

**The Kingdom  
of Swaziland:  
Studies in Political History**

*D. HUGH GILLIS*

**GREENWOOD PRESS**

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*To Celia, who shared the work  
and kept me going on*



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# Preface

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This book examines aspects of the political history of Swaziland and covers the period up to 1921 when the late Sobhuza II assumed the kingship.

At the commencement of my research, the most reliable accounts on the background of the Swazi were by two anthropologists, Hilda Kuper and Brian Marwick, supplemented by a general history prepared by J. S. M. Matsebula. Then Philip Bonner's investigations into nineteenth-century Swazi history were published—important studies by a southern Africa-based historian. Since then a number of specialized and unpublished studies have thrown additional light on facets of the kingdom's development. Still, by comparison with other regions of Africa, explorations into the history of the Swazi kingdom are relatively scarce.

Apart from the first two chapters, this work is derived almost exclusively from a reading of official documents and other accounts contemporary with the period examined. The resources of the Public Record Office in London and the Swaziland National Archives have been used extensively and have been augmented by those of other institutions that possess relevant information.

During the preparation of this work, I have become indebted to many persons, especially in Swaziland. My former colleague, Mveli Elliott Gindza, helped to arrange my visits to the Kingdom since 1980. Others who have contributed in different ways include Dominic Mngomezulu, who was my research assistant for a time; R. Sicheme Mamba, who read the first few chapters; former associates in the Ministry of Education; district officers from rural ministries whose monthly meetings I attended for four years; and Peace Corps and World University Service of Canada volunteers at the Rural Education Centres who, along with local participants, helped

me to appreciate the remarkable strengths of rural life in Swaziland. I am grateful also to Fr. James Somers, for providing materials, and to P. R. Forsyth-Thompson, for assisting with accommodation.

Archival and library staffs have always been helpful and cooperative. I refer particularly to those at my major centers of research: the Swaziland National Archives at Lobamba and the National University of Swaziland in Kwaluseni; the State Library at Pretoria and the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg; and the Public Record Office and British Library in London. Most of the writing was done at the archives in Lobamba.

The book was undertaken after my having spent six years working with the rural populace of the kingdom under programs initiated by the Canadian International Development Agency and the World Bank. Preliminary investigations were supported by grants from the Social Science Research Council of Canada and Saint Mary's University in Halifax; but subsequent research and writing, over a ten-year period, were carried out on my own.

# Chronology

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Sixteenth to eighteenth centuries	Migrations southward
Seventeenth century	Probes toward Lubombo and Pongola
Mid-eighteenth century	Ngwane settlement at Shiselweni
Early nineteenth century	Sobhuza I travels north
Mid-nineteenth century	Mswati II consolidates kingdom
1840s	Cape Dutch <i>trekboers</i> contact Swazi
1844–45	British missionaries enter kingdom
1846 and 1855	Alleged land sales to Dutch republics
1855–65	Mswati II's excursions north-northeast
1860	Boers form South African Republic; first land concession granted
1865	Death of Mswati II
1866	Boers beacon western boundary
1869	Portugal-Republic treaty
1875	Mbandzeni installed as king; Rudolph treaty; MacMahon arbitration

- 1876 Swazi assist Boers against Pedi
- 1877 Transvaal annexed by Britain
- 1878 Swazi support British against Pedi
- 1879 Western boundary delineated; gold discovered in northern Swaziland
- 1880–90 The concessions scramble
- 1881 Pretoria Convention: Transvaal reverts to Boer control; boundaries confirmed
- 1884 London Convention
- 1887 Offy Shepstone named king's agent
- 1888 "White committee" given charter by king
- 1889 Swazi claim to eastern territory rejected; death of Mbandzeni; regency takes over; de Winton-Joubert commission
- 1890 Government Committee established
- 1893 Colesburg Convention endorses Swaziland's transfer to Republic
- 1893–94 Volksrust Convention withdraws organic proclamation
- 1894 Bhunu assumes kingship
- 1895–99 Boer administration; Krogh named commissioner
- 1898 Hut tax introduced; Bhunu accused in assassination
- 1899 Bhunu's death; Labotsibeni becomes queen-regent
- 1899–1902 Boers and British at war
- 1902 Vereeniging peace agreement; Milner appointed to South Africa; Enraght-Moony to oversee kingdom
- 1903 Rubie report; order-in-council
- 1903–6 Inter-Colonial Native Affairs Commission
- 1903–15 East coast fever plagues cattle herds
- 1904 Milner's proclamation regarding administration and concessions; hut tax reimposed
- 1904–8 Smuts concessions commission
- 1905 King's private revenue concession canceled; Milner succeeded by Selborne
- 1906 Swaziland placed under High Commission; Coryndon named resident commissioner
- 1907 Partition proclamation; Selborne reorganizes administration; Swazi deputation to London
- 1908 "Closer union" recommended for southern Africa
- 1909–14 Swazi moved to reserves; ask for additional land; national funds started

- 1910 Union of South Africa established
- 1911 Swazi ask for title deeds to reserves
- 1912 European landowners given freehold title
- 1913 Swazi seek redress
- 1914 Queen-regent purchases land from private owners
- 1914–15 Illness and death of Malunge
- 1914–18 World War I
- 1915 Resettlement on reserves completed
- 1916 Sobhuza and companions sent away for schooling
- 1917 Swazi labor contingent in France; Honey replaces Coryndon
- 1918 Swazi oppose transfer of kingdom to Union government; petition of grievances presented
- 1919 Farmers' Association presses for reforms
- 1921 European Advisory Council elected; Sobhuza II installed as king; regency ends





# Introduction

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When the king of Swaziland, Sobhuza II, died in August 1983, *The Times* of London carried a brief news dispatch stating that feudalism and polygamy were residual characteristics of the kingdom's social fabric under the late monarch. While later reports modified that impression, it is likely that an image of a remote, primitive society was not far removed from perceptions held by those unfamiliar with the kingdom and its history. That, partly, is the justification for this book: an account, however incomplete, of factors that contributed to the distinctive character of the present-day kingdom. Swaziland's evolution toward a modern state was necessarily cautious, harried by forces of commanding influence from within and outside its boundaries and adhering, with dogged persistence, to traditional customs and institutions while not eschewing the advantages that might wait upon social and political renovation.

Swaziland was the last of Britain's territorial possessions in Africa to be granted independence. Its transition from protectorate status to self-government, although delayed, was not otherwise remarkable. The British government, in the wake of two world wars, was preoccupied by demands for self-rule from its major satellites in Asia and Africa; and in any case, the Swazi kingdom had no significant role in the Commonwealth and appeared to be unsettled by emerging political factions and workers' unrest. After 1968, the year when political independence was restored, differing views among Swazi as to the future direction of the nation, and how to achieve a balanced division of powers in a new political system, became more sharply defined. There ensued a generally peaceable struggle between traditionalists and modernists that led ultimately to doing away with Britain's parliamentary legacy in favor of a process considered by its advocates

to be more in keeping with traditional forms and practices. Thus, customary usages, inherent in Swazi culture, were moved out from the shadows to be given again a primary role in the life of the kingdom. This is not to say that anything resembling revolutionary change took place. The Swazi are conservative, and what emerged was an understated compromise. The apparatus of law and government handed down from the Boers and the British remained virtually intact. But parallel structures, perhaps more symbolic than effectual, were restored or renewed to take on what in the event became subsidiary roles.

The most significant change took place in the electoral process. There, in what we tend to look upon as the heartbeat of democratic government, political parties were eliminated and open criticism discouraged, on the grounds that postcolonial Africa, as well as local experience, had already demonstrated the weakness of confrontational politics in a newly independent state. They were replaced by a less divisive method of voting, not inhibited by party ties or campaigning, to be conducted by *tinkhundla*, regional councils said to be modeled on royal villages set up by Mswati II during his nineteenth-century kingship. Whether the new arrangements, set in a mold with some constitutional adjustments, are truly representative of the popular will cannot be said with confidence. What is undeniable is that the balance in political influence has shifted from contending aspirants for office toward the monarchy. This, apologists will claim, keeps the kingdom in the mainstream of Swazi tradition.

Yet it is arguable that, historically, Swazi tradition reflects a more open polity than that introduced during the 1960s. While acknowledging King Sobhuza II's sincerity in seeking solutions that would prevent gridlock, his efforts to try to harmonize two separate political cultures, European and Swazi, leaving each of them with a sufficient measure of freedom for growth, posed challenges that clearly had not been foreseen. There were few precedents for guidance. The history of Swaziland since the granting of a self-governing charter to European settlers in the late 1880s provides little evidence of sharing powers or trying to blend political institutions. When administrative authority was transferred to the government of the South African Republic a decade later, the prospect of rationalizing two distinct political systems no longer had relevance. The policy subsequently followed by the British government, superimposing its own Westminster frame on a people who had had no real experience of it except through external control, did not differ much in Swaziland from what was happening elsewhere in Africa with mixed results.

It may not be surprising, then, that the outcome of King Sobhuza's undertaking to revamp the politics and government of Swaziland, along lines that differed from the postcolonial norm, was problematic. From the beginning, it seems to have been a vision more than a coherent thought-out plan—but a resolve for which the king took prime responsibility. Con-

verting the vision into actual reforms turned out to be intermittent and prolonged—so much so that twenty years later, at the king's demise, the *tinkhundla* system was not yet secure or well communicated throughout the country. In essence, the new procedures appear to have gained acceptance on the king's prestige: Sobhuza was by then a legendary figure—strong, paternal, and trusted by the people. His successor, the youth Mswati III, was relatively unknown and was faced at once by a volatile situation at the capitals: a disruptive struggle for power not unlike earlier incidents in the kingdom's history during transitions in kingship. Constitutional processes gave way to an oligarchic establishment detached from tradition, a reality that, to an external observer, strayed outside the vision of the late king and put at risk credible and enduring strands from the kingdom's past.

Three distinguishable tendencies can be observed in an appraisal of Swaziland's political history: integration, the preservation of traditional culture, and sovereignty. All three have played a role in forming a political stance that is particularly Swazi—one that, at times, appears to be out of place in a contemporary development context and yet has demonstrated remarkable flexibility in responding to the challenges of the day. These tendencies are not new; they are well rooted in Swazi history.

From the earliest stages of Nguni migrations away from the Maputo river areas down toward the Pongola flats, to the settlement (mid-1700s) made eventually in what is now southern Swaziland, the eMbo-Nguni, or Swazi, were basically nomadic, with no defined boundaries or political ties. A half century of expansion and consolidation (1815–65) led by two formidable chiefs, Sobhuza I and Mswati II, induced friendships and created enmities among clans and chiefdoms affected by their sorties north; and this, in turn, led to alliances and new relationships. In consequence, what began as probing excursions by a minor branch of the Nguni generated, through time, a singular identity. It comprised elements from a variety of Bantu-speaking peoples whose ancestors had immigrated to southern Africa from different regions further north. But even though ethnic diversity has had an important influence in shaping Swazi nationality, the matrix of the nation is to be found in the small settlement of hunters, pastoralists, and warriors established at Shiselweni (1760s).

Early attempts at integration were facilitated by the fact that most of those who came under the sway of the settlement shared a similar background. But the encounters were never easy nor free from danger. The Ngwane-Swazi had not the strength to impose their will as they moved north, and their generally temperate bearing was dictated as much by circumstances as by the capacity of their leaders. During the chieftainship of Sobhuza I and the regency that followed (1815–40), they adhered to a conciliatory course, coexisting where possible with those with whom they

came in contact thus setting the stage for eventual assimilation. Afterward, the militant expeditions of Mswati II had the effect of consolidating unity. Although patently successful in breaking down resistance and organizing allegiances, however, Mswati's regime failed to grasp the threat posed to their way of life by the entry of the Europeans into the Swazi heartland (mid-nineteenth century).

The Boer and British newcomers arrived with confident values and an expansive political outlook that, in the long run, succeeded in subverting the kingdom's independence and reducing traditional governing procedures to powerless rituals. That development reached a climax during Mbandzeni's kingship (1875–89): through debilitating concessions, border limitations, and the alienation of control to the two external governments, Pretoria and London. Thenceforward, Swazi political institutions, not only weakened but virtually ignored, ceased to be a significant factor in the management of the kingdom. Inevitably, from the 1880s onward, there was a decline in the Swazi nation's confidence. For although the Boers and British tended to follow separate paths within the kingdom, they shared a common conviction: Neither was prepared to accept as meaningful the culture of an indigenous society or to seek an accommodation with it. This may explain the protective stance taken during Labotsibeni's long tenure (1875–1921) as queen-mother and queen-regent. Faced with the overriding power of the Europeans, and their willingness to use it, the Swazi leadership responded by turning inward; seeking solace and reassurance in the laws and customs of their ancestors; and defending the legitimacy of traditional institutions.

As is commonly the case in southern Africa, indigenous culture and tradition are linked inseparably in Swaziland. Swazi law and custom do not differ appreciably from those of other groups that share a Bantu-language heritage. Variations that do exist can be attributed, in part at least, to differences in environment and experience. Zulu warriors, for example, still present a disciplined militancy harking back to the Zulu nation's years of conquest. And even though Mswati II's successful war machine was modeled on the organization of the Zulu regiments, its modern counterpart in Swaziland pales by comparison. The Basotho, secure in the fastness of their mountain villages, have tried to maintain, in difficult circumstances, the relevancy of the village *pitso*—their traditional medium for obtaining the people's assent in decision making. But the *libandla*, or citizens' council of the Swazi, although it is said to have had its origin in Sotho political practice, has never achieved the independence or influence of the *pitso*. So also do centrist tendencies in Swazi government, evident since Tsandzile's regency, owe something to the example of the Ndwandwe, who had a close connection with the Swazi during the latter's sojourn south of the Pongola river and afterward at Shiselweni. And the age-old *ncwala* ceremony, at

one time celebrated by the Zulu and other Nguni groups but now more or less discarded, has retained its place in Swazi tradition as the central ceremonial exercise in the kingdom.

It is probable, indeed, that the Swazi, through their intermixing with other African ethnicities, developed a certain receptiveness in their response to extraneous ideas and ways of living. This is not to say that Swazi culture consists of an amalgam of borrowings from other ethnic groups. Its core identity is to be found, rather, in Bantu belief, legend, and mythology: the subjective world of faith healers, psychic powers, and communion with the ancestors. These are elements that throughout the ages have been accepted as constant in Swazi tradition. They impinge directly on the political process, giving an other-world dimension to the craft of governance—primarily through the queen-mother as spiritual head of the nation and co-ruler or, less tangibly, through her influence on the king's mandate, since he is the ultimate arbiter of the common good.

Land, cattle, and the homestead—these are the mainstays of material aspects of traditional living in much of southern Africa and firm up the pillars that support Swazi law and custom. The chieftdom has served as the regulating agency, at least from the beginning of organized settlement and probably longer. Although recent trends stemming from advances in Westernization and changes in political control, adding to the abatement of powers already imposed during the colonial period, have tended to lower its status and authority, the chieftdom still stands as a defining obligation to most Swazis.

The Europeans, by contrast, brought to the kingdom other perceptions underwritten by a body of laws and customs deriving from their own experience—and the two did not match. Thus, the conflict over concessions and land partition that marred relations between the Swazi and the British for more than fifty years was grounded in fundamental cultural differences, even more than from the tawdry practices that ran through the concessions transactions. To the Swazi, both the concession claims and the partition of the kingdom into separate European areas and Swazi reserves represented a violation of their way of life—an affront to their sensibility of tradition that justified the long but unavailing struggle to have the impositions remitted.

Aside from the Europeans, to whom a suspicion of “going native” was an opprobrium, acculturation was not always a steady progression. The kingdom's expansionist era came to a close with the passing of Mswati II (1865) and with it the import of prisoners taken by his warriors. From then until the turn of the twentieth century, few indigenous Africans from outside came to stay; and there was hardly any longer a question of assimilation. Most arrivals were transient—laborers from neighboring states coming to work in the mines or in the industrial plants but with no prospect of settling down because of the barriers created by concessions and parti-

tion. That situation continued substantially until the 1920s. The British administration did not favor African immigration in principle, but they did open the doors when needed. For instance, as the Swazi school system was expanded, it was staffed mainly by Zulus; so the medium of instruction in the schools was Zulu, not siSwati.

Nevertheless, the Swazi preserved their traditional culture possibly better than any other national group in southern Africa. Part of the reason was their capacity to adapt, blending compatible elements from other cultures into their own. While an astute observer may see traces of differing ethnic origins in individual cases, the population as a whole appears to be remarkably compact. Part of the reason may also be that acculturation has been phased in gradually. And of more than passing importance has been the connection to kingship. Although critics have faulted the late queen-regent Labotsibeni for her apparent intransigence, her single-minded defense of the kingdom's sovereignty ensured that the legacy of culture and tradition would not be destroyed through attrition.

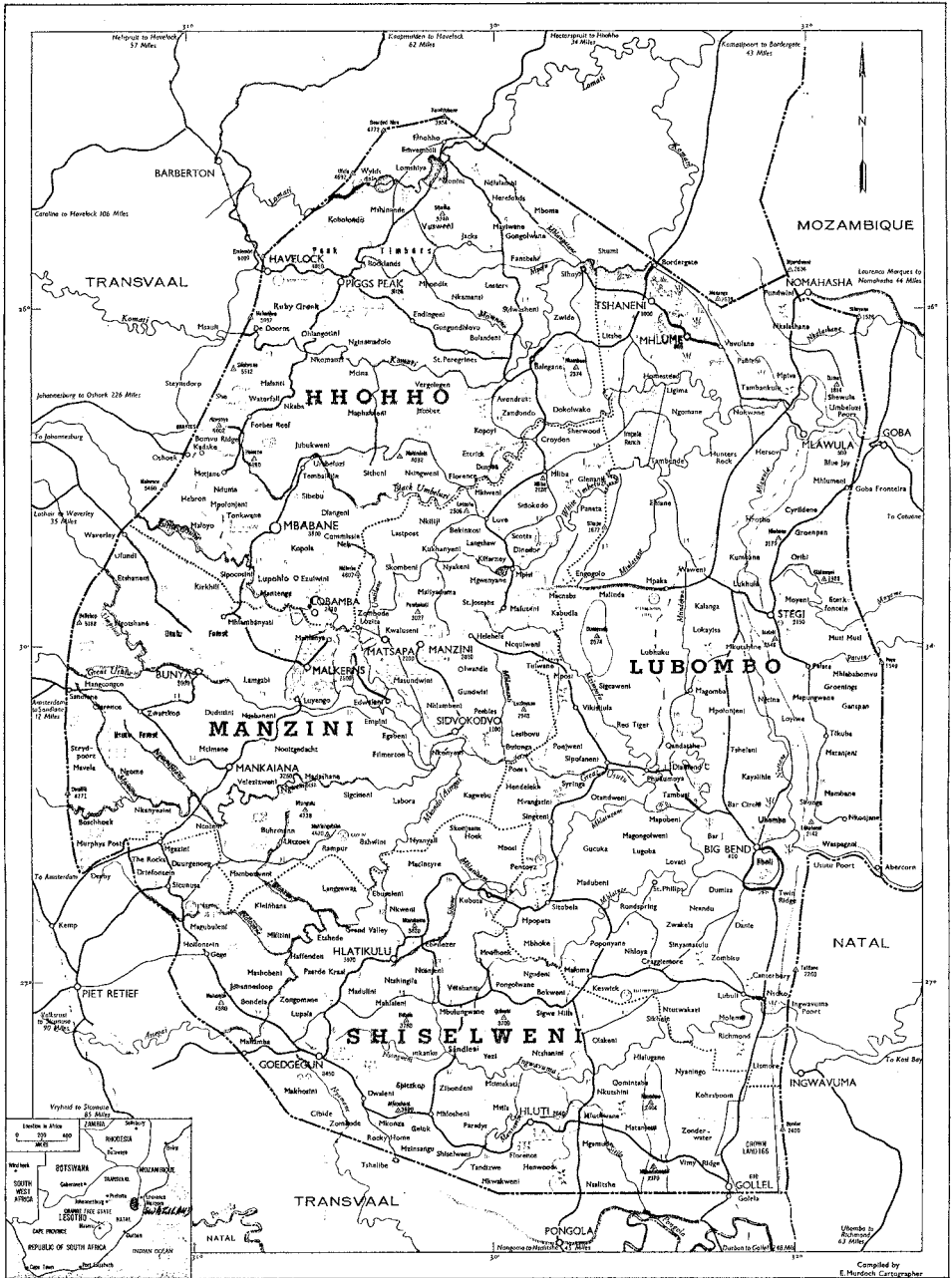
Sovereignty, broadly defined, has been associated in the Swazi mind with kingship. This may well be a modern tendency, dating back to the leadership of Ngwane III and the beginning of Swazi tenure in the present-day kingdom. From what is known of the earlier history of the Nguni, it is doubtful if the acknowledgment of a chief, supported by a claim to a tract of land, was seen to be a necessary equation. But it is reasonable to assume that Sobhuza I, Ngwane's grandson, kept the fidelity of his followers as much by his intrepid travels and territorial outreach as by his role as *ngwenyama*, leader of his people. The military exploits of Mswati II certainly give evidence of sovereignty as a dual principle, although his exercise of the kingship hardly supports the view that in Swazi tradition "a king is ruled by his people." This is not to deny that an abstract concept of the sovereignty of the people, accepted in terms of hierarchy, has been a relevant notion in Swazi history. It goes beyond recognition of the king as head of the nation to include, at appropriate levels, the role and function of the chieftdom, as well as domestic arrangements in clan and family. That concept has been an important principle in Swazi social life, confirming individual rights and responsibilities and providing a measure of accountability at all stages of governance.

