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*mfahla Ndebele tribe, diverse small items
of history and customs*

S. Naos.

The Hunting of Ravenous Beasts.

In the country of Mmakafapile, Mouna Ke Papile Monato', a certain man whose name was Ramfaladi Motlhabane and whose tribal totem was a duiker, accompanied by Raseelogane Kgwebane also one whose tribal totem was a duiker, the son of Mogsipi Kgwebane, and armed with assegais, met a lion. When it came out of the caves of Mmasebolao, it was furious and it charged and mauled the foot of Ramfaladi. He pierced it with a barbed spear and it died. They cut off its tail and they returned home. Ramfaladi was supporting himself with an olive tree rod.

When they were approaching the village, the man pierced the ground with his spear. They pranced with their spears, one was heard to say, "Come and see, the beast is dragging a shield! Yes, 'kakapipi' is inside, come and see the lion eating a person". It was during the chieftainness of Mmalebudi. She offered an ox to be slaughtered for the brave men, in the praise that were sung, their names were mentioned. A song of triumph was at the meeting place of the chief and his people. Women brought beer and it was consumed. The lion's skin was brought and handed to the chieftainness because it is never worn by the common people.

Ramfaladi is the father of Maragakgole, Rankspa and Ramotswi of Motlhabane. After a little while, Sedie and Sedumedi set out. They were the sons of a man from Makgwane, whose tribal totem was a duiker. As they were continuing their hunt, they came across a lion in the caves. When it got up, and charged Sedie the older, caught it by the mane, the lion broke his left arm. His brother Sedumedi stood back and watched and nearly ran away but said, "Can I really leave my elder brother in the lurch while he is being killed by a wild beast?" He got near it and stabbed it with an assegai. The lion mauled him on the thigh but he killed it. His elder brother also escaped death and they set out on their journey home full of scars. They had its tail with them as proof. When they were approaching the village, a man sounded the alarm and said, "Alas! come out and

see a wild beast dragging a shield, 'kakapipi' is inside".

The warriors who had killed men in battles, pranced with their assegais, piercing the ground with them. A black ox was slaughtered at the chief's meeting place and meat was consumed. The horn was sounded. People went there. The wives of men who on previous occasions killed elephants and beasts of prey, wore 'The Eye of the 'Pou' on their necks. The Eye of the 'Pou' was made of beads. It was worn by Mmathoboro Maruping whose tribal totem is a duiker and Mmantumo Matsieng whose tribal totem is also a duiker, and Mmathaba.

Another song of the warriors among the people of Mfathha Maila runs thus: 'Crucify the lion you men, the wild beast, this wild beast was wet overnight, crucify the head of the lion, the wild beast.

At Phalane, a man of the Mfathha people whose name was Rankapa Seemise and whose tribal totem was a lion, once went out on a hunting expedition and met a lion. He killed it. On his way back to the village, he saw another lion again and shot it with his gun. Then as he entered the village, he praised himself and said, "Ramokolopi of the many chiefs has rescued the people down there, down there where the people sit under the shadow of the millet". He sang praises, sticking his assegain in the ground, singing at the same time the war song saying, "Come and see, the wild beast is dragging the shield". One said, "Hee kakapipi e mo teng manong wee, maaka a ja motho. Ahee-ahee kakapipi e mo teng".

The son of Maila shot an ox, the men consumed the meat and started the song. Chieftainess Mmalebudi gave him the skin of a jackal. The men who have killed people in battles or who have killed wild animals, are allowed to stick their assegais in the ground when they are prancing. If an ordinary man who has never killed a wild beast or a person in battle, sticks his assegain in the ground, he is taken to the chief's place. The chief will give judgment that he be fined a beast.

It is said that hunters carried charms for wild animals, Mfolo Makgwane and company who is now dead. He said that they were never hunted without charms. If one hunted without chewing roots, one would never return home.

