATER QUARREL AND WENT TO SETTLE IN AREAS SUCH AS MOLETLANE [ZEBEDIELA], POTGIETERSRUS [MOKOPANE] AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS WITHIN THE PROVINCE OF LIMPOPO.

1.5 RHWADUBA

MATHIBE PEOPLE ALSO FIGHT MANALA BUT UPON THEIR DEFEAT THEY WENT AWAY ESTABLISHING THEIR OWN CHIEFTAINCY NOT FAR FROM KWAMNYAMANA. IT WAS ONLY AFTER BEING DEFEATED BY MZILIKAZI THEY CAME BACK AND LIVE TOGETHER WITH MANALA IN KWAMNYAMANA. TODAY THEIR CHIEFTAINCY IS BASED NOT FAR FROM PRETORIA IN THE PROVINCE OF NORTH WEST.

1.6 SIBASA

HIS FOLLOWERS LEFT AS OTHERS WERE LEAVING TO ESTABLISH HIS OWN CHIEFTAINCY IN THE NORTH BEFORE SPREADING WITHIN THE VHAVENDA PEOPLE IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE. THIS GROUP CONQUERED MANY OTHER TRIBES TO FORM THE VHAVENDA TRIBE.

1.7 DLOMU

DLOMU TOOK HIS FOLLOWERS AND WENT BACK TO NATAL OR THE PRESENT KWAZULU-NATAL. IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT THIS GROUP JOIN THE HLUBI/LANGALIBALELE PEOPLE IN KWAZULU OR FROM THIS GROUP. THEY ARE CURRENTLY FOUND AROUND THE AREAS OF THE KWAZULU-NATAL MIDLANDS.

2. MFECANE/ DIFAQANE [GREAT SOCIAL INSTABILITY]

DURING THE ERA OF THE FOUNDER AND GREAT ZULU KING SHAKA WHO STARTED THE GREAT POLITICAL TURMOIL OR SOCIAL INSTABILITY BY ATTACKING AND CONQUERING SMALLER TRIBES INTEGRATING THEM INTO THE ZULU NATION. ONE OF SHAKA'S REGIMENT LEADER MZILIKAZI WHO CROSS THE LINE RUN AWAY ON HIS WAY HE FOUGHT MANY TRIBES AND DESTABILISING THEM.

HE ARRIVED IN KWAMNYAMANA WHEREIN HE WAS TREATED LIKE A ROYAL AND WAS GIVEN A WIFE, THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING SIBINDI. AFTER SPENDING TWO TO THREE YEARS HE ASSASSINATED THE KING IN 1825 TAKING THOUSANDS OF NDEBELE PEOPLE AND WENT FURTHER TO THE EAST. AT MKOBOLO BETWEEN WITBANK AND BRONKHORSTSPRUIT HE CAME ACCROSS MAGODONGO ONE OF THE OFF-SPRINGS OF NZUNDZA KILL HIM AND ALL OF HIS SONS BEFORE TURNING TOWARDS RUSTENBURG AREAS. HE CONTINUED TO ATTACK TRIBES UNTIL THE BOER TROOPS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BATSWANA PEOPLE DROVE HIM ACCROSS THE LIMPOPO RIVER IN 1837 INTO THE CURRENT MATABELELAND IN ZIMBABWE.

DURING THIS PERIOD LARGER PARTS OF THE INTERIOR OF THE THEN TRANSVAAL WERE LEFT VACANT NECESSITATING EASY INVASION BY WHITE BOERS. MANY TRIBES LOST MANY OF THEIR FELLOW COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO WENT ON TO FORM THE MATEBELE KINGDOM IN ZIMBABWE UNDER THE MZILIKAZI UNTIL IT WAS SHATTERED BY WHITES IN 1895.

3. AMANDEBELE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE BOERS.

AMANDEBELE LIKE MANY INDIGENOUS TRIBES THEIR LAND WAS ENCROACHED BY THE WHITE BOER TREKKERS WHO CAME FROM THE CAPE IN SEARCH OF THE BETTER LIFE AND INDEPENDENCE FROM THE CAPE GOVERNORS. THEIR ARRIVAL WAS NOT WELL RECEIVED BY AMANDEBELE AND OFTEN SMALLER SKIRMISHES BROKE OUT UNTIL THE BOERS FIND THEIR FOOTING THEN BEGAN CONFRONTING CHIEFDOMS AND KINGDOMS.

3.1.1 THE NZUNDZA'S ENCOUNTERS WITH THE BOERS 1840s -1880

THE NZUNDZA NDEBELE WERE VERY POWERFUL IN THE EAST/ CENTRAL TRANSVAAL ALONGSIDE THE PEDI KINGDOM TO THE NORTH. IN THE 1840S, THE BOERS TREKKERS SETTLED IN THE EASTERN TRANSVAAL. AT FIRST THEY AND THE NZUNDZA NDEBELE LIVED FAIRLY PEACEFULLY. LIKE MANY OTHER TRIBES NZUNDZA NDEBELE FEARED THE GUNS OF THE SETTLERS. BOER FIREPOWER HAD BEEN DEMONSTRATED BY THE DEFEAT OF MZILIKAZI IN 1837. BUT IT WASN'T LONG CONFLICTS ERUPTED. DISPUTES WERE OVER LAND AND LABOUR. AFRICAN IN THE REGION HAD THEIR OWN LAND AND CATTLE AND HAD LITTLE DESIRE TO

WORK FOR OTHER. THE BOERS WANTED AFRICAN COMMUNITIES TO PROVIDE LABOUR FAILURE TO THAT LED TO PEOPLE BEING FINED, WHIPPED OR THEIR HOMES RAIDED.