The supposition, favored by Swazi historian J. S. M. Matsebula, that kingship embraces rather than coheres with other components in the Swazi system of traditional government does, however, appear to be of recent origin; and if the experience of other African states is apt, it can lead to assertions of authority that deny accountability. To be sure, some of Swaziland's major accomplishments, in reference to rule and acquisition, have been made during the reigns of powerful kings such as Sobhuza and Mswati. Yet during periods of regency, when the reins of power passed

over to the queens, there were no glaring signs of a loss in leadership in spite of the lesser status of a queen as interim head of the kingdom. On the contrary, strong and dedicated queens—Tsandzile and Labotsibeni are notable examples—made a significant contribution to the stability of the kingdom when it was at risk. The former, not a Swazi by birth or upbringing, helped to strengthen and hold together Sobhuza I's far-flung realm after his death; and the latter guided the kingdom through some of its most difficult passages in modern history. It may be ironic, therefore, that the powers accorded by tradition to the *ndlovukazi*, as co-ruler and spiritual leader of the nation, seem no longer to carry much weight except in ritual observances.

Too great an emphasis on kingship may, of course, endanger the essentials of democratic government. Swaziland's history points to the fact that the chief's domain predates that of the king and has been given, in almost all respects, precedence in the daily lives of the people. This manifestation of the popular will has in the past provided the kingdom with safeguards against the excesses of arbitrary rule. Kingship is, in reality, an extended version of chieftaincy, set apart by the assumed possession of rain-making and other secret rites handed down by custom. Yet there has been a tendency in recent years, possibly to give more credibility to the *tinkhundla*, to downplay the importance of the chieftom as an integral part of the governing structure. Labotsibeni as queen-regent looked to the restoration of kingship, with status and authority, as the principal requirement for winning back independence. Sobhuza II took on from there, cautiously attempting to balance tradition against an alien culture of development without impairing the role of kingship as the central core of governance in the kingdom. In the end, despite the blemishes incurred through history, the claims of tradition and sovereignty more often than not have been intertwined. For running through the kingdom's past, as a steady-flowing stream, has been a sense of pride in being Swazi: to be recognized as a sovereign people with a will to be free and independent.





Swaziland

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## *Chapter 1*

# The Ngwane-Swazi

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In the autumn of 1835, a British sea captain-turned-missionary, visiting the royal kraal of the Zulu king Dingane, met six warriors from “a distant tribe” who, until then, had never seen a white person.

They belong to a tribe called Unguani [he wrote] situated, as far as I could collect, to the N.N.E. of Unkuninglove, at a distance of nine days journey. On the fifth day from Unkuninglove, they reach the river Impongolo, and four days more bring them to Elangeni, where their king, Sobuza, resides.<sup>1</sup>

This was by no means the beginning of the recorded history of the kingdom now known as Swaziland. The geological formations of southeastern Africa, of which Swaziland forms a part, have been identified as being among the oldest in the world, and there is evidence of human habitation going back many centuries. Cave paintings, particularly in the mountainous western region, point to an earlier occupation by the San people during a period when their preliterate culture, along with that of the Khokhoi, flourished throughout southern Africa.<sup>2</sup> But neither the development of the modern Swazi state nor the historical roots of the Swazi nation can be traced directly to the existence of earlier civilizations within the confines of what is now the Swazi kingdom. For the Swazi, as a distinct political entity having a common language and a shared perception of customs and institutions, are of relatively recent origin. They date back, in the context of their permanent occupation of part of the territory of present-day Swaziland, no further than the middle years of the eighteenth century.

That is not to say that the Swazi, or the emergence of the Swazi kingdom, is essentially a by-product of modern history. On the contrary, both the

identity of the Swazi and the existence of the kingdom have far deeper roots. They are singularly tied in with the royal household of the Dlamini; and the Dlamini genealogy has been traced, even if vaguely in its beginning stages, as far back as the thirteenth century.<sup>3</sup> So also, the roots of Swazi identity, insofar as they can be established, are to be found among the Nguni peoples who, in their migrations south from the headwaters of the Limpopo river, occupied lands stretching down between the Drakensburg mountains and the Indian Ocean. There, in the latter decades of the sixteenth century, Portuguese sailors shipwrecked off the coast of Mozambique ran into them, claiming that the inland areas, beyond Delagoa Bay, were well populated and that a brisk trade in ivory was being carried on along the coast.

The Nguni migrations were indeed extensive, both in time frame and in locale.<sup>4</sup> They covered a period of at least three centuries, and by 1800, portions of the Nguni had dispersed southerly from Delagoa Bay as far as the sea basin of the Fish river in what is now the Eastern Cape.<sup>5</sup> But sizable numbers stayed behind, establishing settlements in the vicinity of the Maputo river and, through time, spreading from there throughout the sultry plains of southern Mozambique. The precursors of the Swazi, variously referred to as the eMbo-Nguni, emaLangeni, or eMbo-Dlamini, settled east of the river near present-day Maputo. Eventually, they joined the southward trek, passing through the Lubombo escarpment and continuing down toward the Pongola river. For generations afterward, the fortunes of this group ebbed and flowed, but they never moved far from the turbid waters of the Pongola. Some crossed the river, encamping along the southern plains and making friendly contact with another Nguni branch, the Ndwandwe, who had moved further south from the Maputo settlements.

Others, too, had followed the southern route: The Mtetwa went further south, beyond the Ndwandwe, and the Xhosa traveled much further on, passing through the lovely hill country of what was to become KwaZulu-Natal and occupying territory southwest of the Natal river basin. The movement from the Maputo settlements was not only in a southerly direction. A number of clans sought the protection of the Lubombo mountain ranges: the Matsenjwa, Mngomezulu, and Myeni, for example, taking up sites along the foothills of the eastern ranges stretching down from the "big bend" of the Lusutfu river toward the Pongola. Others ventured west across the lowveld plain, forming scattered and isolated patches of habitation, which, in time, were brought into the ambit of the Swazi nation.

Various reasons have been put forward to explain the southward trek of large numbers of the Nguni from the neighborhood of Delagoa Bay. The fact that they were pastoralist, needing access to water and grazing for their cattle, and that the low-lying lands were infested with mosquitoes and tsetse flies may, perhaps, have been paramount concerns. There may also have

been overcrowding on arable land or rivalry over contacts with Portuguese traders, or possibly an avid curiosity persuaded them to see what lay beyond the Lubombo mountain ranges. The most probable explanation is that a combination of factors, progressing over several centuries, tended to influence the outward movements of the Nguni.

In common with other southern Africa ethnic groups, the Nguni were not monolithic; and they undoubtedly intermingled with remaining vestiges of the San peoples, as they did, later on, with various branches of the Sotho. Nor were they unified politically or subject to any clearly recognized central authority. They were broken down, rather, into relatively independent clans and chiefdoms, and of these, the Thonga chieftaincy seems to have gained a measure of notability. To the Thonga, particularly from one of its chiefs, Langa, has been traced the beginnings of the Dlamini succession in Swaziland. But the issue is clouded. Oral traditions within clans that claim to have descended directly from the Maputo settlements differ in some respects.<sup>6</sup>

The generally accepted version, associated with the Dlamini, is that Langa had several sons and that, contrary to custom, he did not favor the eldest to succeed him on his death. His wishes were respected, and the chieftaincy passed on to another son, Hlubi, apparently without opposition from the firstborn or his followers. In due course, the two brothers moved away, going south toward what is now the border town of Lavumisa. From there they proceeded in different directions: one returning northwest toward the Ngwavuma river to found the influential Mamba chiefdom,<sup>7</sup> whereas Hlubi followed the Pongola river to the west, probing far, it is said, into present-day Transvaal. Hlubi is held to be the connecting link between the Maputo river settlements and the modern Swazi kingdom. When his son, identified in Swazi genealogy as Ngwane III, took over the chieftaincy, he established a settlement south of the Pongola and, when forced to abandon it, moved with his followers across the river to occupy a base along its northern banks.

Ngwane III and his followers were, in an important sense, the true founders of modern Swaziland. Even though the settlement near the Pongola was never secure from raiding and had to be abandoned, that expanse of land is still looked upon by Swazis as part of their historic territory. When they were forced to move further north toward the higher ground of the Mhlosheni hills in what is now the Shiselweni district, Ngwane set up a headquarters at Zombodze, visible evidence of a claim to the prerogatives of kingship.<sup>8</sup> And of great significance in Swazi tradition, there, at Zombodze, the *ncwala* was celebrated for the first time on ground that is still within the bounds of the Swazi kingdom. This festive ritual, the ceremony of the first fruits, identified the bounties of nature with the magical powers of rainmaking inherent in Nguni chieftainship.

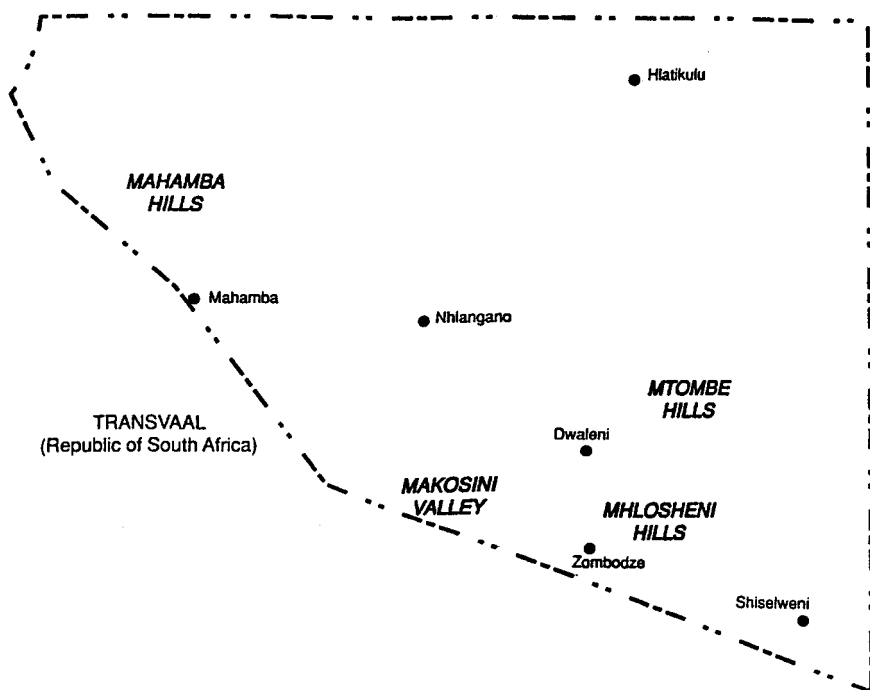
By this time, Ngwane's people were moving toward greater self-reliance.

In their meandering under Hlubi they had undoubtedly been confronted by other warrior bands and had, in the process, gained confidence and pride. Perhaps the time had come for a decision to settle down? If so, the rolling hills and valleys surrounding the new location provided ample grazing ground and generous vegetation as well as greater security. The settlement thus took on a permanence that had hitherto been lacking. There, it may be said, the lasting heritage of the Swazi nation was implanted; and there, too, after what appears to have been a long, untroubled chieftainship, Ngwane III died and was interred in what became the burial ground of Swazi kings. His name is revered in Swazi history; it became and still remains a synonym for the nation and its people: the Ngwane.

Little is known about the quality of leadership provided under Ngwane III's son, Ndvungunye, who succeeded to the chieftaincy while still very young. For the most part it seems to have been a period of limited expansion and consolidation, with capitals set up near the foothills of the Mhlosheni hills.<sup>9</sup> Ndvungunye's followers were not numerous, and the need to build alliances with neighboring chiefdoms was imperative. This was done apparently with some success. The two most powerful chiefdoms south of the Pongola, within striking distance of the Ngwane, were the Ndwandwe and the Mtetwa; and at least a temporary accord was worked out with each of them. Ndvungunye's tenure of the chieftaincy was marked, in consequence, by modest growth. The settlements at Shiselweni profited from increasing holdings in cattle, land, and warrior strength, but he died before reaching full maturity.<sup>10</sup> Swazi tradition is reticent about his place in history, perhaps because his role as leader was overshadowed by the memory of his father and the long, remarkable kingship of his son Sobhuza I.

The Shiselweni settlements did not, in fact, provide a firm foundation for the emergence of a Swazi state. During the years that followed Ndvungunye's passing, three factors, in particular, interposed to shape events. First, elements of the Nguni that had penetrated west beyond the Lubombo ranges, occupying, in scattered clans and chiefdoms, lands that are now within the central core of Swaziland, had to be assimilated or subdued before the primacy of the Ngwane could be established.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, some Sotho clans were moving south along the fringe of the mountains that separate Swaziland from the Transvaal, and a number crossed inland beyond the headwaters of the rivers flowing easterly toward the sea. Sotho customs differed in certain respects from those of the Nguni; and their usages were, in time, to have an influence on shaping Swazi culture and institutions.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Shiselweni settlements were never defensively at ease; the Ndwandwe, and later on the Zulu, posed a threat from below the Pongola marches.

Nevertheless, a beginning had been made. The next task was to bring



Southwest Swaziland: Shiselweni Area (not to scale)

the peoples of the interior under the Ngwane leadership, and this Ndvungunye's successors set out to do. The process was made easier because the Dlamini succession was accepted by many of those who had crossed the Lubombo independently. Ties were strengthened with others through intermarriage, giving rise to the remarkable relationships to the royal household that still persist among the Swazi. The ascendancy of the Dlamini chief was given additional impetus by the relative isolation of the interior clans. Equally significant was the assimilative capacity of the Ngwane themselves—their willingness to try to reconcile other modes of culture with their own heritage. However, integration was not easily achieved. It proved to be a long, drawn-out process, distracted by diversions and uncertainty, because as the Shiselweni settlements expanded, so too did those of other groups. Toward the north and east a number of chiefs could certainly muster a body of warriors equal, if not superior, to that of the Dlamini chief; and in the south the Ndwandwe easily surpassed the Ngwane in influence and strength.

That was the situation that faced Ndvungunye's successor, his son Sobhuza I, popularly known as Somhlolo.<sup>13</sup> Soon after his accession, the Ngwane settlements had to meet a threat that endangered their survival.

As had happened before and was to happen again, a challenge came from below the Pongola river that was to put Sobhuza's leadership to a painful test.

Contacts between the Ngwane and the Ndwandwe had generally been friendly during earlier years, cemented by intermarriages and by shared traditions and language. But the rise to Ndwandwe leadership of an able and ambitious chief, Zwide, brought on a change in attitude. Flushed by his conquest of minor clans south of the Pongola, and confident after a notable victory over breakaway bands that later were to form the core of the powerful Zulu kingdom, Zwide weighted the scales against the Ngwane. At issue was a fertile tract of land south of the river, but more important were the expansionist aims of the Ndwandwe leadership. Attracted by the defensive possibilities of the northern terrain, and perhaps to teach young Sobhuza a lesson, Zwide threatened to turn the full force of his seasoned warriors against the Ngwane. It was a bitter test for Sobhuza, and whether he met it wisely or with courage remains a question. Faced with what he must have seen as certain defeat, he gathered together a small contingent of his followers and abandoned the Shiselweni settlements to their fate. This may, however, be too harsh a judgment. In the intermix of Nguni clans and families, there were close ties between the Ngwane and the Ndwandwe. Thus, despite the fact that Zwide's warriors came in the guise of conquerors, they seem to have met with little resistance. So although the Shiselweni settlements were "eaten up," many among them acknowledged the Ndwandwe and, in keeping with custom, willingly paid tribute to their chief.<sup>14</sup>

Sobhuza I and his small band did, nevertheless, go north. They stopped near Hlatikulu, moved to the Maseko country further on—generally tracked by some of Zwide's warriors—until finally, passing through the Ezulwini valley, they halted near the Mdzimba mountains, site of an extensive cave network that played an important role in later defensive strategy. Whether Sobhuza's northern trek was forced or tactical is open to question,<sup>15</sup> but, in either case, it made possible Ngwane occupation of what is now the central area of Swaziland. More than that, it became a significant factor in welding together those clans and chiefdoms that later joined with the Ngwane to form the nucleus of the Swazi nation.

No matter what the circumstance, the departure from Shiselweni must have been a deep humiliation for the Ngwane chief—hardly a propitious beginning for a leader revered in Swazi tradition as the architect of the nation. But Sobhuza I seems to have been possessed of an adventurous spirit and astonishing resilience. No sooner had he settled beside the Mdzimba heights than he established his capital, a second Zombodze,<sup>16</sup> and began that restless probing into the northwest that, at the end, brought him fame and at least the illusion of empire.

Initially, Sobhuza I sought and won tribute from scattered chiefdoms in areas adjacent to his new headquarters. Then moving northwest toward the Dlomodlomo hills with a small force, he found himself in Sotho country and eventually was forced to seek the hospitality of a local chief. He stayed there for a time, perhaps virtually a prisoner; but ever resourceful, he tried to build alliances and began to cultivate an obsessive interest in the territory northwest.

Meanwhile at Shiselweni, where the bulk of the Ngwane still remained, Zwide's influence was waning, for by this time he had to face a new challenge from Shaka's Zulu warriors. In a major battle fought about 1819, the Ndwandwe were defeated by the Zulu, and their supremacy over Shiselweni ended. In Sobhuza's absence, a younger brother tried to take over the leadership, but the head of the Mamba chiefdom, Maloyi, sent a mission north to persuade Sobhuza to reclaim his chieftainship, and with Mamba assistance, he was able to overcome his brother's pretensions.

However, the Shiselweni settlements were no longer to have pride of place among the Ngwane. The center of gravity shifted north, to the new capitals situated under the protective heights of the Mdzimba. From there, Sobhuza's influence gradually spread outward, at times by force and conquest but more often through carefully weaned contacts and marriages of convenience. That the period of expansion was prolonged and the strategy flawed from time to time was perhaps inevitable. Sobhuza's warriors were then too few to engage in a major confrontation. Despite this, and the menacing might of Shaka's armies, by the end of his reign Sobhuza's hegemony was a fact to be reckoned with. His inheritance from his father had been a small and relatively powerless patrimony in the south, but toward the end of his chieftainship, the territory of the Ngwane-Swazi extended, by claim and reputation if not by actual possession, well beyond the bounds of the present-day kingdom.

The collapse of the Ndwandwe and Sobhuza's reassertion of leadership marked a turning point in the kingdom's fortunes. A period of relative calm followed, principally because of Shaka's preoccupation with conquests further south and east; and Sobhuza used this respite to advantage. First, it was necessary to restore an orderly disposition among the clans remaining in the Shiselweni area. Some were honored for their loyalty: The independence of the Mamba chiefdom, for example, was acknowledged and confirmed. Others were rewarded by being given wives or cattle or being placed in positions of responsibility. The general posture was conciliatory, encouraging allegiance and shoring up the defenses in the south against raiding by the Ndwande and the Zulu.

It has been suggested that Sobhuza I was on friendly terms with Zulu leader Shaka and that their relationship was sufficiently warm to fend off a possible Zulu invasion.<sup>17</sup> Certainly Sobhuza sought to gain a peaceful response; two of his daughters were sent as wives to Shaka, and he may



have visited the Zulu capital. Peaceful overtures had not worked with Zwibe<sup>18</sup> in the past, however, and Sobhuza must have known Shaka to be a dangerous aggressor. Defensive prospects could best be secured by taking advantage of the natural barriers in the mountainous interior. The sheltered valley of Ezulwini, fed by mountain streams and ideally suited to crops and cattle, was temptingly available for occupation and was well distanced from the Zulu. So Sobhuza again moved away from Shiselweni, this time with a fairly numerous following. It became, in fact, a permanent resettlement for the chief and his household. The seat of power shifted north to a new Zombodze and Lobamba and, much later, further north to Hhohho. With it, inevitably, went the commanding influence of Shiselweni chiefs who chose to stay behind.

Once established at his new headquarters, Sobhuza began that gradual enlargement of Swazi influence that marked the balance of his chieftaincy. But he had to act with caution and restraint. Some alliances had been forged during the treks north; and a number of clans and chiefdoms, especially those with ancestral links to the Dlamini going back to the Maputo river settlements, were supportive. In time, the benefits of tribute, mostly cattle, were added to the resources at the capitals, and these, enhanced by the fertile lands of Ezulwini, gave some assurance of self-sufficiency to Sobhuza's followers.

A major challenge existed to the northwest. The highveld territory between the Lusushwana and Komati rivers was occupied by Sotho clans that had ventured south; and beyond, northwest of Lydenburg, lay the country of the Pedi. Sobhuza had already made contact with a number of Sotho chiefs; some willingly accepted the protection of the Swazi, but others were forcibly absorbed. As time went on, these contacts helped to neutralize opposition during his raids into Pedi territory. These sorties north and northwest were facilitated by the earlier dispersion of the Pedi from their traditional lands. To the east, beyond the Lubombo ranges, clan affiliations tended toward the Thonga and other chiefdoms still occupying the ancient lands of the Nguni. But these were, for the most part, weakened by local rivalries and were in no position to provide a brake to the Swazi advance.

Taken as a whole, however, intruding the Swazi presence into alien territory can only be seen in a limited sense as an aggression. Sobhuza I was not a great warrior-king, but he was a clever tactician and generally succeeded in avoiding open warfare. To be sure, there was violence: In the context of the times, no other course could easily be followed. These were the years of the incalculable excesses of the *mfecane*,<sup>19</sup> when so many clans and chiefdoms were uprooted and dispersed. Part of Sobhuza's reputation rests on the recognition that his followers largely escaped the ravages inflicted on many other southeast African groups. Even so, it was only a tentative step to nationhood, because as yet the Swazi domain had more

form than substance. The kingdom was, in reality, a grouping of semi-independent chiefdoms loosely held together by ancestral ties and tributary payments.

Although the Zulu's erstwhile enemy continued to be the Ndwandwe—for years they had been waging a zigzag struggle for mastery south of the Pongola—both coveted the mountainous territory taken over by Sobhuza. Shaka's warriors did pass through the interior from time to time, but the spoils of conquest generally evaded them. It was not until the accession to Zulu leadership of Dingane, Shaka's half brother and a coconspirator in his assassination, that an effort was made to subjugate the Shiselweni country. It did not succeed; in a notable engagement at Lubuya around 1839, Sobhuza's warriors stood their ground and drove off the Zulu. Not long afterward, the king passed away<sup>20</sup> and was buried beside his grandfather, Ngwane III, in the royal gravesite at Mbilaneni.