When the Mfatlha tribe lived at Majweng, there was a man by the name of Ramolebe Molefe whose tribal totem was a duiker. He was the killer of rhinoceroses among the people of his tribe; he killed a rhinoceros just like a person killing a fowl. One day when he went out, he told his wife that he would not return from the hunt, he got that feeling. When he got to the veld, his dogs aroused a rhinoceros, it was ferocious. It pierced the dog so that its bowels fell on a tree ('mogwiliri') tree. When he attacked, the rhinoceros became clever for him, it gored his stomach and the horn went through his spine. It lifted him up while he stabbed it with a spear on the side. It dropped down and died. Ramolebe lay on his stomach on the ground. His dog ran home and on reaching there it beat the stump of a tree.

The men then left following it to where its master lay. It is said that on the spot where it gored him, one could say that a beast had been slaughtered. He sent for his wife and children. When they arrived, he gave them orders about his cattle and then died. This account is given by Molefe a grandchild whose tribal totem is a duiker and who lives at Warmbaths. When he had gone out to hunt, at the time the sun hung over the mountains, he came home having killed an animal.

The dogs of those ancient times were doctored with charms, when an accident occurred to their owners, they went to bark at the chief's place of meeting to inform the people.

Witchcraft And Disease.

The cattle of the Lebotlwane area were being collected at Ntseemoya. Madi Nawa the wife of Chief Magagola was there and she requested that one of them should be slaughtered. This is done so that the cattle should bleed to avoid constipation among the Ndebele people. She lived at the home of Tau Nawa the son of Phuti. The beast was slaughtered and consumed, the men sang a song of joy. At this very feast, there was one Rosina Moleele, the wife of Mpitsi whose tribal totem was a duiker. She took a kidney that had been

cooked and in which she had administered witchcraft by mixing it with a frog. She gave it to Morebudi Ntadi to go and hand it over to Madi to eat.

Shortly after Madi had eaten it something choked her in the throat so that she could hardly breathe. She immediately went home sick. When Morebudi Ntadi of the group which consists of the chief's paternal uncles, was given the kidney, he did not know that witchcraft had been administered in it. He took it and went to place it before the Mdebele wife, the woman took it and ate it all up. The frog bellowed in the chest and it did it increasingly. When she finished eating, something settled in her throat. The old woman of the Maila group, got into difficulties. She told her son Tau that she ate a kidney at the feast and it got stuck in her throat. The kidney was given to her by Morebudi Ntadi. Morebudi was then called and questioned. He said, "I was given a cooked kidney and sent with it by Rosina Moleele a woman whose tribal totem was a duiker and who lives at Lebotlwane, the wife of Mpitsi Moleele, whose tribal totem is also a duiker and who resides at Lebotlwane.

Rosina was then called and told that the kidney she had given to Morebudi to hand over to the old woman Madi has made her sick and she belches like a frog. The wife of Moleele began to make inconsistent statements and said, "I don't know what I was doing by bewitching the child of my elder sister". The people said, "Undo the witchcraft you have administered on her". She said that she did not know how to annul it. She did not know what to do. She kept on holding Madi and feeling her about. After she had thus treated her the sick person became better. From that day, Madi developed food poisoning. When it attacked her, there was a sound such as: 'owaa-owaa'. Up to the time of her death at Lebotlwane, that sound could still be heard. It is said that she administered the part of the head under the chin, of the frog. The family of Mpitsi Moleele and that of Ntadi of the Kobes who died at Lebotlwane and the family of Kgwebane at the Mfathiha's area, are the families which are feared by the people.

On one occasion when Seleke Modimola, a member of the Mfathiha tribe whose tribal totem was a porcupine, went to cut thorn bushes for making

a hedge, he was chased by a snake. He ran until he reached home, the snake still chasing him. His grandfather Kgaratsi struck it with a stick and killed it. This happened at Mothabatse. Ramotokwane Molefe the doctor, was summoned. He threw his divining bones and told them that this snake was sent by the paternal uncle of Seleke, he was disputing the cattle of their father. He said that he had been given only a few. The doctor told them that he could work the witchcraft back to its owner, but they did not allow him saying that he would do it again.

