

THE COLONIAL STATE AND THE RISE TO DOMINANCE OF NGWANASE, 1896-1928

Omissions are an even greater defect than errors, for much of historical interests is not recorded in many documentary sources...The great advantage of the retrospective interview is that it enables historians to intervene directly in the generation of historical evidence relating to the recent past, and so it becomes possible for the historian to collect the type of evidence which customary documentary sources have not supplied.

By: Trevor Lummis¹

The year was 1981, I was no older than sixteen years of age. My mother's 'traditional shebeen' was filled with the regular crowd of men and older women.² As I grabbed the one rand from the grey-headed man who sat under the tree across from my homestead, I heard him discuss that his clan, the Ngubanes, were the original owners of the land in Maputaland. He continued, "One day we were hunting and we caught a buck, and then we were skinning it with the mussels' shells. The Tembe people came with isibhenyani (sharp metal object taken from a round drum used to make alcohol which they used as a knife) and they helped skin the game. In order to show gratitude, we the Ngubanes gave the left front leg of the buck to the Tembe men, that without knowing, however, in the Tembe's culture by giving them that specific portion of the buck, we were accepting their superiority over us." Believing that this grey hair man was telling an old folklore, I turned away and then forgot his story.

Only after sixteen years had passed did this story start to re-enter my thoughts. I was sitting down enjoying the Ngubane's feast in celebration of their son's graduation. A tall lean man, light in complexion, stood up and began to speak on behalf of the family. He started his speech by singing the praise song of his Ngubane clan. With a quick pause after the praise songs, his voice got louder and stronger. "Tembe knows," he insisted, "that we are the rulers and the owners of this area, forget that today we are nothing in the land of our fathers." As he continued, he re-told the same story that I had heard sixteen years ago from the grey hair man in the shebeen. This time I didn't easily dismiss this story. Later on, I arranged a meeting with the speaker to get more details about his story. After our meeting, he suggested that I should meet with other Ngubane people about this tradition. I took advice, and thus began to gather the outline of the Ngubane family's claim to Maputaland. However, in search of the "memories," I wanted to know what the Tembe families thought about the Ngubane's claim.

The complexity of this issue of the land claim was something that I didn't realise in the beginning. As I talked to the Tembes, I started to understand that there was a division between the Tembe people themselves. This family splits into two groups, the Tembes of Makhuza and the Tembes of Ngwanase. I began to see Maputaland in a different light. Tension had spread across Maputaland into three factions lineage's. The Tembes of Ngwanase the current chiefly family are being challenged by two groups: the Tembes of Makhuza and the Ngubanes.

The historiography on the colonial state has often depicted the state as a strong and

¹ Trevor Lummis. *Listening to History: the Authenticity of oral evidence.* (London: Hutchinson, 1987). P. 1.

² 'Traditional shebeen' is a place where home brewed beer is sold by women usually in individual homes for subsistence.

coercive force that culminated the subjugation of the local people. However, in the case of Maputaland where the colonial presence was limited to an administrative structure, an opportunity is provided to examine the dominance and the role of colonial state. The paper demonstrates how the weakness of the colonial state in Maputaland provided opportunities for Ngwanase to work the system to his own advantage which led his domination in this region. Since this was a Cinderella region in KwaZulu-Natal's colonial politics, it received little attention and hence generated fewer correspondence. This paper shares the challenge of reconstructing the past where the documentary trails are limited.

Numerous research have been done on Maputaland, however, the weakness of colonial state in this region has been ignored. It has always been assumed by previous historians that the colonial state had complete dominance over Maputaland. Walter Felgate's research, *The Tembe-Thonga of Natal and Mozambique: An ecological approach*, intended to be an anthropological approach.³ He had no interest on the issues pertaining to the relationship of the colonial state and the people of Maputaland. David Hedges's thesis, "*Trade and Politics in Southern Mozambique and Zululand in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*," focused on the impact of trade on African states.⁴ Hedges indicated important issues on how trade became an essential factor in the consolidation of power among Thonga chiefs. However, his period of focus was before the presence of British colonial state in Maputaland. Once again, this work is unhelpful to the present

3 W. S. The Tembe Thonga of natal and Mozambique: An ecological approach. University of natal, Durban, 1982.

4 David Hedges. "*Trade and Politics in Southern Mozambique and Zululand in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*." London: University of London, 1978 (Ph.D. Thesis).

study. Patrick Harries's book, *Work and Culture, and Identity: Migrant Labour in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910*, approach to the history of Maputaland, focused on the labour migration.⁵ His research focused on the extraction of labour and its impact in this region. He had no interest on the relationship of the state and the people in day to day life. The author's time frame and focus was on the regions in central and northern Mozambique and only tangentially touches the southern regions of Kosi Bay. David Webster, whose work was centred in the areas around Kosi Bay, was killed before he could finish his research; however, his two articles written in the mid-eighties, gives a general understanding about the people of this region.⁶ A respected historian's, Phillip Warhurst, work, "Britain and the Partition of Maputo 1875-1897," shows great interest in Maputaland and wrote an excellent analysis on the partition of Maputaland towards the end of 19th century.⁷ His work offers useful information on the role of British and Portuguese colonial governments in this region. However, Warhurst also paid little attention on the weakness of the colonial state in Maputaland.