Swazi tradition ranks the chieftancy of Sobhuza I second only to that of his son, Mswati II, the warrior-king who gave form and substance to the Swazi nation. Substantially, Sobhuza comes across as a man of peace, although the time and circumstances of his reign impelled him to the craft of war. He made an effort to improve the fighting capability of his warriors and to make use of the cave defenses of the interior. It is probable, as well, that the Swazi became familiar with battle innovations introduced in the wars between the Ndwandwe and the Zulu; and it is possible that a regimental system based on the Shakan model was envisaged.

In civil leadership, Sobhuza I ranks high. Recent studies<sup>21</sup> have emphasized the weakness of his position, especially during the early phases of his tenure. That being the case, his achievement is noteworthy. He strengthened the internal economy of the kingdom through assimilation and force, more often than not in a spirit of fairness. He was not a successful empire builder, however, because he appears to have lacked the ambition and organizational grasp of his son Mswati II. The vast expanse of territory taken under his protection was never firmly brought under control or adequately administered. Yet Sobhuza's reputation as an able leader is deservedly upheld in Swazi tradition. Perhaps his most enduring contribution was in shaping a course for a unified Swazi kingdom. The fact that he was able to do so within moderate bounds unusual for the times adds a measure of statesmanship to his work.

It is tempting, nonetheless, in looking back at the emergent history of the Swazi kingdom, to put too great an emphasis on the contribution of the Dlamini chieftainship. To be sure, it played a paramount role—but not always with prudence or clear-sightedness. Until his later years, Sobhuza could not field a body of warriors sufficient to sustain his primacy. When placed against the resources of the Ndwandwe or the Zulu, or even some

tributary chiefdoms, the Swazi kingdom was clearly not in the first rank. Despite the limitations, the king moved on, with seeming recklessness, to overextend his holdings.

Indeed, what characterized the Swazi before the advent of Mswati II was the gradual cohesion of diverse clans and chiefdoms, some self-sufficient and independent of each other and a few with warrior contingents of considerable strength. They were scattered throughout territory extending west from the Maputo river to the Sotho country and north from the Pongola to the Crocodile rivers. That they could have challenged the supremacy of Sobhuza I, alone or in partnership, but did not do so suggests that the Dlamini lineage had already acquired recognition reflecting its claim to royal standing.<sup>22</sup>

## *Chapter 2*

# Expanding and Consolidating

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During the reign of Sobhuza I's son Mswati II, the "herd-boy king" as he was at first labeled, the Swazi heritage was enlarged and strengthened, bonded in blood no less than diplomatic and strategic skills. By the end of the long, eventful tenure of his kingship, Mswati could look back on an achievement that embraced the modern concept of the Swazi state and extended its territorial grasp northwest to the banks of the Sabie river. He built up an army second only to that of the dominant Zulu; developed an administrative system, some of whose features still survive as working instruments of government; and imposed a sense of unity strong enough to withstand pressures from outside: Zulu or Pedi, Boer, British or Portuguese.

Mswati II assumed leadership of the Swazi toward the end of the 1830s. Not yet of age when his father died, a period of regency under the aegis of his mother, Tsandzile Ndwandwe, necessarily followed.<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of strengthening the symbolic standing of the Dlamini line, the regency had a special significance. For during it a successful effort was made to identify the Dlamini as having possession of ritual and rainmaking powers, along with ceremonial rights and privileges, implicit in kingship in the Nguni tradition.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the regency sought to put in place a viable defensive strategy, centralizing to some degree both military and governmental operations. When Mswati did take over on his coming of age, the charisma of the kingship and the parameters of its exercise were already more clearly evident. This fact alone was of more than passing importance to the crucial task of nation building that still lay ahead.

Mswati's military exploits have gained him a reputation as the Swazi's greatest fighting king. In times of normalcy, this could be dubious praise. But conditions in southeastern Africa were then far removed from nor-

malcy. The devastation wrought by the *mfecane* and the dispersal of clans and chiefdoms all around the Swazi had reduced much of the Zulu-conquered territory to impoverished vassalages. Afterward, the reassertion of Zulu strength under Shaka's half brothers, Dingane and then Mpande, both leaders of unquestioned ability, brought new fears of invasion across the Pongola river. In the northwest, the Pedi<sup>3</sup> had survived the ravages of the Matabele and the *mfecane* and, under the astute leadership of Sekwati and his son Sekhukhune, had reestablished their claim to territory overrun by Sobhuza. Added to that, the steady, persistent encroachment by the Boers on Swazi lands—northwest and west and southwest—and uncertainty as to how best to deal with them, created problems hitherto outside the experience of the Swazi leadership.

The first disruptions were domestic: family dissension among the Dlamini over Sobhuza's successor. Other sons, offspring from the late king's polygamous marriages, had valid claims to the kingship and were not slow to press them. Their actions divided local loyalties, and, though eventually suppressed, they continued throughout Mswati's early reign to be a recurring irritant. They compromised relationships between the Swazi and the Zulu; the Boers and the British were never shy of using them to their own advantage; and they brought on Mswati's hardened attitude toward suspected malcontents within the kingdom.

An open breach took place when Fokoti, one of Sobhuza's sons, tested his strength against the regency and lost. More serious was the challenge from Malambule, an elder half brother who acted as principal regent during the first years of Mswati's minority and who had, before Sobhuza's death, been seen as probable heir apparent. He left the royal household following Mswati's accession and took refuge with the Zulu. But he did not give up his claim to the Swazi kingship, and he surfaced from time to time, a prominent warrior in the Zulu regiments. More serious still was the defection of Somcuba, eldest half brother to Mswati, who in the mid-1840s had a significant influence in the regency and acted as liaison, perhaps without the king's endorsement, to Ohrigstad Boers.<sup>4</sup> He is reputed to have taken with him into exile some 500 followers, seeking support from the Pedi and the Boers and having always, as a prime objective, the usurpation of Mswati's rule.<sup>5</sup> Fokoti and Malambule faded early from the field, but Somcuba carried on for the better part of a decade until finally, about 1855, he was killed by Mswati's warriors not far from present-day Nelspruit.

Mswati's kingship was fraught with countless minor challenges. Trying to unify clans and chiefdoms accustomed to independent action was not an easy task. Suspicions of disloyalty fell first on those who had supported the brothers or were thought to be in alliance with the Zulu. A number of southern chiefdoms were in disfavor, and some, the Kunene, for example, were forced to move south of the Pongola river. Then the allegiance of

clans whose arrival in the interior had preceded Sobhuza I's northern travels—some of Nguni stock but the majority of Sotho background—was questioned, and those found wanting were rejected.<sup>6</sup> Still others, suspect or compromised, had their possessions sequestered and lives threatened or taken. The king's prolonged efforts to quell unrest and eliminate opposition at home had no precedent in previous Swazi experience. His actions were, on the whole, predatory and seem rarely to have been carried out with magnanimity. His reputation as a cruel king still lingers in Swazi tradition.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, the internal pacification undertaken by Mswati was of a different order from the conduct of his father. Yet in fairness it must be said that circumstances differed. As the king extended his influence, pressures from outside began to converge against his kingdom, threatening to wreck its fragile structure. Thus, an authoritarian tendency, already ingressive during Sobhuza's later years and strengthened by changes introduced during the regency, reached a point where centralized control, firmly imposed, came to be seen as the best guaranty of the kingdom's future.

The initial external threat came from the south. Years earlier, Shaka's creation of a highly disciplined army with battle tactics hitherto unknown to southern Africa had wrecked havoc in neighboring chiefdoms. Sobhuza I appears to have been able to stave off raids through an understanding with or concessions made to the Zulu chief. But whatever transpired between Shaka and Sobhuza apparently died with them, for neither Dingane nor Mpande had much tolerance for the Swazi. From the Zulu point of view, the territorial claims taken over by Mswati from his father were not easily defensible. About 1847 a sizable Zulu *impi* made its way north, passing along the Maphalaleni valley and beyond the Komati as far as the Crocodile river, languishing there for the better part of a year. It was, in most respects, an abortive invasion. The Swazi warriors used their mountain caves for concealment and some sought refuge with the Boers, coming back to harass the invaders on their return journey. During the next several years, less ambitious forays were undertaken with negligible results.

By mid-century, in fact, the prospect of further Zulu raids across the Pongola had begun to recede<sup>8</sup> but not before another major attack was launched by Mpande around 1852. For the Swazi, apparently caught unprepared, this seems to have been a near disaster. But it turned out to be almost anticlimactic because Zulu power was threatened by fratricidal quarrels between Mpande's sons, Cetshwayo and Mbulazi: both had fought against the Swazi. Mpande was forced to give up his kingship in favor of Cetshwayo who, as it happened, had only a passing involvement with the Swazi. For by then the Europeans—British and Boers alike—were moving to dismember the Zulu kingdom. Thus, Mswati, now secure on his southern border, was able to begin his bold incursions into Pedi and Portuguese territory.

The relationship between what has been termed “the Pedi polity”<sup>9</sup> and the Swazi kingdom had never been more than moderately friendly. The Pedi, a grouping of predominantly Sotho clans, had suffered much at the hands of the Matabele and during the turbulent years of the *mfecane*. Many of them had been forced to disperse to the northeastern reaches of present-day Transvaal. One of their chiefs, Sekwati, led his followers back to reoccupy part of their former territory. With the accession to Pedi leadership of his son Sekhukhune, the fairly passive Swazi-Pedi contacts of former years gave way to growing antagonism between Mswati and the Pedi chief. If either side is blameworthy, the odds fall heavily against the Swazi.

In order to understand the underlying strains in Swazi-Pedi relations, it is necessary to revert to the final phases of Sobhuza’s chieftancy. It was then that the Swazi took for granted their right to the extensive northern territory held under the stewardship of the Pedi and other Sotho chiefdoms. While most Pedi settlements lay north of the Steelpoort river, a handful of Sekhukhune’s tributaries were in the southern region. To be sure, the area was sparsely populated, largely open grazing land where Sobhuza’s *impi* had roamed at will across the countryside. Sporadic raids did not, however, bestow traditional rights of conquest, nor does a claim to the territory appear ever to have been made by Sobhuza.

That was the situation passed on to Mswati. Once freed from the probability of Zulu intervention, he sent warriors to the northern region. During his minority, about 1838, the first major raid against the Pedi, launched presumably by Somcuba, got as far as Phiring but was repulsed.<sup>10</sup> When Mswati did take over, he set up an operational base at Hhohho, close to what is now the northern border of Swaziland. From there, he established a series of outposts further north and west. He then began to strike down Pedi and Sotho chiefdoms suspected of standing in his way and to embark on the wide-ranging raids that helped to gain him his fighting reputation. An earlier narrative asserts: “The raids against the Bapedi and other Sesuto-speaking clans to the west and north could not be dignified by the title of campaigns. They were really nothing more than raids for slaves and booty.”<sup>11</sup>

Mswati is reputed to have gone much further north, even as far as present-day Zimbabwe, but this achievement, if it did occur, can hardly have been more than an excursion. The logistics of expansion, then as now, demanded some form of follow-up organization and control, and there is no evidence that Mswati’s forces held sway, with any continuity, north of the Sabie river. But royal encampments were established at a number of sites in what is now northeastern Transvaal;<sup>12</sup> and these, along with Hhohho, were occupied by Mswati himself from time to time. They were organized as royal villages, sometimes in the charge of one of Mswati’s wives or, more often, under a half brother, son, or senior chief, assisted by a trustworthy *indvuna*.<sup>13</sup>

If skirmishes with the Zulu were primarily defensive, the same cannot be said about Mswati's incursions north and east of Swaziland. While the movements of his *impi* from the mid-1850s until his death cannot be traced with certainty, they apparently followed routes in several directions. To the north lay the Boer republics of Ohrigstad and Lydenburg, and Mswati's contacts with them initiated a puzzling strategy that led to complications later on. Mswati's network of manned outposts opened the way for raiding deep into Pedi territory, and Sekhukhune, sensing a threat to the Pedi heartland, assembled a defensive force of considerable strength. But the rival forces avoided open warfare. It was left to Mswati's successors, at the urging of the Boers and afterward the British, to escalate their differences into full-scale conflict.

Mswati's foreign entanglements were not confined to the Pedi. Coincident with the decline of Zulu influence north of Delagoa Bay—the backcountry for Portugal's lucrative ivory trade—he undertook a series of raids against the Madola, “a powerful and independent kingdom”<sup>14</sup> northeast of the Lubombo. These raids, beginning about 1855, were encouraged by the rivalry of Portuguese traders and local chiefdoms—Madola, Tembe, and Shangane—and by the vacuum created with the withdrawal of the Zulu. Mswati's wives included two sisters of a Shangane chief, Mawewe, who was deposed in a coup supported by the Portuguese and fled to the Swazi for protection. For several years, Mswati carried on, with mixed success, a costly campaign against those responsible for the coup, even laying siege to Lourenco Marques. His warriors carried on from there, going north as far as the Limpopo river and making a tenuous claim to the country in between.

By the end of Mswati's reign, the mid-1860s, the Swazi could assert a right over territory well beyond that traveled by Sobhuza. Although fixed boundaries were not yet a barrier to free movement in southeastern Africa, the Swazi kingdom had unquestioned recognition as having a claim to very extensive holdings in territory and cattle. Those claims were to be put in jeopardy by the entry of Europeans into the Swazi outland. For that, some of the blame must be attributed to Mswati himself, to his ambiguous negotiations with the Boer communities at Ohrigstad and Lydenburg.

Thus far, the discussion has centered on the interaction between the Swazi and neighboring ethnic chiefdoms. In a sense, this may understate the reality even though these rivalries impacted heavily on those involved. In the Swazi kingdom, losses incurred during Zulu raids were compensated by certain gains recovered in the north. On balance, Swazi holdings appear to have been significantly increased as a result of raiding and long-range expeditions. This is not to say that the benefits accrued were widely felt or evenly distributed. On the contrary, the spoils of raiding appear to have resulted in an imbalance of resources between the capitals and chiefdoms,



to the disadvantage of the latter. Part of the reason may have been the dominant role given to the regiments.<sup>15</sup> Following the example of the Zulu, the regiments were trained as a warrior force largely detached from clan or chiefdom. Recruited from across the kingdom, they were seen to be the king's men, serving him at home and abroad with pride and steadfast loyalty.<sup>16</sup> As might be expected, they were given a dual role: defending the realm on the outside and securing, at the king's behest, order and control at home.

As has been seen, centralizing tendencies were already evident during the regency. Queen-mother Tsandzile had brought from the Ndwandwe an experience of centralized rule, and after Sobhuza's death, the governing strategy encouraged tighter control, thus impinging on the chiefdoms. The reaction was predictably negative. The chiefs observed, with growing misgivings, that the spoils of raiding were principally being used to support an expanding royal establishment. Although evidence is lacking, the frequent absences of the warriors must have impacted negatively on the prosperity of the chiefdoms,<sup>17</sup> as did the exaction of skins and cattle to support the king's foreign forays. So also, marriage into the Dlamini family, whatever its advantages,<sup>18</sup> had to be met by a substantial dowry of the finest cattle in the chiefdom's herd.

The chiefdom, as an institution, served the Swazi as well as any organization reasonably could.<sup>19</sup> Though conservative in spirit and at times exacting, its normal course was tempered by restraints imposed by custom. Within its limits, it provided a means for meeting basic needs and ensuring that individual rights, as well as duties, would be respected. When problems did arise, the authority of the chief-in-council could be exercised, and failing satisfaction, an appeal to the king could be made. Any lessening in the standing of the chiefdom was bound to be seen as a challenge to tradition, a threat to the virtue and utility of the system itself. While Mswati's military exploits no doubt enhanced his personal stature, pressures from the capitals lowered the status of the chiefdoms, and this was probably a mistake. When, after Mswati's death, the central administration virtually fell apart, intervention by strong and confident chiefdoms, ably led as some of them were, could have helped forestall the weaknesses in leadership exposed by the arrival of the Europeans.

Despite differences over succession, the Dlamini's right to precedence within the kingdom had never seriously been challenged. The prerogatives of kingship, however, were confined by custom to incumbent kings and queens. Inasmuch as polygynous unions were a normal feature of the culture, the number of dependents in a chief's household tended to be very large. It may not be surprising, then, that siblings and relatives figured prominently in appointments: assigned to vacant chiefdoms, serving in senior combat roles, or given sinecures at the king's headquarters. Although the *libandla* was by custom representative, there was never a scarcity of

princes and well-connected headmen at the capitals. Indeed, Mswati's reign confirmed the status of the Dlamini kingship—fortified by tradition, sanctified by ritual, and strengthened by possession, it stood out as one of the powerful dynasties in the southern subcontinent.

Mswati died at Hhohho about 1865.<sup>20</sup> Despite his accomplishments, he left an uncertain legacy. Still young, even by the standards of the times, he had scarcely reached the peak of his career. For the Swazi, in Honey's phrase, "the days of Mswati were days of conquest and independence";<sup>21</sup> and Bryant's praises, placing him on a par with Shaka, may not be too exaggerated.<sup>22</sup>

The king's demise was followed by a decline in Swazi influence and power. Part of the reason was that custom left open the door to succession, and as had happened before, too many aspirants were waiting to pass through. Part of it rests with the *liqogo* and the regency that followed, for they allowed state policy to waver. Some of it must be found in prior events, in vicarious dealings with the Boer republics, because, in the end, it was these that opened the way to European conquest.

The first problem was the royal succession. Reference has already been made to the polygynous aspect of Swazi social life. At the chieftain level, the number of wives was a measure of distinction and, at times, an indication of wealth and influence. Some chiefs used the practice for gaining influence—a useful means of forging alliances, dissuading enmities, and organizing power. Sobhuza I had understood the advantages to be gained through the marriage bond and resorted to it frequently, as did, no doubt, his predecessors. Mswati, as his fame increased, had easy access to consorts from neighboring chiefdoms and rival kingdoms, as well as from exogynous Swazi clans. Thus, when the question of succession arose, some twenty of his sons had supportable claims to the kingship.<sup>23</sup>

Among them was Mbilini, old enough to succeed without the hiatus of a regency. There was also Ludvonga, son of Sisile Khumalo, a boy of eleven years or so. And younger still was Mbandzeni, whose mother died while he was still a child. Although Mswati is said to have favored Mbilini, he was passed over by the elders. Angered by the decision, he found refuge at Lydenburg, the Boer republic, and eventually moved south to join the Zulu forces of Cetshwayo. There followed a recapitulation of Sobhuza's experience. With or without Cetshwayo's blessing, Mbilini became a scourge to southern Swazi chiefdoms, a destabilizing influence whose access to the Zulu and the Boers could encourage an attack from either source.

Ludvonga was acclaimed but never exercised his kingship. He died in mysterious circumstances around 1872, almost on the eve of his majority. His death was followed by a brief, trouble-filled season of division and at least some "killings off." That, along with several misjudged raids against the Pedi, threatened the kingdom's unity enough to put at risk the gains

made by Mswati. The *liqoqo* moved quickly to name a successor. Sisile Khumalo, Ludvonga's mother, was influential in the choice that settled on Mbandzeni, then barely into his teens. It was a pragmatic selection, an arrangement that served two purposes: Because Mbandzeni's mother was no longer living, Sisile could continue as queen-mother; and the regency would carry on since Mbandzeni was not of age to assume the kingship.

The regency did, in fact, continue as the governing body of the Swazi for the next ten years, from Mswati's death until the reins were finally handed over to Mbandzeni. Its senior members had an even longer tenure at the capitals. Sandlane Zwane had served both Sobhuza and Mswati—a veteran warrior and statesman whose opinions carried weight. Tsandzile, now queen-regent, became a commanding figure, respected by her peers and revered by the Swazi. They made up the hard core of regency decision makers, supported by others whose presence in the background may belie their influence. But they were from an older generation, and it is doubtful if they were sufficiently sensitive to the import of the European presence in southeastern Africa. Mswati had fashioned a powerful kingdom through the imposition of internal discipline and bold forays into neighboring territories. The regents do not appear to have sensed the danger if his gains were exposed to passive leadership. Mbilini, supported by younger, spirited regiments in the north, may have been a better choice for the kingship. Reports that he was to be named head of the Zulu army testified to his ability. Theophilus Shepstone warned the Natal administration of possible trouble in Swaziland if this took place:

The contemplated appointment of Umbelini as C-in-C of the Zulu army . . . is well calculated to cause a defection from the Amaswazie force in favour of the Zulus. Umbelini is the eldest son of the late Amaswazie King, and attempted to succeed his father, but was expelled from the tribe, and fled to Zululand. He has, however, many sympathizers among his father's people, and the present King [Mbandzeni] is but a weak and frivolous youth.<sup>24</sup>

From roughly 1865 until the mid-1870s, the regency handled Swazi affairs with an authority drawn from experience. Mbilini's defection was patched over, but the northern regiments were restless and, by the end of Mswati's mourning year, anxious to go on with raiding. The Madola were again attacked, and Matsafeni, a popular warrior-chief, led a raid against the Pedi. The Swazi were ambushed during their withdrawal, and they suffered a similar fate when they ventured a raid into Zoutpansberg. As if to confirm these setbacks, the Swazi-born Msuthfu, son of Mswati's exiled half brother Somcuba, came down from his Pedi retreat to avenge his father's exile by bloodying Swazi soil. The regents were not pleased with the turn of events in the north. Tsandzile held that the Zulu were still a po-

tential threat and saw a deployment of warriors elsewhere as weakening southern defenses. Her judgment was probably correct because the Zulu, under Cetshwayo, nursed a grievance against the Swazi leadership, partly because of the regency's reluctance to become involved in the Zulu wars.



Southern Africa (not to scale)

## *Chapter 3*

# Boundaries: The Transvaal

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On a contemporary map of the African continent, the kingdom of Swaziland appears as little more than a diminutive enclave, scarcely 6,700 square miles in area, cut out from the variegated land mass of southeastern Africa between the Crocodile and Pongola rivers and extending eastward from the lower reaches of the Drakensburg mountain ranges toward the Indian Ocean. The eastern boundary with Mozambique follows the heights of the Lubombo escarpment, but otherwise, the kingdom is encircled by the Republic of South Africa.

