

4.4.11 Appendix 11 - Tshiendeulu the Grave of Dambanyika

Tshiendeulu the Grave of Dambanyika

THE RUINS OF VENDA LAND

By Pieter W. Van Heerden

&

THE LEGEND OF NGOMA LUNGUNDU

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THE RUINS OF VENDA LAND

The subjoined article was specially written for the readers of "Bantu" by Mr P.W. van Heerden, Inspector of Bantu Education for the Soutpansberg-Sibasa circuit. Mr Van Heerden is particularly well acquainted with the Bantu of his environment and the facts provided by him follow the popular parlance of the Bantu.

Readers must not expect a scholarly argument confirming or denying one or the other scientific view on these ruins, but should accept them in the light that the Bantu see them, as expounded Mr Van Heerden.

THE RUINS OF DAMBANYIKA

To the north of the capital of the Venda chief, Mphephu, the much discussed ruins of Dzata, the almost legendary capital of the first Vhavenda, who settled in this well-watered and fertile Nzhelele valley, within the Soutpansberg range, are situated. Here in the silence of the secluded countryside, where the calls of the herdboys yonder behind their herds can be heard, lie the Zimbabwe-like ruins, mainly toppled over and neglected.

One afternoon I visited the ruins in the company of the uncle of Mphephu. Although the ruins have been declared a National Monument and fenced in, they are in a critical condition. If help is not forthcoming to conserve this historical monument from an earlier era of the history of our country, they will disappear and only piles of stones will mark the site where once stood a flourishing capital of the Vhavenda.

These dilapidated walls of Dzata set me wondering whether these inaccessible fastnesses of the Soutpansberg do not harbour other secrets from the days of yore.

Inquiries eventually led me northwards through the mountains, along mountain tracks, which could be negotiated on foot only. The precipitous heights proved almost impassable in places, but I eventually stood on the first plateau, a fertile and well-watered region that, from the Nzhelele-valley, discloses nothing of its character.

On top of this extensive plateau, cultivated fields stretched out solidly to all sides, heavily laden with the finest grain that it was my privilege to see.

(Photograph no. 23)



Beautiful scenery is found in the vicinity of Lwandali

And still the route led northwards, across the plateau, over mountain ridges and cliffs, along precipitous footpaths, across another plateau and eventually it loomed up before me – Tshiendeulu Mountain, the object of my journey.

(Photograph no. 5)



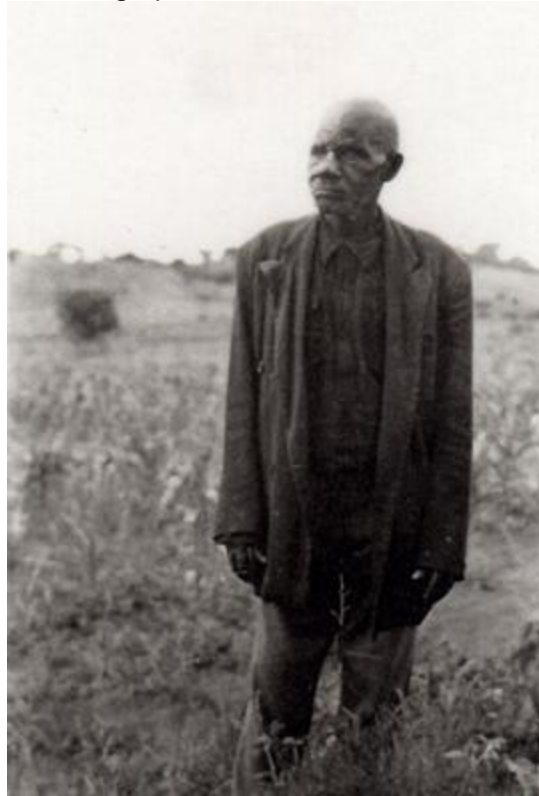
Tshiendeulu Mountain – approximately 1,000 feet above the plateau

I arrived here on the invitation of headman Nthangeni Netshiendeulu who had learnt of my interest in the past of the Vhavenda.

Before you descend into the valley on the southern side of Tshiendeulu Mountain, you cannot but admire the splendour of the scene in front of you. The immense mountain towers high above the plain and rises at least a thousand feet higher than the surrounding terrain. The precipitous rock-face sporadically covered with dense bush, imbues one with trepidation and awe for the unspoilt nature, here still in its purest virgin form, miles and miles away from the nearest civilization.

And then a thought strikes you that here, yes, there in front of you over the summits of the mountains the first Vhavenda, on their trek to the south, must have come. In their thousands they must have been – men, women and children, with their flocks of goats, herds of cattle and their domestic utensils...

(Photograph no. 22)



Netshiendeulu

Suddenly you hear: "Ndaa!" and supervisor Mudau, who acts as interpreter, returns the greeting: "Ndau- muhali, Vhamusanda!" and you realise you are face to face with Netshiendeulu, the "high priest" of the Mphephu people, the custodian of the "Ngoma-lungundu," the sacred drums of the Vhavenda.

Netshiendeulu is a friendly, smallish man, whose face is covered with wrinkles. His greying hair is an indication that he must be advanced in years, although his stride is still buoyant.

Deliberation takes place. Plans are made which important places will be visited and when. During the discussions you are amazed at the strength of the Venda tradition that a reasonably powerful chief like Mphephu, may not look Netshiendeulu in the face when the latter is addressed. According to the tradition the chief will die when he sets eyes on this man. Exactly how this came to be, I shall explain later.

There are various places of interest. We decide to view the ruins of Mbwapenga, the first known ancestor of Netshiendeulu. Mbwapenga was, according to our informant, the contemporary of the famous Dambanyika, the first Venda chief who settled south of the Phembe (Limpopo). Mbwapenga belonged to the first group who settled here

in the new country. On the southern slopes of Lwandali Mountain (now known as Tshiendeulu) he built his first village.

Through masses of dense shrubs and rambling creepers, through “haak-en-steek” bushes and “wag-’n-bietjie”, through patches of aloes, over huge slabs of rock and higher up the mountain, Netshien-deulu led us. At times we had to crawl on all fours through the twilight of the primeval forest, out of which strange birds took raucously to the air. And meanwhile you began to wonder whether you would ever again return to the civilised world. Your hands, arms and face are full of scratches and fresh bright blood shapes miscellaneous patterns on your skin. Here in the dense virgin forest it is humid and deadly quiet; the heat rises in suffocating airlessness out of the dark, rich soil, covered with centuries’ soft rotten leaves and when you listen, you only hear the sounds your companions make as they too negotiate the difficult bush. Suddenly there is silence.

The crooked finger of Netshiendeulu points to a few rocks. Your eyes roam through the twilight. The ruins of Mbwapenga, most probably the very first wall that the Venda erected south of the Limpopo! You stand in the presence of remote antiquity. Round about you lie the ruins, admittedly not walls anymore, yet nevertheless ruins.

(Photograph no. 1)



Ruins of Mbwapenga’s settlement on the southern slopes of Lwandali

Then you crawl through thick creepers and struggle against the mountain slopes. Unmistakable signs of an early settlement: heavy, thick walls roughly stacked of undressed stones, perhaps hurriedly – and you are astonished at the thickness of the walls and the size of this very first Venda village.

The tracks of time lie heavily on these ruins because they are overgrown and covered in vines and with difficulty you discern the entrance to the village. Amongst the slabs of rock you detect an overgrown pathway in the entrance – a footpath over which thousands of feet must have passed. This is the village of Mbwapenga, eight generations in the past.

(Photograph no. 2)



All that is left of the entrance to the village

According to your spokesman Nthangeni Netshiendeulu, Mwapenga was the maternal uncle of Dambanyika, the first known chief of the Vhasenzi, the actual rulers of the Vhavenda. Dambanyika followed soon after on the trail of this vanguard and eventually found himself in this vicinity and built his first royal village on the summit of Lwandali, a thousand feet above the surrounding area! It sounds impossible and you voice your doubt, but Netshiendeulu assures you that it is true. And what is more, he will prove it. After a last glimpse at the handiwork of ages past, the pathway again leads downhill, through dense virgin forest, over rocks and fallen tree trunks, until you emerge at the foot of Lwandali in the torrid heat, as perspiration streams down your body.

After an hour's rest in the shade of a friendly tree, Netshiendeulu points to a footpath, which meanders in the direction of the eastern slopes of Lwandali through the shady trees. What now? No, to the ruins of Dambanyika and they are on the summit of Lwandali! And you become conscious of the seriousness of the task before you as you look up towards the perpendicular cliffs that stand like rugged towers soaring against the dark blue sky. Our protests are ignored and we are to follow Netshiendeulu's uncle, who is already disappearing in a jogtrot amongst the trees. High up on the mountain ominous dry trees reach premonitorily up to the sky. And long shadows begin to form on the eastern face of Lwandali and you are thankful for the shade. Slowly we wind our way up the mountain, holding on to tree trunks and behind you the precipice yawns wider and deeper. Somewhere a troop of baboons take fright and utter warning screams and shrieks as they flee headlong over the cliffs. A bird flies up raucously and a few hadidas pass overhead and utter their hoarse cries. You shudder again when you look at the abyss under you. Involuntarily you cling desperately to rock and tree. You gasp for breath on account of the rarer air.

Eventually you stand on top of the mighty Lwandali. In the distance on the plain to the north the copper mines of Messina are visible and just a little distance further on lies Rhodesia. You are looking as it were right into the country from whence the Vhavenda immigrated. Huge euphorbia trees in their hundreds grow here. Other

shrubberies grow in profusion and it is clear that nobody ever sets foot here. Here on the summit it is desolate and quiet. A hare, aroused from its lair by the unusual commotion, disappears quickly into the undergrowth.

Ever westwards we are led. Here on the highest summit of Lwandali you are shown the remains of the large village, the first settlement of the followers of Dambanyika, the first known chief of the Vhasenzi. The rough stone walls appear to be of a temporary nature, as if the tribe had moved in a hurry. There are no signs that this place was inhabited for any length of time.

(Photograph no. 3)



On top of Lwandali. The first place of residence of Dambanyika the first known Venda chief

The existence here on top of Lwandali must have produced its quota of problems. Water was available only from fountains and streams at the foot of Lwandali. For a moment you stand here in the past, here at the ruins of a nation that came to make this land their own. Here lie the old ruins and you are told that you are the first white person to lay eyes on these ruins, indeed the first white to reach the summit of Lwandali! You are here in the presence of history, of a tradition that lives from generation to generation.

And in the afternoon, with ruins and heavy euphorbia tress around you, you listen to the history of this tribe. After the death of Dambanyika, his followers, on his command, moved away from the mountain. There being no chief, they were under the command of the Makhadzi, who established a new town three miles away on the plain south west of Lwandali. Dambanyika ordered his followers never to come near Lwandali, or use the products of the area – even honey was forbidden. The last command of Dambanyika was obeyed and a new village under the rule of the Great Makhadzi, who was also responsible for the safety of Vele, the “crown prince” until he could succeed Dambanyika, arose.

Here on the fertile plateau an unfamiliar village took shape. Round walls were carefully built. Passages and outer walls and entrances were constructed. Higher and higher the walls rose here on the northern slopes of Tumvi.

(Photograph no. 6)



The immediate surroundings of the original Dzata

To the north on the other side of the valley, Manambeni and Magunduni lie, while in the distance, to the north-east the summits of Lwasoli and Lwandali were visible. In the east there were the slopes of Maswuni Mountain where flocks and herds grazed amongst the game.

The capital of the Vhasenzi under the rule of the Great Makhadzi was known as Dzata. Here they stayed for many years. With a start you wake up from your reverie: "Dzata? But surely Dzata lies in the Nzhelele valley near Mphephu's capital?" "No, but that is not the real Dzata – the right one is here on the plateau!" This unbelievable statement is difficult to absorb. "Wait until tomorrow – then we'll go and see the real Dzata!" And there below in the valley the shadow of Lwandali lengthens towards the east, while the sun here on the summit still shines brightly.

You struggle down the sheer mountain slopes and you wonder nostalgically whether the Venda of today, descendants of the stalwart old Vhasenzi, remember the traditions and glory of a rich and abundant past?

THE DZATA OF NYAMULANALWO: THE GREAT MAKHADZI

With the morning sun behind you and green pastures around, the footpath winds along the foot of Tumvi. The grass is still laden with dew, while Netshindeulu, the "youthful" greybeard heads purposefully westwards. In the course of the walk penetrating questions about the history were posed. "This Dambanyika, the first noted chief of the people who later came to be known as the Vhavenda, how did he meet his death?"

Netshiendeulu stops for a brief moment. His eyes dwell over the cliffs of Lwandali. A kind of fogginess fills his eyes as his finger points to the eastern slopes of the mountain. "That is where he died. His grave is also there." No, we do not understand. Tell us. Netshiendeulu resumes his walk on the winding track. "Dambanyika was fond of hunting. On this particular day he took his dogs Mutshena and Mazwipalile along. It proved to be the last time that he was seen alive. When he was still missing the following day, a search party set out led by one of the dogs, which arrived whining at the capital of Lwandali during the night. The dog led the party round the mountain to a cave where it stood whimpering and swinging its tail. The men then saw that the opening of the cave was filled with huge rocks, which were impossible to move. After unsuccessfully trying to remove the rocks, they were addressed by Dambanyika. "Men, there is nothing to do but to leave me here where I shall die. This cave of Lwandali will be my grave. Lwandali will be the sign of my grave.

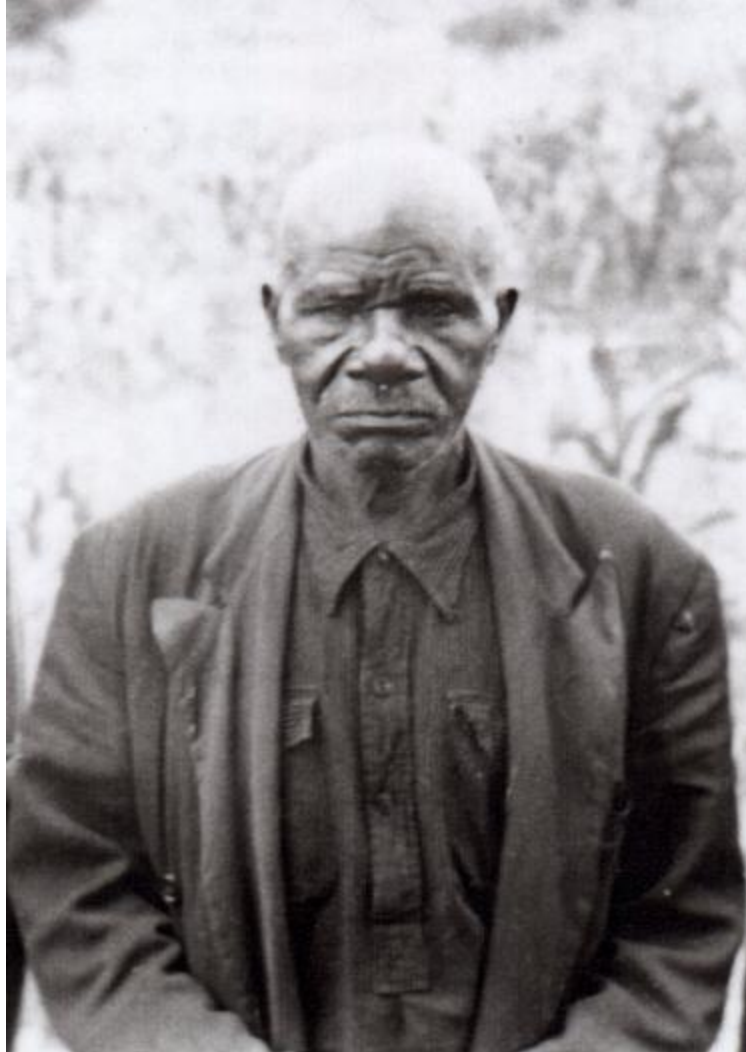
(Photograph no. 4)



Tshiendeulu Mountain from the south-east

You may not live on it and you will have to move. Nobody is to eat fruit that grows here and even the honey will be taboo. Let Nyamulanalwo lead my people to another place and let her raise Vele so that he can succeed me. And let the son of Mbwapenga remain behind to tend to my grave, from now onwards for many years to come. Furthermore he will be the guardian of the ngoma-lungundu, which has to be kept near my grave. And the son of Mbwapenga will be responsible for the rain and good crops. Go now, my people, go in peace."