An old woman by the name of Mmamolekeng Kgwebane at one time when she was going through an entrance of the yard of Mmatlou the wife of Chief Ramabele Nawa who lived at Lebotlwane, sat down, partially lifted her dresses and relieved nature just at the entrance. Mmatlou reprimanded her and said, "You just have to remove that filth of yours". Mmamolekeng then said, "Dear me! I was pressed, my stomach makes me run." She then removed the mess.

The old man Kobe Ntadi whose tribal totem is a duiker, of the 'Letakana' regiment, when the tribe lived at Potwaneng, went off to go and bewitch at Molefe's home, the child of Molebe whose tribal totem is a duiker and who was the younger brother of Seleka. Molefe's house had two doors. When the wizard arrived, he knocked at the door on the one side. Molefe got up and went out by the other door, he chased him and struck him on the hip joint with a stick; he beat him on the legs as well. He wanted to beat him to death but his wife Serine (Martha) refused, she grabbed him by the hand and stopped him. When Kobe the wizard left there, he went to lie down on the path to rub himself.

A wagon belonging to Segale Matsieng came along, he was going early in the morning to Nylstroom. When the wizard saw the wagon, he crawled to the reeds of the Thathe river. At about dawn, the wizard stirred up a whirlwind, he went into it and it raised dust as it was going in the direction of his home. When the whirlwind approached Kobe's home, Chief Magagola saw him jumping in over the hedge. Kobe became very ill, he even died dragging his legs along (crawling).

Regiments.

The first regiment among the Mfatlha tribe is the Marema, it is followed by Magaga and Malekana or Magata, as the Mfatlha people term it. Then comes the Madingwana and the Matlhwana, the Mangana, the Makoba and the Matlakana. These are the regiments of the olden times when the koodoo horn used to be sounded. The Magaga is Mmakokami the grandmother of Dasetere Makakaba whose tribal totem is a horse and who lives at Dintshi's and Mmatheti of Masibi. They were the Magaga regiment at Mfatlha's area.

The Madingwana is Rakobe Ntadi who begot Kobe Ntadi the Letlakana regiment whose tribal totem is a duiker and who died at Lebotlwane in the country of the Mfatlha people and Kota Tsiane, they were the Madingwana regiment.

The Matlhwana is Moloka Makakaba whose tribal totem is a horse, who begot Radiphala Makakaba who lives at Rasegone's, it is Mmanwaila Maruping the father of Phenyane and Kota whose tribal totem is the duiker, it is Ramonyatsi Motlhabane, Morola Nawa, Magasa Nawa whose tribal totem is the duiker and who went to Maletse when the tribe removed from the Kgaphamadi mountains at the salt of the Mfatlha people.

Mangana is the regiment of Rabohosi Nawa whose tribal totem is a duiker and who died at Tsiditsane. Matlakana is the regiment of Chief Mogagola whose tribal totem is a duiker and Kobe Ntadi whose tribal totem is also a duiker.

At Moseka the regiments who underwent the rites of circumcision were the Magaga, Madingwana and Malekane. At Mmakafapilwe on the mountains of Kgaphamadi the Matlhwana and the Mangana were circumcised. At Kgwadibeng they scattered abroad and got to the country of Chief Motseketla the paternal uncle of Mathibe the Chief of the Bagwadiba. Here, the Matlakana and the Makoba went through the initiation ceremonies. The Makoba and Matlakana are a regiment. Chief Motseketla received Maila's tribe hospitably. On their arrival, Chief Mmalebudi offered a black ox, giving greetings to the chief of the Bagwadiba. Chief Motseketla himself received them with joy and gave them the ploughing gardens which belonged to the Bagwadiba who broke off with

Chief Mathibe who went to Bopediland on account of the dispute over their chieftainship.

Now on his return from Bopediland, he found that the Mfatlha people had been given ploughing gardens and that they had sown kaffir corn and it had already sprung up. When the kaffir corn of the Baphuthing produced heads, Chief Mathibe on passing by these fields, cut off the ears of the corn of the Mfatlha people and they suffered from famine as a result. When the position remained like this for two years, they removed to Kguruletlha Mafatse in the country of Setlhako.