This was not always so. During the later years of Sobhuza I and particularly during the heyday of Mswati II's reign, the Swazi kingdom could reasonably lay claim to territory almost ten times greater in extent. As was the case elsewhere in colonial Africa, the reduction of the Swazi kingdom was brought about not by conquest or occupation but by arrangements of convenience between European powers. Less than twenty years after Mswati's death, a peace agreement drawn up by Transvaal Boers and the British, ostensibly to end a war in which the Swazi had no part, left the kingdom with a truncated version of its former domain. The whole of the northern and northwestern territory that had been held by common consent since Sobhuza's time passed out of Swazi hands.

In a limited sense, blame for the attenuation of the Swazi kingdom can be traced to flawed diplomacy by the Swazi leadership. Mswati II himself entered into an ambiguous relationship with the neighboring Dutch republics of Ohrigstad and Lydenburg, and the regency that followed his death was less than steadfast in safeguarding the integrity of the kingdom. So when Mswati's young and inexperienced son Mbandzeni was installed as king, the stage had already been set for a sharp reversal in the existing state

of things. The immediate catalyst for change was the arrival from the Cape of several hundred Dutch *trekboers* who took over land near the Swazi hinterland, to be followed, in later years, by the infiltration into the kingdom's heartland by Boer graziers and British entrepreneurs and, in their wake, a vagrant group of adventurers, speculators, and settlers.

While Arabs and Portuguese had opened trading routes to the south-eastern coast of Africa as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century and had made contact with the Maputo river settlements, they apparently did not travel far inland. The eMbo-Nguni, once they moved away from Langa's territory, had little opportunity for meeting foreigners, although legends gathered from raiding forays must have made them aware of an alien presence harboring by the sea.

The Swazi heartland remained, however, singularly free from foreign intrusion. Not until the 1820s did Protestant missions begin to be established among the Sotho; and Catholic priests from Portugal, though active with the Delagoa Bay traders, seem not to have pushed much beyond the frontiers of Portuguese territory. In fact, a Wesleyan mission set up near present-day Mahamba in 1845 was the first missionary establishment within the borders of what is now Swaziland.<sup>1</sup> It was, however, a short-lived venture, caught in the cross fire of Malambule's failed uprising against Mswati, and was, in consequence, forced to flee south of the Pongola.<sup>2</sup>

Swazi contact with Europeans began in earnest when a resolute wave of Dutch *trekboers*,<sup>3</sup> coming north for greener pastures, reached the western hinterland of Swazi territory. Self-exiled and inward looking, they were seeking a homeland where they could lead a Calvinist-inspired communal life, free from the government of British officials. The "great trek" started in the early 1830s and continued, with varying fortunes, during the next twenty years.<sup>4</sup> By 1845 some 300 families had stopped at Ohrigstad, to be followed by another settlement at Lydenburg further south. Both communities fell within the Swazi sphere of influence, but the Pedi had perhaps a prior claim in the area. The *trekboers* saw the need to seek an accommodation with one of the indigenous groups, and Mswati and his council, for reasons of their own, were willing to reciprocate. The end result was the preparation of two deeds of sale, in 1846 and 1855, which, if taken at face value, surrendered almost the whole of Swazi territory to the Dutch republics.

These agreements<sup>5</sup> have been challenged—and with reason. That of 1846 gave to the Boers a vast tract of land centered on Ohrigstad and stretching from the Oliphants river down to the Crocodile. The grant of 1855 extended the sale to include, though the geographic description was imprecise, more or less the core territory of the Swazi. The price for both amounted to some 170 head of cattle.

The main thrust of both alleged transactions is suspect. It is hardly cred-

ible that Mswati would have given away the territory north of the Komati river. Hhohho was his power base, and the area contained a number of royal villages defended by his warriors. Furthermore, such cessions of territory were patently outside the law and custom of the Ngwane-Swazi. Land could not be alienated except by conquest or a decision of the people. The Boers themselves were never fully convinced that the deeds of sale were genuine—hence, the skepticism of the *volksraad*<sup>6</sup> in 1876 when President Thomas Burgers brought them out of the closet to try to quell criticism of his campaign against the Pedi. After 1855, Mswati undertook a sweeping series of raids northwest, passing through supposedly ceded territory without protest from the Dutch republics. His regiments raided in all directions, in some of the most effective actions of his campaigns. The Boers, on their part, were uncommonly inert, failing even to take possession of the Pongola corridor in the south, thus allowing a handful of Zulu to cross the river and settle there.

From time to time, the Zulu put forward a claim that the Swazi were under their protection—a dependent status dating back to Sobhuza I's reputed visit to Shaka's capital. That supposition became part of Zulu folklore and was reflected in contemporary European journals as well as in official dispatches. Zulu kings Dingane and Mpande later reverted to it as an excuse for raiding Swazi territory, and as late as 1877, the Zulu king Cetshwayo is said to have tried to persuade Mbandzeni to join an alliance against the Boers and British on the strength of that relationship. The Swazi rejected the claim as having no factual foundation and certainly never yielded obeisance to Shaka's successors. Their primary defense against incursions from the south had been the Pongola river itself, but experience had shown that that was not enough. A wedge of land along the northern banks occupied by Europeans had the appearance of sound defensive strategy, but Dutch burghers showed no disposition to take up land next door to the Zulu.

The political union of some of the Dutch republics<sup>7</sup> became a reality in 1860, and after Mswati's death, the enlarged South African Republic set in motion a series of initiatives that had the effect of cutting off the margins of the late king's legacy. In April 1866, while the Swazi were still in mourning, a survey party was sent by the Pretoria government to beacon off a boundary between Swaziland and the Republic. Two Swazi *tindvuna* joined the mission, giving it the appearance of a bilateral exercise. By the end of June, thirteen beacons were erected, tracing a curve south-southwest from the Komati river down beyond the Assagei river toward the Pongola. It fixed a boundary between western Swaziland and the Republic that narrowly constricted the outreach of the kingdom. Despite Swazi objections, the beacons line became the recognized boundary. British authorities, during their first brief administration of the Transvaal,<sup>8</sup> accepted the beacons



as the immutable starting points of the Alleyne boundary survey that was then commissioned.

That the Republic had further designs on Swaziland was soon demonstrated in other ways. Within months of the border beaconing, a deputation was dispatched to the regency to sound out Swazi reaction to closer political ties. When Thomas Burghers took over the presidency of the Republic, he reputedly visited Swaziland in 1873, possibly the first non-African head of state to visit the kingdom. On the eve of Mbandzeni's coming of age, emissaries were sent again to Swaziland, this time to take part in the installation of the king. That expedition was more than diplomatic. It was an imposing show of strength—a mile-long convoy of four mountain guns, a band, and some 350 armed commandos, accompanied by three government officials: Gert Rudolph, R. K. Lovedale, and C. J. Joubert. Rudolph was well known to Swazi leaders, having had contacts with them while serving with the British in Natal.<sup>9</sup> The mission was successful. Within a few days of Mbandzeni's installation, an agreement was concluded with the Swazi council.

In essence, the 1875 agreement gave credence to prior transactions between the Boers and the Swazi, thus confirming the Republic's dominion over the kingdom. To the Swazi, however, it guaranteed "free and unencumbered" possession of their territory and "free and undisturbed management of their affairs" as long as their laws and customs were "human, reasonable and tenable," and they were promised assistance in case they were attacked. But there were restrictions: The Swazi government would have jurisdiction only on its side of the boundary, and the Republic could appoint a commissioner to ensure cooperation. And no matter what the acknowledged rights, the Swazi would be "subjects and obedient servants . . . of the South African Republic."<sup>10</sup>

As with similar arrangements in the past, the agreement raises questions about the motives of the Swazi council. It bore the signature mark of the new king and seventeen leading chiefs and headmen, but there is no evidence that it was ever presented for approval to the assembled Swazi nation.<sup>11</sup> The Republic claimed to have been invited by the regency to crown the young king so that his claim to kingship would have external recognition. Natal, however, saw the Republic's action as a countermeasure to its participation in the crowning of Cetshwayo, the Zulu king, a year before. Later on, the Republic made much of the fact that it had crowned the king, pointing to that as evidence of an existing special relationship with the kingdom. It is difficult to understand why the Swazi council accepted the terms of the 1875 agreement. Hardly a decade had passed since Mswati's death, and to risk becoming, in the words of a South African statesman, "vassals of the Republic,"<sup>12</sup> surely was too great a price to pay, no matter what the circumstance. The British government's annexation of

the Republic in 1877, although criticized on other grounds, rescued the Swazi leadership from a serious blunder: the agreement was nullified by virtue of the takeover.

The annexation did not end what had become an aggravating situation along the western border. With the tacit approval of the regency and local chiefs, Boer burghers were in the habit of crossing onto the Swazi highveld to winter graze their sheep and cattle. It was a fair exchange; the pastures were not fully taken over by Swazi stock, and modest rentals were paid to chiefs whose lands were occupied. But problems did arise; some Boers looked upon the Swazi as squatters and determined to get rid of them. These men were influential in the border country—the Ferreiras, Maritzes, Tosens, and Murphys, among others—and they used the means available to disrupt border chiefdoms. While such behavior does not appear to have been typical, it did upset the Swazi and certainly contributed to anti-Boer sentiments that surfaced later on. Preserving a good rapport with the Swazi was important to the Republic, if only to offset its poor relations with the Pedi and the Zulu.

Contacts between the Swazi and the British were on a different plane. The Natal administration was in Pietermaritzburg, nine days' journey from the Swazi capital at Mbekelweni. It was one thing for the kingdom to be threatened by next-door neighbors—Boer, Pedi, or Zulu—but quite another to have a powerful distant friend, hopefully ready to assist in times of crisis. That, in essence, was the Swazi expectation of Natal. They placed their faith in Theophilus Shepstone,<sup>13</sup> the colonial guru in the colony, and the relationship that followed was well bonded. Shepstone was empathetic and used his influence with the Zulu to discourage any move against the Swazi, thus ensuring, by his own word, fifteen years of peace.

Mbandzeni's accession did not affect the ambidextrous policies of the Swazi council. While wanting a special relationship with the British, links with the Boers were strengthened. In 1876, they consented to send warriors to support the Republic in its struggle against the Pedi, but in an assault on a Pedi stronghold, Boer commandos let them down, and they returned home, embittered.<sup>14</sup> There was reluctance, therefore, two years later when the British high commissioner, Sir Garnet Wolseley,<sup>15</sup> requested Swazi help against the Zulu. The council hesitated before calling out the regiments, and by the time they did so, the Zulu were in retreat with their king Cetshwayo captured. Some months later, the Swazi again responded to Wolseley's call for help, this time in an attack against a Pedi stronghold.<sup>16</sup> Their conduct during that engagement was criticized in the British press, with accusations of savagery; but a British officer serving with them denied the charges: "In no single instance to my knowledge or that of . . . my four subordinate officers, did the Swazis attempt to kill women and children."<sup>17</sup> The British command was not perturbed. Wolseley noted in his diary: "My

object is to strike terror into the hearts of the surrounding tribes by the utter destruction of Sekhukhune, root and branch, so the more the Swazis raid and destroy, the better my purpose is effected."<sup>18</sup>

The annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 had unforeseen consequences. The Boers saw it as a violation of their rights as an independent republic and were aroused sufficiently to undertake an armed rebellion. That reaction may have been anticipated, but the storm of criticism raised in Britain less so. In addition, British troops fared badly in early skirmishes with Boer commandos, and the startling defeat of British regulars at Majuba Hill brought pressures to negotiate a peaceful settlement. In the discussions that followed, the claims of the Boers were generally admitted, with some reservations to imperial control; and the treaty signed at Pretoria in 1881 represented, to all intents and purposes, a return to pre-1877.

Swaziland was not involved directly in the Anglo-Boer struggle. Reports of British losses in the field may have surprised the king and council, but there was no reason to suspect a British defeat. Hence the peace agreement and the retrocession of the Transvaal to the Boers caught them by surprise, unprepared for the dramatic shift in policy embodied in the 1881 Convention. The kingdom failed to regain any of its claimed historic territory, and even the Pongola strip, never occupied by the Boers, was handed back to the Republic. Britain's willingness to placate the Boers by maintaining the status quo with respect to Swazi claims points clearly to a weakness in Swazi leadership. The imperial government wanted, if possible, a binding conclusion to problems in southern Africa; and Wolseley, despite the assistance given in defeating the Zulu and Pedi, relegated Swazi concerns to a low priority.

The 1881 Convention did guarantee the independence of the Swazi nation, as the Boers had promised to do in earlier treaties. But as events unfolded, this turned out to be a delusive warranty. No wonder that when the issue was made clear to her, queen-regent Tsandzile would raise her hands in horror and exclaim: What have we done to the great Queen across the water that she should hate us so. Or that the colonial A. G. Marwick, looking back on the British government's treatment of the Swazi, could ask with bitterness: What worse fate could have befallen the kingdom, had it opposed the British in Wolseley's wars.<sup>19</sup>

Reference has already been made to the Alleyne boundary commission,<sup>20</sup> appointed in 1879 when the Transvaal was under British control and there was no expectation that it would shortly be reverted to the Boers. The survey was intended partly to meet Swazi objections to beacons placed by the Boers and to define a border along the whole of the northern and western territory separating the two. Its task was, in Wolseley's words, to effect "a final settlement," guided by principles of "justice and expediency."<sup>21</sup> To achieve these ends, however, it was to adhere, as far as possible, to the beacons already placed by the Republic.



Basically, the commission dealt with three areas of contention—the western border, the boundary north of the Komati river, and the Pongola strip. The Swazi claimed possession within a line connecting roughly the present-day communities of Chrissiesmier, Badplaas, and Barberton. They insisted that, after 1846, that parcel of land had been bought back from the Lydenburg Republic by Mswati. An officer at the High Commission advised Alleyne: “While it is desirable to establish the old Boer boundary in the Komati Valley, it is still more desirable that the Swazies should look upon us as firm and honest friends incapable of spoiling them of their just possessions”;<sup>22</sup> but in the end, the Swazi claim was rejected. Part of the northern claim included Hhohho, Mswati’s former base, and this was identified as belonging to the kingdom. From there, however, a decisively negative decision was made. Two options were open to the commission—a line northeast from Kamhlabane to the confluence of the Crocodile and Komati rivers or a line running southeast from the same point to Mananga Peak, not far from present-day Mhlume. The second option was favored, denying the kingdom a large sector of its claimed territory. Similarly in the south, despite strong evidence to the contrary, the Swazi claim to lands as far south as the Pongola river was rejected. Opinion in Natal and Zululand supported Swaziland’s claim that the kingdom’s southern boundary was the Pongola river. Bernard Fynney, who spent many years in the area, declared: “As regards the boundary between the Amaswazi and Zulu nations the river Upongolo has always been looked upon as such, and the fact, until lately, to my certain knowledge, has never been for a moment disputed.”<sup>23</sup> And in its final report, the Zululand boundary commission of 1879 stated: “The Pongola forms the northern boundary to Zululand, from its junction with the Pemvana to the Lebombo.”<sup>24</sup>

The boundary commission’s recommendations were endorsed by Wolseley and embodied in the 1881 Convention with little apparent resistance from the Swazi leadership. Perhaps the reality of the European presence in southern Africa had been brought home to them. The Swazi had never been much impressed by the fighting capability of either the British or the Boers, thinking the Zulu to be far superior.<sup>25</sup> But the fortunes of war had changed; the dismantling of the Zulu kingdom provided striking evidence of that. Or perhaps they hoped for more favorable treatment from the British government in due time. Mbandzeni’s later deposition to the governor of Natal gives credence to that view. He complained that the Boers were moving into “hill country” north of the Komati river, but he had given it to the British, not the Boers, and wanted it returned. The reply was, to say the least, unpromising: “It is . . . unnecessary now to discuss the merits of the question. The Transvaal-Swazi boundary was fixed after a full and careful consideration of the question . . . and I do not think it would . . . be possible to re-open the question of the Swazi boundary.”<sup>26</sup>

## *Chapter 4*

# Boundaries: Portuguese Territory

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Once the provisions of the 1881 Convention had been put into place, there remained to be settled the boundary between the Swazi kingdom and the Portuguese possessions centered on Delagoa Bay. Historically, the chiefdoms east of the Lubombos had closer links with the Swazi than those in the areas taken over by the Boers. Ancestral ties were close enough that many of the chiefdoms there regularly paid tribute to the Dlamini king. The Swazi claim to a portion of the country extending from the Lubombo mountain ranges toward the Indian Ocean predated Mswati II's campaigns and had never been contested. The reason is that the principal activity of the Portuguese had been in trading, not in the acquisition of land. Their stations in the backcountry, north and northwest, were intended to safeguard trading routes from the interior to the shipping ports at Beira, Lourenco Marques, and Kosi Bay rather than to encourage settlement.

Portugal could not easily remain detached from the urge for possession that quickened European interest in southern Africa during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The treaty of 1869 with the South African Republic may have lacked substantial credence at the time, but it did attest, along with a similar treaty in 1875 and the MacMahon arbitration of that year, that Lisbon was not prepared to stand by idly while Briton, Boer, and German sought to gain control over southern Africa. The Portuguese government's challenge to Britain's claims south of Delagoa Bay, and the judgment made in Portugal's favor, helped to focus attention on the benefits to be gained from occupation and settlement.

There were obstacles to settlement, however. The low-lying areas to the west and northwest of the coastline were hardly more than a vast wasteland. Most of the Portuguese who elected to stay in the territory or served

as government officials there remained at Lourenco Marques or at other outposts nestled beside the ocean. Further west, the treaties of 1869 and 1875 between Portugal and the South African Republic established a vague dividing line along the Lubombo mountain ranges; and the MacMahon award confirmed that the inland plains as far as the Lubombos were Portuguese territory. But that expanse of land was also humid, fever ridden, and unsuitable for colonization. It must have been obvious to the Lisbon government that this sector of the MacMahon conveyance was not likely to be endowed with rich rewards.

Until the 1880s, Portuguese contacts with the Swazi had been infrequent and indifferent. While tradition called for Swazi runners to travel eastward to obtain waters needed for the *ncwala* ceremonies, the youthful warriors passed through friendly chiefdoms, and their mission precluded contact with the Portuguese. The chiefdoms situated to the east of the Lubombos served as a buffer between Portuguese territory and the Swazi kingdom; and apart from incidents during Mswati's conquests, there was none of the sustained suspicion that conditioned Swazi reaction to its other African and European neighbors.

That situation was not to last, however. Early in 1886, Mbandzeni sent an urgent message to the governor of Natal, asking for assistance. He was being "hemmed in" by the Boers and the Portuguese, he said: "On the east, the Portuguese Government, from Delagoa Bay, are disposing of . . . lands in the Lebombo Mountains to the Boers of the Transvaal, which, it is stated, the Boers are now going to occupy."<sup>1</sup> Confirming evidence was soon available. The British consul at Lourenco Marques observed that a government notice "appears to imply that everything coastwards of the Great Lubombos is in Portuguese territory,"<sup>2</sup> and the Natal administration asked the Portuguese governor for an explanation. Within a year, a Portuguese official arrived to survey the Lubombo area, and soon forty farm plots were put on sale at Lourenco Marques.

What, then, had changed? First, the MacMahon judgment of 1875 opened the way for Portuguese activity in the country leading to the Swazi kingdom. But because the lowveld plain was unhealthy and undeveloped, it was not likely to attract potential settlers. Beyond it, the Lubombo ranges were in a different situation, favored by a mild climate and terrain well suited for cattle grazing or intensive farming. Some Europeans—Britons and Boers—had already taken up land there, and others were showing an interest in exploration and settlement. More important, coal had been located in the vicinity and near the western base of the escarpment, and speculators were led to believe the area could be rich in minerals. Then there was the projected Swaziland railway. The possibility of a railway line, linking the South African Republic to the Indian Ocean via Swaziland,<sup>3</sup> first mooted seriously by Alexander McCorkindale, was given added im-

petus by the mining boom on the Witwatersrand; and the Pretoria government had for some time been hoping to acquire passage rights through the Swazi kingdom. The Portuguese administration saw a need to control access to its seaports and stole a march on the Republic by starting construction of a railway line from the capital to what is now the border town of Nomahasha. As a result, the extended stretch of lowland running east from the Lubombos to the sea acquired a new importance.

The first informal mission by the Portuguese to the Swazi king was in 1887 when two prospectors arrived at Mbekelweni with gifts, to let him know that they had a concession from their government to mine coal on the Lubombo. The king was far from pleased. He refused the gifts and told them that the lands on the Lubombo and as far east as the Maputo river were part of the Swazi kingdom. Some months later, in January 1888, a Portuguese official, Colonel Machado, arrived to try to resolve the dispute over the dividing line between the kingdom and the territory. The king extended traditional Swazi hospitality but rejected all Portuguese claims to the Lubombos or the lands to the east: "There was not the slightest tradition in the country of the Lebombos ever having been occupied by the Portuguese, and, furthermore, that the oldest men among them said that the whole territory as far as the Tembe had always belonged to Mossuata [Mswati II]."<sup>4</sup> Machado was insistent. He pointed out that the treaties between Portugal and the Republic controverted the Swazi claim, to which the king responded: When did the Boers occupy and administer the Lubombo to give them the right to give it away. Then Machado brought up the MacMahon award, and Mbandzeni asked: Was Swaziland represented at those negotiations; he did not even know about them until the prospectors came to him. Finally, Machado argued that the Lubombo was a hotbed of crime and violence and that the Swazi were unable to control it, but the Portuguese would undertake to do so.