The reasons for tracing the authority of Ngwanase is that I have found another source of information that denies that the Tembe of Ngwanase should be the dominant rulers over Maputaland. The source, oral evidence, argues that this area, which was ruled by Ngwanase from 1896, was originally ruled by another branch of the Tembe clan. This

⁵ P. Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant labour in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910*. Partsmouth:Heinemann, 1994.

⁶ David Webster, "Tembe-Thonga Kinship: The marriage of anthropology and History". *Cahiers d' Etudes Africains*, 104,XXVI-4, 1986. P611-632 and " Abafazi Bathonga Bafihlakele: Ethnicity & Gender in a KwaZulu Border Community." *Tradition and Transition in Southern Africa*. (eds) A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister. *African Studies, 50th Anniversarry*. Vol. (1&2), 1992.

branch of the Tembes was under the leadership of Madingi Tembe and later by Makhuza Tembe whose ancestors had moved from Mozambique in the periods that counts four generation back from the period of Ngwanase.⁸ This information has not been recorded in any documents. The reason being that historians who have done their research in Maputaland have been using the colonial archives which are by themselves silent about this conflict. In the colonial documents Ngwanase appears as the original and only ruler of this area. Therefore, in a situation such as this, oral sources becomes extremely important.

Before moving forward in the examination of Ngwanase's dominance, a summary of the geographical and historical background of Maputaland is necessary. The geographical dimensions of Maputaland has changed various times from its old boundaries due to the presence of colonial powers.⁹ In the early seventeenth century, this region acquired a political identity under Mabhudu Tembe (the name which was later corrupted to Maputo and in some cases known as Maputa) and during that period the Tembe kingdom was bounded by Delagoa bay on north and by Mkuze River in the south. The presence of colonial powers, such as the Portuguese and British governments in the late nineteenth century, complicated the structure of this kingdom. From 1875 to 1897 this country was divided among these two colonial governments.¹⁰ In 1875, the first partition of this area

7 P. Warhurst, "Britain and the Partition of Maputo 1875-1897". Conference paper. University of Natal, July, 1985.

⁸Interview with the Tembe people of Makhuza lineage

⁹ P. Warhurst, "Britain and the Partition of Maputo"

¹⁰ Many historians have done their research on international competition in this region. D.M. Screuder, *The Scramble for Africa, 1877-1895* (Cambridge, 1980). Screuder has an excellent analysis of the British policies in Africa. Axelson's important study, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, 1875-1891*

resulted from a ruling of the French President MacMahon who was trying to resolve the issue as to which colonial country was supposed to control Maputa River after a dispute emerged between Portuguese and British government.¹¹ This ruling favored the Portuguese and resulted in Maputa losing its northern territory which included the Island of Inhaca and Delagoa Bay. In 1889 Maputa lost its southern territories as a result of re-settlement of Zululand northern boundaries by British colonial government who wanted to gain more control over coastal regions as a strategy to keep the Portuguese, Afrikaners and Germans away from the south-eastern coast of Africa.¹² Finally, in 1897, Maputaland was annexed and incorporated to Zululand to become a part of the Natal colony. When discussing Maputaland today I am referring to the part which remained under the Tembe authority after these colonial boundaries were set. Maputaland has now become a small strip covering regions from Lake Sibaya on south and bordered by boundary of Mozambique on north. On the west by Lebombo mountains stretching to Swaziland with the chiefdoms of Nyawo, Mathenjwa and Mngomezulu.

Before the partition of Maputaland, the Tembe chiefs were living in the northern area of Maputaland which later became the Portuguese territory. After 1891 African chiefdoms,

(Johannesburg, Witswatersrand University Press, 1967) offers useful information on the movement of the Portuguese government in this period. Also, Warhurst's *Anglo-Portuguese Relations South Central Africa*, highlights the years when the British South African Companies was involved into what became Mozambique. Another excellent work written by Warhurst on this subject was his "Britain and the Partition of Maputo 1875-1897". See also, Liesegang's 'Aspects of Gaza Nguni history 1821-1897', *Journal of the Central Africa Historical Association*, Vol. 6 (1975), pp. 1-14.