Initiation ceremonies at Maila's were stopped by Chief Mogagola and Chief Motshela at Tsiditsane. These are the chiefs of the Mfatlha tribe who went to fetch Reverend Zakaria Ramusu from Pietersburg by wagon. On their way from Pietersburg, their oxen died at Sebediela. Servants were sent to Tsiditsane to fetch the oxen.

The doctor for initiation ceremonies and battles was Makelepe Molefe whose tribal totem was a duiker, who died at Tsiditsane. He was the doctor of the Mfatlha tribe who came from Seleka's country. Doctor Makelepe died only of old age. Doctor Makelepe was a renowned doctor among the Mfatlha and Seleka tribes. Where he had doctored with his medicines, no doctor could undo what he bound. When a disease was going to break out he foretold it.

At Kguruletlhake Mafatse malaria fever broke out, it came from Bopediland. The story is told by Mmamokwena who witnessed it with her own eyes. Makelepe foretold it. Then he took his whisk made of the hair of the tail of the hartebeest, he went round along the boundaries of the village and warded off the disease. It is said that when he had strewn the weapons of the Mfatlha people with witchcraft medicines, the assegais of the enemies never pierced the men in battle; it is said that they just slipped off from the men.

When circumcision was stopped at Tiditsane, it was after the initiation ceremony of the Matlakana or Maleta-kgosi regiment. When circumcision ended, Zakaria Ramusu started the Dutch Reformed Church, he also opened a school and the old men began to learn. To this day the people of Mfatlha are still taught by him.

At the circumcision school, the men and women were taught a language unknown to the ordinary person. They were taught the art of fighting with sticks in battle, proverbs the language of the old men, were taught, and the method of living during the times of poverty and they also learned to eat grass and meat.

In one of their initiation songs, they say, "You there woman^a! the morning star has appeared, give me the 'sekonotwane' (private parts of a woman)". The language of the circumcision school, one would say, "The moon is inside, the coming moon. The bones are in the forest, the animal is there. The jackal is wasting the water draw some water for me, I am thirsty! We thank the bones, if a person was ill and is now recovering. "Put in a little stone" means "fill the drinking calabash". The death of maswana means "the natural death! The person of boiled mealies means "a person loved by many". "A ka diphofo" is 'he can fly'. "Go baya dinao" is to chase". "Go itiya masopa a mptsa ka patla" means not to get anything. "Go ntsha mmutlwa ka ntlha" is to tell the truth briefly.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE MFATLHA TRIBE OF MAILA.

Messina (Bonyai)

The war with the Manyai, they were helping Mokwena.

Ngwapa (mountain) War with Mongato. The Mfatlha & Seleka tribes.

Moseka (river) War with the Bakgatla of Lentswe.

Mmakefapilwe (Ntsosolo mountain)

Kgapha-Madi (Mountains of Mfatlha tribe).

Bokwena: Legwale, Chief.

Phalane: Mokopane: Musuko (mountain) War with Bapedi of Thulare.

Tsiditsane. Mafatse (Kguruletlhake) Moletlane; They scattered through hunger.

Mabula

Ntswana-le-metsing

Lebotlwane

War: Moselo (Mountain) Matsutsa divided. A Letsutsa woman advised the Chief War of the woman.

Mmamudu

at the Bagwadubas

Pretoria they besieged its mountains.

Free State

Kraal (motse) They distinguished themselves with the duiker

Basotholand: Motlhasedi died

Phutigatsana river.

Zululand before Tshaka's reign.

When they left, their totem was an elephant, The Ndebele of Mfatlha.

Port Elizabeth. Their progress was stopped by the sea Indian Ocean.