Mbandzeni, confident of the Swazi position, took steps to secure it. In September 1887, he called on the British and South African Republic governments to cooperate in a boundary commission. In his message to President Paul Kruger he insisted, "The king cannot admit that the eastern boundary . . . terminates on the Lebombo, as neither by treaty or conquest has the Swazie nation been deprived of any territory to the eastward."<sup>5</sup> The British Foreign Office hesitated but eventually agreed, and a four-member commission was named. It comprised Lieutenant Colonel Rowley Martin as the British nominee and G. R. von Wielligh for the Republic; Portugal was represented by the governor of Lourenco Marques, Antonio de Vasconcellos, and Swaziland by the king's agent, Offy Shepstone.

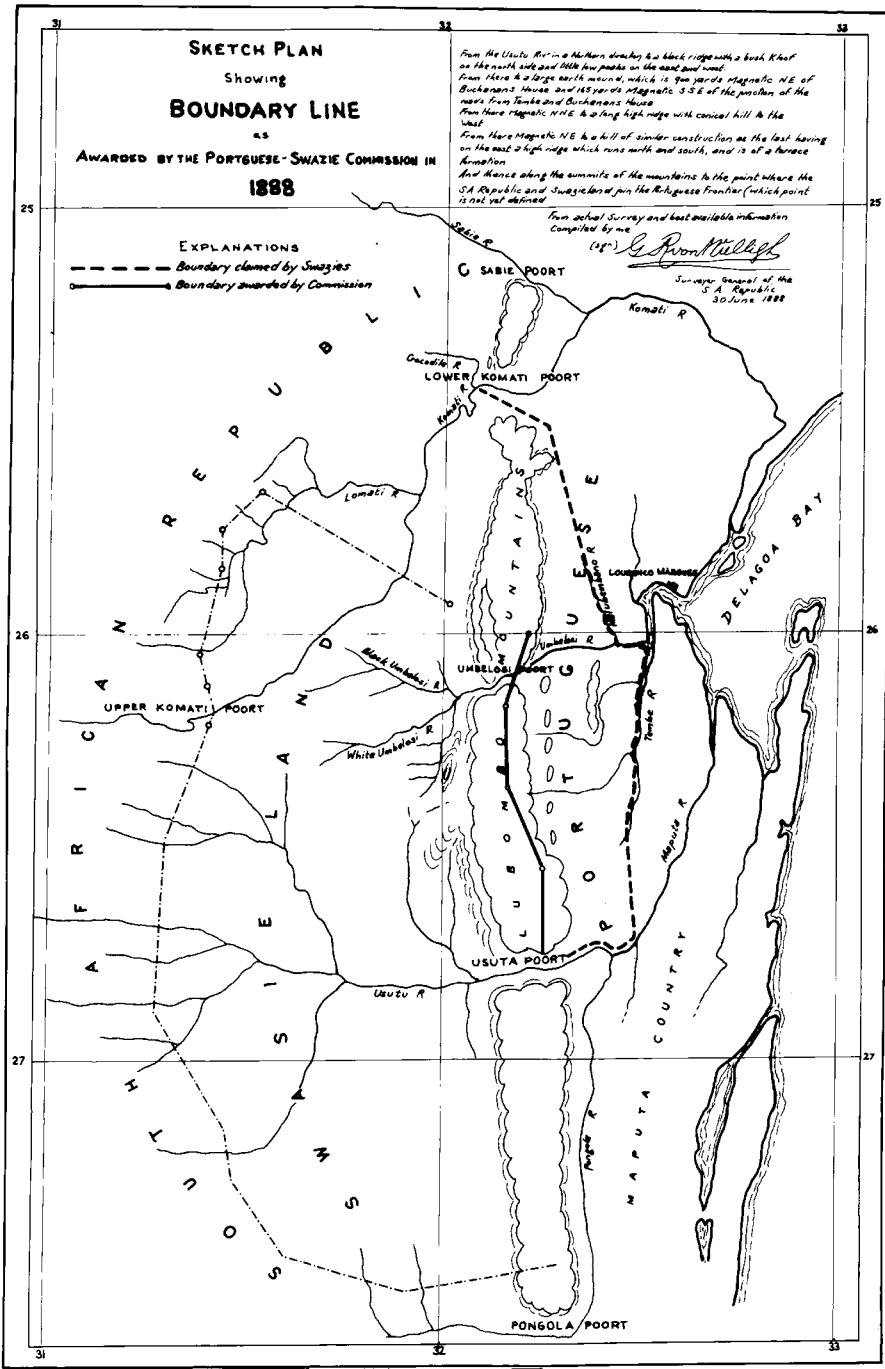
The commission assembled at Mananga, near the Komati river, at the beginning of June 1888 and, after some days examining documents tabled by the Portuguese governor, went up the escarpment to camp at a local



farm. There they remained for ten days, interviewing witnesses brought over by Shepstone—Swazi living on the upper ranges of the Lubombo and others from the eastern plains who claimed to be subjects of the Swazi king. From there they moved north along the ranges for on-site inspection, and von Wielligh, who was the Republic's surveyor-general, took bearings with a prismatic compass, to prepare a sketch of a proposed boundary line. By normal standards, the commission conducted a careful, probing enquiry, marred only by an incident when Mbandzeni arrived with his entourage.<sup>6</sup> Seeing men from the Matastu clan, traditionally linked to the Swazi, among the Portuguese group, he reprimanded them with threats of punishment. His action was ill-advised and may have prejudiced the Swazi case. De Vasconcellos was indignant and threatened to withdraw from the commission, especially as two Europeans in the king's party were "applauding the King's behaviour, and encouraging him in it."<sup>7</sup> Both men were known: Robert McNab as leader of a border smuggling gang and Thomas Rathbone as a sycophantic hanger-on at the king's headquarters. Shepstone attempted to play down the incident, saying it was "due to ignorance of civilized usages on the part of the king who was induced to behave as he did by the irresponsible whites who accompanied him."<sup>8</sup>

As the hearings proceeded, it became clear that Swaziland's case was by no means etched in stone. To strengthen the Portuguese case, the governor brought in witnesses to counter the evidence of Shepstone's witnesses. They held that although Mswati had raided their land, it had not been a conquest and the Dlamini king had no claim on them. The Portuguese governor put his faith in the documents—the alleged cessions of land to the Boers, treaties between the Republic and Portugal, and the MacMahon judgment. He argued that in spite of changes in governments and rulers, the documents had not been invalidated; and their net effect was to eliminate Swazi sovereignty over the disputed territory. Shepstone dismissed the argument: Swaziland was not a party to, not even consulted in, most of the agreements referred to: "How a nation can be bound by an award in a dispute between two Powers, in which dispute the nation was no party, and was not advised of, I cannot understand,"<sup>9</sup> he protested.

While the commission was divided on details, the real issue at stake was a question of principle: the relative weight to be given to oral as against documentary testimony. For de Vasconcellos and von Wielligh—and possibly Martin, who chaired the proceedings—the documents clearly weighed heavily in favor of the Portuguese claim; and Shepstone had not the resources at hand to refute them. Neither he nor his client, the king, made a persuasive case for the kingdom. At the time, relations between the two men were strained. There was a growing suspicion at the capitals that Shepstone, as king's agent, was not serving the kingdom faithfully. Accusations were made by influential concessionaires in the kingdom and were surely made known to Martin and von Wielligh. Then Mbandzeni, who appeared



Von Wielligh Sketch Map

as a witness, weakened by illness and the long trek through the lowveld, made a poor impression. His presentation was random and discrepant, not likely to persuade the commission.

To add to the negatives for Swaziland, diplomatic pressure appears to have been involved. The British Foreign Office, sensing possible opposition from Portugal, vetted the instructions sent to Martin, and the colonial secretary sent a cautionary note: "I am disposed to think that the fairest and most convenient decision . . . would be to declare the *summit* of the Lebombo range the boundary."<sup>10</sup> Martin was not prepared to rock the imperial boat: At the closing session of the commission, he concluded, "I am quite prepared to allow on the part of the British Government that the line should be the summit of the mountains."<sup>11</sup> Diplomatic concerns aside, subsequent events had a touch of irony: The British consul in Lisbon reported that the Portuguese government "did not seem to attach much importance to this issue,"<sup>12</sup> and a British War Office surveyor observed that von WIELIGH's sketch map of the proposed boundary was not only "inaccurate and unreliable"<sup>13</sup> but gave the Republic a slice of Swazi territory to which it had never made claim.

Notwithstanding, the commission's recommendations were a major setback for Swaziland. The boundary line eventually laid down denied the kingdom's claim to any portion of the Mozambique plains, the eastern face of the Lubombos, or even a substantial sector of the upper ranges. Yet the Swazi case was reasonable and well founded. But perhaps the king was overconfident in asking for a commission. Previous decisions on the western and southern boundaries should have given a warning of the risks entailed in seeking judgments outside the law and custom of the Swazi nation.

The commission, of course, was encumbered by its European outlook. Ancestral ties, *de facto* allegiance, or payments of tribute took second place to documented evidence—a token perhaps of a change in attitude on the part of the European powers during the later years of Mbandzeni's kingship. The Swazi were no longer seen to be equal partners in the body politic of the kingdom, so beyond their role as witnesses they had no part in the deliberations of the commission. This is not to impute bias to its members. It reflects, as much, weakened leadership at Mbekelwini and may explain the muted reaction within the kingdom to the commission's decisions. Mbandzeni's kingship was nearing its end; and a great deal of the kingdom's land and resources, and some of its dignity, had already been compromised in transactions with European concessionaires.

The eastern boundary commission did not complete its demarcation because in the northeast, where claims by Swaziland, the Republic, and the Portuguese administration conjoined, no survey had been made to fix a junction point. The Swazi contended that their lands ran eastward as far as the Maputo river—thence in a northerly direction to Bambai—and from

there followed a natural course along the eastern base of the mountains as far as Komati Poort. The Martin commission had gone north beyond Buchanan's farm and, as has been noted, projected "the summit of the ranges . . . nearest to Portuguese territory" as the boundary. Later observers found that what was intended by the commission was by no means certain: There were multiple summits and deep fissures along the northeastern ranges. Caught in a confusion of surveys, war, politics, and fluctuating claims to ownership, it took thirty-seven years—from 1890 to 1927—before a compromise solution was agreed upon.

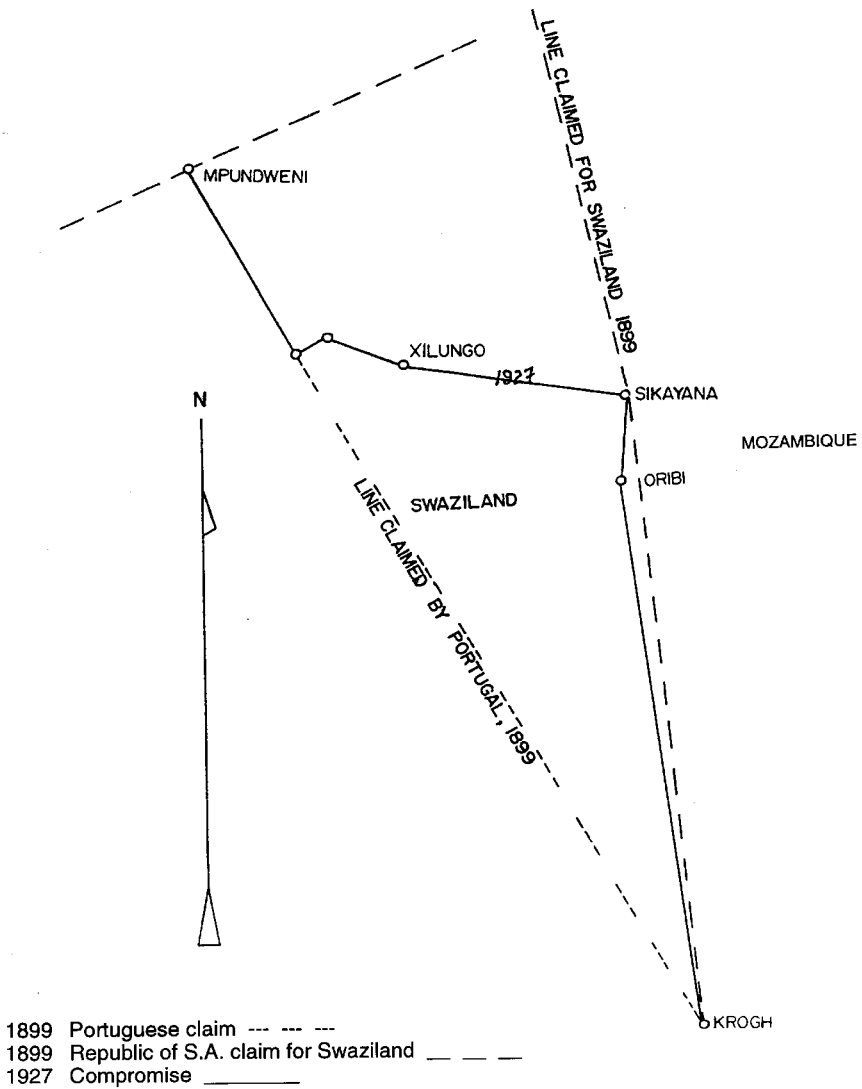
In July 1894, a joint Republic-Portugal survey commission was sent to the area. It selected Mpundweni Peak as the junction point, and the Portuguese fixed a beacon to the west of that. When in 1897 another joint commission was dispatched to complete the boundary, it included von Wielligh and Johannes Krogh, then serving as the Republic's commissioner in Swaziland. He objected to the placement of the Portuguese beacon in a report to the state secretary in Pretoria:

Your Commission regret to find that the Commission of 1894—have fixed the junction point of the boundaries at Impundweni, the western side of the Lebombo instead of the eastern side as was in the minds of the Commission of 1888. . . . This point was defined in 1894 . . . and we were therefore obliged to adhere thereto, but we are of opinion that a large part of Swaziland, possibly about thirty square miles, has thereby fallen into Portuguese territory.<sup>14</sup>

With that proviso, the 1897 team did fix a beacon at what it thought to be the northern point of Martin's expedition, but Shepstone asserted that the point selected was "dead wrong"—it was too far north. Von Wielligh drew a tentative line from that point (it came to be known as Krogh's beacon) to the Mpundweni beacon, but the government at Pretoria refused to accept it as a border line.

Complications set in when it was discovered that officials at Lourenco Marques did recognize the tentative line as being the boundary, and some Portuguese moved across to take possession. In effect, the line, carried diagonally across the mountains, cut off the northeast corner of Swaziland, including the chiefdom of Mahlalela, along with a number of sizable concessions granted by the Swazi king. At the outbreak of the South African war in 1899, the issue was still in dispute, and Portugal established a military post near Nomahasha. British concessionaires holding grants in the neighborhood complained to the High Commission that the Portuguese were encroaching on Swazi territory.

It was not until 1905 that the status of the northeast boundary came again to prominence. The issue then was not the boundary as such but a question of sorting out concessions. An attempt was made to strike a deal informally, but nothing came of it. Then a meeting with the Portuguese



Eastern Boundary Dispute (not to scale)

governor-general was arranged, and a barter proposal was offered, but that, too, failed. The British government was not pleased by the impasse and was almost prepared to concede to Portugal but Lord Selborne, the high commissioner, was adamantly opposed, and the matter was temporarily left to rest.

Apart from another cursory effort in 1908 to solve the boundary problem, nothing of consequence happened until 1917 when a press notice from

Lourenco Marques revived the issue. It reported that a township had been laid out at Nomahasha with sixty stands—all to be occupied within a year—and that the Portuguese administration intended to develop part of the area into a health resort. When appraised of this, the British government reminded Lisbon that the question of ownership had not been resolved. Portugal did not reply, and nothing more was heard of the matter for several years. Then, in 1919, a more ambitious plan was reported, including a summer residence for the governor-general. The British government again protested, and this time Portugal responded. Another joint inquiry was convened that included two members of the Swaziland administration. It met in July 1920. Separate survey teams, acting for each side, made a topographical survey, concluding that the 1888 definition did not conform to the claims of either party. A compromise was recommended that, with minor changes, was accepted by Lisbon and London; and a treaty was signed in October 1927.

Although in the northeast the Krogh-Mpundweni line was adjusted to meet part of the Swazi claim, the final arrangement leaned toward the Portuguese demand. In recommending acceptance, Lord Buxton, the high commissioner, reckoned that not more than 18,000 acres were lost by the kingdom—a dubious calculation. Viewed from the perspective of the 1888 survey, Swaziland suffered a serious abridgement of land and resources; and of chiefdoms whose allegiance to Swazi kings, past and present, was never in doubt.



## *Chapter 5*

# The Concessions Scramble

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British and Boer collaboration at the 1881 Pretoria conference and afterward effectively deprived the Swazi kingdom of much of its territory and resources. The tangled web of British-Boer relationships in southern Africa had loosened long enough to enable the Europeans to win mastery over the indigenous peoples; and although the Swazi had been reluctant pawns in the struggle, they became a principal victim. But the Swazi leadership was not entirely free from blame. As the kingdom's lands were depleted through border adjustments, the king, in concert with a number of chiefs, speeded the process by frittering away to European concessionaires a good deal of its remaining assets.

The concessions transactions were a near disaster for the Swazi. Toward the closing years of Mbandzeni's reign, the kingdom became, in almost all respects, a European dependency. From then on its destiny was fixed by the shifting balance of British and Boer economic and strategic interests in southern Africa. The Swazi, not yet well adjusted to political gamesmanship, stood by as witnesses, even at times as agents, to external bids for influence and gain. Central to the narrowing of the Swazi kingdom's independent role was the activity of European concessionaires.

This is not to say that the concessionaires came across the Swazi border with a concerted plan of action to undermine the Swazi or disrupt the kingdom. From the start, their aims were no more insidious than those of men and women who pushed back frontiers in the American and Canadian West. But the circumstances differed. In North America, the forces of law and order were never too far removed from frontier penetration. Swazi society had a traditional system of social restraints, but it was not identified



nor respected by the newcomers. Lacking resolute leadership, events in the kingdom were allowed to follow a wayward course.

The concessionaires were a mixed lot—for the most part, burghers and entrepreneurs, prospectors and speculators, along with a number of adventurers seeking quick rewards. Some were responsible and progressive in the classical mold of capitalist innovators who contributed much to the advancement of industrial societies during the second half of the nineteenth century; others were ne'er-do-wells possessed of neither capital nor capacity. They came from every sort of background: *trekboers* and farmers, honest men, troublemakers, and criminals, but many of them with modest means and commonplace ambitions. In a stable, confident kingdom, the influx of several hundred alien Europeans would have had little more than a ripple effect; but in the current state of Swazi society the effects were disquieting in the short run and in the long run catastrophic. In the course of less than a decade, between the late 1870s and 1890, concession grants were handed out so freely as to mock Boer and British commitments to the kingdom's sovereignty.

The concessions began innocently enough. Late in the 1860s, Mswati II granted to Conrad Vermaak, a *trekboer*-hunter, a very large tract of land situated in the southeast of present-day Swaziland and covering a portion of what is now the northeastern sector of the district of Piet Retief.<sup>1</sup> From the king's point of view, the grant was intended to be a defense against Zulu raids. To ensure that the grant conformed to Swazi custom, Vermaak is said to have been given the status of a chief.<sup>2</sup> No further grants were made during Mswati's or Ludvonga's chieftainships, and it was not until 1874, under the regency, that another *trekboer*-hunter, P. J. Coetzer, was given a land concession.<sup>3</sup> Several more followed, and in 1876, an extensive grant of land was made to F. I. Maritz and the Ferreira brothers, covering what later became the Little Free State.<sup>4</sup> By 1880, transactions were beginning in earnest, and during the next two years, a number of land grants were made, almost all to Boers but one to a man called Robertson in return for looking after the king's ostriches.<sup>5</sup>

From the beginning, the pattern was fairly simple: surface rights were granted over the land, for grazing or farming or both, continuing for fifty years and generally renewable for another fifty, with the sovereignty of the Swazi king over the ceded territory reserved.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the land concessions were made within the framework of Swazi law and custom. Mbandzeni's councillors were certainly aware of what they were doing; to surmise otherwise is to belittle the intelligence of men like Sandlane Zwane, whose mark appeared on some of the documents.<sup>7</sup> By the same token, the Boers could not but have been conversant with traditional customs, and there is no evidence that, at that stage, claims to ownership were made or other challenges contemplated.

By Swazi custom all land was the common property of the people, held in trust for them and allocated under the authority of the king and chiefs. No one, not even the king, could alienate the land; and when allocations were made, either by king or chief, the sanction of the appropriate council was required.<sup>8</sup> This formula was so commonplace in the way of life of the Ngwane-Swazi that no pretense of confusion or misunderstanding can seriously be taken from either side, Swazi or European. While the sovereignty of the king was clearly specified in the documents, the wording did not adequately express the Swazi concept of common ownership by the nation. The written contracts were not, of course, prepared by Swazi or at their request. They were asked for by the concessionaires and drawn up by themselves or by official draftsmen. For Mbandzeni and the chiefs, a verbal commitment was the norm; “the word,” once affirmed, was binding, and paper documents were, at best, irrelevant. This was the crux of difficulties that followed: a clash between customary law as understood and practiced by the Swazi and the Roman-Dutch *corpus juris* of the Europeans—hence the Swazi assertion that “the papers killed us.”

Even so, there was no ambiguity on this point in the written documents. A typical reservation, repeated in other deeds of sale, appears in the mining grant given to Alexander Murray (February 24, 1887) by Mbandzeni: “In making this grant or Concession, I do not alienate from my Kingdom this or any portion of it, but reserve intact the sovereignty of my dominion.”<sup>9</sup> If there was any question at the time, the king dispelled it in a strong message to the European community when tensions between Boers and Britons were building to a crisis: “I have not sold you the ground, you have simply got a lease of it,”<sup>10</sup> he told them plainly; and there was no dissent. Again, a statement by Swazi chiefs that the king “had the same power over White people as he had over the natives—if they gave offence, he could turn them out”<sup>11</sup> clearly reflects the Swazi position.