(Photograph no. 24)



Nthangeni Netshiendeulu

Again Netshiendeulu stopped and turned towards the hazy summit of Lwandali. "The people duly moved away and my ancestor, the son of Mbwapenga became the first guardian of the chief's grave and he and his successors became known as Netshiendeulu, because Tshiendeulu means cemetery.

Nyamulanalwo carried into effect the last commands of her chief and built a new capital to the south west and called it Dzata. From that day Lwandali became known as Tshiendeulu, even to this day. We have arrived at the great Dzata."

And we get our first glimpse of the forgotten Dzata through dense undergrowth and huge euphorbia trees. Beautiful dry masonry, the handiwork of ages past, appears undamaged in places.

(Photograph no. 25)



DZATA RUINS - This photo shows the building structure of the Dzata ruins

"This is the entrance to the great Dzata," Netshiendeulu explains and once more centuries speed past while we stand in the presence of events of days gone by. In places the ruins are well preserved.

(Photograph no. 12)



DZATA RUINS - Note the fine stonework

Up to eight feet high the fine masonry stands, flat stone upon flat stone, accurately and thoroughly built, without mortar anywhere in between. It reminds you

immediately of Zimbabwe, but the finish is coarser and not of the excellent workmanship of the latter.

(Photograph no. 8)



DZATA RUINS – Note the fine workmanship on the rough foundations

And while Netshiendeulu leads the way through passages and wild creepers, you begin to form an idea of the size of these ruins. You cannot grasp the fact that you stand here in the presence of a monument from the past.

(Photograph no. 7)



DZATA RUINS - Foundations

You ask Netshiendeulu if other whites have been to these ruins? "No, you are the first – wait a bit, let me see – oh yes, the Rev. van Rooy, missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church and also another person were here. They and you are the first whites to have set foot within the walls of this Dzata."

(Photograph no. 9)



DZATA RUINS – Note stacking on rough foundation stones

One is amazed at the solid stonework and the manner in which these ruins have been preserved.

(Photograph no. 13)



DZATA RUINS – Note the similarity of the stones

“What became of Nyamulanalwo, the Great Makhadzi?” Netshiendeulu finds a shady place under the huge euphorbia trees within the silent walls of the first Dzata and sits down and relates how the Great Makhadzi and her followers after many years, moved away from this place. She led her followers south and into the fertile Nzhelele valley, and here a second Dzata was built – the Dzata that was known. It seems as if the tragic death of Dambanyika cast a shadow over the Vhasenzi so that they experienced a feeling of danger and chiefly they were worried about the safety

of Vele, who was to succeed Dambanyika. That is why they moved away from the plateau and the ancestor of Netshiendeulu and his followers remained behind in the shadow of Lwandali. Since then the descendants of Dambanyika may not face the descendants of Netshiendeulu because it was believed that the descendants of Netshiendeulu possessed supernatural powers. This custom is observed until this day. "What happened to the Great Makhadzi?" Netshiendeulu explains that the Great Makhadzi disappeared in the same mysterious fashion as Dambanyika. Until this day nobody knows what actually happened to her." But others contend that it was Dyambeu who died in the cave?" Netshiendeulu insists that it was Dambanyika who died in the cave and not Dyambeu. "Who was Thoho-ya-ndou?" "He was also known as Tshiseve, a son of a younger brother of the unfortunate Dambanyika, who died on the trek southwards (the brother). This Thoho-ya-ndou was also under the care of the Great Makhadzi. He (Thoho-ya-ndou) later disappeared. But that is another story."

In the scorching afternoon sun the ruins are explored further. You follow the passage that leads from the northern entrance.

(Photograph no. 16)



DZATA RUINS – Note the building style. This wall is collapsing on the left side

There are unmistakable signs that huge, rough stones were used in the construction of the walls, mainly as foundations. Other sections of the walls are well preserved and the uniformity of the building blocks appears as if they were especially pieced together.

(Photograph no. 14)



DZATA RUINS - Near the main entrance on the north

Netshiendeulu then takes you to an immense round structure within the ruins. "This is the place where tribal decisions were taken – the royal council chamber." These walls are high – up to eight feet. You notice that rougher stones were used... Perhaps they were erected in haste, who knows? You also notice that a section of this wall apparently collapsed and was later carefully repaired in the pattern of the outer walls.

(Photograph no. 10)



DZATA RUINS – An old wall repaired according to the new style of building (top right corner)

But the surprise is even greater. Netshiendeulu indicates that we should follow him. We are led through maize fields on the outside of the ruins of Dzata. Approximately two hundred yards in a western direction, we come across another series of ruins.

In places the walls have been well preserved, but alas, with the ploughing right up to the walls and even inside, these ruins are destroyed to a great extent.

(Photograph no. 15)



DZATA RUINS – Collapsed walls

Those that still stand are built in the beautiful style of the ruins of the royal village. "These," Netshiendeulu explains, "are the ruins of some of the followers of the Great Makhadzi." You climb on to a high wall and around you in all directions you notice more of these interesting relics. You reflect that perhaps the time is ripe for these ruins to be saved for our descendants. What secrets lie buried here? Back under the shade of the euphorbia trees, your thoughts return to the past.

(Photograph no. 11)



DZATA RUINS – Note the bonding

Here in front of you lies the western entrance to the village. A little further on you notice a spherical mound. A scrapheap? You ask Netshiendeulu whether this is true? Yes, he thinks it is the scrapheap of the village. With a small spade that you have brought along, you commence digging an experimental hole and at a depth of fifteen inches you find ash and further down, some pieces of bone come to light, quite a number of them, because these people were hunters. Eventually in front of you there lie potsherds with a pattern that reminds you of claypot shards that were dug up at Zimbabwe; a pair of leopard's teeth, buffalo teeth, pieces of marrow bone and the past lives once more! Meanwhile Netshiendeulu is watching your activities closely and he is highly amused that you are digging in a scrapheap.

And late in the afternoon you take leave of the great Dzata, the size of which is difficult to determine because dense shrubs and climbers have made it part and parcel of the primitive jungle. But you have made a detour of the circumference of Dzata and came to the conclusion that this place must have been the centre of a great community. You decide that further research into this Dzata is necessary. Nature, here in the high mountains, acted as guardian of this great and interesting part of the history of the Vhavenda and you are thankful that a person such as Netshiendeulu, faithfully kept the traditions and historical facts alive as his ancestors were instructed by Dambanyika. You are thankful that, despite the absence of a written historical record, so much information still remains at the disposal of the Vhavenda. You are thankful for the work of the great Makhadzi, Nyamulanalwo, and you wonder what story the high mountain peaks would be able to tell should they be able to speak.

But the great shadows of the evening had already fallen and the plateau was silent. A group of hadida birds with their eerie, hoarse calls shock you back to the present and there, on the summit of Tshiendeulu Mountain, linger the last rays of the sun.

THE CAVE OF THE NGOMA-LUNGUNDU

As the first rays of the rising sun appear on the Soutpansberg, the many villages come alive and smoke curls lazily into the morning air. This morning our journey will take us north-eastwards to the slopes of Tshiendeulu Mountain where the sun already shines on the high crags. Vultures and eagles drift lazily in the blue sky.

The footpath meanders through the dense land of maize. Netshien-deulu deliberately leads us northwards. Your thoughts return to the ruins of the great Dzata that was visited yesterday, and to the Vhasenzi and their journey southwards.

"From where did the Vhasenzi originally come?" you ask in the course of the conversation. Immediately Netshiendeulu answers: "From the country of the Barozwi, situated on the banks of a great river, the Congo." Well – how would Netshiendeulu know about the Congo, here on the plateaux of the Soutpansberg where he grew up and without a doubt never left the area? According to him the Vhasenzi came from that area – he does not doubt that for a moment.

"What about Zimbabwe?" you ask. "Who built that?" But the white man pronounces the word wrongly! It is Dzimbahe. In the language of the Vhasenzi the meaning is "houses of stone." "Who inhabited these houses of stone?" you want to know. Naturally the chief and his following and therefore "Dzimbahe" to this day means a

royal house. When the Vhakaranga speak of this place (Zimbabwe) they also mean "houses of stone." According to Nthangeni Netshiendeulu the meaning of "Zimbahe" is royal house. The ancient Vhasenzi also spoke of the "zimbahe" across the Vhembe (Limpopo) and thereby they meant "royal place," i.e. the place from where the people originally came.

"Here we are." And Netshiendeulu raises his curved hand. You feel a strange tickling, for here begins the adventure that you could only dream about. At last you are about to behold the "Sacred Drums" (the ngoma-lungundu) with your own eyes. But no, Netshiendeulu still has to make considerable arrangements. The rest of the party is to remain behind because it is forbidden for locals to see the sacred drums, with the exception of himself and the "Khotsimunene." Only the white man and the supervisor Mudau will go along. And there he once more takes the road and we follow in single file. The footpath twists through mealie lands. The sun scorches down and the atmosphere is extremely oppressive, although it is still very early. Netshiendeulu heads straight for the steep slopes of Tshiendeulu Mountain and before long the pathway zigzags into the first dense scrub at the foot of the mountain. It winds through the shade, over rocks, through ditches and alongside fearful precipices. We begin to stoop and soon we are on all fours while hookthorns catch at your clothes and gouge painful wounds on your arms and legs. Of direction by now you know nothing, because the footpath has long since disappeared. You find it difficult to see where you are going because you are blundering over rocks, and tree roots ever higher and higher. The dense virgin forest, through which lianas and other climbing plants grow, suddenly is steeped in twilight. You can only see one or two patches of blue through the dense canopy of leaves.

And then there is the sound of voices; it sounds as if somebody is praying. For a moment you involuntarily hesitate, but you struggle valiantly forward and inquisitively peer over the edge of a huge boulder. And then you notice that Netshiendeulu and his companion lie flat on their faces and they crawl mumbling further up the steep mountain side. One hears ancient names of well-known chiefs and you recognize a praise poem, which is used only for praising great chiefs.

Suddenly they bow their heads again and a respectful "Ndaa!" slips from their mouths. At the same time you notice that you are in a dim cave and when your eyes grow accustomed to the strange light, you notice the two drums in front of you – the "Ngoma-Lungundu!"

(Photograph no. 26)



THE GREAT NGOMA (left) - with the smaller one next to it

Netshiendeulu seats himself comfortably in the silent shade, while you struggle to assimilate the fact that you are in the presence of the legendary “sacred drums.” May photos be taken? “Naturally – you are an honoured visitor and the very first white who has been allowed into this sanctuary.”

You notice that the cave lies deep under a huge inclining rock. Here in the cave they are protected from all sorts of weather: these drums that signify so much for these people. Many people maintain that the existence of these drums is a figment of the imagination, but here they are right in front of you!

There are two of them, viz. the large one “Matale” and the smaller “Thungwa ya Matale.” The larger drum, as well as the smaller one are of the same shape as the well known drums used by the ordinary people, approximately 23 inches long, 18 inches wide and 14 inches high. They are made from wood, with a handle on all four corners. The drum itself is round in shape and covered by a tightly-drawn oxhide, fastened to the drum by wooden pegs and has a largish hole in the bottom. It is decorated by fine woodcarving. The handles of the drums are known as “madamu” (nipples) of the drum. The wooden pegs are known as the “khokho dza ngoma.” The other drum is made in the same pattern, although smaller.

Netshiendeulu touches one of the drums deferentially and hands it to you. You feel the lightness of the drum and marvel at the expertise employed by the creator of these instruments. In the dust of the cave you notice pieces of an old drum that must be at least hundreds of years old. When the old drums perish of old age, they are replaced time and again. And there, suddenly, the riddle is solved of the apparently continued survival of these instruments; the pursuance of a tradition as old as the Vhavenda themselves!

(Photograph no. 17)



Remains of old drums that have perished

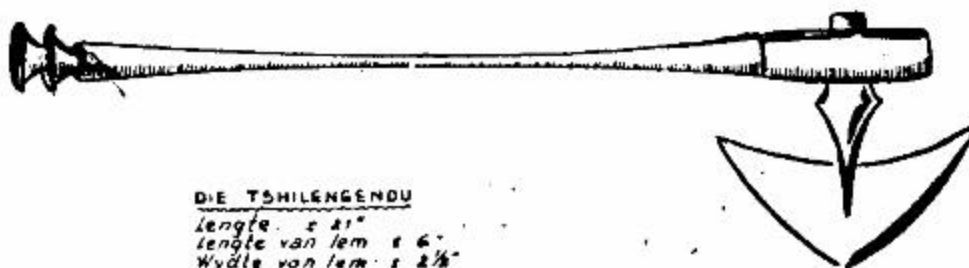
When you turn back for a last look, Netshiendeulu and his companion are once more on their knees retreating backwards, continually muttering and bowing their heads until they are out of sight of the drums. Then they turn away and follow the difficult trip through dense undergrowth on the mountainside. After hours' of struggling, you emerge once more into the scorching sun.

INTERESTING ANTIQUES OF NETSHIENDEULU

THE TSHILENGENDU (BATTLE AXE) OF NETSHIENDEULU

We sit under the shady trees at the humble home of Netshiendeulu. Questions were asked to which prompt answers were given. In the course of the afternoon, Netshiendeulu showed us various interesting items, which he inherited from his ancestors. These things are fast disappearing, but you are thankful for the privilege to be present when the dignified old Keeper of the Royal Graves relives the past.

Sketch of the tshilengendu - (battle axe)



Length: 21 inches
 Length of blade: 6 inches
 Width of blade: 2 ½ inches

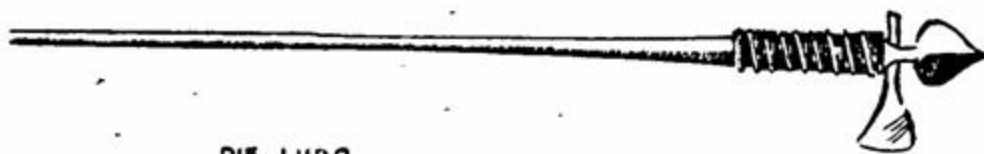
He handles the instruments with care and tenderness. "This tshilengendu – battle axe - has an interesting history... And then he proceeds to relate how this very axe was used by his ancestors to execute magicians and condemned persons; how in the war between Mphephu and the Swazi, this self same axe was stolen by the Swazi robbers who left it in the fork of a tree where the men of Netshien-deulu found it. "What about the present?" It is used once per year at the Thevhula ceremonies in the winter months when offerings are made to the ancestors.

The shaft of the axe is cast from one piece of iron and exquisitely finished. The blade and the spigot by which it is attached to the shaft are made of another piece of iron. Its length is about twenty-one inches and the expertise is unrivalled.

THE CEREMONIAL STAFF

And this is the "Ludo." In front of you you see a very small axe of the same type as the battle-axe, but it is not an axe.