¹¹ David Leslie, *Among the Zulu and Amatongas*. Edinburgh, 1875

¹² For details on demarcation of northern Zululand boundaries, see, E. Axelson, *Portugal and the scramble for Africa, 1875-189*, pp108-109, N. G. Garson, "The Swaziland question and a road to the sea, 1887-1895" MA Thesis, in *A Year Book for South African History*, 1957, P. Warhurst, "Britain and the partition of maputo 1875-1897" Conference paper. University of Natal, July 1985 and British Parliament Papers (C 6200) 1890, pp 226-227.

in general, experienced more difficulties as colonial powers exert more pressure on African state. This period was traditionally described as the ‘Scramble for Africa’.¹³ Thus greater tensions between African states and colonial governments developed. In most cases the colonial governments used African chiefdoms to fight with other African chiefdoms who were resisting colonial authority. In 1894 the Tembe chiefdom was requested to assist the Portuguese government in their war with Gaza Kingdom. However, a conflict emerge between the Tembe chief and the Portuguese, as the Tembe people withdrew from the war after being armed with guns. These guns were used to loot the Portuguese shops while the Portuguese army was fighting with Gaza kingdom. Fearing revenge from the Portuguese, chief Ngwanase of the Tembe people, who was ruling at this time, was forced to flee his country and submit himself to the British colonial government. In 1896 Ngwanase was welcome by the British colonial power. He was recognized as the Paramount chief of Maputaland. After his death in 1928, his descendants continued to rule over this region until present.

Ngwanase’s dominance in this area ensured his families rule in this region: How can Ngwanase dominate an area he has just arrived in? What strategies did Ngwanase employ to maintain his power? It is important to start by looking at the traditional means of political control that Ngwanase used to dominate Maputaland. It should be mentioned at this time, that the Tembe of Makhuzha branch shared the same descends of the Tembe royal family. This family disintegrated in the early 18th century. At this time, the family was living in Maputo River in the Portuguese territory under the leadership of chief

¹³ Screuder, *The Scramble for Africa*, 1980.

Mwayi Tembe. Among his sons was Makhasana, who was born from the senior wife was *lobolad* by the community, and Madingi, who was born by the youngest wife.¹⁴ The oral tradition suggests that Madingi was given independence by his father to go and established himself as a chief outside the Tembe chiefdom because Makhasana was the legitimate successor to his father. Madingi migrated to the area that is being contested today. This means that Madingi formed a new independent Tembe chiefdom which was seen as a separate chiefdom to the senior Tembe chiefdom existing in Portuguese territory. Madingi ruled for many years, and thus out lived his son who was suppose to be the direct successor of his regime. As a result his grandson Makhuza, succeeded him. When Ngwanase migrated to this region 1896, Makhuza was ruling as the third generation of Madingi lineage.

The problem emerged as to who was going to be a chief between the two brothers: Ngwanase was coming from the senior family of the Tembe branch, however, Makhuza was ruling in an independent chiefdom. According to the tradition Ngwanase was supposed to take over as he was leading the main branch of the Tembe royal family. In addition to that Ngwanase was to given a senior position because his mother, Zambili was a Swazi prince, a daughter of King, Sobhuza. The son of the daughter of a king was usually given a higher position in Thonga culture. Thus Makhuza was forced to hand over chieftaincy to Ngwanase as way of recognizing that seniority. This system allows the role of marriage to distinguish power in a wider political context. However, Makhuza thought that he would not loose any power in this arrangement because Makhuza

¹⁴ The son of the wife who has been lobolad by community become a legitimate succssesor.

retained the same powers as Ngwanase. He maintained his land where he appointed his own *indunas*. Makhuza's area consisted of the coastal region with easy access to sea and Kosi Lake while Ngwanase ruled the western part of Maputaland.¹⁵ In other words, the two brothers ruled parallel to each other with Ngwanase recognised as having senior status between the two brothers. Makhuza helped Ngwanase in establishing his palace in the area called Mfihlweni which was named after his old palace in Portuguese territory.¹⁶

In the area where Ngwanase was allocated there were few people to rule. Many people lived in the coastal areas to have access to the sea and various resources that are found along the coast.¹⁷ Once Ngwanase got settled he needed to extend his power and have people to rule. Marriage arrangements was one of the strategies Ngwanase used to extend his power. It was common in Africa that the daughters of a king or chief marry another chief. Ngwanase arranged that two of his sister marry Makhuza. In Thonga culture people of the same clan name can marry each other. Henri Junod, who live with Thonga people, observed that when people of the same clan name or relatives married, a cow was slaughtered, and this tradition was called *dhlaya shibong*--literary meaning 'destroying the relationship.'¹⁸ This allowed Makhuza to marry Ngwanase's sisters, even though the two chief were considered to be brothers. In many cases, such arrangements

¹⁵ Thonga people's life depended on the sea where they harvest mussels, fish and crabs. There are even more fruits in the coast than inland. Nkaphani argued that in the old days there were no mealies or any grown food in maputaland, people depended on fish and fruits. Ngwanase himself complained to the magistrate that his people were starving because this area was unlike in Portuguese territory there was no rice or ground nuts.

¹⁶ Junod who was living with the Thonga people mainatins that statute labour was one of the main revenues of the royal kraal. Vol 1, p406, Ngubane argued that his husband was building the palace as they brought food in the palace.