It was not until 1882 that concessions began to be extended beyond a simple land grant. A dozen or more were approved by the king in that year, and several went beyond the standard pattern, providing a right to dig for precious metals. This privilege was first given to two Britons, Thomas MacLachlan and Walter Carter, who in 1879 had discovered pockets of gold along the Phoponyane riverbed, not far from present-day Ntfontjeni.<sup>12</sup> A minor gold rush was soon set in motion that lasted the better part of the decade, and a number of mining companies started production, with varying success.

The MacLachlan-Carter grant became a prototype for other mining ventures, frequently providing for ancillary rights. A mining concession necessarily involved the use of land, and the rights conceded soon began to overlap on the ground. A parcel of land given to a Boer, for example, could be partly overlaid afterward by a mining concession given to a Briton; and since the activities envisaged were not compatible (a complaint was

made to the king that he was permitting the British to dig holes for Boer cattle to fall into), friction between the two parties inevitably followed. Through time, the overlapping of interests got completely out of hand—so much so that a commission of inquiry found some concessions “three and four deep over portions of the same area.”<sup>13</sup> No one could be sure that a Swazi, working his allocation, was not infringing on one or more European claims. To be sure, some grants did include a clause enjoining the grantee to respect the rights of indigenous Swazi, and the evidence suggests that responsible burghers honored that provision.<sup>14</sup>

Between Vermaak’s initial lease and the end of 1889, at least 376 concessionary grants were made:<sup>15</sup> 180 to the Boers and to a few others living in Boer settlements near the border; 191 to Britons and to other Europeans associated with them; and 5 to expatriate Swazi from Natal, several of whom had connections with the Dlamini household.<sup>16</sup> During the first few years, most concessions were for grazing purposes and farming, and it was not until 1886 that they began to cover, in significant numbers, mining and trading. After Offy Shepstone’s appointment as resident agent early in 1887, transactions entered a new phase, diverting from land and minerals to sweeping claims of monopoly. Less than two years later, Shepstone was temporarily deposed, but the concessions boom did not abate. On the contrary, most of the monopolies as well as other improbable grants were given under the avowedly cleansing influence of the “white committee.”<sup>17</sup>

Basically, the concessions can be reduced to two categories: some 250 land grants, mostly with fixed terms but a number giving perpetual rights whose meaning was never clarified; and the remainder, mining and monopoly concessions of various kinds. The land grants went predominantly to Boers, but Britons gathered up some seventy-five. Mining and monopoly grants were generally a British preserve; mining companies were started, most with inadequate capital; and only a few, such as the Forbes Reef Mining Company, were successful. In practical terms, the intermix of land and mining grants gave rise to problems, not only because there was some overlapping but because secondary rights stipulated in some contracts held up the working of a claim. More important perhaps, it caused jealousy and hostility between Boers and Britons, exaggerating suspicions and bringing on a near-anarchic situation that the king and council were not able to control.

Most damaging to the Swazi kingdom, in the long term, were the monopoly concessions, for they placed in private alien hands ownership of service operations essential to the kingdom’s exercise of sovereignty. From the Swazi point of view, the land-related claims were subject to customary usage and could be abrogated; but service operations became private monopolies outside Swazi experience. Neither the king nor his council seem

to have understood that in granting them, they were giving to European interests effective control over substantial areas of administration.

Among the more extreme examples of irresponsible concessions (and there are many to choose from) was the series of monopolies given in 1889 to J. R. Harington, who had already been granted the sole right to provide postal services throughout the kingdom and a monopoly in granting licenses. He obtained the right to collect the king's private revenue (July 6, 1889), that is, income from concession rentals, taxes, duties, and all other public charges normally associated with government. In return for this concession, the king was entitled to £12,000 a year, provided the revenues reached that figure—a princely sum at the time. This concession was central afterward in attempts to sort out the confused state of the kingdom's finances and became a source of grievance in the Dlamini household. It gave its holder abnormal sway over the revenues of the kingdom, and it ended up in the hands of the Republic.<sup>18</sup>

No less critical were the extensive privileges given to John Thorburn. He was a longtime resident of the kingdom, a confidant and friend of the king, and an influential member of the European community. Through his possession of the "unallotted lands" concession, shared with Frank Watkins (July 26, 1889), he obtained virtual control over nearly one-sixth of the total land area of the kingdom: the whole of the unassigned territory south of the Komati river and all lapsed, forfeited, or abandoned farming and grazing rights anywhere in the country. He had already been given the "unallotted minerals" concession (December 22, 1888), giving him exclusive rights to prospect and dig for minerals and precious stones on land in any part of the kingdom where concessions had lapsed or had not yet been granted. Added to this, Thorburn and his family obtained important holdings in mines, trading, and banking that netted him, by any measure, a handsome fortune.<sup>19</sup> Corporate interests eventually bought out the Thorburn holdings along with other family investments, prompting an official note that they had gained "enormous interests in Swaziland."<sup>20</sup>

A later report, part of an official inquiry into concession dealings, traced the process of escalating corporate ownership by outside interests:

In the years 1888 and 1889 sundry Concessions were obtained by John Thorburn and others from the Swazi King and Council. These . . . were subsequently disposed of, either in whole or in part, to a small Syndicate in London, with a capital of £2,000. In June, 1891, this small Syndicate was absorbed into a Company, which was incorporated on 29th June, 1891, in London, under the name of the "Umbandine Swaziland Concession Syndicate," having a share capital of £50,000. This Syndicate Company acquired sundry Concessions, or portions thereof, numbering fifteen in all. Thereafter the Umbandine syndicate parted with its interests in Swaziland to a new company, named the "Swaziland Corporation, Limited," having a

nominal capital of £300,000. . . . It is to be noted that all these transactions were effected while practically nothing was done in Swaziland under the Concessions.<sup>21</sup>

Two enterprising traders, Albert Bremer and Gustav Schwab, were given the right to import all manner of goods free of duty and taxes. Bremer already had a hotel and merchandising outlet on a tract of land that included part of the present city of Manzini. Schwab was given a personal concession by the king under somewhat bizarre circumstances—a hurriedly written note in the trader's "imperfect English" on the day before the Government Committee instituted an import levy—giving him the right to transfer goods from Delagoa Bay through Swaziland to his store at Darby. After the king's death, he opened an outlet at Bremersdorp and succeeded in forcing Bremer's store to the wall. These duty-free concessions kept commodity prices high in the kingdom as well as depriving the local administration of revenue; it was later estimated that Schwab's annual profit from his retail stores and trading came close to £4,000 sterling.

Among the more successful of the mining operations was that of the Forbes family. James Forbes, a pioneer settler in the New Scotland district, obtained a grant of land from the king, consisting of some eighty square miles situated between present-day Mbabane and Piggs Peak, ostensibly for mining but giving him control over any profit-making activity within the area of the concession.<sup>22</sup> The Forbes enterprise prospered through fortunate gold diggings and careful management, and its founder became a trusted adviser to Mbandzeni and the council. Forbes and Thorburn probably topped the list of wealthy concessionaires and were certainly influential behind the scenes. Both took exception to the appointment of Shepstone and disparaged his activities. Shepstone himself did not do badly in the concessions scramble but not as well as his critics charged him with.

Not all concessionaires were enriched by their holdings. Many of the land grants were never taken up, and rentals, however small, were not paid. A majority of the mining grants were purely speculative, the grantees having neither the capital nor the expertise to work them. Eventually, the Republic bought, through private agents, a number of service monopolies—a precautionary move in its quest for Swazi annexation. It also purchased from individual concessionaires land grants and a mining concession. These monopolies included vital public functions—customs, licenses, telegraph, postal, and railway services, in addition to the king's private revenue concession—and gave to the Republic's government pervasive control of the kingdom's public economy. It should be noted that none of those concessions were granted directly to Pretoria by Mbandzeni; they were purchased from original or secondary holders, and it is unlikely that the king knew what was quietly taking place.

No phase of Swazi history has been as fully documented as the concessions scramble. Criticism has variously been meted out to Mbandzeni, Offy Shepstone, and the concessionaires. All three must share a portion of the blame. The king entered the game willingly, albeit unwittingly, and played his cards with a gambler's instinct; and he walked away with substantial winnings.<sup>23</sup> The evidence makes it clear that the king did not act alone; members of the Dlamini family and prominent chiefs and headmen accepted bribes to act as agents for concessionaires, and those who out of reverence for the past stood apart or voiced their disapproval fell into disfavor. Sandlane Zwane's "killing off"<sup>24</sup> was not unconnected with his remonstrances over concession grants and his opposition to the "white committee."

Offy Shepstone's name is invariably linked to the concessions. Although he may have started his work as king's agent with good intentions, the opportunities for self-aggrandizement were too tempting for him to pass them by. He had what the king lacked: experience in government, training and practice in the law, and familiarity in dealing with Briton, Boer, and Zulu. But his handling of concession contracts was careless and sometimes short of probity; and he had not the strength of character needed to restrain the king or to prevent malpractices by concessionaires. Recent studies, however, have tended to place an undue burden of guilt on Offy Shepstone's shoulders. The concessions marathon was well on the way before he came to Swaziland, and by the end of 1886, some seventy grants had already been made. In spite of favorable contracts, he did not profit much from his handling of concession transactions.<sup>25</sup> Still, he was self-serving and appears to have been uncommonly self-delusive.

Concession hunting was not, of course, a new phenomenon. "Staking a claim" had been endemic in the North American West and was common practice on the Rand and in the eastern Transvaal; and many of those who crossed the border into Swaziland were experienced foragers. A distinction must be made, however, between the first Boer arrivals and those who followed. The Boers wanted pastureland on the Swaziland highveld as grazing ground for their sheep and cattle during the winter months. For the king and certain chiefs, it brought gifts and income in return for grazing privileges. But when challenged by an influx of British concessionaires, the acquisitive spirit of the Boers did not long remain subliminal. It may not be surprising, then, that between 1887 and 1889, when the mining boom was under way, a rush for land titles took place. Verbal agreements and squatter rights were translated into written petitions for long leases or permanent occupation. In fairness, it must be said that the Boers frequently acted only to protect their claim. Yet their reputation for taking over African lands in stages—temporary holdings converted to claims of ownership

and followed by exclusive possession—was already well established in the Cape and the Transvaal.

There was a distinction, furthermore, in the attitude of Boer and British concessionaires to their respective governments. Burghers and graziers who took up land in Swaziland were more or less detached from the authority of the Republic, behaving, in certain instances, as if it did not exist. They ignored Kruger's request that they not take possession of the area that later became the Little Free State, and after the establishment of the "white committee" and their estrangement from it, they saw their interests threatened. They turned for redress, not to Pretoria but to Mbekelweni and the Swazi king. "We are a deputation sent by a number of grazing holders and residents," they informed Mbandzeni. "We are told by them to say that we do not recognize the [white] Committee. We only recognize the king and Councillors. . . . We want things to be as they were in olden times."<sup>26</sup>

British subjects, on the other hand, held firmly to their imperial ties. Martin's correspondence is replete with reports and complaints that, he thought, should properly be relayed to the High Commission. To these concessionaires, as to him, the British connection was never in doubt. Yet the records rarely give attention to concession abuses; and it may be significant that when the Pretoria government began to gather up existing concessions, its agents and clients were, for the most part, British concessionaires.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the situation in Swaziland can be seen as a replication, on a smaller scale, of what was already taking place on the Rand, where the confluence of gold and politics was creating a void in the public interest. In a note to the High Commission, the British agent in Pretoria reflected: "I do not suppose that the rogues of Swaziland are much deeper in iniquity than the concessionaires of the . . . Republic but even the little leaven which exists in the . . . Republic appears to be lacking in Swaziland."<sup>28</sup>

The passive reaction of British and Boer officials to what was taking place in Swaziland became an embarrassment to both later on—to be explained away by placing the blame on the Swazi themselves for permitting the king and chiefs to deprive them of their heritage. Before 1889, no serious effort was made by either the British or Republic government to dispel the confusion over concessions. The "Swaziland question" was taken to be an internal matter arising from the conflicting interests of Boers and Britons, with lurking in the background fractious Swazi who were said to be getting out of hand.

Following the death of Mbandzeni, when the mists of mourning had begun to lift, the stark reality of what had happened was beginning to dawn on the regency and chiefs. Safeguards built up over generations by custom and through isolation were close to being in ruins; and the machinations of Boers and Britons could lead to a complete takeover. To the conces-

sionaires, on the other hand, the apparent instability of traditional rule was seen to be a threat to their concession holdings. It was left to the de Winton report of 1890, with its strong European bias, to put forward a remedy: What was needed in Swaziland, it said, was an externally imposed solution that could ease the way to stableness, calm the agitation of the Swazi, and enable settlers and investors to progress and prosper.

The 1890 Convention carried on from there. The European community in the kingdom would be given legal status, having security in the “rule of law,” empowered by Britain and the Republic. Afterward, the problem of concessions, along with other irregular manifestations, could be dealt with in a systematic way. The transition would be carried out in stages: first, improvements in the kingdom’s administrative arrangements, set up in 1884; then the creation of a special court to pass judgment on the validity of the concessions, and finally, a guarantee from the regency of Swazi compliance, to be made public by an organic proclamation.<sup>29</sup>

A concessions court was appointed without delay. Three experienced advocates accepted appointment—Chief justice Kotze and J. du Toit from the Republic and H. Juta from the Cape Colony. The court began hearings in Swaziland at the beginning of October 1890 and carried on until mid-December; afterward, du Toit acted alone. The mandate of the court was to “undertake judicial enquiry into the validity of disputed concessions, as soon as the Swazi government shall have framed and proclaimed a list of those concessions which it approves of.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, the court should investigate those claims brought to it by the regency. Shepstone, as the regency’s agent, brought forward two lists after first disallowing 23 claims on the grounds that they were palpably fake. Of the 367 claims submitted, only 3 were rejected by the court; all three were said to be contrary to public morals.

Reaction to the decisions of the concessions court was mixed. Apart from those whose claims had been rejected, concessionaires were jubilant. Boer and British officials were pleased that justice had at last been seen to have been done; while the queen-regent and council, pointing out that they had no part in either the appointment of the court or its deliberations, disavowed the process.<sup>31</sup> The nearly unanimous approval given by the court did, however, raise questions. Critics argued that Swazi concerns had not been adequately addressed: The court had narrowed its mandate to a skeletal minimum, confining the question of validity to form divorced from context. Judge Kotze later defended the court’s interpretation: “The court has no power to disallow a concession as being against the public interest, nor jurisdiction to enquire into the effects of a concession, unless it can be shown that the concession is contrary to Roman-Dutch law as in force in South Africa.”<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the mandate of the court was intended to be narrow. The 1890



Convention was itself a compromise, a balancing of pressures by the two external governments that gave little weight to the interests of the Swazi. The court was not requested to carry out a probing inquiry but to confine itself to disputed concessions laid before it. No member of the regency could read, and the evidence was laid down in written documents. Throughout the hearings, oral depositions were rarely asked for.

The decisions of the concessions court were never successfully challenged. After the South African war, when Britain assumed responsibility for the kingdom, the Swazi leadership looked forward to a remittal; but the response of the British government did not admit a possibility of a review: "These concessions have been validated by the Court established for their examination under the Convention of 1890, and Great Britain, which was party to that Convention, remains, under all contingencies, bound to respect them."<sup>33</sup> In other words, the issue was foreclosed, and the British government was of no mind to have it reopened. As time went on, the decisions of the concessions court took on a quality of immutability—a convenient screen behind which unpalatable facts of history could be concealed.

## *Chapter 6*

# Independence Fades

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The 1880s were not easy years for the Swazi. Invasion scares, delimiting boundaries, foreigners moving in on chiefdom lands, vendettas, and uncertain leadership at the capitals—all combined to sap the nation's confidence. By the end of the decade, the cumulative effect was to put an end to the kingdom's independence. If a beginning can be fixed as a point in time, it may, perhaps, be found in the Boer-British Conventions—Pretoria in 1881 and London in 1884—for it was then that direct involvement by the two external powers in the governance of the kingdom was instituted as policy.<sup>1</sup> Domestic problems were abrasive in the short term, whereas intrusions by the Europeans had lasting consequences; but they cannot be separated. The reluctance of the Swazi leadership to stand up to the concessionaires was conditioned not only by their failure to take stock of what was happening but, even more, by their recognition that the kingdom had no hope of winning in a struggle with the European powers. Their strategy of playing one against the other, which worked in past years, was no longer opportune.

Foreign involvement in the kingdom's affairs was a bellwether of what were to become basic concerns: Which societal tendency, African or European, was likely to take precedence? For the Swazi, the question was how to meet the challenges, not just of land and resources falling into alien hands but the risk of creeping acculturation accompanying the process.

Just as the rise of industrialism swept away many of the conventions of an agrarian society in western Europe, so the concessionaires ushered in new trends in living, behavior, and work, until then not native to the Swazi. When Allister Miller, the most articulate voice of the European community, berated the Swazi for their backwardness and lazy habits, he looked to an

influx of British settlers to balance the scale toward a “civilized” work-oriented way of life. Miller and the majority of Europeans with residence or interests in the kingdom could neither identify nor acknowledge the presence of values in the customs they were anxious to replace. But the Swazi experience of European customs and values during the 1880s was hardly such as to conduce to mass conversion.

From 1884 until the shared administration of the kingdom ended ten years later,<sup>2</sup> Swaziland was racked by rumors and reports of violence. While some were fictional and others exaggerated, there is ample evidence that the situation was serious and that the kingdom was in danger of becoming ungovernable. Complaints of Boer transgressions began soon after the signing of the Conventions. In January 1886, the secretary for native affairs at Pietermaritzburg, Henriques Shepstone, reviewed a list of formal complaints brought to his notice since 1882. The accusations were serious: stealing cattle (more than 2,000 during 1885–86 alone), levying taxes on Swazi border residents, shifting boundary beacons inside the line confirmed by the Conventions, and worst of all, carrying off children to be indentured in the Republic.<sup>3</sup> “The Boers who are complained of are three in number,” he wrote, “and are all three officers of the Transvaal Government, and do what they have done in the name of that Government.”<sup>4</sup> The men complained of did hold official appointments. J. J. Ferreira was border commissioner at Wakkerstroom and maintained an armed police force as well as having authority to adjudicate disputes. Abel Erasmus and Franz Joubert were field cornets in the district of Lydenburg. These men, and others, became a scourge to Swazi living in border areas, and their hostility worried the king and council. It is improbable that the Pretoria government condoned their activities, and their reputation for pressing down the Swazi may have been magnified by rumor. However, records of the period are so filled with accounts of Swazis being harassed that it cannot be doubted that intimidation was used.

There were, of course, denials and countercharges from the Boers: Only Swazi living on the Republic’s side of the border were taxed, beacons had not been touched, and cattle were taken for failure to pay taxes. The Republic’s response to Swazi complaints was generally halfhearted, and some of the inquiries made were patently a whitewash. The authorities in Natal, in turn, did little more than try to reassure the Swazi. Natal had its own recalcitrant minority, and, as was pointed out, the Republic could no more control the actions of headstrong Boers living near the Swazi border than the Natal administration could keep in line wayward Britons who flouted the law in parts of the colony.

Toward the end of 1886, Henriques Shepstone was urging that a formal inquiry be commissioned, and others were calling on Britain to annex the kingdom. Sir Hercules Robinson, the high commissioner, was against any

British involvement, professing that “the inaccessability of Swaziland is conclusive against our either establishing a protectorate over the territory or annexing it.”<sup>5</sup> He broached the idea of a Boer protectorate with the British government standing by in *locus standi*. That idea gradually gained support in colonial circles—dispose of the Swaziland problem by letting the Boers take over the kingdom.

Rumors of an intended Boer invasion were frequently heard in the kingdom. In January 1887, a report was circulated that Stoffel Tosen was coming in with a party of Boer freebooters.<sup>6</sup> Later in the year, Tosen did come to Mbekelweni, accompanied by a few burghers and graziers. They spoke strongly against the “white committee.” If the king was not prepared to rule his country by himself, they threatened to establish a committee of Boers to safeguard their interests in the kingdom. More rumors were spread, each more ominous than the other. An army of 8,000 men was said to be massing at the western border. The king and council were alarmed and contacted Pretoria, and Kruger asked Johannes Krogh, then at Wakkerstroom, for an explanation. The rumors were “the grossest untruths,” Krogh replied: “I declare with a clear conscience that I have never sent a message or never have said to the King, or to anyone else, that I, this Government, or someone else, would or wished to send a commando to Swaziland.”<sup>7</sup> Kruger followed with an angry telegram to Robinson: “This Government much regret that so much notice is taken of unfounded rumours and communications which are circulated solely for the purpose of creating difficulties between this Government and yours.”<sup>8</sup>

A peaceful settlement of Swaziland’s problems remained elusive. By mid-summer 1887, the king informed Pretoria that Boer extremists were harassing other Boers on their grazing grounds. Henriques Shepstone warned that the Swazi were reaching the limit of their patience; they were confident and feeling their strength, he said; and should they move against Europeans in the kingdom, consequences could be grave. But a mission dispatched from Pretoria to investigate complaints found no cause for alarm or evidence of Swazi unrest. After a cursory inquiry, it concluded, “[I]t appears that no thefts or deeds of violence or acts of rebellion were committed by white men.”<sup>9</sup> In November, the *Barberton Herald* reported fresh dangers: Some 700 Boers, under Krogh’s command, were gathering at the border. A week later, the *Natal Witness* quoted a correspondent as saying the reports were “sensational and false”; no threat had ever existed. Then the *Cape Argus* carried an item that Kruger had delegated Krogh, “a moderate man and most excellent officer,” to look into the Swazi situation.

There were genuine reasons for alarm, nonetheless. Parts of the western border were virtually under siege. A meeting of some 200 Boers was reported to have been held at Apfel’s farm to plan for a Swazi takeover. Whether the meeting did take place is not certain, but when word of it reached the president, he wired the High Commission that the situation

was under control. Meanwhile within the kingdom, Boer and British differences continued to be strained. The “white committee,” taken in hand by Thorburn and Rathbone, appeared to be moribund, and in February 1889, following a confusing period of intrigues, Shepstone was replaced by Allister Miller as king’s agent—a victory for his detractors.