(The ludo)



DIE LUDO
Lengte: 2 3/4 - 6"
Dikte: 3/8" met verdikking bo-aan

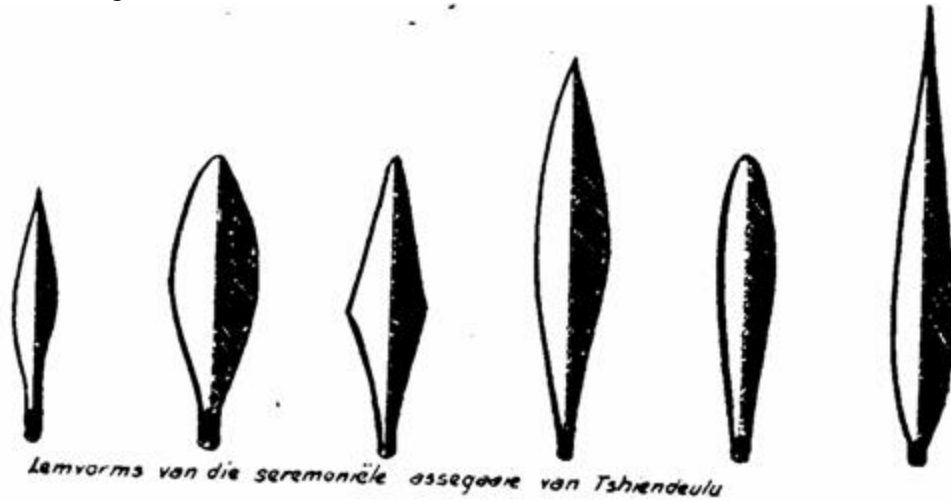
Length: 3 ½ feet
Thickness: 3/8 " with thickening at the top

The shaft is 42 inches long and is made totally of iron. "But what is it then?" you ask. "It is actually a staff used by the Makhadzi," Netshiendeulu explains. "On the same day that the chief receives the traditional axe (the tshilengendu), i.e. on the day that he starts to rule, the Makhadzi receives this 'ludo.' "

CEREMONIAL ASSEGAIS

And thus we arrived at the ceremonial assegais, which are also used in ancestral worship. There is one for each ancestor. The length of the assegai is 42 inches, the thickness approximately ¾ - 1 inch and the blades vary from 3 – 9 inches. Each son of the house of Tshiendeulu is bound by tradition to prepare such an assegai when his father passes away. Thus they differ in pattern and decoration. Netshien-deulu takes each assegai in his hand and names the ancestor for which it was prepared. They are:

(Ceremonial assegais)

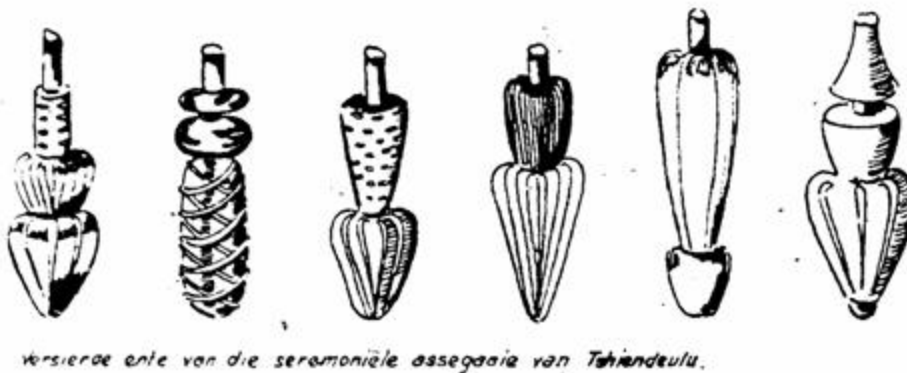


Blade shapes of the ceremonial assegais of Netshiendeulu

- Mbwapenga
- Tshidulu
- Tshumbewane
- Tshidongo
- Mathavhala
- Navela

When Nthangeni Netshiendeulu eventually dies, his son will prepare a ceremonial assegai for his father.

(Shaft ends of assegais)



Decorated shaft ends of the ceremonial assegais of Netshiendeulu

THE TSHIDZUNGULUWE

Netshiendeulu led us to these later ruins. You are able to see that they are from an earlier period, because the characteristic style is there. Mbwapenga, the maternal uncle of Dambanyika, built them. Eight generations have lived here in the second home of Mbwapenga. They are as old as the Dzata we visited yesterday. When the Great Makhadzi moved away from the mountain, Mbwapenga, who became the first Netshiendeulu, built his second home here.

Deep within these ruins, covered by dense grass and shrubs, Netshien-deulu shows us the famous "tshidzunguluwe." For a moment you are astonished – in front of you is the largest clay pot that you have ever set eyes upon. It is old, very old, because it is covered in stonemoss just like the stones nearby. In actual fact it resembles the stones in its vicinity, but it nevertheless is a clay pot. Perhaps it came along with the move to the south of the Vhembe. Nobody knows.

Netshiendeulu explains: "Out of this pot Mbwapenga drank his beer during the domba and other ceremonies. After his death it was declared sacred and sealed. It has never been opened. You study it attentively, for here is yet another link with the past. The seal appears unbroken after centuries' exposure to the elements. "What will happen if the seal is broken?" you want to know. Netshiendeulu shakes his head. "It is better left unopened, because tradition has it that a huge whirlwind will arise and sweep all people into the sea." We therefore remained at a safe distance from the tshidzunguluwe, admiring the handiwork of whoever was responsible for it and which could last for so long. One then wonders if it would not be better for this old heirloom to find a last resting place in a museum, instead of in the open under trees?

THE MYSTERIOUS RUINS OF MUDZIMUNGALE

At last we are homeward bound. The interesting few days have passed. To the beautiful plateau and its friendly inhabitants we reluctantly say goodbye. It is as if the people here in the vicinity of Tshiendeulu still cling to the past. The stone wall tradition has become part of them. They are the subjects of Chief Mphephu, but they are not allowed to reside in his vicinity, because they are also the subjects of Netshiendeulu, the Keeper of the chief's grave. Thus an old tradition is perpetuated and maintained. Netshiendeulu accompanies his visitors, because there are more ruins that he would like to show the white man. Along murmuring streams and cool fountains the road leads back through fertile mealie lands and rocky heights, south eastwards, back to civilisation. At about half way Netshiendeulu signals that we are to turn left. We clamber over huge boulders and scramble up the incline. Netshiendeulu indicates that we have reached the place. We look around but perceive only huge boulders and dense bushes. But wait, Netshiendeulu knows his locality. He takes us into the bushes.

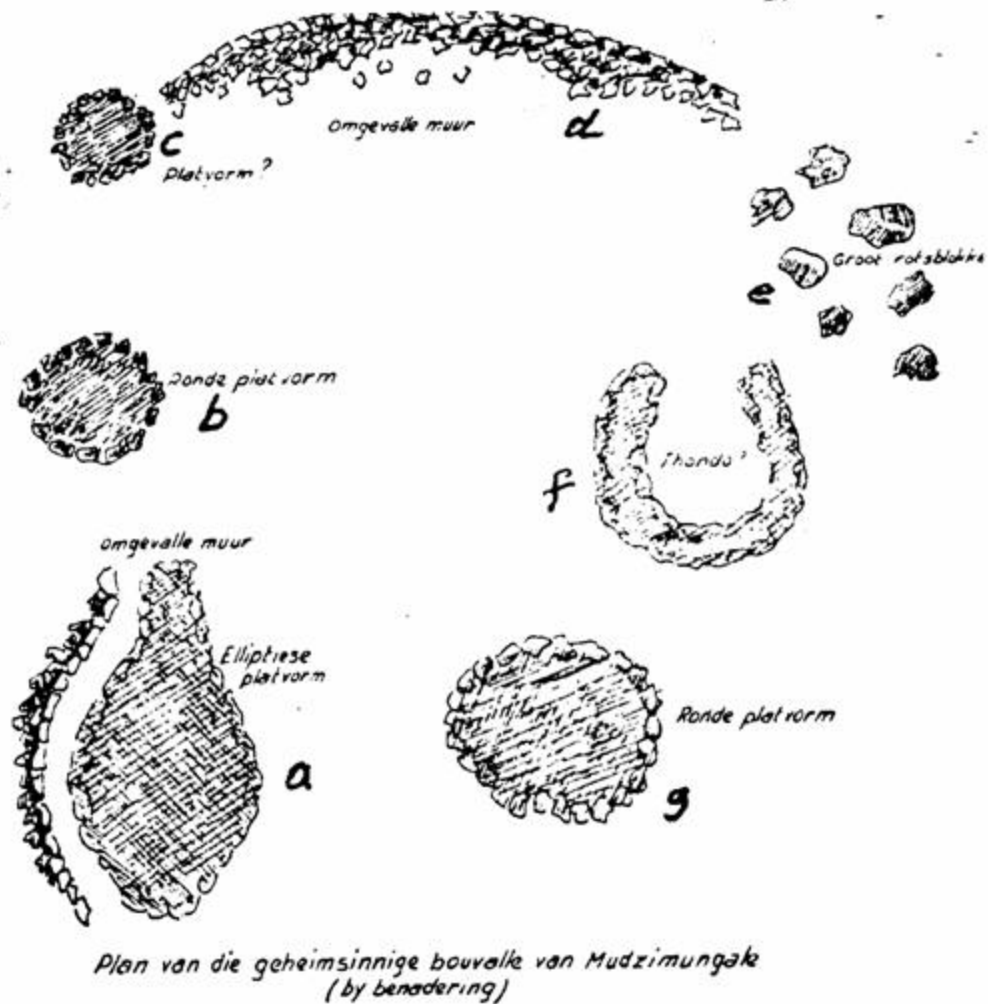
(Photograph no. 18)



MUDZIMUNGALE: a cleared space in the bush

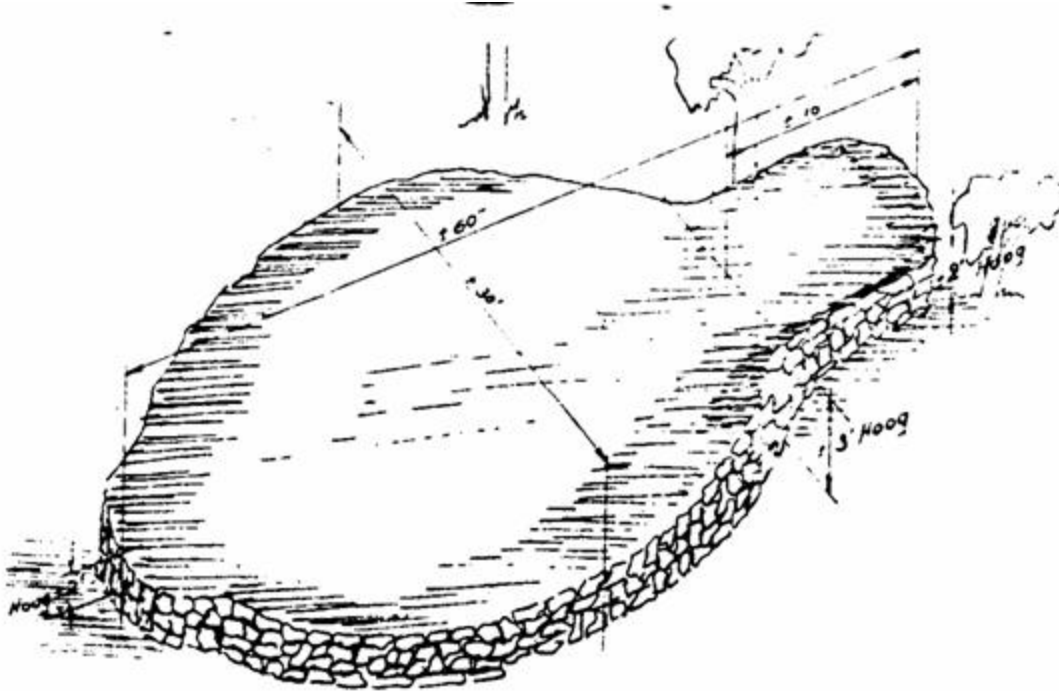
In front of us we see the characteristic stacked walls. The stones are green with age and the bushes are so dense that you cannot get near the wall. An opening through the bushes is made with difficulty. At last: You climb the wall. But you stagger back in surprise. This is not a wall, but a platform.

Plan of the mysterious ruins of Mudzimumgale (approximately)



- elliptic platform showing collapsed wall
- round platform
- small platform
- collapsed outer wall
- huge boulders
- Thondo?
- Round platform

We walk carefully on the floor of the platform, peep through dense foliage and come to the conclusion that these ruins are not in the same category as those of Dzata. You carefully climb back and circle the bush (platform). These platforms are filled with smaller stones to the height of the outer wall. The platform is clearly elliptic.



Elliptical platform (Ruwé sketch)

Rough sketch of elliptical platform, showing approximate measurements

It is about 60 feet in length and 30 feet wide. The northern wall is about 3 ½ feet high and the southern side about 2 feet. The platform has a type of built-up butting face on the northern side – it is about 4 feet wide and 10 feet long. It is lower at the beginning and rises gradually until it reaches the height of the platform. On the south-western side the wall has collapsed.

Ten feet further in the bush you come across another wall and another platform but this one is round and approximately 3 feet high and 18 feet in diameter. On the eastern side the walls have collapsed, but it is clear that even this platform had been filled up with smaller stones just as the elliptical platform. About 15 feet further there is another wall.

(Photograph no. 19)



MUDZIMUNGALE: another cleared space

It is a circular wall of rough stones stacked together – one upon the other. To the north there is another collapsed wall, densely overgrown and practically unrecognisable. The ruined wall suddenly ends in an irregular platform. Some 6 feet away there is another platform, smaller than the others and round in form.

(Photograph no. 21)



MUDZIMUNGALE: the size of the stones used

Upon further investigation you note that the platforms lie in a rough circle. The outer wall is built of huge uneven rocks with a collapsed entrance on the north side.

Netshiendeulu is questioned (about these ruins). No – how would he know who built these platforms? When his ancestors settled here, this place was here. Nobody knows what took place here. They only know about these ruins. It must have been

their predecessors who are responsible for these ruins. The place is known as Mudzimungale.

And so we left the hill with its mysterious ruins. Who knows what these dumb rocks may be able to tell? Was it a place where the gods were worshipped? Was it the capital of a ruler with his thondo?

Netshiendeulu stood against the horizon and waved goodbye to us with his tattered old hat. Behind him Tshiendeulu Mountain towered in the midday sun, like a guardian jealously watching over his precious treasures – treasures from the time-honoured past of the Vhavenda who found a new home in the Soutpansberg.



Pieter van Heerden



Richard Wade

Expedition to Tshiendeulu March 2007

Tshiendeulu Mountain coordinates: -

22° 49' 60.00" South

30° 10' 60.00" East

On the 2nd March 2007 Richard Wade embarked on a reconnaissance of the Tshiendeulu with six colleagues to meet with the grave keeper of Tshiendeulu.

One of the son's of Nthangeni Netshiendeulu, Samson Netshiendeulu and his son Eric Netshiendeulu met with Richard Wade and formal contact was made for the first time at the foot of the mountain at the Netshiendeulu homestead. Over a period of a day various members of the family were introduced and the whereabouts of Pieter van Heerden's document were established, of the trip he took to Tshiendeulu in the early 1950's with Nthangeni Netshiendeulu.

Richard Wade presented Samson Netshiendeulu with a copy of the document made by Pieter van Heerden in the 1950's with the father of Samson Netshiendeulu.

On 6th March 2007 Richard Wade received a call from Azwindini Netshiendeulu, son of the head lady or vhoMakhadzi of Tshiendeulu also requesting a copy of the document, specifically the photographs of Nthangeni Netshiendeulu, for Her Majesty the Makhadzi - Tshina teho Nkonene Netshiendeulu. Tshina teho Netshiendeulu is the daughter of a brother of Nthangeni Netshiendeulu called Jim.

Another brother of Nthangeni Netshiendeulu is Thomas Netshiendeulu. Thomas is the present grave keeper of Tshiendeulu and tends to the grave of Dambanyika and the sacred objects that are kept with the Ngoma Lungundu in a cave near to Dambanyika's grave. He is very old and lives in the homestead of the next grave keeper in line - Eric Netshiendeulu. Thomas is the only person that is allowed to go onto the sacred area of Tshiendeulu Mountain where Dambanyika had his original settlement after leaving Great Zimbabwe nine generations previous.

Richard Wade therefore has established the exact location of Ngoma Lungundu and the grave of Dambanyika, which is the cave that was closed in a rock fall that entombed Dambanyika. Many subsequent calls and electronic Cellphone messages (SMS's) were sent to Richard Wade from Eric, Azwindini, Samson and the Makhadzi Netshiendeulu to help draw awareness to the sacred site. Adjacent to Tshiendeulu on the plateau and in the Njelele Valley below are found the remains of the earliest settlements by the descendents of Dambanyika, namely Dzata I and Dzata II.

Dzata I and Dzata II were built after the death of Dambanyika and are regarded as the remains of the earliest settlement of the original settlers that came from Great Zimbabwe when that Empire supposedly fell into decline in the 14th century. However, on the top of Tshiendeulu Mountain the actual original structures of the very first settlement of

Dambanyika are found to exist. This is not known and the grave keepers have purposefully misled many archaeologists and anthropologists throughout the years.

On receiving the document of their father's trip with Pieter van Heerden, for the first time, the Netshiendeulu families have formally requested Richard Wade to help establish their lost city and draw the awareness to the immense importance of the sacred area and profound legacy that has never been recorded of the Royal descendents of the Great Zimbabwe.