¹⁷Evidence of Nkaphani,Ngubane during interview. He recalled that the fish and fruits was the only food

was seen as a way of resolving conflicts.¹⁹ Therefore, it make sense that Makhuzza gave more land to Ngwanase when he requested it not only as brother but also as a brother-in-law. As Ngwanase's subjects migrated from Portuguese territory to follow their king, Ngwanase kept on begging more land from Makhuzza. Thus, although Ngwanase was settled in the western side of Maputaland, his brothers such as Mahlunzula, Joji and Mshudu were settled in Makhuzza's territory. Ngwanase's sons were also allocated in Makhuzza's ward. The importance of this allocation was that the brothers and sons of chiefs automatically become indunas on behalf of the chief. Thus, Ngwanase's sons and brothers became indunas on behalf of Ngwanase in the area ruled by Makhuzza. The land and people which was originally ruled by Makhuzza now fell under the authority of Ngwanase, and thereby extending his power in this region.

Junod observed that in Thonga culture chiefs generally place their wives in the various provinces of their chiefdom as a way of governing the area. Chiefs would pay visits and stay for days in these secondary capitals, and thereby, keep-in-touch with his subjects all over his territory. But, Junod argued that the most effective way for chiefs to hold their territories, were to place their sons or close relatives, after naming them as indunas or sub-chiefs, in certain areas so those regions would be named after the chiefs' indunas, and thus the chiefs could claim authority over those regions.²⁰ This same structure appeared in Makhuzza's ward. Even today the areas which Makhuzza ruled are known by

people depended on in Maputaland. So people tended to settle around the sea.

¹⁸ Albert Tembe, pointed some families whose marriage were arranged in this tradition.

¹⁹ Interview with Walter Tembe.

²⁰ Junod, *The life of a South African Tribe*. University Books Inc., New Hyde Park, New York , 1962. Vol 1, p409-410

the names of his sons which has made it easy for his generation to claim these regions as a part of their lineage's rule; thus, comes as a strong evidence to assist them in their present conflict today against the Royal Family.²¹ However, some of Makhuzas' indunas were not originally from the Tembe clan. There were indunas such as Ntuli, Mdlesthe, Khumalo and Mlambo who were ruling on behalf of Makhuzas. Ngwanase saw his opportunity of extending his authority to the areas by creating closer relationship with the indunas who more distant relatives to Tembe families. It has been customary in Africa for indunas and sub-chiefs who were distance relatives of the ruling chief to hand over land to their closest relatives.²² Ngwanases found it easy to establish a close relationships with indunas who were his relatives in order to extend his authority across this region, and thereby, outplay Makhuzas. Ngwanase arranged for his sister to marry Mabile Mdlesthe who was living in the areas around Lake Sibaya as an induna under the leadership of Makhuzas. There are two reasons which made Ngwanase arrive to this decision. By having his sister marry Mdlesthe, he established a good relationship with the neighboring clans in an area he had just arrived to. More importantly, he knew that by having his sister marry Mdlesthe, that area was going to fall under his authority in the future. The son born from his sister would be the successor of Mdlesthe. Once his nephew was an induna, the Mdlesthe region that was traditionally under Makhuzas was now going to fall under Ngwanase's authority.²³ There are many occasions where Ngwanase used marriage arrangements in creating a relationship with people who held

21 Isabel Hofmeyer's text which discusses African boundaries in an African perspective.

22 Liesegang in his article, 'Aspects of Gaza Nguni history' observed that chief Mahazule Mabaya resisted when Ngungunyane of Gaza attempted to strip his power in 1894.

23 Interview with Walter Tembe, who complain to Mdlesthe clan that they are in power because they were given such position by Makhuzas, now why are they paying allegiance to Ngwanase.

power in various regions of Maputaland. Prozesky who worked in Maputaland during the 1920's, wrote that she met a man at Mloli area who was made an induna by Ngwanase because he was married to his sister.²⁴ Gradually, Ngwanase became a recognized chief in Maputaland. By extending loyalty to him through traditional ways, Ngwanase's authority grew across areas originally ruled by Makhuzi. Thus, today it becomes difficult for historians to trace Makhuzi family's claim. Prozesky observed that by 1925 Threlfall school children were singing songs about Ngwanase as their great king. The first verse goes:

*Ses' fikile Ngwanas' Ngwanas' Ngwanase
Ses' fikile ngwanas', Mkhulu wetu!*

*Sit bayete! Umkulu wetu!
Sesi lapha Ngwana! Umkulu wetu!*

*"Amehlo ayajabula, jabula, jabula!
Amehlo ayajabula, ukubona wena!"²⁵*

This can be closely translated as saying:

"We have arrived Ngwanas' Ngwanas, Ngwanas
We have arrived ngwanas! Our father great

We say bayet! Our father great!
Here we are Ngwanas'! Our father great!