More disturbing for the Swazi, the capitals were in turmoil. At Christmas 1888, a number of senior councillors, including Chief Minister Zwane, were summarily put to death, accused of plotting to replace the king. The nation was profoundly shaken by this turn of events, and the ensuing weeks were said to have been disorderly and violent. The concessionaires were anxious but divided: the Boers looking toward Pretoria for annexation and the British petitioning London for a protectorate. By late spring 1889, the kingdom was virtually paralyzed. The king had been seriously ill since October and was “said to be in a critical state.”<sup>10</sup> The elder Theophilus Shepstone, devoid of influence but watching the Swazi scene from the bleachers in Natal, was pessimistic: “What turn events, which seem to be marching quickly, may take in that country,” he wrote to the Natal governor, “it is not possible to foretell: the only certainty is, that change must come.”<sup>11</sup> The change, when it did come, drew the curtain on Swazi autonomy.

Three separate but related events contributed to the uncertainty of the period. In February 1887, Offy Shepstone was formally appointed by Mbandzeni to serve as king’s agent in the management of European affairs. The following year the so-called white committee was given a charter by the king. Then a presumed cabal of chiefs and councillors were “killed off” or forced to leave the country, charged with conspiring against the king.

Different explanations have been given as to the circumstances surrounding Offy Shepstone’s appointment. The second son of Theophilus Shepstone,<sup>12</sup> he served briefly in the Natal House of Assembly and was reputed to be versatile in African languages. His introduction to Swaziland was as a speculator.<sup>13</sup> He arrived at Mbekelweni in November 1886, and as Mbandzeni’s kraal was always open to visitors, a welcome for the son of *Somtseu* (his father’s Zulu name) was assured. Thus there began for him at the age of forty-three, a relationship that opened the way to a new and promising career. An effort was made to get him appointed as British commissioner, but neither the governor of Natal nor the high commissioner was prepared to recommend that, so he was given a personal appointment by the Swazi king.<sup>14</sup> At an impressive gathering of the nation in February 1887, he was shown to the people as the king’s agent in matters affecting concessionaires.

He began his task with an attempt at conciliation. He agreed to the formation of a committee to advise on concessions problems, but the Boers were suspicious and, with a few exceptions, did not participate. From the beginning, therefore, the die was cast for trouble. Burghers and graziers,

then in for winter pasturing, far outnumbered British residents, and in spite of the imbalance, a committee was elected. Problems soon developed, and a second meeting was called three months later. Again the Boers failed to take part, but the Britons asked the king for official recognition. This was granted after long delay by the council, and the “white committee” was given the king’s blessing.<sup>15</sup> It was not meant to be a form of “indirect rule,” the norm elsewhere in British colonial Africa, and the charter grant provided for its levying and collecting taxes, duties, and fines and making and enforcing laws and regulations. Although it had a restrictive clause—it could “in no way interfere in matters in which our nation’s subjects only are concerned”—it did appear to be an intromission into the traditional governing role.

Although it was primarily an instrument for British residents, the “white committee” was divisive and partisan. The Boers were aware of this and tended to blame Shepstone, as king’s agent. Influential Britons soon took up the theme and formed what amounted to an anti-Shepstone lobby, working assiduously to undermine his influence with the king. Eventually, the king gave way, persuaded that monies collected from concession rentals were not being paid to him. Shepstone was dismissed; but he refused to go or to give up the records of his stewardship. Allister Miller was named to take over as king’s agent,<sup>16</sup> a new executive was appointed, dominated by the critics, and the conduct of affairs moved swiftly from bad to worse. Two weeks after taking office, the executive sent a petition to Natal, signed by the king and only five members of the Swazi council, urging that Britain declare a protectorate over Swaziland. When Kruger was informed, he expressed “the greatest astonishment. . . . [I]t is entirely in conflict with the messages which Umbandine sends to me. Umbandine does not know and understand what a Protectorate means.”<sup>17</sup> The king was then in a weakened state: worn down by illness, facing an uneasy council, and risking the displeasure of *Somtseu* over his son’s dismissal.

Before that happened, however, another incident took place at the king’s headquarters that threatened to divide the nation. Shortly before Christmas 1888, it was reported that a conspiracy had been “smelled out” at the capitals. Its object was to get rid of the king and replace him with his half brother, Nkopolo. The alleged pretender fled the country, but his accused accomplices, including the king’s chief minister, were put to death according to Swazi custom. The news sent shock waves through the kingdom. It was followed by a spate of raids and “killings off,” said to be directed from Mbekelweni. Miller, as king’s agent, sent a message to Natal justifying the action taken; and messengers were sent to explain the situation to Kruger, who was then at Piet Retief. “High treason” was the charge: The king’s life had been at stake, and those found guilty at a “fair trial” and on the evidence of “reliable witnesses” had been punished by “severe and decisive action.”<sup>18</sup> What actually happened is not certain, but it is doubtful if that

was a truthful account. It is hardly plausible that the speedy dispatch of the alleged conspirators could have been preceded by a trial with witnesses.

There were aspects of the incident that raised suspicion. The conspiracy was discovered while Shepstone was absent from his base, and most of the victims were among his Swazi supporters. John Gama, a Shepstone loyalist, gave a different version: "Umbandine fell ill and sent Shepstone to the border of Swaziland about certain cattle, and meanwhile had Bulaan, Sandhlaan, Juabo, Kobaba, Makabeen, Sutaambo, and Kopola (with all their servants and children) killed. It was pretended that these Chiefs wished to depose Umbandeen, but this was not true."<sup>19</sup> Nkopolo, the alleged pretender, was thought to be antiwhite, opposed to concession grants and the king's intimacy with British advisers. His attitude was known, and he was not, by any chance, the favorite prince of the Europeans. Miller was almost gleeful at the turn of events. His diary records that a sigh of relief passed through the European community when it was learned that Nkopolo had been driven into exile. "The white people," he wrote, "feel perfectly safe so long as Umbandine remains on the throne."<sup>20</sup> At all events, Governor Havelock and President Kruger received the news with surprising equanimity. The king was congratulated on his escape, but there was no moralizing, as happened later with his son Bhunu, about the "killings off."

A proposal for British-Boer cooperation in settling the affairs of the Swazi kingdom was first broached by the South African Republic but was not then taken up.<sup>21</sup> The British were reluctant to act in what could be seen as a contravention of Swazi independence in terms of the Conventions. There was also a suspicion, never fully dispelled, that the Boers were following their own agenda for ultimate dominion over the kingdom. But there were other pressures at work, in southern Africa and in Britain, to persuade a more direct involvement by both parties. Toward the close of the 1880s, the composition of concession holdings differed significantly from the initial stages. The Boers were no longer just part-time tenants in Swaziland; many of them were now permanent settlers, and while some, especially in the Shiselweni district, were stalked by poverty and a marginal existence on their farms, others prospered sufficiently to have a substantial stake in the kingdom's future.

The British outlook differed. Settlers and traders and those who had not sold out their monopoly rights looked for the protection of the imperial government. The largest concentration of British capital was in mining, which required a heavy investment in machinery as well as technical expertise—both beyond the reach of many concession claimants. The twenty or so independent mining companies that started operating were taken over by large corporations with control vested in external directors. By the end of the 1880s, British investment in Swaziland was reckoned to be in excess of £2 million sterling. Unrest and discord in the kingdom were seen to be

a threat to that investment, as was the opposition of burghers to British-controlled interests. Following the assassinations, concerned investors contacted the High Commission and Colonial Office; and the London Chamber of Commerce and its Edinburgh counterpart sought an interview with the colonial secretary to plead their case.

A dozen or more British enterprises with investments in Swaziland added their voices. For different reasons, the Aborigines Protection Society in London shuddered at the prospect of handing the Swazi over to the Boers. Nearer home, Jacob Eckstein, a wealthy Johannesburg middleman, informed the high commissioner that his clients, representing large property interests in Swaziland, had made their investment under the protective umbrella of the 1884 Convention; and since that investment consisted largely of English capital, it must be safeguarded in any settlement of the kingdom's future. A petition reputedly from Swaziland's leading entrepreneurs, but many of them from outside the kingdom, urged the British government to reopen the terms of the Conventions so that "the form of the future government of Swaziland"<sup>22</sup> could be reexamined.

While pressure was being exerted in defense of British capital, the Republic was not idle. As early as January 1887, the Swazi were visited by two senior officials from the government: Piet Joubert, the vice president, and N. J. Smit from the *volksraad*. They discussed border troubles with the king, suggesting that annexing the kingdom to the Republic could put an end to such problems. Pretoria's apparent tolerance of border violations resulted, inevitably, in growing Swazi mistrust. Yet the majority of Boer concessionaires appear to have had a good relationship with their Swazi neighbors. When a question of the king's impartiality was raised at a public meeting of Europeans, Zwane responded sharply: "The king has no preference for any particular class of white people. He liked them all, English and Dutch; the white people were all the same. If any trouble rose in the country it would be amongst and be caused by the white people themselves."<sup>23</sup> Still, the reputation of the Boers was tarnished by the excesses of a few. Public opinion in Swaziland, and more forcefully outside the kingdom, latched on to rumors and negative reports, accusing the Boers of warped ambitions and sustained atrocities.

By December 1888, ructions within the European community had not abated. The Boers continued to have little influence at the capitals and, despite their numbers, saw themselves as being outmaneuvered by the British; and pressure was building on Pretoria to annex the kingdom. Dr. W. J. Leyds, the new state secretary, was a strong supporter, arguing that apart from geographic and strategic reasons the large Boer presence in the kingdom confirmed the justice of the Republic's demand.

Early in 1888, there was an exchange of correspondence between the Republic and the High Commission over sending a joint team to Swaziland to try to settle disputes between concessionaires.<sup>24</sup> Kruger was anxious, but



Robinson was hesitant; Mbandzeni must be brought into the discussions, he said. When the king was contacted, his response was diplomatic but firm. He did not object to a commission, but he said, "It can only be one to enquire and report to their respective governments; as in all matters pertaining to the government of Swaziland, the King respectively points out that he, as King . . . will adjudicate."<sup>25</sup>

The catalyst for the appointment of a commission came some months later from Shepstone. Forced out from his power position as king's agent, he addressed an alarmist plea to Kruger and Robinson, listing a chronicle of ills that were besetting the Swazi kingdom. He called on the two governments "to do something decisive as to the future government of Swaziland. The king for the last six or seven months has been and still is in a weak state of health and I do not believe that he is at all times responsible for his actions."<sup>26</sup> The Pretoria government reacted at once, emphasizing the dangers to life and property implied in the letter and offering to send an armed patrol to the kingdom to ensure that order be maintained. The British response was reticent, so Kruger indicated that he would welcome a British proposal for a joint commission. Robinson finally gave up his reservations ("his old woman's ways," the *Natal Witness* called it) and recommended to the Colonial Office that because "the make-shift government organized by Umbandeen has broken down,"<sup>27</sup> a British observer should be sent to Swaziland. The Colonial Office agreed, and arrangements were made with the Republic for a joint mission.

Boer and British investigators arrived in Swaziland in July 1889. General Smit and Lieutenant Colonel Martin were, of course, familiar with the problems from earlier exposure; and although they did not function as a team, their reports to their respective governments reflected common themes. The Boers resented the influence exerted by the British minority and gave a dismal account of conditions in the kingdom—strong evidence of the need for outside supervision. The British were more cautious, not yet ready to apportion blame but agreeing that the situation was deplorable. Martin was convinced that the king "has very little influence,"<sup>28</sup> and Smit castigated the white committee as being "just as powerless as the king, the members of it are divided among themselves, and the said body has done nothing since its establishment for the benefit of the white population."<sup>29</sup> Martin found the king to be "very suspicious as to the object of our visit"<sup>30</sup> and summarized local opinion among Europeans as he found it:

On this subject [Swaziland's future] I have heard several opinions expressed: 1st. That if it is the question of a protectorate under Her Majesty's Government or under the Government of the South African Republic, then the Europeans would rather have a British protectorate, but if Swaziland is to come under the direct rule

of either Government, then the choice would be in favour of the Government of the South African Republic, as that Government is thought to understand the government of Natives better than Her Majesty's Government. 2ndly. The South African Republic Government is preferred by many, as it is feared Her Majesty's Government would not recognise or allow many of the concessions. 3rdly. The Dutch state openly that owing to its geographical position, the country must come under the rule of the South African Republic and no other. 4th. That the British interests in the country are so great, that English inhabitants are strongly opposed to any Government other than that of Her Majesty.<sup>31</sup>

No untoward incident took place during the deputations' month-long stay in Swaziland. A prearranged meeting of concessionaires, scheduled for July 29, went off smoothly in spite of predictions that it would end in violence. A number of resolutions were passed by the Boer majority, suggesting that the Republic should take over the administration of Europeans without infringing on the king's sovereignty; but these were taken to be expressions of opinion. No one could claim with certainty that a threat of rebellion existed or that Boer elements were planning a takeover.

Reaction to the reports differed in degree. The Republic wanted immediate action. "The country is lawless, orderless, and without Government,"<sup>32</sup> asserted Leyds, urging that the Republic be allowed to step in. The British were more tentative: Recommendations as to what needed to be done should be obtained before proceeding further. A compromise was reached, and with the Swazi council's approval, a joint British-Boer commission to recommend on future policy was agreed upon. But before the commission reached Swaziland, word went out from Mbekelweni that the king had passed away.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the weaknesses of his reign, Mbandzeni's death was genuinely lamented. Throughout difficult years, he had retained the loyalty of the Swazi. He was reputed to have been a fair-minded arbiter, and he seems to have preserved, in trying circumstances, a sense of integrity. He was not a drunkard, as official reports later alleged, based on popular gossip. William Penfold, who served with Shepstone at Mbekelweni, wrote: "The writer saw Umbandine continually from 1886 until his death, and never once did he see him touch wine or spirits."<sup>34</sup> Yet he was lax in the exercise of kingship, led by events and too readily taken in by unscrupulous bartering. As had happened before, the king's death was variously interpreted by Swazis. Some saw the hand of witchcraft in the demise of so young a chieftain; others saw it as an opening for their own advancement, and jockeying for position began anew. The Europeans were as nervous about the future as they were suspicious of each other, and many put their hopes in the promised joint commission.

Planning for a joint commission on Swaziland was already under way before the Martin-Smit missions completed their inquiries, and by Septem-

ber 1889, arrangements had been made. Piet Joubert, well versed in the kingdom's problems, led the Pretoria team, and Sir Francis de Winton was sent out from England to head the British group. The principal task of the commission was to make recommendations on the future governance of Europeans in Swaziland. It moved with reasonable speed; by late November, the "white committee" was dissolved and its former powers transferred to the commission. In mid-December, the queen-regent and council issued a proclamation that a provisional governing committee would be appointed, once the commission left the country. The committee would be tripartite, that is, with a representative from each of the two outside governments and one from the Swazi kingdom. It was a temporary arrangement, to last only four months while details of a long-term settlement were worked out. Offy Shepstone was named chairman, with Martin and D. J. Esselen as colleagues.

Shepstone's resurgence requires a word of explanation. Soon after Sisile Khumalo's untimely death,<sup>35</sup> Tibati Nkambule was named queen-mother and, as such, assumed an authoritative place on the council. With Mbandzeni's passing, she became queen-regent and continued to influence the conduct of affairs. She appears to have retained confidence in Shepstone, as did other prominent Swazis. In the confusion at the capitals, it was no difficult feat for him to gather enough support to regain his position as king's agent; and he was restored to office shortly before the king's death. Tibati issued a statement, endorsed by forty-two chiefs and headmen, to the effect that all existing European appointments were canceled; and Shepstone emerged from the shadows with greater power than he had ever enjoyed under Mbandzeni. So by the time the joint commission arrived in Swaziland, he was back in office, apparently secure in the confidence of the nation.

The work of the commission was somewhat inhibited because of the king's death and the customary year of mourning that normally followed. Contacts with Swazis were limited, and de Winton, in particular, seems not to have gained a rounded understanding of the local situation. He had, of course, been briefed en route at Cape Town and Pretoria. By then the High Commission favored Boer intervention, and Kruger was bound to have made a forceful case for annexation. De Winton's report<sup>36</sup> to the British government was, in some respects, a pedestrian document, but three proposals were made that had important consequences for the situation in the kingdom. First, a system of courts should be set up, based on Roman-Dutch law as practiced in the Republic; second, a newly established High Court should be empowered to deal with the initial validity of concessions; and third, if the proposed governmental arrangements did not work out, sole responsibility for the kingdom should be given to the South African Republic. All three provisions were acceptable per se to the Republic and the Colonial Office, but there was a major stumbling block. Opinion in Britain

was agitated by the situation in southern Africa, influenced by a rising tide of anti-Boer propaganda. The government of Lord Salisbury was unwilling to risk reaction at home if they were seen to acquiesce in a Boer takeover of the Swazi kingdom. Thus, the views of High Commission and Colonial Office officials supporting a transfer were put on hold, and an urgent message was telegraphed to Cape Town: "Her Majesty's Government adopt in principle all recommendations . . . of the De Winton Report . . . except that it is quite impossible to obtain sanction of Parliament to recommendation 3, giving to Transvaal Government the exclusive government of whites."<sup>37</sup>

The commission left Swaziland late in December 1889, and the provisional governing committee took over. It faced an uphill task. Neither Boer nor British concessionaires were satisfied with the recommendations made, and the provisional committee made no moves that were liable to rouse their opposition. No such restraints existed with respect to the indigenous population, and one of the committee's first official actions was to forbid the supply and sale of liquor to the Swazi. That problem was not new. Some years before, a British resident of Amsterdam, a few miles southwest of the Swazi border, had complained to the governor of Natal: "The Swazi tribe which only 11 years ago was noted for its sobriety is now completely swamped with intoxicants, principally gin, which will prove another powerful factor towards its extinction."<sup>38</sup> More recently, in a submission to the commission, a missionary declared, "With the exception of Delagoa Bay, I know of no place in South Africa where natives are so freely supplied with grog."<sup>39</sup> The importing and sale of gin and other alcoholic beverages had become a lucrative trade in Swaziland, with canteens sprouting like mushrooms in populated areas. Responsible Swazi chiefs condemned the practice but could not control it. At the later installation of Bhunu as king, Chief Minister Jokovu complained that the canteens gave rise to "all the trouble of the nation"<sup>40</sup> and urged the provisional committee to get rid of them.

A more tendentious question was the Swazi custom of "killing off," and it was not easily resolvable. De Winton had addressed the issue while in Swaziland, admonishing the queen-regent and council that the practice be given up. So the committee decreed that in the future such "barbaric acts" would not be tolerated. The decision, as must have been foreseen, ran counter to a long-standing Swazi custom. The regency, however, was prepared to compromise. Because witchcraft was suspected in the late king's death, the committee was asked to condone the practice in this one instance: The populace must be given time to become reconciled to a change in custom. Officials in London and Pretoria did not see it that way, and the committee was forced to be inflexible. When later on there were reports of misconduct in the regiments, Tibati put the blame, perhaps with justification, on what she deemed to be the lowering of punitive standards by the committee.

In one respect at least the arrangements made appear to have had little effect: Reports of restlessness, agitation, and occasional violence did not abate. Shepstone thought the situation to be potentially explosive, and the European community, always quick to take alarm, felt threatened.<sup>41</sup> Rumors were being spread so rampantly that the committee issued an order threatening punishment to rumormongers. Outside the kingdom, critics became irresponsibly vocal. The *Barberton Herald* published an inflammatory report of a massacre in northern Swaziland, ordered it said by Queen-Regent Tibati, “a blood-thirsty old woman.”<sup>42</sup> *The Times of Natal* suggested that if reports were true, “[w]e should stop all this bunkum about Swazi independence,” and the *Pretoria Press* blamed any disaffection on the “dilatary policy of the British Government.” The general impression given was that Swaziland was in a state of anarchy, moving closer to civil strife.

Meanwhile, the provisional committee’s term of office was nearing its end. New rumors began to gain acceptance: Britain and the Republic were deadlocked, and Swaziland would soon be left to its own devices. That was not true; but the committee’s term had to be extended for four months, then again for another month, until finally word came through that Britain and the Republic had reached agreement on a solution to the kingdom’s problems.

## *Chapter 7*

# Governing by Committee

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The auguries for Swaziland at the beginning of the 1890s could hardly have been promising. The king was dead, and the kingdom had entered into a long period of mourning, “crying” for the departed chief and cleansing the nation of evil spirits that may have hastened his demise. There were rumors of tensions at the capitals, differences over the choice of a successor to the king. The regiments were said to be factious, that there was bad blood between the late king’s bodyguard and those serving the new queen-regent, Tibati Nkambule, at Nkaneni. Reports of eating up and killing off were current; some incidents were said to be due to the unstable situation at the capitals, others because of bitterness over the deaths of prominent chiefs before Mbandzeni’s passing, and still others were attributed to greed or seeking revenge. The reports were causing anxiety and fear, even though the grounds for some was weak. All the same, official accounts provide persuasive evidence that the kingdom was unsettled and that vendettas and other untoward behavior was common.

European residents did not feel secure. Living, as they tended to, in rural isolation, they saw themselves as being defenseless should a Swazi uprising take place. No matter that their Swazi neighbors were passive, or that the Swazi record of nonviolence in relations with Europeans was, by any test, exemplary, rumors of warlike preparations and internecine quarrels gave rise to fears. The burghers and graziers looked to Pretoria for protection, and Martin reported that some British concessionaires had asked the Government Committee for permission to draw arms and ammunition to defend their lives and property.

Moreover, beyond its borders, a strategy was emerging that would diminish even more the independence of the kingdom. Since the arrival of

the Smit-Martin deputation in July 1889, Swaziland had not been free of foreign interveners, sent by the British and Republic governments to probe into its affairs or to take over the management of the European community. The late king had seen the danger in this development but was not able to arrest it. His impatience that the Smit-Martin inquiry was taking too long, Chief Minister Tekuba's assertion to the de Winton-Joubert commission that it should get on with the job so that the kingdom could get back to normal, and Queen-Regent Tibati's restoration of Offy Shepstone's mandate—all point to the fact that the Swazi were looking toward a future free from foreign intervention. But as it happened, that prospect was being gain-said by negotiations outside the kingdom, over which the Swazi had little influence and no control. What is remarkable, looking back on the events of the early 1890s, is that the transition to a wholly dependent political status took place so gradually, so seemingly inevitably, as to be almost imperceptible.