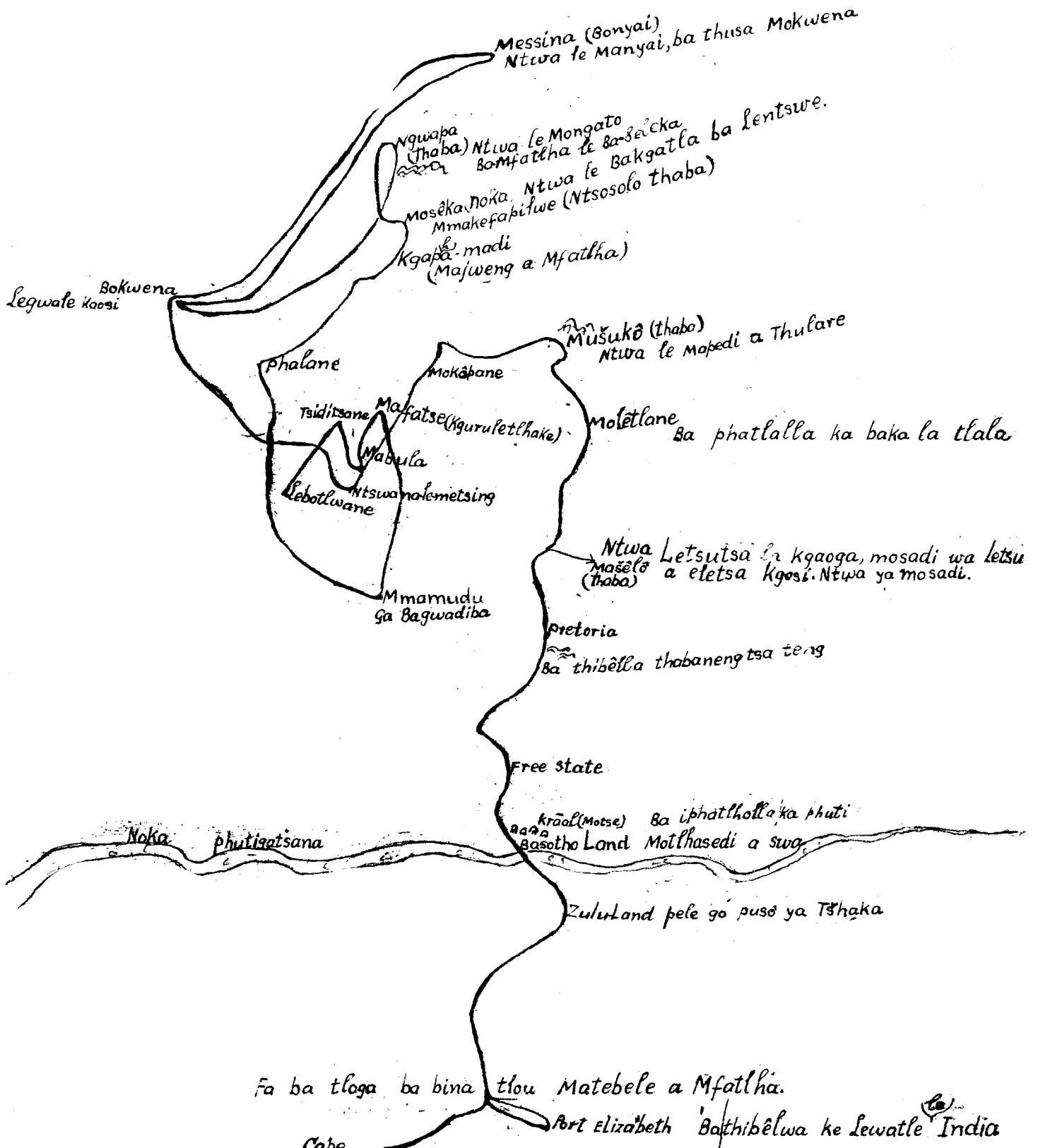
Cape. Mazwe and his elder brother. Dispute amongst them. On

account of choice of circumcision, Mazwe was dissatisfied he broke

away with tribe, went in direction of Natal. He had already married

a Letsutsa and Mosotho. Mazwe the child of Nqunda.

Tsamayō ya Tšhaba sa Mfatlha wa Maila.



Fa ba tloga ba bina tlou Matebele a Mfatlha.

Mazwe le mogologwe. Phapanj pakeng tsa bona.
Ka lekgetho la lebollo, Mazwe a belaela a rutla
le setšhaba-a lebisa Natala a nyetse Letsutsa le Mosotho. Mazwe ngwana Ngund

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