Our eyes are glad, are glad
Our eyes are glad to behold you

Coincidentally while Ngwanase was extending his rule across Maputaland, the British

²⁴ Henchmen Prozesky was a daughter of Rev. August Prozesky, a German missionary who sailed for South Africa in 1863. He started his missionary work in Drankesrbg and later work in Northern Natal. Many of his children followed in his steps. Thus Henchmen was appointed to work in Kosi Bay in Threlfall Mission Church which was established by Rev. Ernest Carr. When she was performing her missionary work she met chief Ngwanase.

²⁵ Miller Papers, Killie Campbell Manuscript 2309, Von Wissel, Louis Charles Reminiscence of trading

government began to consolidate their own authority in Maputaland. At this time in 1893, British colonial administrative policy changed, as a result of the simultaneous retirement of Orsborn, Resident Commissioner, and Sir Charles Mitchell, Governor of Natal, and the death of Shepstone. Marshall Clarke was appointed as Resident Commissioner of Zululand.²⁶ Three years later, Ngwanase requested to be allocated to British territory after his clash with the Portuguese colonial government. Clarke criticized the Shepstonian system of administration which he thought it was sparking opposition to the hereditary chiefs. It will be recalled that Shepstone's policy was looking at gradual elimination of hereditary chiefs, and this policy encouraged the fragmentation of chiefdoms by removing all the dissatisfied indunas and petty chiefs from the hereditary chiefs and amalgamate them with administrative chiefs.²⁷ According to Clarke the system was hindering the development of natives institutions, and it reduced the advantages to be desired from tribal institutions. As a result, an excessive number of chiefs and petty chiefs created land disputes and faction fights.²⁸

Clarke policy was more about maintaining the traditions of Zulu law and the tribal structures compared to Shepstone's policy of gradual elimination. This newly appointed commissioner thought that his policy would provide some uniformity in the

days in northern Zululand 1895-1919. See also P. Warhurst, 'Britain and the Partition of Maputo', p28.

²⁶ The new Governor, was Sir Walter Hely Hutchinson assuming office on the 19th May, 1893 and Clarke as Resident Commissioner of Zululand assumed office on August, 1893

²⁷ Annals of Natal, (London, 1938) p. 237 This was the case for example, in Maputaland, when Saunders was commissioned to demarcate the Zululand northern boundaries in 1889. After the negotiation between the Thonga chief and British government failed to bring Maputaland under the British rule, chiefs Sibonda, Manaba, Fokothi, Mjindi who were dissatisfied with Tembe, were removed off the Tembe chiefdom and thereby fall under Zululand which was recently annexed to the British government.

²⁸ Ruth Edgecombe, "Sir Marshall Clarke and the Abortive Attempt to 'Basutolandise' Zululand: 1893-7."

administration of native law. When Ngwanase arrived in British Maputaland, the colonial policy had a tendency of strengthening the traditional systems as oppose to the Shepstonian policy. In this context, Ngwanase's position strengthened as it will be shown below. The interest of the British colonial government can be traced to 1887 when they tried to development ties to the Tembe chiefdom with Ngwanase's mother, Queen Zimibili. Ngwanase's family's relationship began with the British government in 1887. A treaty was signed between Queen Zambili and the British government; however, this tie ended after the Queen rejected a proposed protectorate from the British government. Therefore, Ngwanase's submission of his land to British government meant a positive development for the British government who had long been interested in this region to seal-off other colonial powers. However, the British government faced serious problems if they were going to administer this region; there were no roads in Maputaland, and the country was home to many streams and swamps which are the ideal living quarters of mosquitoes. These are not just mosquitoes , but mosquitoes that carries malaria. The only transport that could be used were horses and oxen, and these animals were extremely vulnerable to an insect called *nagana* which caused rinderpest.²⁹

White settlers were not prepared to risk their lives in this region.³⁰ The problem for the British was: how do we administer this region? It seems as if Ngwanase became an

²⁹ When Saunders visited maputaland for the first time in 1887 he described how difficult it was to get to this area. One of his Zulu men who accompanied him died in this trip from malarial infection. Another serious difficulties was transportation of goods to this area. The only goods could get to maputaland was through boat, a scheme that was started by Messrs. Wissel and Finnetti, storekeepers, who were authorised to trade in this region. This means that the goods be carried via delagoa bay and then through Pongola river to maputaland. Thus the material that constructed the Indumu police Camp was carried by these traders.