Photographs of Tshiendeulu Expedition March 2007



Richard Wade, Dr Magdel le Roux, Lawrence Bale, M J Mungulwa, N Mafadza (Lemba elders), Prof Tudor Parfitt and His Royal Highness King Tony Mphephu Ramabulana



Tshiendeulu Mountain, previously known as Lwandali before it became the grave of Dambanyika



Homestead of Netshiendeulu family the Grave keepers and vhoMakhadzi of Tshiendeulu



Mother of the present vhoMakhadzi of Tshiendeulu



Dzata I



Dzata I



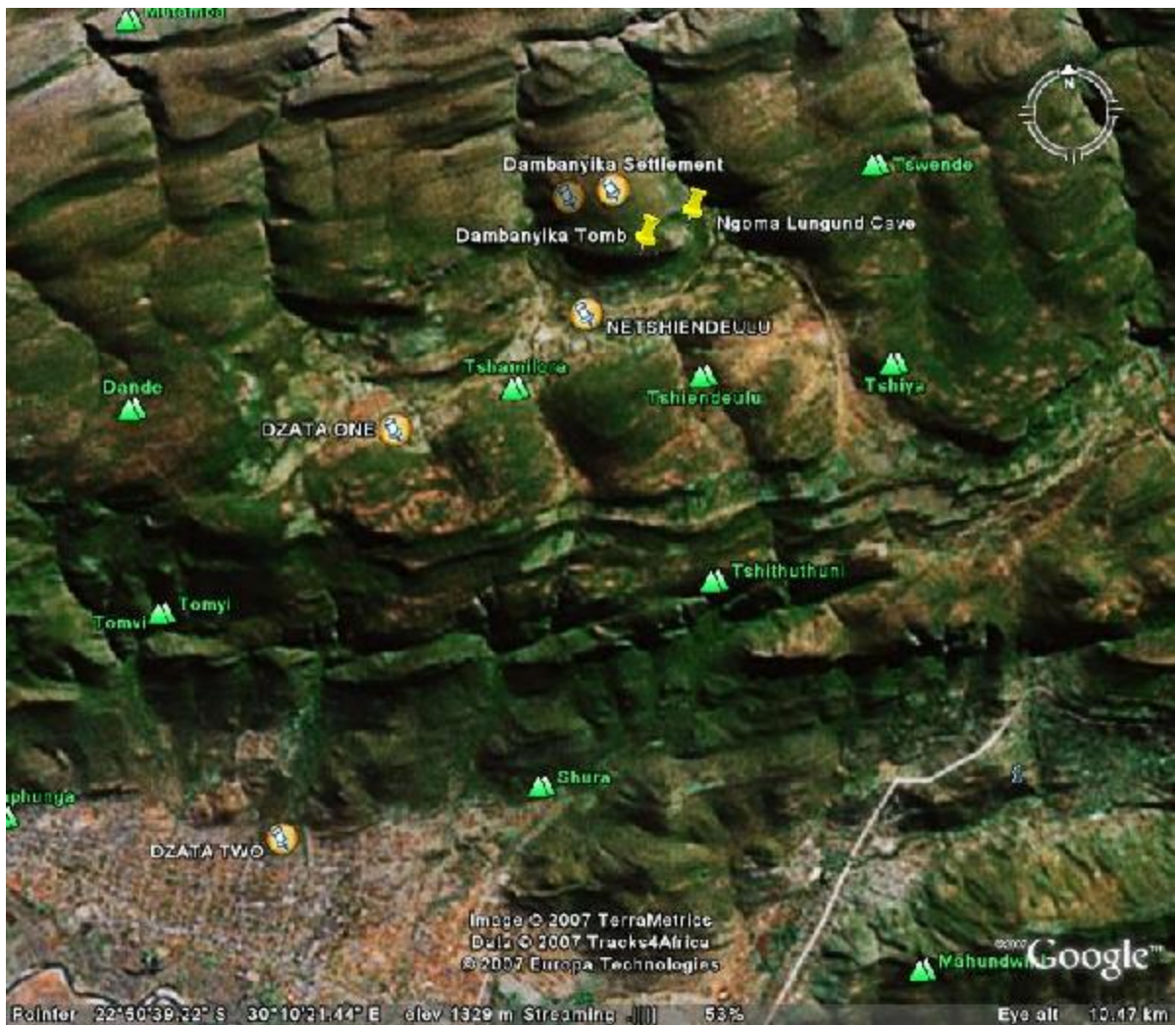
Tshiendeulu Mountain with the Cave of the Grave of Dambanyika in the centre



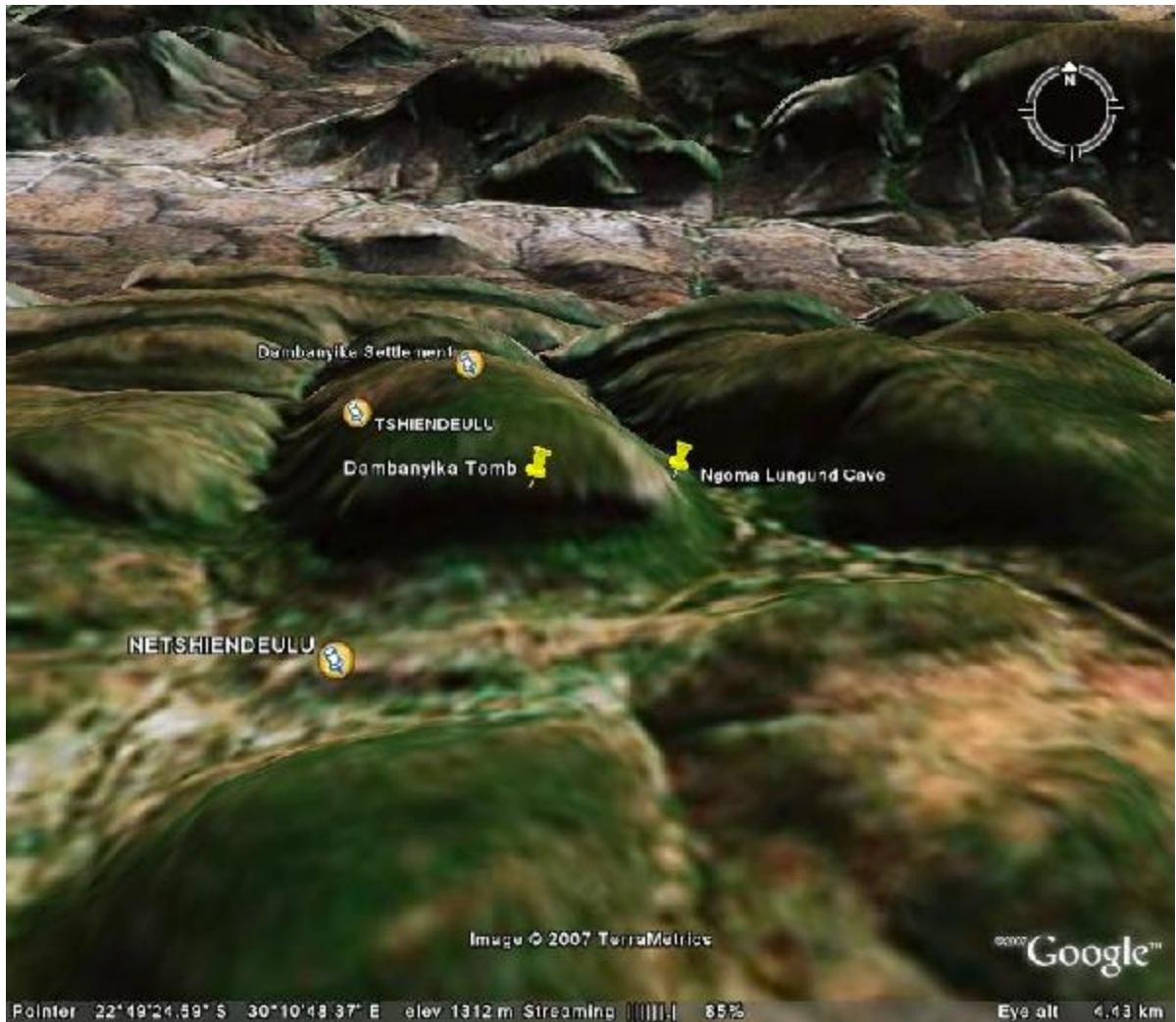
Samson Netshiendeulu and the present Lemba Leader



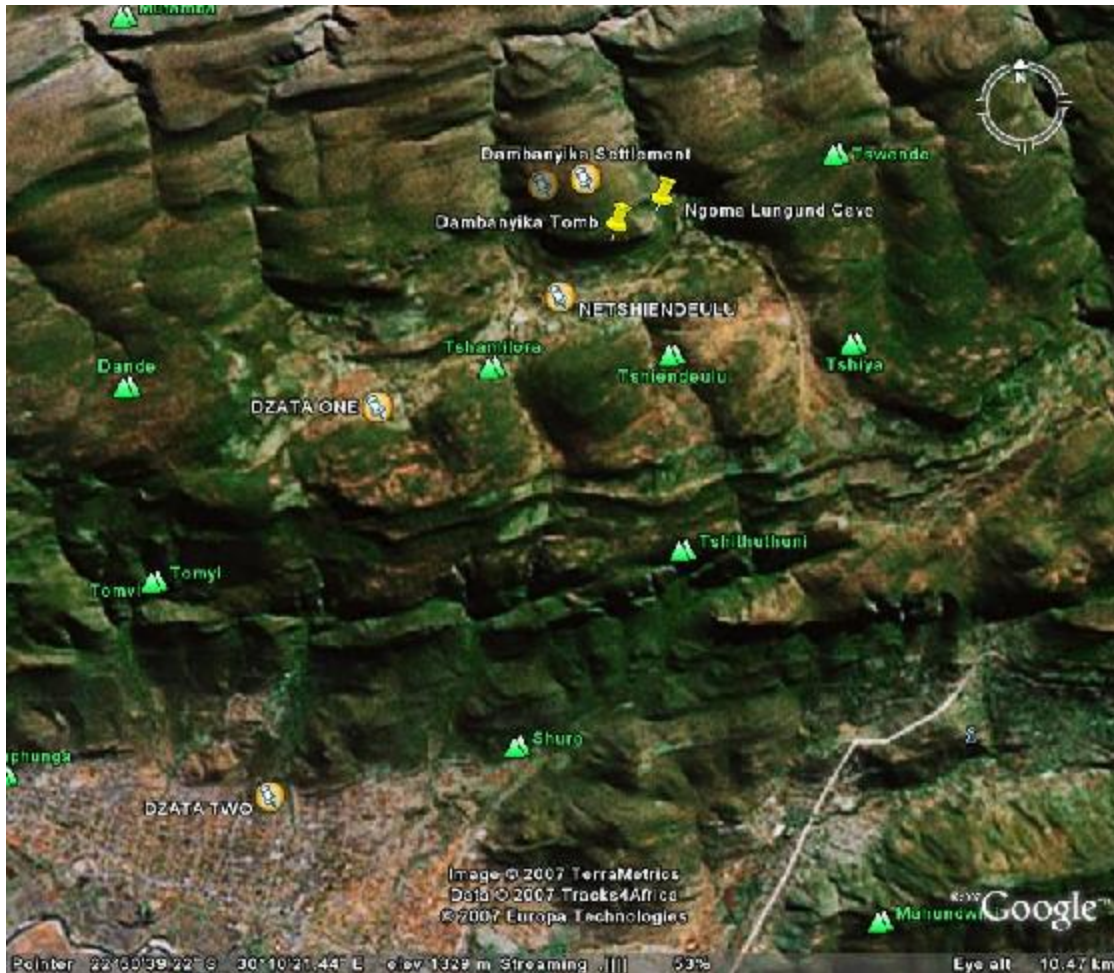
Dzata I, Dzata II in relation to Tshiendeulu Mountain. Njelele Valley is to the left



The Valley on top of the Tshiendeulu Mountain



The Sacred Area of Tshiendeulu where Dambanyika made his original Settlement as well as the Cave where Dambanyika was Entombed in a Rock fall and the Cave of the Sacred Objects – Ngoma Lungundu



Tshiendeulu area or Lwandali Mountain, was changed to 'the place of the graves' after Dambanyika was entombed in the mountain. The original Dambanyika settlement is very sacred ground and his followers were ordered to leave the area at the time of Dambanyika's death when they established one and then Dzata two. Dambanyika's maternal uncle Mwapenga then became the keepers of the grave and so changed their lineage name to Netshiendeulu.

The Legend Of NGOMA LUNGUNDU

1.

"The ancestors of the Vhavenda were very fond of songs and musical instruments of various sorts. Different instruments were played by men and women, and they were especially fond of collective music-making, when ecstatic scenes might be witnessed. Such occasions were for instance when the whole people foregathered to dance matangwa and tshikona, the young men danced and perspired, and the girls sat in the centre watching them, whilst relieving one another at the drums, the older females pranced about and trilled and the old men squatted around the beer pots and enjoyed themselves. These are things that every Venda child of today still knows from personal experience. In all the rites of initiation, such as Vhusha and Domba, the drums also played a most important part.

Amongst all their musical instruments, however, the greatest and that which was feared and revered most by all the people, was the instrument of the royal ancestor spirits, the Drum of Mwali, the Ancestor God of the Vhasenzi and the Vhakalanga. This drum was called the Voice of the great God, Mambo wa Denga (King of Heaven), the Lord of all the ancestor spirits.

2.

We have seen that the most important musical instruments were the drums, and amongst the drums again the greatest one of all was called Ngoma-lungundu or Thundundu. The people honoured it feared it because it was believed to be the drum of the dead. It was brought hither by the VhaSenzi, who are today called VhaVenda. It is said that the drum belonged to their departed ancestors at the time when they were still living at Matongoni, yonder up north, in a country of great rivers and lakes, in a country of dense forests and jungles; a country overflowing with water and with many forests and fruit, of bananas growing in many groves and of tubers and pea-nuts in great variety. In that country lay the old dwelling sites of the VhaSenzi and VhaLemba, who later came hither to Zoutpansberg to the country of the original VhaVenda who were called VhaNgona. The chief of the latter was Tshivhula, whom the VhaSenzi, upon their arrival accompanied by the VhaLemba, drove away; and he went westwards and settled in what is today Hananwa, around the Blauwberg.

The chief kraal of the VhaNgona was called Ha Raphulu. It was situated on the mountains of Vuvha near the small hill called Tshivheulwa. This place the VhaVenda fear even today; and on the ancient kraal sites of the VhaNgona they do not build, for that is tabu. This because the Vhasenzi were the enemies of the VhaNgona.

All the VhaNgona are said to have come into this country in very ancient times. The people whom they found already in occupation were the VhaLembethu of Ha Mutele, those who exorcise the malombo spirits. Their chief was Mutele himself. Others of the same race were the people of Makuya and Thengwe.

All these tribes had different sorts of musical instruments. The VhaLemba had the deze (with metal tongues) and a kind of drum that was beaten for the rites of the circumcision lodge. The VhaNgona had the xylophone. Ma tangwa is something new in this country, having first been taken up by Magoro's people.

Ngoma-lungundu was the sacred drum of the Vhasenzi, who had brought it with them from the North, from Ma tongoni or "The Graves".

Their king was greatly feared by all his people, for he could work miracles with this drum which they called the drum of the gods. His village was built on a mountain, and was of tremendous size. Its walls were built with huge stones; it was impregnable. The houses were built of shining slabs. The drum itself was never seen by anybody except the high priest and the king. A special house has been built for it of beautiful slabs. This building was huge, so big that many thousands of people could not fill it. The roof was constructed of huge logs cut in the forests. In one chamber was placed the sacred thing itself, namely Ngoma-lungundu, the drum of Mwali.

3.

The king was called by the name Mwali, and the high priest was known as Dzomo-la-Dsimu, the mouthpiece of God. To him the king gave directions to transmit to the people. He it was who could be seen, for Mwali himself was tabu to look upon. The drum Ngoma-lungundu also was beaten only by him and by the king.

Whenever the councillors heard a trumpet sound, they assembled in the courtyard and awaited what announcement was going to be made by the king through the mouth of the high priest. When they were all assembled there, the drum would be heard once. All the people would fall on their faces and make humble obeisance saying, "Great king, male elephant, light of the country, great ancestor spirit, ruler of heaven." No man was permitted to see the king, they merely heard what he spoke to the high priest in a tremendous voice that reverberated in a terrifying manner.

The king usually spoke from his private hut which might not be visited by anyone. The place was guarded by his lions. Snakes with a head at either end kept all the fences to the sacred place closed. The lions were called the dogs of the king; whenever they heard the sacred drum, they began roaring in a terrifying way, praising their master.