BOERS USED THE CRUELLEST AND INHUMAN METHOD OF SECURING LABOUR BY KIDNAPPING YOUNG CHILDREN WHO WOULD BE RAISED AS SLAVES WHICH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES WERE OPPOSED TO. THE BOERS BECAUSE OF THEIR TRIUMPH OVER MZILIKAZI THEY CLAIMED EVERY PIECE OF LAND BELIEVING THAT NO ONE ELSE WILL TROUBLE THEM.

AS A RESULT NZUNDZA NDEBELE FOUND THEMSELVES LIVING IN THE SO CALLED BOER FARM WHO NOW DEMAND RENT AND TAX FOR VARIOUS ACTIVITIES. THIS CONDUCT WAS MET WITH RESISTANCE AND HELPED TO GALVANISED EVEN NON NZUNDZA NDEBELE PEOPLE TO JOIN THE CHIEFDOMS IN OPPOSITION AGAINST THIS FOREIGN BEHAVIOUR. DUE TO MINES AND WORK PLACES BLACK PEOPLE INCLUDING NZUNDZA NDEBELE WERE ABLE TO WORK AND ACQUIRE GUNS. THEY REINFORCE THEIR CAPITAL AT ERHOLWENI [ROSSNEKAL] BY BUILDING LINES OF HIGH STONEWALLING TO JOIN NATURAL ROCK DEFENCES.

3.1.2 HOW THE WAR AND THE LAND WERE LOST

IN 1882 THE WAR BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE BOERS AND THE NZUNDZA NDEBELE. THE 2000 STRONG BOER COMMANDO ALONG WITH AFRICAN TROOPS SET OUT TO ATTACK THE NZUNDZA NDEBELE. BUT THE HOPES OF THE BOERS OF A QUICK VICTORY SOON FADED DESPITE THEIR HEAVILY ARTILLERY, SIEGE GUNS AND MORTARS, THEY WERE UNABLE TO OVERCOME THE MAIN NZUNDZA NDEBELE STRONGHOLD. [CHECK THE PARAGRAPH BELOW THE PHOTO OF TROOPS – COPY IT AS IT IS]

3.2.1 THE MANALA ENCOUNTER WITH THE BOERS 1860s - 1915

THE MANALA NDEBELE WERE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF KING SILAMBA WHEN THE GERMAN MISSIONARIES ARRIVED IN THE TRANSVAAL AND ESTABLISHED A HANDFUL OF MISSION STATIONS IN THE 1860s. THE INTENTION WAS TO SERVE AS CENTRES FOR THE EVANGELISM OF AFRICANS AND TO WEAN THEM AWAY FROM THEIR CUSTOMARY PRACTICES, MISSION STATIONS ALSO PROVIDED REFUGE TO DISPLACED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS, AS WELL AS EDUCATION.

THE BOERS TRIED TO ENFORCE THEIR CLAIMS BY COMPELLING AFRICANS TO PROVIDED LABOUR AND TO PAY TAXES AND RENT, DEMANDS WHICH AFRICANS INITIALLY RESISTED SUCCESSFULLY. BUT WITH THE ANNEXATION OF THE TRANSVAAL BY THE BRITISH IN 1877, IT BECAME POSSIBLE FOR THE BOERS TO ENFORCE THEIR CLAIMS AND DEMANDS.

BATTLES ENSUED BETWEEN THE MANALA NDEBELE AND THE BOERS OVER THE LAND, LABOUR AND TAXES THAT WERE DEMANDED BY WHITES IN THE AREAS AROUND PRETORIA IN KWAMNYAMANA, BRONKHORSTSPRUIT AND BAPSFONTEIN. AFTER LONG BATTLES WITH THE BOERS THE GERMAN MISSIONARIES INTERVENE AND OFFERED THE LAND TO MANALA NDEBELE WITH THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL BE CONVERTS BY BECOMING CHRISTIANS AND WILL BE SCHOOLED. REV KNOTHE AND HIS GROUP REALISED THAT MANALA NDEBELE WERE NOT TO BE PART OF THEM AS THEY RESISTED EVERYTHING INCLUDING MOVING INTO AN AREA DEMARCATED AS LAND OF AMANDEBELE.

KING SILAMBA HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAD NO BUSINESS WITH GOVERNMENT SPY DISGUISED AS PREACHER. HE WENT FURTHER TO DISCOURAGE HIS PEOPLE FROM GOING TO CHURCH AND SCHOOL. AS A RESULT TENSIONS MOUNTED BETWEEN HIM AND THE MISSIONARIES. THIS TENSION AND ANIMOSITY CONTINUED TO THE LAST KING MBHONGO WHO MOVED AWAY FURTHER TO THE EAST IN 1915.

ON THE OTHER HAND CHIEF MGIBE MABHENA UNCLE TO KING SILAMBA WHO WAS RESIDING IN THE WITBANK DISTRICT ALSO COULD NOT ESCAPE BOERS TREATMENT. DURING THE BETWEEN CHIEF NYABELA AND BOERS, CHIEF MGIBE BECAME THE FIRST VICTIM TO BE ATTACKED FEARING THAT HE WAS AIDING CHIEF NYABELA. HE WAS ARRESTED AND SENTENCE TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT BUT HE WAS RELEASED BEFORE PASSING ON IN 1905.