³⁰ Earlier attempts by missionaries did not succeed as malaria was a threat in this region.

answer to their question. He represented the colonial presence in this region. His importance cannot be underestimated especially since by Ngwanase agreed to add a big piece of land to the British territory without resistance. Ngwanase collected taxes for the British, and he was an eye for this government in terms of looking at encroachment of the Portuguese government in British territory where no officers were present. Colonial officers were paid additional allowances if they agreed to work in Maputaland. Yet, this was expensive for the government who would have been forced to spend money in an area where their presence was only needed for strategic reasons. The importance of Ngwanase to the colonial government was acknowledged by Clarke in a letter he wrote to the Acting Magistrate, Dr Stephens. He warned Stephens, ‘not to harass’ ‘the unfortunate chief’ with unnecessary orders.³¹

Fourteen Natal Policemen were sent by Clarke to protect Ngwanase, after rumors flourished that the Portuguese were claiming taxes from Maputaland in this region.³² Ngwanase understood that the British government needed him more than he needed them. Besides using traditional systems to make himself dominant in Maputaland, Ngwanase recognition by the British government, sent a message to the people in terms of Ngwanase’s position in Maputaland. It was clear to everyone that if he was protected by external power no one could challenge him.³³

A temporary magistracy was established in 1896 and then abolished in 1899, during the

³¹ P. Warhurst, ‘Britain and the Partition of Maputo,’ p26

³² Confidential papers, 8450/1896.

re-adjustment of the boundaries north of Mkuze River. It was agreed upon by the British officers that the only areas that would be retained by their government was the regions that could be accessible by car. Thus, due to having no roads in Maputaland, this magistracy was abolished by the British colonial government. Ingwavuma magistracy became responsible for the administration of Maputaland even though it was eighty miles away from the Tembe chiefdom. This made things difficult for colonial government officials to communicate with Manguzi Police Camp which was the only sign of colonial presence in this region. The Magistrate of Ingwavuma suggested a re-establishment of Maputa magistracy as he was failing to be in full contact with the people in Maputaland. He also complain that the people who were arrested by the Manguzi police stay long time in custody before being brought to trial.³⁴

In 1910, Rev. C. E. Den, of the Wesleyan mission wrote a letter to the District Native Commissioner at Eshowe complaining about the difficulty of getting the Christian girls to travel to Ingwavuma in order to secure marriage certificates. He said they are forced to enter a sinful marriage. Den suggested that the Police be authorized with powers of granting marriage certificates.³⁵ In this police camp there was two white policemen which were assigned many administrative tasks. Solomon Tembe recalled that the issuing of passes was carried by Police Authorities.³⁶ However, this Police Out Station was closed following the outbreak of the First World War. At that time, duties of passes were

³³Solomon Tembe mentioned that everyone was afraid of Makhuza, no one could oppose him.

³⁴SNA, R771/1909

³⁵SNA 2122/1910

³⁶ Interview with Solomon Tembe, February 2000.

assigned to individuals and storekeepers.³⁷ Such small number of officers could not perform their duties without the assistance of Ngwanase.

One of the biggest problems for the colonial government was that they didn't know where Ngwanase was staying because this chief chose to establish his palace deep in the forest. When he was called to attend meetings with the British authorities, Ngwanase did not attend, and instead he sent his messengers to tell these government officials that he was sick. Understanding that the government depended on him, Ngwanase began to manipulate the system. He began to request favors from the government which no chief in Zululand would have thought about negotiating with the British. From 1897 Ngwanase was paid 100 pounds per year which far exceeding in comparison to other chiefs in Zululand who were earning only 6 to 40 pounds per year.³⁸ However, Ngwanase continued to request for increase on this stipend. In 1912 Ngwanase met the Acting Chief Native Commissioner of Natal, Shepstone, at Ingwavuma Magistracy and told him that he was in a state of distress because he had asked for an increase of 100 pounds from any colonial official he met.³⁹ In 1922 he repeated the same request this time saying that he desired an increase because 100 pounds was not sufficient because he has a large family and he was still going to pay the government taxes. He also warn the government that on

³⁷ Mr B. C. Harrison who owned a shop in Manguzi was hired to perform the issuing of passes from 1914 up to 1916 when Coporal Bowles was appointed as a pass officer as the Outstation was re-opened in 1916. See C.N.C. 2455/1918.

³⁸ D. Welsh. *The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910*. Cape Town and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. According to D. Welsh the salary of the recognised chiefs in 1893 varied from 6 to 30 pounds annually, depending on the size of the tribe.

³⁹ C.N.C. 1021/1912.

the following year he was going to pay less taxes if he didn't get his increase salary.⁴⁰ Although he was not given an increment until 1927 the correspondence between the colonial officers suggests that the colonial officials in Natal and Zululand were sympathetic to Ngwanase's request. If it was not for the Secretary of Native Affairs in Pretoria who against the idea of increment, Ngwanase would have gotten his increase as early as 1912.

C.A. Wheelwright, the Chief Native Commissioner of Natal, wrote to the secretary of Native Affairs in Pretoria that he was considering that Ngwanase's salary was inadequate. He propose that it should be increased to 200 pounds per annum. His reason was that Ngwanase was responsible for bringing a large 'slice' of territory under the British rule in 1897. Wheelwright also thought that an increase would act as an incentive to Ngwanase who would assist the government by collecting more tax as the people of Maputaland were in heavy arrears with their taxes.⁴¹

Such division among colonial officials on the issue of Ngwanase's increment is another interesting issue. Why would the officials from Natal sympathize with Ngwanase? The answer lies on what was the importance of Maputaland to Natal Colony at this time. Before 1910 the imperialistic interest dominated the British colonial policy in this region, who wanted to protect their areas from influence of the Portuguese, Germans and Afrikaners. In post-1910, the British imperial interest became secondary. The Union of

⁴⁰ C.N.C. 3226/22 housed at Ulundi Archives.