Indeed, this king was indeed very sacred, so that they treated him as a god or an ancestor spirit. If the rain did not come the councillors came the high priest and begged for it. He would then hear their prayers and transmit them to the king. Then there would be heard the drumming of Ngoma-lungundu, the lions would respond with their roaring, and this would show that their words had reached the king and had been well received. Then the trilling of the woman would respond to the roaring of the lions and all the people would assemble. A great din would commence.

Then when the drum sounded again, a dead silence fell. Mwali began to speak in a tremendous voice that was heard throughout the city of Matongoni.

Every person would be seated with his eyes on the ground, covering up his face, because of the tabu that forbade people to gaze on his countenance. All the people, womenfolk included, were under a strict tabu not to look at him. Whosoever should gaze at him was immediately slain.

The high priest also was not looked in the face, but with him the fear was not so great as with the king. Ngoma-lungundu also was tabu to people, it might not be looked at, and the drum-stick with which it was beaten was equally tabu. He who beat the drum was the high priest himself, a man from the blood of the Vhasenzi. Before beating the drum, he would kneel at the door and salute the great drum. Then he would enter but remain on his knees and make obeisance and say, "Great spirit, my master and of people and of animals and everything! You, omen of clouds, drum of the spirits, god of the heavens!" Then only would he take the drum-stick and beat softly, so that people who were far away could not hear it.

Those who heard it would be the princes within the royal precincts near to the house of the drum. They would immediately raise shouts of rejoicing that the people of the city must prepare themselves and rejoice before the drum. Then all at once the ululations of all the royal city would be heard around. Upon hearing this shouting of the princes throughout the town, all the people would remain quiet to hear the noise of Ngoma-lungundu. This was their way of honouring the drum of the gods. For the drum also the people regarded as a mudzimu, even as they feared Mwali himself as if he were an ancestor spirit.

Then the royal precincts would again echo to the blowing of sable horns. Suddenly the noise of the ancestor drum would be heard, making the whole hill resound, the hill of the ancestor spirits that was tabu to all men excepting the high priest and Mwali himself. Thereupon all the people would ululate, the men and youths using all the instruments they had, sable trumpets, impala horns, bugles, flutes, whistles and so forth and making a tremendous din all over the hill.

4.

All this would take a long time, until at last silence would supervene when the trumpet sounding from the sacred place was heard. This was a signal to the people to be silent, that Mwali might speak and lay his laws and injunctions upon his people, thundering the while with the noise of many waters rushing over a cataract. His interpreter was the high priest himself.

When all the people were silent, the drum again would be heard, the people would fall onto their knees and salute the king. Then in complete silence of man and beast, the king spoke from his sanctum near the hill. What he said was not understood, for it was more like the great roaring of a heavy rain. Clouds were seen hovering over the mountain, blackening in a fearsome manner. Above this black cloud, a fire could be seen leaping and blazing. Lightning played and flashed.

Then the voice said, "Hear me, my children, I speak of great things, especially to you the councillors and great ones all! Abandon all your differences and quarrels, above all you, my children, born of my wives. You are the ones that set the people against one another, because you leave not our bickerings. The thieving amongst you exceeds all measure. The people groan under the burden of your government.

And you also, councillors and great ones of the tribe, listen well. You also are bringing to ruin all the country by raising up factions amongst my people. You have made laws which I, your ancestor, did not give you. Listen you, grandchildren and great grandchildren, both male and female, and you all my daughters' children, To all of you I say, leave off from bickering and quarrelling, and from all evil. If you do not, I shall afflict you. If you hear not what I say, I shall go forth from your midst. I shall vanish and go to live beneath the earth. From thence I shall slay you all with an earthquake. I shall cause you to sink away with all your cattle. Listen carefully, all of you! Give ear to me, your ancestor; do as your great grandfathers did before you, whom I governed in piece. They always hearkened to me with care, but now you live in factions and in quarrelsomeness."

The voice of the great grandfather was not easily understood for he was a very aged man. He was indeed greatly aged, for all the old men of the country were his grandchildren. Yet though he was thus aged his voice was very loud.

The pronouncement of the king having ended and having been translated through the mount of the high priest, the sacred drum was beaten loudly, all the people trembled and fell to the ground in their terror, many of them fainted with fear and fell to the ground unconscious and never awoke again.

Those that remained were weak with terror of that which Mwali had spoken in anger. Their fear was increased by a shaking of the earth, lightning and thunder in the cloud that covered the mountain and a great fire that blazed and shone over them.

The sharp voice of the high priest was heard above it all. Many of those who died, were old men and woman of the Vhasenzi. Of the VhaLemba however not one had died for they have been observant of the law.

What struck terror into people was that especially the sons of princes had been slain. Those who survived were very few.

The next morning at sunrise it was seen how many were the deaths. There was a calling to one another to come and look; in every household there was a weeping, for Mwali had slain people with the noise of Ngoma-lungundu, the drum of magic and of slaughter. This was the rod with which the old man punished his people, the noise of this drum worked miracles.

Many years past by and Ngoma-lungundu sounded no more, so that people again forgot that terrible rod of slaughter. Again there arose quarrels and fighting amongst the princes of the royal city and factions between the councillors. The fighting grew day by day; cheating and betrayal and many evils were done again and again.

Then one day there was heard the sounding of the death bringing sable horn. The people trembled, for they saw that another slaying was about to begin. A great sound of weeping went up amongst the people yet they did not omit to ululate in salutation, and to blow their instruments in praise of Mwali. This was done not only to salute the king and the high priest but also to soothe them as it was known that songs soften the king's heart when he was angry.

When they had stopped making their salutations, the cave of the ancestor spirits was seemed to be alight with fire that shone out. Then the drum of death, Lungundu, sounded with a sound of good omen; the people prostrated themselves and rejoiced.

Mwali spoke to them through the mouth of his high priest and said, " My grandchildren and great grandchildren, you trouble me today, why do you not listen when I lay my laws upon you, I your great grandfather. You scorn to listen to what I tell you. Your grandparents I slew because they would not hear me. Whence come these differences amongst you? The wars amongst you part you from me, your creator. Now I am going away as I told you. I go under the earth, far down below. Some other day I shall walk on the clouds. I say to you: dwell in peace. What I have said that I shall carry out. I you do not hear, I shall shake you from where I am below, under the soil of the earth".

The people still believe that Mwali sometimes walks on the clouds and under the earth. When an earthquake occurs, they say, "Our grandfather is passing" or "He is angry, and wants to kill people" and they ululate for him.

When these words have been pronounced, the people trembled greatly and feared to hear the noise of the killing of the spirit drum. All of them make obeisance, and ululations were heard on every side, that the king might not slay them.

Then however, a torrid noise was heard that struck terror into the people's hearts, that day there died countless people, and their cattle and sheep perished in a terrible way. The people went to the high priest that he might intercede for them.

Nevertheless a great epidemic broke out that ravished the whole city of Matongoni. And the king Mwali died, and with him came the end of the great city. Many people fled and scattered all over the country. Of the king it was said that he vanished and went under the earth and dwelt in Mubwumela mountain from which a rumbling may be heard at times. He did not die, he went down below.

Before Mwali vanished it is said that he gave all his magic to his eldest son who was always listened to the royal commands.

It is said that he was given a small drum of the spirits, which was also called Ngoma-lungundu. It also resembles the big drum of the spirits in magic and killing power. It was this small drum that helped the prince whenever he was surrounded by his enemies. In the wars it was this drum, Ngoma-lungundu that helped them the most, and which broke the strength of their enemies in the days of drought when no rain came, it was the salvation of the people, for it was the omen of the clouds and soon rain would fall.

The prince who received the magic drum was named Tshilume. He had always obeyed the high priest and the great ones, wherefore he did not share the unhappy fate of the others. They say that Mwali did not go away altogether, but returned from time to time and his lions were still there.

6.

On a certain day in the month of July, just after the harvest and when the cold wind was blowing, and whilst the gardens were still being grazed by the king's cattle only, in the evening at full moon, an alarm was heard at the chief's place, that the princes were fighting one another with spears in dispute over the chieftainship. There was a terrible commotion, for they had set the town alight and the fire had reached the sacred places and the kitchens. Huge flames were beginning to lick at the dwellings of the ancestor spirits themselves, the very shrine in which the great and sacred object, namely Ngoma-lungundu and all the sacred amulet spears of Mwali were kept.

The alarm was raised in the middle of the night. All the men began the work of quenching this fire. The whole king's palace was a mass of flames, for the fire and the fighting had become one confused mass. There was none to give a hand, for each was occupied with saving his family and his grain.

Many people perished, especially old men and woman and cripples, and cattle, and sheep and other animals. The country was covered with a heavy pall of smoke, and the next day those who had escaped the carnage saw no sun, for a great darkness reigned.

The fire raged on for four days, as the city was great and the mountain large. The fire also spread over the mountain of the spirits and destroyed everything; the forest burned. The whole country felt the heat of that fire. This was the end of the city of legend that was very great and was known in all the countries of the earth.

The descendants of Mwali who had begun this great dissension and had set the fire going, then fled and scattered over the country. There remained only the one who had not transgressed, who had always listened to the precepts of his elders, and the pronouncements of the king. This one was known as Mutumbuka-vhathu, of whom it is said that his father was Mwali, ancestor god of all the country; it was he who had been given the small drum that resembled the great one of the spirits. Its name was also the same, namely Ngoma-lungundu.

When the fire had died down, the people went up to the royal place to see what had happened. They came to the place of the high priest to hear from him what should be done, but found the building without inhabitants and everything that had been there was burned, only ashes and embers were left, everything smelt of fire. The cattle kraals they found empty, no single living thing was left, except a dog that had escaped from the fire by running into the bush far away. They shouted loudly to see whether the high priests were still there, but no answer came. Thereupon they entered all huts to see whether anything living was left; but they found nothing but desolation. They gave up all hope and were in great fear, for they saw that in the burial place (Tshiendeulu) the fire had also raged and that another was still glowing where the fence had been. They feared greatly, for they saw that the whole mountain of the spirits was burned, together with the house of the spirit drum and that other which it was tabu to approach. So they turned back and went to summon all the councillors and the headman to deliberate what should be done. They called also the headman of the VhaLemba who were in the country.

On that day of the great gathering, they decided that they must find out what had happened to Mwali, his high priest and those princes who, it was thought, had scattered in all directions. The councillors and all the great ones of the land agreed that the VhaLemba should enter Tshiendeulu, because to them nothing was tabu.

So the elders of the VhaLemba climbed up to the Great Place to see what had happened and to discover whether Mwali was still alive, and whether his drum was still there in his private quarters. The VhaSenzi on the other hand all remained yonder where they had been living when they were struck by the anger of the king.

7.

The old men went up, repeating salutations all the time until they reached the sacred precincts, but they found nothing left, and only the smell of fire.

They entered the great dwelling of the queens and younger wives, but found only desolation and ashes everywhere, They went on to the place of the sacred objects, where Ngomalungundu had been wont to stand, but found nothing. Everything was reduced to ashes. They became much afraid; they looked also at the place where the priest has always stood when he spoke to the people at the times when Mwali instructed him as to what should be done; there also they saw nothing left besides stones and walls.

They went on to the great sleeping place of Mwali himself, reciting praises as they went. They entered but found no living being, and everything that had been in there was charred to ashes. Only on the north side did they find glowing embers, but they could not see clearly for the heat, though there was neither smoke nor flame, but only burning embers. Here they prostrated themselves and spoke, "Mambo, king of heaven and of the earth! Shuffler! Fierce wild beast of the wilderness! Bull elephant! Creator of men! Ancestor of us all!"

Then suddenly there resounded in the ruined huts a terrible voice that thundered and spoke, "Call me hither my son who was obedient, that I may take leave from him. Go back you, and do not speak of what you have seen here, for if you divulge it, you will be visited with great dying amongst all your kin." He who spoke was Mwali himself, the great-grandfather of all the people. It is said that he was not burnt by the fire but simply changed himself and became fire and burnt together with that fire that was lit by his children who were fighting for the chieftainship. And the queens and the great drum also, it is said, did not burn but were changed by Mwali and became stones that stood there in the palace area.

The VhaLemba went back and told the people that Mwali wished to see the virtuous one amongst his sons, namely Mutumbuka-vhathu. All the people were ordered to assemble in the great meeting place of the ancestor spirits, that Mwali might speak to them and bid them goodbye, for he desired the righteous people to migrate with his son who was good, and who would govern them in peace without the dissensions of those other rivals. The VhaLemba, it was ordered should not be present on that day for to them nothing was tabu.

When the day arrived, all the VhaSenzi assembled with their womenfolk to hear what their ancestor had to say to them. And the righteous prince was also there.

Then suddenly there was heard a terrible rumbling from the mountain of the spirits, on which the royal city of Matongoni had been built. The voice spoke, "My beloved son! Come hither that I may confer with you, for it is you that always hearkened to me, and to you I shall give the kingship of my righteous people." So the prince went up to Tshiendeulu alone, though in fear of meeting face to face his father, the great ancestor spirit. He came to the private quarters, knelt and made salutation, and saw Mwali himself. He was commanded to depart from that country and migrate towards the south. There, he was told, he was to settle and govern the whole of the land beyond the Limpopo. Mwali then adorned his son in shining white cotton garments and beautiful madi and denga beads. He also gave him the small drum Ngoma-lungundu, and told him that it would be his defence against all evils. He gave him also spears and the banner of royalty and many insignia. He was told that if he could not carry all these things himself, he might go and call the VhaLemba, for they would be charged with the carrying of all these things on their march to the south.

8.

So Tshilume returned to where the people were assembled who were to be governed by him. He descended from the mountain shining like fire, though he burned not. And his eyes also flamed like fire. The people trembled and were afraid to see him wearing this terrible appearance. Seeing the people fearing him thus he put out the flames that were burning about him. Only then could the people approach near to him; they knelt before him, making obeisance with a great noise of salutation. On the mountain of the spirits there were also heard many ululations and the sound of sable trumpets being blown above.

The VhaLemba were now told that they were to be the bearers of the sacred objects; that they should go up immediately to the mountain to fetch whatever they would be shown by Mwali. They went and found the drum Ngoma-lungundu inside a huge covered basket, so heavy that four women could not carry it. It was provided with seven tassels so that it could be borne by the VhaLemba woman. Many baskets were also found filled with madi and denga beads. Chaplets filled other earthenware pots and all together there was so much that the people could not carry everything. The necks of the VhaLemba were nigh being broken by the carrying of all this.

When they were carrying everything in the company, they heard a voice coming from the mountain saying, "Ye children of my grandchildren, listen to what I, your great-grandfather, say to you. I say to you now, even as I told you long ago that your dissensions had troubled me for many years, behold today the fire has destroyed many things, and there is no reckoning how much my children have scattered and spoiled. As for me, I am now going. I go under the earth and into the clouds. All you who cherish this son of mine who listens to me, must hoe your gardens this year and prepare to leave the land. The sacred objects and the magic drum I give to Tshilume, who is king of all the country. Let all men acknowledge him.

On the day of the new moon of July, you will arise and proceed southward. The VhaLemba will tell you when those days have come near. Fear nothing everything will go well. The important thing is Ngoma-lungundu, which will help you greatly. Whenever enemies trouble you, beat the rain-making drum, and everything that lives will be seized with fear and fall down as in death, excepting you yourselves. In this way all the country will fear to undertake anything against you, because you are my grandchildren. Should rain be lacking, drum five times and everything will be well, soaking rains will come. Everything will go well for you, if you will beat this drum that I have given you. But one great thing there is also: Let there be no dissension in your midst. Have nothing to do with the rival princes who have destroyed this city of your earliest ancestors. The deed was done by them in their youthful disobedience. The loss will be theirs; their lot will be to wander for ever. They will be eaten by the wild animals of the forest and of the waters and of the deep caverns."

The voice of the king having finished speaking, acclamation was heard on all sides. Nevertheless some of the people scorned Tshilume, that he should be the king, they moved away to the west and others to the north. There also arose dissensions when some of the princes fought because they wanted to take the drum that Tshilume had been given by Mwali. But when things were at their worst, Tshilume beat the drum, and he carried the day.

That season the people displayed great activity in their gardens, in order to grow food for the road. When the month in question came, the VhaLemba shaved their heads, and the VhaSenzi prepared for the road.

That season the fruits of the field grew in great abundance, especially pea-nuts and calabashes and pumpkins. Every sort of cultivated plant bore bountifully, there was an abundant crop, a harvest of rejoicing ensued which compensated for the restraint that had been laid upon them by the tabus created by the fire.

9.

When the day of the great migration had arrived, Tshilume assembled all the members of the house of his maternal uncle, the VhaNdalamo, and his brothers of the house of his mother, and all those who supported him and the VhaLemba followed him and acclaimed him their king. Those who thus acknowledged him went with him. Their animals they took with them, cattle, sheep, goats, dogs and others, so that a tremendous herd was formed, to drive which was a great labour. The VhaLemba had the duty of carrying all the baggage of royalty, the madi, denga and tshikandwa beads.

This remained the office of the VhaLemba until they arrived here in Venda, the country of the VhaNgona. The VhaNdalamo were the bearers of the sacred objects, the spears and Ngoma-lungundu itself. The hour of their departure was in the night, when all the people who were their enemies and rivals were deep in sleep. The enemies were in their beds and heard no sound of what happened in the city, or in the whole of the country.

For when the drum of the gods sounded, all the enemies lay down in a deep sleep, the VhaLemba and VhaSenzi then went out of the city, following Tshilume, who marched with his brothers and his makhadzi and all the children. That which had plunged his rivals into deep sleep was the sound of Ngoma-lungundu, for its sound could break the strength of all enemies who fought against Tshilume, the son of Mwali. The drum was carried by six men, who bore it slung from a pole, for Mwali had laid the injunction upon them that it should never be placed upon the ground, for should that happen, the people would be visited with great misfortune and calamities. Thus it was tabu for it even to touch the soil, be it never so slightly. At sunset the bearers of the sacred objects would therefore lift it onto a tree or would build a platform for it, lest it touch the ground.

The people marched many days in peace. They were not troubled by anything, for they had their great drum that was feared by all the people of the country. Nor did they lack food, for all the chiefs or the countries they marched through feared to attack them and immediately brought them gifts, because they were the people of Mwali. The report of Ngoma-lungundu and the magic of Mwali were known everywhere.

After a month they came to the chief of the VhaKalanga. The king Tshilume sent his messengers to inform the VhaKalanga chief that he was being visited by a great force of the descendants of Mwali, the great king of all the country.

That chief, upon hearing that they were carrying with them the magic drum, feared greatly, and said, "We are your slaves, we bow before you. Behold yonder the girls that will be the chief's younger wives, make your choice amongst them. Behold also the cattle, pick out the fat ones and take them, together with the fat wethers, that they be my tribute, from me your slave. And inform the king that we VhaNyai pray him that the drum of the spirits may not be sounded here in our country, for we are in great fear. As to subjecting ourselves, have we not done so long ago!"

The messengers returned with a huge herd of cattle and with men who had been told to go and tender submission at the Great Place of VhaSenzi.

10.

Upon their arrival at the camp of their people, the king was surprised to see this multitude of girls and the herds of cattle and wethers. These things pleased him not when they told him, and he asked, "Why did you accept all these things and all these girls?" They replied, "We were afraid to refuse the request of the VhaKalanga chief, O king," But he told them, "But I do not desire him as my subject. Return all these belongings of the VhaNyai; I do not want them. And further, tell the VhaKalanga that we have not come to dwell here in Galanga, we are passing on our way to the south to a country of peace. They must not fear; if they trouble us not, we will do them no harm; but should they prove treacherous, they will suffer great things that will come upon them from me. I impress upon them that all the VhaKalanga must see that they do not fall out with the grandchildren of the gods." The messengers went and did as they had been commanded.

The king of the VhaSenzi, Tshilume, the son of Mwali, told his councillors that they must make a plan to migrate further. So they left that place preceded by the drum Ngoma-lungundu, then followed the king, his sister and members of his household and all those who followed him. In this manner they travelled on, all the time being lead by the sacred objects and Ngoma-lungundu. The VhaLemba marched with the king Tshilume himself, carrying the luggage of the royal household.

They left the place where they had built and proceeded further towards the south. They came to another VhaKalanga chief of those parts, one who was feared amongst all the VhaKalanga on account of his bravery in war. Nor were his own people less afraid of him.

The king of the VhaSenzi, Tshilume, sent his messengers to speak to the chief, to get permission to build and make gardens, for hoeing time had arrived. The land in that quarter was very good. Arable land was plentiful and grazing abounded, so that Tshilume desired very much to stay for good in this country. He gave the order, "Go and tell the VhaKalanga that I wish to see this great chief of theirs face to face, the chief whom people fear so much on account of the evil in his heart, so much that his very name is that of "Evil" (Tshivhi). Tell him that I am here, that I have been sent my mudzimu, namely Mwali, to live in his country. He must not fear that I might perhaps take away his chieftainship. No! What he must avoid is deceit and the cruelty of slaying the people of Mwali who have no guilt. Tell him that I wish to settle here in the valley of the Tshipene. His chieftainship is of the VhaKalanga, who are not VhaSenzi nor VhaLemba. These latter are my people, and are ruled by Mwali."

The messengers arrived at Tshivhi's place and whilst still outside his courtyard saw many people issuing forth from the royal place with spears in their hands and prepared for battle, they stayed outside the courtyard fearing to meet them, because they had already heard

that this chief had great cunning and a cruel heart. They heard the chief shouting with a great voice, "O ye VhaSenzi people! What seek ye here in my city and in my land?" They replied that they had been sent by Tshilume with a message for the chief himself.

Tshivhi replied, "Speak what you have come to say from where you are, for you VhaSenzi are evil men and cunning." In fear those messengers then spoke the whole message that had been given them by their king, especially because they feared the many men gathered around with spears and shields and in overwhelming numbers. When Tshivhi had heard what they had to say he ordered his people to kill them. They fled, but the VhaKalanga caught up with them, and all the VhaSenzi ambassadors were slain, not one survived to tell the tale.

Tshilume learning of this, was very wrath and sent men to and kill Tshivhi and his people, to avenge the crime of the VhaKalanga had committed upon his ambassadors. All now issued forth with their spears and shields. The chief himself also went out with them, preceded by the VhaNdalamo carrying Ngoma-lungundu.

11.

They found the VhaKalanga of Tshivhi awaiting them in the plain of Zwiatula, a great open plain. Here Tshivhi had drawn up his forces below a great mountain. Tshivhi had learned that the VhaSenzi were men of courage and of great magic, worked by the Ngoma-lungundu. But he scorned what people told him, saying that he would overcome Tshilume and his gods and all his people. He boasted that he had never been overcome by any other chief ever since his grandfathers ruled the VhaKalanga.

As the VhaSenzi now approached, the VhaKalanga commenced shooting poisoned arrows at them. Tshilume beat the drum of death: Nduu! Straightway the men of Tshivhi fell to the ground in a deep sleep and knew no more. Then Tshilume commanded his people to slay them all, but Tshivhi himself they must bear up and bring to him and not hurt him in any way. The VhaSenzi slew all those that were there, but Tshivhi they brought to where the king was sitting, that he might see what sort of man this was who had scorned Mwali. The VhaKalanga, it said, could not awaken until the great drum had sounded again.

When all the enemies had been slain, and their chief brought before the king still unconscious, the king Tshilume spoke, "Place him amongst you, so that when he comes to he cannot run away and escape." They did as they were commanded. Then Ngoma-lungundu was beaten once: Ngunduu! Immediately Tshivhi awoke and found himself in the midst of the VhaSenzi men. He fell into a great fear, not understanding in what way he had been brought here in the midst of his enemies who surrounded him on all sides. Tshilume said to him, "Young man, why did you thus despise and insult the great ancestor on the VhaSenzi, Mwali, the great Mambo, king of heaven? Now see, you are in the midst of these men of mine. All your men are those lying yonder on the plain. They are prostrate and will not rise again. All of them have been slain, knowing nothing, like you who have been brought here unconscious. We just happened to care to let you live; had we been like you, full of evil, we would have slain you also today."

Tshivhi started and trembled like a man seized with fever. He begged to be allowed to live and not to be slain. The VhaSenzi king granted him this for he was kind-hearted, and told his people to let him go and permit him to return home. They did as they were commanded by the king and sent him home.

Arriving there he was astounded to see what had happened to his people who had all died there on the plain, not understanding that these things had been done by Ngoma-lungundu. He merely remembered that they had been busy preparing themselves when they saw the VhaSenzi in the distance and that his men had shot arrows at them. All the rest and the sound of the drum he remembered nothing of.

He arrived home out of breath and sweating over his whole body, unable even to relate anything to those left at home when the army went forth, as he had gone out of his wits. The people asked him what had happened, but he gave them no reply, he simply shook his head and held his chin. In this fashion he continued for two days, until he was able to relate how all his men had died and how he had been seized without knowing anything and had found himself in the midst of his enemies. Then he also gave an account of what he had been told by Tshilume, the king of the VhaSenzi.

When the people heard that all these men had been slain, they were plunged in to grief. The widows of the dead men made a plan to revenge themselves by killing Tshivhi and all his wives. So one day they lay in ambush and rolled a great boulder down upon him which crushed him. He was killed outright, and thus died Tshivhi, a man whom all men feared, and who yet died at the hands of woman. His wives they also sent after their husband, for they killed them all. They did not touch the small children. From this arose the song of woman: "Tshivhi is the great lion that was feared by men, but was killed by woman. O my! The men were by Ra tshilumela laid to the rest from which there is no awakening."

As we have heard, Tshivhi was a great fighter who was known throughout the country. The slaying of this warrior and his own death caused consternation in all the land, and the fear amongst the tribes was increased by Ngoma-lungundu, the drum of death and misfortune, the mouthpiece of the gods of the VhaSenzi.

One day the sounding of the big drum was heard, and on the next day there was a great sneezing amongst the VhaNyai. They found that they had been afflicted with a great and amazing epidemic. It raged for a few days only, but in these there died people without number of the VhaKalanga. This caused terror in all the countryside, and the people greatly feared to stand face to face with the VhaSenzi because they had the drum of death. After this all the tribes of the country were afraid to undertake hostilities against them, wherever they went the people immediately subjected themselves without fighting merely out of fear of the drum of the VhaSenzi.

The VhaSenzi dwelt in the country of the VhaNyai for three years. They hoed and did what they liked, for the country was theirs. And moreover, they began to marry the girls of the VhaNyai. Only the VhaLemba did not take part in the mixing of the VhaKalanga and VhaSenzi. The VhaSenzi in their disregard of the law took to wife the women of that country, and this was the beginning of degeneration of their race, for the VhaSenzi were handsome people, with long jaws and pure white eyes like ndalama shells; fine men of tall stature with long straight legs (not knocked kneed) and high skulls. From this there comes the proverb which says' "Though you wash and anoint yourself never so much, will you ever resemble the girls of the Nzhelele with the straight legs, the long jaws and eyes white like ndalama shell?"

The physical appearance of the VhaNyai on the other hand was not pleasing, they were "those to whom the ground is not far away," men with red eyes, short jaws and beetling brows.

Some of the children of these wives resembled their mothers. This was the beginning of the deterioration of the race of the VhaSenzi in respect of physique.

The VhaLemba however, even today do not permit intermix ture with any other race, and in respect of physical beauty it is said that they are very well formed. There is the phrase, "That girl is as beautiful as a MuLemba," which means that the girl is very handsome indeed.

Mwali came and showed himself in a fire that lighted up the top of the whole mountain. A great thundering was heard that frightened the people. The drum of the spirits sounded in praise of Mwali, the ancestor of the people; it was beaten by the new high priest who had been appointed by Tshilume and his sister. That night no one slept, for all the people made a great noise by playing all the instruments they had. A great sound of rejoicing was heard on every side though the people were glad with a joy that was mixed with fear. Then was heard a voice that spoke in a long drawn-out sound; what was actually said was not understood, for only Tshilume and his high priest understood it. They explained to the people what the ancestor spirits had said and what he desired all people to do. He had reminded the people that they must arise and must not be beguiled by this country of the VhaNyai, but must arise and go elsewhere, and no longer live there. They must migrate further south to the country they had been promised when they were still at Matongoni. Moreover, their ancestor was disgusted by what the VhaSenzi were doing, namely their marrying of the VhaKalanga women; those who were praised were the VhaLemba because they had not sinned. Tshilume himself was rebuked for what he had done, for he had married VhaKalanga; and he was enjoined to depart quickly, lest he be visited with a great slaughtering as punishment for his disobedience and that of this people.

Thereupon the king immediately ordered his people to prepare for departure when they should hear the sound of Ngoma-lungundu followed by the ululations of his younger wives and of everyone. Then the people must march behind the VhaLemba and the VhaNdalamo, who would bear the sacred objects. The order was given that no one was to cross the course of the Zwiaila. Whosoever should attempt to cross would have misfortune visited upon his kin.

13.

The day for departure having arrived, the noise of the drum of death was heard, the chief's sister gave the sign and was followed by the other wives, then all the people joined in and one could hear a tremendous shouting on all sides, the dust raised by the people dancing for joy was tremendous, resembling a rain cloud.

The bearers of the sacred objects arose and marched southwards as they had been told; there lay the country of peace and beauty. The great multitude of people marched behind them singing loudly and dragging their feet. The VhaKalanga rejoiced at being relieved of the presence of these people of whom it was said that they were spirits in their own persons. They marched with great rejoicing until they eventually reached the country of Mubvumela, where the stream called Zwaila flowed; the stream that was not to be crossed, that had been made tabu by Mwali. Here the drum of the spirits fell to the ground because it had not been placed carefully in a tree. Yet it was tabu that it should touch the soil.

That very night there arose a tremendous storm that broke even big trees. This happened because the drum of the spirits had touched the soil. It was terrible, and the high priest was at a loss what to do in this predicament, everybody was at his wits end about what was happening. Next morning there rushed on them a great troop of fierce lions that had been sent by Mwali to kill the people who had sinned in not taking good care of his drum. In the shelters erected by the people there was utter confusion; lions rushed everywhere, with the fierceness of the dogs of Mwali. It availed nothing that the high priest poured libations. Many princes and commoners perished, others crossed over to the other side of the river that was tabu, in their terror of the dogs of Mwali, the fierce lions. The king himself poured libations upon seeing how his people were being slain. But not even this brought any relief; and he despaired on seeing his children dying and his people being massacred and others in flight. He went up the hill of Mubvumela and did not return.

Then one day the lions disappeared, but many people had perished. The mountain glowed red with fire; it was their ancestors who had come to see his descendants. A great voice was heard. The high priest rejoiced, thinking that perhaps Tshilume would return, but he only heard the voice say, "Tell the makhadzi that Tshilume has vanished and will not return to his people because they are disobedient and have sinned, and respect not my drum. Should they go on with this, I shall again send my dogs that have been finishing you off, because you did not listen to my commands." As great wailing arose, all the people shaved their heads in mourning, excepting the VhaLemba who shave every new moon only.

The new king who was then installed was a young man and the only one who had stayed when the lions attacked the people. He had remained with his sisters. His name was Tshikalanga, because his kingship was entered upon in the country of the VhaKalanga. He was given all the sacred objects and Ngoma-lungundu. Many people had been slain by the lions, others had fled, others remained in hiding because they no longer desired to go forward, seeing that the country they were in was fine and gave no reason for complaint. Moreover, travelling had fatigued the people very much.

They were told by Mwali to arise and cross the valley of the Zwiaila, and proceed southwards across the Limpopo, the great river with the pools, which was the younger brother of the Dzambwedzi (Zambezi). The people that now remained were not numerous. It was only a small group, which in time of war could achieve nothing. But Mwali told them not to fear anything. Their defence would be the great drum. That was to be the spear and shield of the VhaSenzi, the descendants of Mwali, the god of destruction.

Then there was heard the announcement of the high priest urging the people to pack up their luggage and turn their faces southward whither the drum was preceding them. They were told not to cross the Limpopo before Mwali told them. They were also told about the shaving of their heads in mourning for their chief Tshilume who had vanished at Mubvumela, so that the new king might find new hair on their heads at beginning of his reign. All the people did this, the heads and beards of all the men and the very old were shaven. On the day of departure the great drum sounded, the people received its noise with a great shouting and blowing of trumpets. A great commotion ensued as the people struck camp. This place is feared even today, it is called Mubvumela, it is the site of the settlement that Mwali built after leaving Matongoni. Here he dwelt with his son Tshilume, the king who loved his people and who was loved by all on account of his great humanity.