⁴¹ Ibid. From the letters written by Wheelwright to the secretary on native affairs in Pretoria, in 28/10/1925,

South Africa had its own interest. One of the major theme which historians have tended to emphasize in this government is the 1913 Land Act. However, since Maputaland was not seen as a place for white settlement, this region only became an area for labour reserve. Labour historians argued that this was at time when there was a marriage between gold and mining. Mining interest began to dictate the British colonial policy. While Ngwanase 's role was to collect tax and help in administration of Maputaland in the period before 1910, in post 1910 Ngwanase remain important because of his major role of mobilizing the labour. Harries argued that the alliance between chiefs and employers allowed the chiefs to repatriate labour and at the same time prevent them from permanent emigration of their followers. In this system the chief will not only benefit from the money paid by recruiters, but also tax the returning migrants. Many old people in Maputaland recall that chief Ngwanase demanded two rands from each man returning from work.⁴² This system of taxation was started by Ngwanase's father in the early 1880s.⁴³ A letter written by the Magistrate of Ingwavuma requesting an establishment of pass office at Indumu area in 1918 summarized the importance of Maputaland as a labour reserve.

There are many Portuguese East Africa natives living in the border who prefer to work on the coast farms. In ordinary course these natives are required to come up to the count for identification and passes, which as you are aware takes them a good deal out of their way. It occurred to me that a pass office might be conveniently be established at the police camp at Ndumu as in the same case of Maputa...⁴⁴

and 20/9/1927.

⁴² Interview with Solomon Tembe, February 2000 and Nkaphani Ngubane in August 1999.

⁴³ P. Harries, 'Migrants and Marriage: The role of Chiefs and Elders in migrant labour movements from Pre-colonial Southern Mozambique to South Africa'. A paper given in Centre for African Studies, UCT, May 1979. P11

⁴⁴ C.N.C. 2455/1918

Ngwanase was increasingly becoming important for Natal settlers thus it was important for Wheelwright to try as soon as possible to meet Ngwanase's needs. In a letter he wrote to the Secretary of native affairs in Pretoria recommending the increase of Ngwanase's salary, he ended this letter by calling this request as an urgent matter:

I trust therefore that the department will now be able to authorize an increase of stipend to 200 pounds p/year as recommended by me. I propose visiting Zululand this month and expect to be at Ingwavuma on the 1st proximo and will see Chief Ngwanase as day or later. The chief invariably brings up this question whenever he sees me and I shall be glad therefore if the matter may be treated as urgent and a telegraphic reply sent in order that I may be able to make a definite communication to him at the forthcoming interview.⁴⁵

What chief's needs in the history was treated as urgent as Ngwanase's? If Ngwanase had so much power who would challenge him in his region? Even Makhuzha had no chance. Even if he could challenge, he was going to be easily crushed by Ngwanase whose power was not only recognized by the people but by government.

In situation such as this, the government could turn a 'blind eye' on Ngwanase even if he was breaking the law. Ngwanase was guilty in terms of British law, but he no one would punish him as he was becoming so special for the government. Even when the magistrate of Ingwavuma complain that Ngwanase disrespect him, he did not attend the meetings. He never went to Ingwavuma like other chiefs, and the officials never took any steps against him. Ngwanase's corruption was known by the government. Many chiefs who

were not following the law were deposed in Zululand. Despite many warnings given to Ngwanase on his disrespect of the government's law Ngwanase continued to break the law by removing people from his wards. According to the law the chief did not have power to remove people from the wards without the prior arrangements or with an order of the Supreme Chief. Chiefs could not depose any indunas from his position without approval from the Supreme Chief. In 1924 Ngwanase ordered that Mebelendlala Mathenjwa be removed from his region. In 1926 he remove Mhlumbuza Tembe without any approval of the government .⁴⁶ These people were accused of undermining the king by reporting cases to the government's courts. Ngwanase complain about this to the Chief Native officials that he was against appeals made by people to the high court. He objected that his that his people appeal against his decision to a higher courts saying that he holds his position not only by virtue of his birth, but by virtue of appointment by the government.