14.

They marched on until they came to the valley of the Limpopo, the river they had been forbidden to cross until ordered to do so. The order came that its water was not to be drawn by the VhaSenzi, but only by the VhaLemba. The people complied with these orders.

In that place they built a camp again, but were much troubled by malaria fever which fell upon the people with great virulence and took off many of them. The new king died there at Vhuxwa, (place of dying) and event which caused great sorrow amongst the people, afflicted as they were with fever. Their ancestor spirit Mwali spoke to the high priest that they should install a new king chosen from the sons of Tshikalanga, on whose name was Hwami, a man of peaceful disposition and kindly temperament. He was the king who first arrived here in the country of the Venda, bringing with him only a small group of VhaSenzi and VhaLemba who had escaped the various visitations of death that had come over the tribe previously.

Though Hwami had so few people left, he was not troubled by his enemies, for all of them feared Ngoma-lungundu and the ancestor spirits of the VhaSenzi and the VhaLemba, as they were so fierce in slaying. The cattle and other domestic animals had all perished. What was left was very little indeed; the bulk of them had been finished by the lions that had scattered them when they were still in the valley of Zwiaila. The great drum made their enemies peacefully disposed towards them; had it not been for this drum, this people must surely have perished entirely and have been overcome by the other tribes that it encountered.

Whilst they were still sojourning across the Limpopo, the report of their approach reached the Venda country. The VhaNgona became very alarmed, because they had heard what had been done to the VhaKalanga of Tshivhi who had all been laid down in sleep by the drum of Mwali, the ancestor spirit of the VhaSenzi, the drum of which the sound made people other than its masters faint in fear and lie down as in death. In this way the owners of the drum could do what they liked with their enemies, whether it be to bind them or slay them, everything was in their hands.

Many people in their fear of the drum, hearing that the VhaSenzi were coming, immediately made way for them and fled further southwards or westwards or eastwards. A great flight ensued from the country of the VhaNgona; villages were left in ruins and gardens were left unreaped.

Hwami came and settled on the mountain of Tshiendeulu in the country of the MaKwinda overlooking the Nzhelele valley. The owners of the country immediately subjected themselves without having thrown a single spear, for they feared the ancestor spirits of the VhaSenzi who burnt like fire though the bush did not burn and though the whole place around was alight with flames.

Hwami's people now made gardens, as the hoeing season had arrived, but rains had not yet fallen. They hoed and planted; the high priest, who was by now very aged, beat the drum of Mwali, so the rain might fall. Indeed a great rain came and the Nzhelele river ran full to overflowing.

15.

The MaKwinda lived in subjection to the VhaSenzi and were much troubled because their cattle were being continually seized by the king. So one night a certain man of the Kwinda broke into the town of the VhaSenzi and set a light to it; the whole place was burnt down but Ngoma-lungundu was saved from the flames by the VhaSenzi. A deep sorrow however was that the high priest has perished, and a great mourning was held by the VhaSenzi.

Hwami lacked the energy to undertake anything, for he was a man who hated strife. They dwelt in that place for four years but the people were not pleased with it and wished to go further. So Hwami moved on, but the VhaNdalamo refused to go that way, they left for the east, and settled in a place that is called "The plain of Tshishonga." Hwami and his people migrated southwards, and crossed the Luvuvhu and Klein Letaba. They went still further and eventually settled in the mountains that are today known as Mamabolo's. Then they moved further still, and arrived in the Pedi country, but here they did not stay long because it was cold, and their enemies did not fear Ngoma-lungundu, and above all remained unmoved when it was beaten. So Hwami returned with those people who still clung to him. But there were others who refused to return, and who continued to dwell in the south, together with some younger brothers of his who were tired of travelling around the country.

The VhaSenzi of Hwami and the VhaLemba who remained loyal now returned to the north, and settled in what is today called Muila's. Here they dwelt for many years, hoeing and harvesting, though Eleusine did not do well there, sorghum and millet and tubers doing better; pea-nuts were no use and fever troubled them much. So Hwami again suggested, "My people, let us return to the country in the north, yonder to the land of the VhaNgona, which more resembles the homeland of our ancestors. There the country is good and there are rivers with much water." The whole community of the VhaLemba disagreed, saying that they had now settled here and were no longer desirous of going to the country across the Luvuvhu.

So Hwami departed and crossed the Letaba and the Luvuvhu and came to the country of Tshivhula the chief of the VhaNgona, for he knew that the VhaNgona feared his spirit drum, so that here there would be no trouble. All the Vhasenzi migrated and came and settled in the Nzhelele valley, where they built a great town, which they laid out to resemble that of which they had heard from their fathers, namely Matongoni and the town of Mubvumela. This new town they called by the name of Dzata. The VhaNdalamo also returned and came to dwell with their cousins.

Having settled, they found peace, there were no dissensions, all the people lived together like actual brethren under their king Hwami. This king, they say, lived to a great age, he died having already seen his great-grandchildren and eventually having gone blind through age. All the VhaNgona were brought under subjection and even their great chief Tshivhula became a vassal, for the VhaSenzi had gone and beaten the drum for him yonder near Vuvha where he was living. All the people of Tshivhula trembled thinking that the same would be done to them as had been done to Tshivhi who had been laid to sleep with all his people. Tshivhula himself fled westwards to the country of the baHananwa. Hwami subjected the VhaNgona each in turn, until he became the sole ruler of all the country, his kingdom became great and he was feared far and wide. Hwami lived to a great age and four successive priests held office during his time. They all grew old and died of old age.

16.

When Hwami was dead, a great-grandson of his became the king, because all his sons had died of age. Amongst all those who were still alive there was none that was as old as Hwami, neither man nor woman. And his grandson also was very aged, having no black hair left, for Hwami had lived to an age where none remained who could remember his parents or who had seen his youth or even his age of manhood, amongst all the people. All the people called him by the name of Mutumbuka-Vhathu; the creator of men, as far as our memories go.

The name of his grandson and successor was Dyambeu, who also lived to a tremendous age.

When Dyambeu, became chief he went to the east, to the kingdoms of Mutele and Makahane, who had not yet bowed to his authority. These were the kings of the VhaLembethu. He took Ngoma-lungundu with him, that it might defend him against all his enemies. First he made for the country of Mutele, who had ruled over all the land of the VhaLembethu until he was conquered by Tshivhula, king of the VhaNgona. Approaching near

to the royal village, they sent messengers to ask Mutele whether he was prepared to become a vassal without the shedding of blood and fighting. The messengers upon their arrival shouted from outside the enclosure, "Hi Mutele! What do you say, will you fight with Mwali the god of the land? Tell us whether you will submit and give twenty girls as tribute. Bring also ten oxen and thirty goats. Do this quickly. Unless you do so, you will be smashed by the descendants of Mwali. Give us your reply quickly."

When they had spoken, Mutele invited them inside the village, but they refused to enter, though he begged them most instantly. They merely repeated their message about the payment of goods and everything that was demanded, including the large tribute of girls. They returned to report the matter wrongly and with lies, in order to set the two chiefs against one another. They told Dyambeu that Mutele had said, "The sun will not go down upon you if you come here, I shall smash you all forthwith, you with your funny little drums that are good for nothing. "When Dyambeu heard this, he became very angry. "At sunrise we shall see whether they can fight against Mwali," he said. And so next morning before the sun was well out, the VhaSenzi ascended the mountain of the VhaLembethu carrying with them Ngoma-lungundu, the death dealing drum.

Before they got there, they were met by Mutele and his men, who shouted that they were prepared to submit. But the VhaSenzi refused even to listen, they immediately beat the drum of death. Immediately the VhaLembethu fell to the ground unconscious, knowing no longer what they were doing; they all resembled corpses. The VhaSenzi of Dyambeu then slew all the VhaLembethu, excepting the woman. Mutele they did not kill with a spear; they strangled him in the way all kings are killed by tying a strand of plaited cotton and string around his neck; this is the manner in which all royalty must be killed. Great wealth and possessions were taken from the VhaLembethu, grain and stock and children. There was a great confusion of people all mixed up.

Leaving there, they went to Makahane, who was a man greatly feared by many people on account of his ferocity. Upon their approach they were immediately met by men sent by Makahane to tell the VhaSenzi to go back. Dyambeu refused to go back, and ordered them to tell Makahane that it were better for him to subject himself without delay before the great drum had sounded, otherwise if it did, things would go badly with Makahane's people. The messengers sent by Makahane went back and reported as they had been told, but when Makahane heard this he said, "I shall capture this little drum that they make so much of, of the ancestors of the VhaSenzi and the VhaLemba." So he summoned a great host of armed men, his warriors come armed with arrows and bows and shields and battle-axes of Ngoni workmanship. Great things were to happen that day, and a shout went up on all sides calling the people together.

17.

The VhaSenzi assembled in one place awaiting the attack of their enemies and fearing nothing, for they had their great drum with them. When the VhaLembethu were near, Dyambeu beat the Ngoma-lungundu: Ngindii, ngindii, ngindii! Straightway Makahane's men

were seized with great fear and fainting fell to the ground like dead men, together with their chief. They were attacked by the bodyguard of the king and all stabbed to death, excepting the chief himself, whom they strangled. Stock and girls were captured in great numbers and driven home. When all was over next morning, the big drum was beaten to let the people rest, that a day of tabu be observed in the country of the VhaLembethu.

Thus everything went well for the VhaSenzi and they became great chiefs. All the goods and chattels that were captured were taken home to Dza ta, the royal place that was built in the valley of the Nzhelele river, having subjected all the VhaLembethu they returned home rejoicing, carrying with them Ngoma-lungundu which was borne before the host.

They all assembled in the "Plain of Tshishonga," where they built a camp and for Ngoma-lungundu they constructed a shelter that was surrounded by the skulls they had cut from the bodies of the men of Mutele and from that of the chief Makahane. The private quarters of the king and of Ngoma-lungundu were clearly visible in the night on account of the fire that glowed there throughout the night until daylight, when it went out. Mwali himself was heard speaking from the hut of Ngoma-lungundu saying "Listen Ye, my children, tomorrow at dawn proceed in the direction of Tshiheni, in the country of the VhaTavhatsindi; overcome them with my drum and having done so, do not take the least bit of goods or chattels from them, for they are the children of the gods that dwell in Fundudzi lake, should you do so, you will be visited by great misfortune that will kill the people. Do exactly as I tell you."

When their ancestor spirit has ceased speaking, the countryside shook with an earthquake for a little while and clouds gathered in the sky. Dyambeu beat the drum Ngoma-lungundu so that a fog might cover the mountain of Tshiheni and the enemies might not see them approaching.

Immediately the whole countryside of Tshiheni, the home of the VhaTavhatsindi, became enveloped in a huge black mass of fog. The VhaSenzi followed Ngoma-lungundu, which was being carried in front with Dyambeu their king immediately behind. Dyambeu told them that not a single one should speak whilst they were on the march; for the VhaTavhatsindi were cunning people, nor might anyone ask a MuThavhatsindi, whom he might happen to meet, any questions; but whoever was encountered must be seized and slain lest he betray their presence and they be attacked by the enemy chief and the ancestor spirits of Fundudzi lake.

Upon their arrival they heard the lake roaring and moaning, for the local spirits were enraged and were beating their drums.

All of a sudden the dense fog lifted and the VhaTavhatsindi were able to see the VhaSenzi clearly and immediately came towards them though still far away. The high priest of Fundudzi rushed down to the lake to report (to the spirits) the news of the battle that was imminent.

Dyambeu in his arrogance boasted that he could conquer the VhaTavhatsindi without once beating the drum Ngoma-lungundu, for he saw that they were not numerous. So they hung up the drum in a tree, as it was tabu to place it on the ground, no matter how tired the bearer were, their duty was to hand it up or place it on top of something else. But the drum fell down, being blown by the wind, and touched the ground. The high priest of Dyambeu went and beat the drum without first making obeisance, because he saw that the VhaTavhatsindi were now very near, and Fundudzi also had risen against them.

But to beat the drum now was of no use, for they had already sinned by scorning the help of Ngoma-lungundu. So their enemies fell upon them with great ferocity, unconcerned about the sound of the drum. The high priest exhausted his powers of trying to get Mwali to help him. The VhaSenzi were slain, all of them, excepting Dyambeu himself, whom they seized and flung into the lake of the spirits of the VhaTavhatsindi.

When the VhaTavhatsindi had flung him in he sank, but one had again arose above the surface holding a firebrand. They were terrified and shouted to their gods in the water that they must kill him lest he escape to land again. Ngoma-lungundu did not escape either, for they took it and carried it to their chief's village on top of the mountain; and this was the first defeat of the VhaSenzi in Venda and it was caused by their having despised Mwali.

18.

The massacre that had taken place became known throughout the country and news also came that Ngoma-lungundu has been captured by the VhaTavhatsindi, a thing that caused astonishment everywhere, when this news reached their home in Dzata, the people fell into a great terror.

Those that remained immediately prepared to go and recover the drum that was their god. They set out in the night, preceded by the chief of the VhaNdalamo whose name was Tshishonga; he was a great and trusted warrior.

Those that remained immediately prepared to go and recover the drum that was their god. They set out in the night, preceded by the chief of the VhaNdalamo whose name was Tshishonga; he was a great and trusted warrior. They arrived and assembled in the plain where Dyambeu had first built his temporary camp when arriving there from the VhaLembethu country. Here they perceived Mwali bringing fire in the middle of the night. He spoke to them, "Here me, your ancestor. Those others scorned me, they let my drum hand in the sun and let it fall from the tree and get cracked, which enraged me very much. So I cast them off, and all of them have died. I now give you a horn, which you must blow on the day you attach the VhaTavhatsindi. On that day there must be none that eats sour porridge, for it weakens the limbs. You must not begin before you have heard me tell you that you must fight.

Mwali having finished speaking to Tshishonga, the people saluted humbly. They remained here for ten days eating meat and fruit of the stamvrug and others. In the night of the tenth day as the first red of daylight was seen, Mwali again spoke to them and said, "The dawn is here, arise and go in good faith to retake my drum, do not fear their spirits, for I am stronger than they, I am their king." The sun having risen, they went and Mwali gave Tshishonga the brass flute to blow, so that his enemies might fall asleep and lack strength, and they could break into their town. So there was great rejoicing amongst Tshishonga's people. The plain on which they had built their shelters is till today still known as the "Plain of Tshishonga".

Arriving in the country of the VhaTavhatsindi, they blew the flute of their ancestor and immediately stormed the chief place with great courage, their enemies in the meantime having been befallen by heavy sleep, the chief and the spirits included. They began by taking Ngoma-lungundu which they had hidden near the enclosure of the village. Once having recovered the drum, they started stabbing all the VhaTavhatsindi who had lost consciousness through the blowing of the flute of Mwali. The chief himself they seized and bound hand and foot in accordance with the commands of Mwali.

When the VhaTavhatsindi chief recovered consciousness he was very surprised to find himself bound hand and foot. He was, it is said, a very handsome person. The order was therefore given that he be taken home so that the people who had remained behind, and the makhadzi, might see what sort of person he was. The younger wives of the chief were also taken and sent to Dzata.

When they returned home there was great rejoicing amongst the people of the country and all the town, for there had been no peace since the drum had been captured. Nor had any rain fallen in the country, the people and the makhadzi all went out to meet the drum of Mwali as it was returning home together with the children of the royal house of the VhaNdamo. There was a great assemblage, the whole valley swarming with people. The drum arrived home with the people rejoicing, the old women dancing and the trumpets, flutes, bugles and other instruments all being blown in unison.

There was a great to-do. On the next day a general tabu was proclaimed, the people were to remain at home all day and keep quiet. They were commanded by the makhadzi to shave off their hair in mourning for Dyambeu, their king, who had perished in Fundudzi. This mourning lasted a whole month, during which the people did not work in all the country that was ruled by the VhaSenzi. All the people were shaven and the beards of men and the aged were also shaved off, indeed there was a very deep mourning.

19.

On the first day of the month, the fires were extinguished throughout the country so that the new month might begin with new ones. Mwali spoke to Tshishonga, the grandson of Dyambeu, and told him to place someone on the throne, as the people could not live without a king. The makhadzi selected the eldest son of Dyambeu as king, his name was Bele and he

was praised as “Bele of Mambo” i.e. the hyena of the king. He was a craftsman, one who used to make beautiful things, who carved wooden platters and other things out of logs. The coiling of wire to make bangles he also understood very well, having learnt all his craft from the VhaLemba.

On the day of his installation on the throne, very early before daybreak, Tshishonga beat the great drum of the spirits and all the people assembled and the ululations of the married women and the sound of sable horns and impala trumpets and bugles and other instruments was heard and one could hear the whole country resounding to the music. This took some time whilst they blew in unison, when everything would again be silent, as the drum was again beaten. The nobles and headmen came to the head kraal according to their clans. All the people gathered together at midday in the great courtyard where stood the throne built of stones for the new chief, by his craftsmen who were also his comrades.

The people having assembled, the makhadzi and the VhaNdalamo meet in the council chamber, and wait for the new chief, the new high priest and the chief’s deputy. There is a quaking of the earth for Ngoma-lungundu has sounded. The people assembled in the courtyard await the appearance of the princes and other great ones of the tribe. They come in to view, a great mass surrounding Bele on all sides, and his deputy, named “Seat of the spirits.” The new priest is of another hut, no longer that of old because the old ones have died out. His name was Gole-la-Mambo, from whom the house of Mphaphuli takes its origin. Mats are spread out, and the king and his priest and deputy seat themselves on them, covered with one huge kaross made of leopard skins. The old makhadzi arises, almost blind with age she is, and speaks, “You my grandchildren, listen to me who was begotten by Hwami your ancestor, by him who was himself a son of Mwali, the great spirit of heaven and earth. Mwali our common father has chosen this son of Dyambeu to be the chief over all the people of this country.

20

So saying, she tells Tshishonga to uncover the kaross which conceals the chief, his younger brother and the new priest. The drum is beaten by the makhadzi herself. The face of the new chief is red and shining, like the embers of a smouldering fire. Immediately Bele ascends the throne standing alone in the open place, whilst all the people maintain an impressive silence, the great ones and princes come and make obeisance before the throne, after them come the headmen, and then the common people. When this is over, they hear the drum sounding all of itself, being beaten by someone nobody could see, namely by Mwali himself.

They cannot see the drum any longer, as it is glowing like a fire. The people fall to the ground and recite praises and pay reverent homage. When this is over, the tshikona begins again, and the big drum is carried back to its place by the VhaNdalamo. The tshikona goes on, but Bele and his ndumi (deputy) are not to be seen, because they have left for their private quarters. In the night the tshikona blowers go

home, a great rain falls that frills the Nzhelele river in one night. The people rejoice and again blow tshikona in spite of the rain.

The tshikona continued for a whole month, until the day of the first-fruits ceremony on which it stopped. Every day the king had been in the habit of coming out very early at sunrise to sit upon his throne outside the courtyard.

The rejoicing was great everywhere, because in those days rivalries over the chieftainship were not common and the princes got on well with one another knowing that the king was chosen by Mwali and not by any person, so that even if a man should make a claim for the kingship he would not profit, since it was the drum of Mwali that chose the heir. No man knew which of the princes would be the heir. And even if the prince who was destined to be the king might be named by the great makhadzi, this was never divulged, so that nobody could perceive the truth. Whosoever should reveal the secret was immediately slain by the king, these things were done lest people kill him with sorcery. But above all they feared the power of Ngoma-lungundu and Mwali, for the priest did everything in his power to scare the people and was aided therein by the great ones and the makhadzi; so that it seemed dangerous to do what the king had forbidden, when he had been urged by the high priest and the great ones to give this command. On the day of the installation of the king, the oldest noble, the makhadzi and the high priest selected the one amongst the princes who pleased them most, that he become chief the next day. What one hears about the "great house" is just so much talk, for this is not a law that is much observed.

When the day has come for the trial, one of the makhadzis is put inside the hut in which the corpse of the deceased king was placed after his decease. She then bars the door on the inside, so as not to be seen. Now the princes are told to come and attempt to open the great hut. He who can open the door is the one to be the king. All of them had to make the attempt, but the one selected would have the door opened for him by the person inside the hut. Those who were not popular found the door barred, so that it might be said that they were not desired by Mwali. The hut where this test was held was that in which Ngoma-lungundu was kept and in which the deceased king was laid out, so that he might be seen by the next king before he was installed.

All these things, it was said, came from Mwali, the ancestor spirit of the people, who was terrible in his use of magic.

One having ascended the throne, the king was greatly feared by all, being now a person who conversed with Mwali and moreover one who was loved by all his ancestor spirits, with whom he conversed.

Now this Bele-la-Mambo was a good ruler, and the people loved him though he was also feared on account of his possession of the death-dealing drum.

The first person to fall out with him was Tshishonga, who lacked respect towards him, for it is common that he who knows that he has given you something, despises you when afterwards you grow overweening on account of it. Tshishonga perceived that he was no longer popular at the king's place, and so attempted to administer to the king a poison in order to kill him, but this came to light and he was driven out, and went to the east, where he settled at Tshivhilidulu near the Nzhelele river.

Here he built a great town of the VhaNdalamo; here it was that he settled. The king Bele realizing the increase in power of Tshishonga sent his men to fight him, but without result, for Tshishonga also had charms of his own, namely the horn that he had been given by Mwali at the time when the drum was captured by the VhaTavhatsindi. So Bele's men were beaten though they had gone out with Ngoma-lungundu. Though they beat it continuously, they were overcome.

So next day Bele went forth himself in all his state and with many warriors. On that day the battle was a bloody one, for great numbers engaged on both sides. Ngoma-lungundu sounded in terrifying fashion, but the VhaNdalamo took no harm, for Tshishonga blew his horn. The countryside shook and a great fire blazed on Tswime mountain, a fire that had not been lit by human hand, but which consumed many people. The whole mountain and the adjoining valley burned and the smell of scorched flesh went up. At that time hot springs burst forth that today are called Tshipise. The village of Tshishonga was consumed by this fire, the two kings caused one another great losses but eventually it was the king Bele-la-Mambo who was killed. The slain were numerous. Tshishonga won the day because he was the son of the makhadzi's family and knew the secrets of Mwali.

The Tshishonga clan are to the present day greatly honoured amongst the Venda. Even though someone else were the chief of the VhaSenzi, Tshishonga was also a chief at the same time, he ruled together with his sister's son the chief, so that there were two chiefs in one country. Hence the proverb, "The rulers are Thovhela and Tshishonga," meaning that the country has two rulers, though it is but one, Tshishonga used to live near Tswime mountain in the Nzhelele valley.

The place where the battle was fought is still tabu for the Venda chiefs to this day, but only for the great ones.

For many years they were at loggerheads and at Dzata there was no king, the government being in the hands of the uncles, whilst the rivals were fighting one another and quarreling, each for himself. The drum was in the hands of Tshishonga's people who had built a new town.

At Dzata a new king could not be installed because the sacred objects were not there, namely the horn and Ngoma-lungundu. The country no longer enjoyed peace, there was dissension everywhere, amongst them. Then the royal uncles begged Tshishonga to give them the sacred objects, but he slew them all at the same place where Bele had died, and

this strengthened the tabu which forbids chiefs to go there, so that even today it is absolutely forbidden to a chief of the blood. In this way many years passed. The people were split in factions, only coming together again when the members of the royal family were appeased by gifts of cattle and girls. Tshishonga returned to Dzata with his people in order to install a new king.

He installed Dimbanyika, a sister's son of the VhaNdalamo. He was given Ngoma-lungundu and the magic flute of Mwali. Now Dimbanyika was told by Tshishonga to subject all the other chiefs who were living in the neighbourhood. Some of these were VhaNgona who had become rebels because there was no longer a king at Dzata.

22

Dimbanyika was one who listened to Tshishonga and did what he told him. This Tshishonga ruled the country though he was not the chief, merely working through the chief, who did what he wished him to do. Dimbanyika was popular with the people because he was on good terms with the VhaNdalamo. He travelled far and wide and subjected the people by means of the drum and with the culture bone flute given him by Tshishonga. The country feared him, and his rule extended far and wide in Venda. He brought all the VhaNgona under his control.

After a time Tshishonga died, and Dimbanyika was free to do as he liked. His high priest Gole-la-Denga was a man who was much feared also, because he was looked upon as Mwali's servant and the possessor of much power. The chief Dimbanyika lived to a very great age, as his father Hwami had done before him, so that neither his father nor mother were remembered by any living person. Thus it is that some say he was a son of Mwali himself, because he could work such amazing miracles.

The town of Dzata grew and covered all the valley up to the hills of Mandiwana and Tshiendeulu and Tswime. Even the Vhakalanga across the Limpopo and far away in the north, and all the people in the east and the Sotho also acknowledged the supremacy of Dimbanyika, including also Tshivhula the Ngona chief tain who had been driven out and had fled westwards to the Blauwberg.

Dimbanyika seeing that his days were coming to an end, parcelled out the lands under his control to his sons, so that his realm might continue to exist even after his death. So he gave independent chief tainships to his sons Ravhura, Mandiwana, Munshedzi, Tshivase and Thoho-ya-Ndou. The senior amongst them was Munshedzi of the house of Ramabulana, whilst the youngest was Thoho-ya-Ndou.

When the chief was dead, the VhaNdalamo met to install the new chief at Dzata, because they were the possessors of the magic objects, as they were of the house of the makhadzi. They made the youngest, Thoho-ya-Ndou, the chief, him to whom no area had been given. Tshivase had been given Phiphidi and all the area at present still occupied by him, and his

headquarters were at Phiphidi. Munzhedzi was given a huge area, as he was the eldest of them all. Mandiwana was given the north, from Tshiendeulu onwards.

Gole the high priest was given the area in the south-east, to guard that quarter against possible enemies who might want to attack the princes, and to check the illness-bringing winds that came from that direction and which troubled the people much. His headquarters were Tshitomboni.

The headquarters of Munshedzi were at Vuvha, where the VhaNgona had used to live; but not exactly on the old ruins of their dwellings, because that was tabu.

Another commoner who found much favour was Magoro, who was given the area of Mbwenda, so that he could support Gole Mphaphuli, both of them being appointed guardians of the royal sons.

23

The VhaNdalamo had installed, Thoho-ya-Ndou because he was their sister's son, and also because his father had been very fond of him on account of his obedience.

The people assembled, and the princes also, not knowing who was going to be the chief, since the one to point him out was the makhadzi, who had been married by the VhaNdalamo. It had already become the rule that the great makhadzi must be married by one of the VhaNdalamo of Tshishonga only, and that she must be in charge of the royal magic.

The princes met near the royal hut in which the sacred relics were. They were called up in turn to attempt to open the door of the hut. All of them, from Munzhedzi downwards, were unable to do so. When Thoho-ya-Ndou came along, the door opened easily, he entered and came out again with a basket full of bananas, which he offered to his elder brothers, "Eat," he said, "for these are said to be eggs of princes." But they in their anger, and gearing also to be bewitched, refused, because they saw that the bananas had been smeared with black medicine. He then took and ate, not caring about the medicine on them.

He again entered the hut and came out with a calabash full of beer, offered it to his brothers and said, "Drink of this, they say it is the water of princes." But they refused again, because it had been doctored with a red medicine on the calabash. So he drank of it himself.

The drum Ngoma-lungundu sounded, the people trilled, and the thsikona was blown to bring peace to the country, but the older brothers went home angry, unmindful of the exhortations that they should acknowledge Thoho-ya-Ndou. Each one of them went to his own home full of disgust, and Gole no less, because of what the VhaNdalamo and the makhadzi had done. They refused to bow to Thoho-ya-Ndou, and each ruled as an independent chief, for each had many people of his own. Gole and Magoro were on one side,

they lived together peacefully south of the Luvuvhu and Letaba rivers. Tshivhase subjected the Vhalembethu of Mutele and Makahani to himself.

Munzhedzi had an area larger than that of any other, and his power was such that he conquered the Tshivhula and Raphulu people.

At Dzata things were also well, and peace reigned there, the realm of Thoho-ya-Ndou surpassed that of all the rest. Because he had the sacred objects, Mwali spoke to him, and the VhaNdalamo and others supported him.

In this way many years passed without any disturbance, nor was there ever scarcity at Dzata, but only in the areas of his elder brothers, whereas he lived in plenty.

However once Magoro and Gole got the brothers together and persuaded them to attack Dzata, with the help of some of the VhaNgona, in order to install whom they considered to be the rightful chief. Before they reached Dzata however, Thoho-ya-Ndou and his people left the town and went away northwards, whither no one knows today. He took his cattle and goods with him. Tavhura however turned back on the way, saying he wanted to fetch his club which he had forgotten, but when he went after them again he no longer could see their tracks, and heard Mwali tell him to go and live at Makonde.

When the enemy reached Dzata they found it empty and even the big drum and the sacred things gone. They tried to follow the tracks, but turned back for fear of a storm in which they thought their ancestor spirit himself was.

That is all. In the olden days people lived in fear of the spirits of their ancestors, and of the sacred amulets. And even today a chief who has no such sacred objects is not held in great esteem. We must add that it is said that a chief had to swallow the "pebble of the chieftainship," which came originally from the stomach of a crocodile. This gave him his supernatural virtue or "weight," as they call it. At the death of the chief this stone comes forth just before he dies, and when it is out he dies immediately afterwards. Only a rightful chief can retain this stone. However the great thing in the olden days was the drum called Ngoma-lungundu.

Everything was done for reasons of fear and ignorance, so that, since knowledge and independence of thought were unknown, the chief and his drum were what everybody feared and lost their faith in.

Today the light has come to us, and peoples' eyes have been opened. And yet crime and sin have increased since Ngoma-lungundu disappeared and no longer rules over us."

Source of information to Ngoma-lungundu

Extracted from E. Mudau 1940 and is explained by him in 'Preface to Ngoma-lungundu' in pages 8 to 9 of The Copper Miners of Musina and the Early History of the Zoutpansberg: Vernacular accounts by S.M. Dzi vhani, M.F. Mamadi, M.M. Motenda,, E. Mudau in Ethnological Publications Vol. VI III Edited and supplemented by other material by N. J. VAN WARMELO Government Ethnologist - Department of Native Affairs. Printed in the Union of South Africa by the Government Printer, Pretoria 1940 (G.P.S. 1843-1940-800).

"The original bearers of this myth or legend, according to E. Mudau, come from an area closest to 'Tshakoma' which is situated on the upper reaches of the Luvuvhu River nearest the Lutanandwa tributary that flows into the Luvuvhu.

He first heard this story in the early 1900's from his mother and a cousin of his mother called - 'Magodi'.

Magodi, in turn received this information from another old man called - Mutsila Ramasalerwa (a smith who worked iron and made amulets). They both lived at Maswie in Luvhalani's area at Tshakoma.

Mutsila Ramasalerwa's father - Ramphaga, was the source and originator to the knowledge. He also knew the history of the VhaNgona of Raphulu - the original inhabitants of Venda. Ramphaga was driven away by Matsheketshe's people of Mauluma where he was master of the western side, near to Tshivheulwa. Originally a VhaNgona area.

Ramphaga was the mother's brother of E. Mudau's mother.

The stories were originally told as folk-tales to the children in the evenings and were prevalent amongst others at Vhulaudzi. E. Mudau recorded these traditions for a literary competition held under auspices of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.

Other people contributing to information were:

Finiasi Mutsila of Maungani - concerning VhaLembethu and VhaNgona. Ne-Mugumoni of Luvhalani (a headman of chief Madzivhandila) concerning Ngoma-lungundu. Nkhumeleni Dzege concerning Ngoma-lungundu and Thundundu of the makhadzi Mutumbe, the mother of the clan of Madzivhandila.

The informants of E. Mudau declared that the people of Ravhura at Makonde knew about these matters best and that they feared being informants of their history as their powerful chiefs disdained this. (Ravhura's line takes precedence over the Royal houses of Venda).

A different version concerning lineage exists, according to the VhaNdalamo of Tshakoma - Mateos Mukhodobwane and Mbobvu Dzege, that maintain that the Royal house of the Vhasenzi was that of VhaNdalamo. Others declare that Ramabulana and Tshivase are sister's sons who assumed the chieftainship and clan-name of the VhaNdalamo, viz. Rambau".

Another Venda format of the legends of Ngoma-lungundu was published as:

Mudau, E & Mutenda M.M. 1958. "The drum of Ngoma-lungundu and Chief Ramabulana"
History of the Venda people Northern Transvaal. By the Government Printer 1958. (Union of
South Africa Native Department Affairs.)