Wheelwright failed to punish Ngwanase. His letter to the magistrate of Ingwavuma suggested that he was tired of Ngwanase's misconduct. Thus he wrote:

.....Knowing so well Ngwanase's history, as I do, and knowing also that the man's physical and mental condition has been undermined by fever and ubusulu and by his general mode of living. I have naturally taken these factors into consideration in relation to his conduct in regard to these administrative matters and in regard to the punishment to be meted out to him for what he has done....
Because of these considerations, I will not take such drastic action against him on this occasion as his conduct really merits; and have decided that in these circumstances a

⁴⁵ C.N.C. 3226/1922

⁴⁶ Loose papers of C.N.C. 2/21/2/1/3 in Ulundi Archives

stern reprimand must suffice punishment....⁴⁷

The letter shows that even if the evidence was there to show that Ngwanase was guilty, the government failed to fine or punish him. It is interesting to see that it is the colonial officials who recorded that Ngwanase did not want to come under the administration. Yet there was nothing they could do. They needed the man. It was beyond their power to bring Ngwanase under their control.

In the meeting with the Chief native Commissioner, Ngwanase protests against colonial laws. He also protested against dog taxes, and he stated that his people would not have money to pay for both hut and for dog taxes. This statement followed people's appeals against his decision of force removals from his area without reporting it to the magistrate.⁴⁸

Despite all Ngwanase activities which was against the British law, the government continued to give him favours that no other chiefs could receive. In 1910 Ngwanase was given a permit to possess a firearm which was an issue the colonial government was reluctant to give to Africans especially after the Anglo-Zulu war and Bambatha Rebellion.⁴⁹ From 1912 to 1919 Ngwanase send many application requesting many things from the government. He asked permission to shoot animals in his area who were causing damage in his field. Ngwanase was allowed on the condition that he would bring the

⁴⁷ C.N.C 3226/22

⁴⁸ Mtshokobezi Mdhletshe and Mhlumbuluza were evacuated because they appeal against Ngwanase's decision. Mstshokobezi reported at Ingwavuma that in Ngwanase's area some people possessed the

skins to them every time he submitted the taxes. These skins were the property of the administration and was given to the Game Conservator in Zululand. In the same year he applied for a loan of three bulls which he said he wanted to improve the breed of his stock. He agreed to return the bulls once sufficient breeding was taken place. Colonial officials were impressed about Ngwanase thinking because it was believed that it was an indication of improvement and such developments was going to enhanced the commercial value. The bulls were going to transported from Ixopo to Maputaland. Transportation was difficult at this time and thus one can understand that Ngwanase was so specially to the officials that they would burden themselves about this task one. Reasons for the special favours was justified by Wheelwright in a letter written to the Provincial Secretary:

I should mention that prior to the annexation of Maputaland in 1895, Ngwanase was an independent chief, exercising absolute authority over this area and that of Maputaland game to be incorporated with natal, not by conquest, but at the request of the chief who wished to come under the protection of the British Government. In his former independent state he was, of course, subject to no restriction. Having regard to this, and the circumstances under which his territory became part of Zululand, it would I consider, be gracious act on the part of the Administrator to allow permit as asked by the chief.⁵⁰

There is no doubt that colonial officials were aware of their weak colonial set up in this region. Without Ngwanase they would not administrate Maputaland. Ngwanase was aware of such weaknesses. He even understood how to play rivals between Portuguese

unlicensed firearms which they use to kill the hippos.

⁴⁹ SNA, R637/1912

and British government. Every time when he request something from the British government he started by stating that he received invitation from the Portuguese government to return to their territory with. his country and his people. It might have not put any pressure to the British colonial officials, but it shows that Ngwanase understood its rivalry with the Portuguese government.

When Ngwanase was requesting five stores to be established in his area he mentioned that such stores would helpful to the government because his people would stop going to the Portuguese territory where they could get firearms and liquor. This was a thoughtful statement, if one recalls that firearms and liquor imported from Portuguese was uncontrollable in this area. During the Anglo-Zulu War, the Portuguese government was warned not to sell firearms to African people, however, it was difficult to control that because the Portuguese were making by selling these weapons. Thus Ngwanase would manipulate that opportunity and requested anything he needed from the government. At some stage Wheelwright was aware of how Ngwanase used them, thus he warned him not to think that the government was paying tributes by giving him all theses favours, but the truth is that no one could tell the difference.

This paper does not claim that the colonial state did not dictate to the African chiefs in the colonial period. The state had the power to appoint and depose chiefs; however, in areas where their presence was weak, such as in Maputaland, the British colonial's power was limited. Henceforth, their presence was only known by one police camp that

⁵⁰ C.N.C. 1676/1917

contained only three policemen. These policemen could not perform all the administrative duties needed, and thus they depended on local power to assist the government. In that context, Ngwanase saw his opportunity to manipulate the system for his own advantage. He was in control of every thing. The colonial state was forced into a position to handle him with care and meet all his needs. In this situation, Ngwanase was capable of demonstrating courage and strength to negotiate his salary. Ngwanase's domination was not by an accident; it was an historical process which saw the inequalities and the weakness of the time. Nothing could have been done by Makhuza to regain his control over Maputaland. After Ngwanase's death, his dominance was so strong that an opportunity was opened for his family, the Tembe of Ngwanase, to continue their domination in this region.