The Convention of 1890, worked out at Blignant's Pont on the Vaal river at a meeting between President Kruger and the new British high commissioner, Sir Henry Loch, was intended to direct the course of future development in southern Africa. One of its priorities was the so-called Swaziland question. Even though several of de Winton's core suggestions had been turned down as not then being expedient, his "able report" (as Loch described it) provided a basis for the British position. Loch had come to southern Africa with instructions to play a firm hand in dealing with Pretoria. President Kruger wanted a settlement and invited Loch to meet with him to discuss outstanding issues that divided the two governments. A meeting was arranged for early March 1890, and the two leaders, with their advisers, began discussions. The conference continued for two days until finally an agreement in principle was reached. Afterward, a draft Convention was prepared and forwarded to the respective governments for approval.

Apart from reservations expressed by colonial reform groups, no serious obstacles were raised against the draft in London, and it was approved by the cabinet. But there were difficulties in Pretoria. The executive council was divided and the *volksraad* strongly opposed. There was disappointment that the transfer of the Swazi kingdom to the Republic had not gone through. The high commissioner sent J. H. Hofmeyr, leader of the Afrikaner party in Cape Colony, to Pretoria to try to smooth the waters. At the same time, he made it clear that the British were not prepared to accept prolonged delay. If the agreement was not ratified by the *volksraad* by August 8, he informed Kruger, the British government would withdraw its approval and, under Article 2 of the London Convention of 1884, exercise its right to appoint officials and to deploy a protective force in Swaziland.<sup>1</sup>

It was not a bluff. A special force was being recruited and trained in

Natal for possible service in the Swazi kingdom; and both Martin and the British agent in Pretoria were instructed to take action if the Republic failed to cooperate. What may have happened if that occurred can only be surmised, but on the day before the deadline, the *volksraad*, after prolonged debate and a number of amendments, ratified the agreement. Loch's bulldozing tactics had won the day, but as it turned out, it was a Pyrrhic victory.

For the Swazi, the terms of the 1890 Convention differed from de Winton's recommendations in several respects: The Boers would not take over; shared administration would continue; and the provisional committee would be replaced by a permanent body to be titled the Government Committee. The new Government Committee would continue to be tripartite, representing the Swazi kingdom, Britain and the Republic. Offy Shepstone as king's agent was to chair the Committee, with Martin staying on for Britain and D. J. Esselen, a government official, coming in to act for the Republic. A chief court, guided by Roman-Dutch law, would have jurisdiction over European residents and would adjudicate the validity of concession claims. The expenses of the Government Committee, where not borne from local revenues, would be shared equally between Pretoria and London. To compensate for Kruger's giving up an interest in the northern territories, Britain would not oppose his having the Little Free State, a railway bed through Swaziland and the trans-Pongola chiefdoms, as well as the service concessions—posts, telegraph, and railways—already purchased by his government.

The independence of the Swazi kingdom was again proclaimed, but there were significant departures from previous usage. First, the Swazi leadership's acceptance of the terms of the 1890 Convention must be made clear to the Swazi people through an organic proclamation to that effect, to be issued by the queen-regent and council. Second, no "inroad" on Swazi independence could be made, even by the kingdom's traditional government, without the consent of the two external powers. Third, once the organic proclamation had been made public, Britain and the South African Republic would be entitled to use force to compel "the Swazi Government and the Swazi" to observe its provisions. To put it plainly, the Swazi kingdom's sovereignty, even over its own people, would be limited in the future.

It was left to the provisional committee to explain the terms of the new arrangements to the queen-regent and council and to prepare the wording of an organic proclamation. The news was taken calmly, apparently accepted as a continuation of the status quo. The organic proclamation was duly signed at Zombodze by Bhunu, the young king-designate, and by Tibatati and nineteen chiefs.

Since Mbandzeni's death, the Swazi had been closely engaged in their own affairs, so much so that foreign machinations were low on their agenda. A new king had to be selected, and there was no scarcity of po-



tential appointees. The late king had left a number of sons, none of whom was of age to assume the kingship, and the choice fell finally on the son of Labotsibeni Mdluli, the young boy Bhunu, still in his early teens. The choice was not acceptable to all Swazis. Reservations by some members of the royal household and among certain chiefs were no secret, and some of them never regarded Bhunu's appointment as being in keeping with custom. The young king, it was said, had been named too soon, before the prescribed period of mourning for the late king had ended—an unacceptable break with tradition for many chiefs and elders.<sup>2</sup> The criticism was probably valid. Shepstone had warned that there could be violence because the claims of other sons were being pushed. Claiming that Labotsibeni was favored, he urged Cape Town and Pretoria to press for an announcement of Bhunu's appointment: "There is now no fear of anyone else being put forward in his place. After his installation his mother will be the chief person in the Nation, with the regent and old Queen as referees."<sup>3</sup>

The custom of "crying" for a deceased king, that is, observing a period of public mourning, was an important symbol in Swazi culture. Its foundation was religious—paying homage to the ancestors as well as to the departed chief—and because it frequently gave rise to unreserved emotions, there was always a chance of violence stemming from it. The possibility of violence appeared to be very real during the early months of 1890, and the burden of keeping the peace fell to the new Government Committee. It had little to fall back on except moral suasion and Shepstone's standing with the chiefs and regiments. During crowded gatherings—3,000 warriors reaped maize in the king's fields during May; most of the headmen of the nation collected for the installation of young Bhunu in June; from 8,000 to 10,000 Swazi, many of them from outside the kingdom, came to "cry" for the departed king or to erect a kraal for the new king in August—Shepstone was present, his burly figure standing out among the warriors. He reported proudly to his colleagues on the Committee: "I have been present by day and night at all these ceremonies, and I deem it my duty on behalf of the Swazi nation, to record their peaceful conclusion, a result almost without parallel in the history of the South African tribes."<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps his finest hour in Swaziland.<sup>5</sup> The ceremonies did come off peacefully, no violent incidents were noted, and the advent of young Bhunu seemed to presage a return to peaceful pursuits.

Unhappily, that was not to be. Despite the orderly arrangements hoped for by the Convention, conditions remained much the same. Indeed, official correspondence from 1890 through 1893 points to a deteriorating situation. Three probable causes can be identified. First, refractory elements near the border paid no heed to the Convention, and the authority of Pretoria could not easily be imposed. The seasonal movement of sheep and cattle across the Swazi border continued, with burghers and graziers as well as the Swazi being victimized by troublemakers. The Government Committee

was fairly helpless in dealing with the offenders because many of them were based outside its jurisdiction. Then, the Committee itself, now established at Bremersdorp,<sup>6</sup> was not working well. The blame for this rests partly with Shepstone. He was not by nature a team player, and as time went on, he tended to go his own way, relying more on Swazi contacts than on the shared opinions of his colleagues.

To cap the discontentment, the Republic was not comfortable with the outcome of the 1890 Convention, and there were those within the executive council and the *volksraad* who would not mind seeing a breakdown in Swaziland that might collapse the whole edifice. The Republic had only modest means at its disposal and was reluctant to engage in a major undertaking where political control was not firmly in its hands. Thus, the prospect of expansion eastward entailed risks, whereas the British South Africa Company, with a royal charter giving it almost unlimited powers, was advancing confidently into the northern territories. For many Boers, the Kruger government's acceding to the 1890 Convention was a mistake.

If publication of the organic proclamation had any beneficial effects on Swaziland, they were not easily seen. Most Swazi were not affected personally and were probably not aware of changes at Bremersdorp and the capitals. To be sure, there was no reduction in the activities of troublemakers at the borders. The Ferreiras and their associates, along with other unruly freebooters, became increasingly offensive. The Peak area north of the Komati river was particularly vulnerable—burning grass, destroying kraals, and seizing cattle became so prevalent there that Shepstone warned: "If matters of this nature are not put an end to . . . there will be reprisals from the Swazi on the border."<sup>7</sup> Ferreira even sent his police to the kraal of Chief Minister Tecuba, demanding that he and his headmen appear for trial in connection with an alleged cattle theft. The troubles were not confined to one section of the kingdom. Martin informed Loch that complaints "appear to be general throughout Swaziland and are not made by Swazis alone but by White Residents also."<sup>8</sup>

Numerous specific complaints were recorded:<sup>9</sup> Umbobo and his family were driven out from the New Scotland district; Umbani, whose kraal straddled the border, was pressured to pay full taxes to the Republic; Maweni, while collecting twenty head of his own cattle from Zambaan's chiefdom, was accosted by Ferreira's police and had his cattle taken; Madusa's mother was held prisoner by Ferreira's police when she refused to give up cattle at her son's kraal; two men on Dabakaombe's holding burned grass and maize and beat him up severely when he protested (Dabakaombe was a son of former King Sobhuza I, an elder prince of the royal line); Chiselwako's huts were burned down; the mining commissioner at Steynsdorp arrested and jailed Maputumana when he went there from Piggs Peak on legitimate business; Chief Gomba, a half brother to the late King Mband-

zeni, was molested by one Grobbaar, a concessionaire in the Peak district; a British farmer, Duncan, lost his horse and stable through indiscriminate fires set by Grobbaar's party, and a number of others had cattle taken or were subjected to abuse; and two Boer graziers, Bretenbach and Rensdorf, were driven off their grazing grounds by other Boer marauders. On the other side of the kingdom on the Lubombo ranges, raiding goods wagons coming in from Delagoa Bay was masterminded by two Britons, McNab and Dupont, with a mixed bag of followers, some of whom were Swazi. These two men were rivals, and both had criminal charges pending against them; rustling cattle, attacking goods wagons, and stealing constituted their mode of life.<sup>10</sup>

It may be wondered why the Swazi regiments were not called out to help preserve law and order, but there were overriding constraints. First, the European community did not trust the warriors, seeing them as the potential enemy. On the other hand, the troublemakers were mostly European, led by men of influence, and there were bound to be reprisals if the Swazi acted against them. More important perhaps, there was a respected tradition among the Swazi people, going back to Sobhuza I's time, against doing physical harm to a European. Within the chiefdoms crime and punishment were local concerns, and except in critical matters, the king did not become involved. Tibati, for example, had been accused of misusing her authority by sending an *impi* to "eat up" unfriendly or uncooperative chiefdoms.

Since the formation of the "white committee," policing was shared by two separate units, acting independently. The Government Committee had inherited a British-officered force of some forty members, commanded by Captain Bates;<sup>11</sup> and an indeterminate force had been recruited by Shepstone as king's agent, made up predominantly of Zulu serving under his personal command.<sup>12</sup> In theory, the two units served separate constituencies—Bates and his men being responsible for the European community and Shepstone keeping the king's peace among the Swazi; but Martin complained that the distinction was often blurred. Adding to possible confusion, J. J. Ferreira's police, based outside the kingdom, roamed freely on both sides of the border, collecting fines, taking cattle as repayment for taxes, and exacting punishment for alleged crimes. His men were maintained by the Transvaal Border Commission, an agency of the Republic. They were African, most of them brought up on Boer farms, and they tended to look down on the Swazi ("tame kaffirs" as against "kraal kaffirs" was the Boer distinction). They had horses, were commonly armed with guns, and were well trained and disciplined—better at their jobs, perhaps, than Bates' or Shepstone's men.

From the beginning, the Government Committee was beset by problems. Britain and the Republic had agreed to an equal sharing of budget deficits, and because of concession monopolies, the Committee was hard-pressed to

find sufficient revenue. The “free import and export” concessions held by Bremer and Schwab, and the dozen or so concessions allowing free entry of machinery and other materials, meant that customs revenues, a staple in colonial budgets, were largely denied to the Committee. Martin described these concessions as “the main cause of the decrease in the Swaziland revenue; as not only are they [cessionnaires] exempted from payment of duty themselves, but other storekeepers in Swaziland obtain the greater portion of their goods from them, and thus avoid the payment of duty to the Government.”<sup>13</sup> When the Committee did attempt to impose charges against Schwab, he challenged its right to do so through the courts and was upheld. The main sources of revenue were from issuing licenses, a tax on mineral and grazing concessions, and a levy on landholders. The total revenue collected barely amounted to £2,500 a year.

There were other problems as well to test the unity of the Committee. Esselen proposed that Europeans on the government police force be replaced by Swazis. Shepstone agreed it would reduce the payroll and thus be cost-effective.<sup>14</sup> Martin was indignant: “Our duty is to govern the whites and protect the Swazies,”<sup>15</sup> he said; a number of European police was “absolutely indispensable” to control the graziers who came into the country during the winter months (the annual Boer influx was estimated to be near 1,000) and curb the liquor traffic and smuggling. It may have been incidental that the police concerned were British or that Captain Bates was not afraid to place blame where he thought it belonged. Then there was the case of Neumann, the medical officer. Whether he had any professional qualifications is unknown, but he submitted regular reports to the Committee, including a long paper on the causes of malaria that made no mention of mosquitoes, then swarming during the wet summer season.<sup>16</sup> In due course, he was arrested by Ferreira’s police, charged with smuggling arms and ammunition; and he resigned his Swaziland appointment.

By the autumn of 1892, the Committee was almost at an impasse. Martin had been granted leave to England in April, to be replaced pro tem by Godfrey Lagden, then government secretary in Basutoland. Lagden was a career officer, and the contrast between the two men could hardly have been greater. Martin’s courtesy and transparent integrity won over the regents, and he was trusted. Lagden had no contact with the royal household and paid his respects to the queens and young king only twice—when he arrived and when he left. He had a keen eye for detail and was clearly not impressed by the standards set by the Committee. He mistrusted Esselen and had an almost pathological dislike of Shepstone, suspecting that the two were working in collusion.<sup>17</sup> At meetings in the Committee, Lagden’s probing questions did not go down well with Esselen or Shepstone, and they were barely cooperative. Despite Lagden’s competence in colonial administration, not much was accomplished during his nine months in Swa-

ziland.<sup>18</sup> The Government Committee fell victim to the catharsis that had destroyed the “white committee”: personality clashes, suspected loyalties, and a breakdown in trust.

It may be, however, that Lagden brought the worsening situation to a head. He reported his observations to the High Commission, which, in turn, passed them on to the Colonial Office. Esselen made regular reports to Pretoria as well, and Shepstone added his voice from time to time, suggesting that shared control was not the answer to the Swaziland problem. Between them, the weight of evidence tended to confirm what others had been saying for some time: The provisions made for the Swazi kingdom in 1890 were not working.

Among the critics was the Treasury Board in London. Never enamored of the arrangements made by the 1890 Convention, Treasury officials cast a wary eye on Swaziland’s finances. When presented with partial estimates for 1893–94, they concluded that the situation was “far from satisfactory.”<sup>19</sup> Since the formation of the Government Committee, they pointed out, revenue had declined, expenditures had increased, and the British government’s contribution to the deficit had gone up from £4,600 to £7,000, “a charge for which it is difficult to find any adequate defence.” Their summing up was caustic:

The . . . staff consists of 61 persons, who between them collect a revenue of £2,500, and administer an expenditure (apart from their own emoluments) of £3,610. 11s. per annum. The five principal officers receive between them emoluments of £8,200 per annum, or nearly half the gross expenditure, and over three times the local revenue. Taking the staff altogether, in relation to its duties, it is probably the most expensive in the whole world.<sup>20</sup>

If the Committee needed a coup de grâce, that was probably it.

Critics of the Swazi provisions in the 1890 Convention were not confined to London. As noted earlier, when J. H. Hofmeyr, a respected Cape Town politician, journeyed to Pretoria at Loch’s request, he found a situation that tested all his negotiating skills. The *volksraad*, in particular, was adamantly opposed; and a group of latter-day *trekkers* was organizing an advance toward Mashonaland in the north, to challenge British pretensions in that area. President Kruger was said to have hinted privately that he would use his influence to stop the *trekkers* if the British government was prepared to take a more flexible stand on the Republic’s aspirations toward Swaziland and the eastern chiefdoms. Thus, during the course of Hofmeyr’s month-long stay, a veiled understanding was reached: The position of Swaziland might be looked at again if the trek were halted; and this “re-consideration option” entered into official correspondence and was later embodied obliquely in the text of the 1890 Convention. A stipulation was

added that either party—the British government or the Republic—could terminate the arrangements made after a three-year period.

Kruger did his part. The *trekkers* were induced to return by threats of a heavy penalty. Leyds then brought the Swaziland issue to the forefront: “The present joint Government is too expensive and too incompatible, and gives no satisfaction,” he wrote.<sup>21</sup> Loch was by then receptive and confided his thoughts in a telegram to the new colonial secretary, Lord Ripon: “My opinion is that Joint Swaziland Government cannot be indefinitely successfully continued.”<sup>22</sup> The Colonial Office was cautious, and the matter rested for some months. Then Leyds reintroduced the issue, bringing Shepstone’s name discreetly to the front as one who would favor the kingdom’s transfer to the Republic in discussions with the Swazi. Finally, the British government took a stand. Loch could arrange a “personal conference” with Kruger to talk over the future of Swaziland. A meeting was tentatively set for October 1892, but Loch thought it prudent, in view of the seriousness of the matter, to be thoroughly briefed in London on how far the British government was prepared to go. So the conference was postponed for six months. Pretoria was disappointed by the delay and, when Loch returned to Cape Town, played down its interest in a meeting. By then the British were committed; and after an exchange of diplomatic notes, a conference was set up to meet in mid-April 1893 at Colesburg in Natal, with Boer officials to be guests of the British government.

The Colesburg conference lasted three days. There was no question about the main issue: Swaziland would be handed over to the South African Republic. The British were not prepared to take on unilateral responsibility for the kingdom, even if it were possible to do so. Pretoria’s concession holdings and the unlikelihood of Kruger waiving the clause in the 1884 Convention that called for mutual consent to any change in the governance of Europeans combined to make it a negative proposition. The Boers had no such doubts—geographic contiguity, the prospect of eastward expansion, landholdings, the private revenue concession, possession of essential service rights, and Britain’s obvious reluctance to go it alone all pointed to the “justice” of the Republic’s claim.

Both parties were agreed that an “independent” Swaziland was no longer feasible; the kingdom would revert to its “former anarchy.”<sup>23</sup> Yet the British government did have pangs of conscience. It had what could be seen as a historic obligation to safeguard the independence of the kingdom,<sup>24</sup> and the interests of British residents and corporations had to be ensured. The net result was a compromise: The Boers could have the kingdom, but the British would maintain a low-profile presence, enough to make certain that imperial interests and those of the Swazi were not neglected. Following the conference, Leyds prepared a draft document, approved in principle by the executive council and the *volksraad*, and Loch sent it to the Colonial Office with a recommendation that it be accepted. Minor adjustments were

made, and by the end of the first week in November, the 1893 Convention was signed by Kruger and Loch.

The final wording of the document hardly differed, with respect to Swaziland, from the draft prepared by the Republic. It provided that Pretoria negotiate with the queen-regent and council on transferring powers from the Government Committee to the government of the Republic. Three conditions had to be satisfied: First, the Swazi kingdom was not to be incorporated into the Republic; second, the queen-regent and council must comprehend what would be involved in the transfer; and third, the Swazi authorities would continue to manage their own affairs in accord with traditional laws and custom. The prohibition on the sale of liquor would stand, and no hut tax would be imposed for at least three years and should not be higher than that currently asked of Swazi in the Transvaal. British residents would, on application, be entitled to burgher status, that is, they would have the same rights as Boers and be permitted to vote in Republic elections. Finally, an organic proclamation would be issued by the queen-regent and council, committing the kingdom to accept the new arrangements.

Nothing happened during the months following the Colesburg conference to indicate that a problem might arise in Swaziland. Negotiations between Pretoria and Cape Town were tactful. Loch was invited by Kruger to visit the Republic, and he brought along his wife to charm the Boer establishment. The journey lasted sixteen days, and the visitors were acclaimed in Pretoria and at the principal European settlements across the nation. Loch reported to the British government that the Boers were well disposed and that Her Majesty's subjects living in the Republic were demonstrably loyal to the crown.

Still, negotiations on the future of Swaziland were moving at a languid pace. The *volksraad* continued to be difficult, wanting annexation without the encumbrance of an official British presence. Capitalist interests impressed on the two governments the need for securing their investments in any settlement; the Aborigines Protection Society made several appeals to the colonial secretary on carefully argued grounds; and the Bishop of Zululand added a moderate brief, asking for consultation with the Swazi before a new political arrangement was put into place. But soundings from Swaziland, if heard at all, were soft and muted, giving no warning of the rocky shoals ahead.

## *Chapter 8*

# Politics in Flux

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The final version of the 1893 Convention, ratified by the governments of Britain and the South African Republic, was a carefully worded restatement of the terms agreed upon at the Colesburg meeting. Its message was unmistakable: Swaziland was to be handed over to the Republic but would retain its identity as an African kingdom. The constitutional position was, however, left in some doubt—a protectorate of sorts, perhaps, but essentially an undefined status, not to be absorbed by the Republic yet lacking the safeguards implicit in the British imperial scheme. It was a plausible arrangement to meet exigent needs and, in hindsight to the 1890 edict, not likely to raise much opposition. As State Secretary Leyds suggested in another context, “If the change of administration is effected so quickly as to be scarcely perceptible to the Swazi nation,”<sup>1</sup> no disturbance would likely follow.

The key passage affecting the sovereignty of the Swazi kingdom was stated clearly: “All rights and powers of jurisdiction, protection and administration over Swaziland, and the inhabitants thereof, are conferred on and hereby secured to the Government of the South African Republic.” The time-worn clause confirming the kingdom’s rights in purely local affairs governed by traditional law and custom was inserted; but its purport was made questionable, not only by constraints already in place but by the troubled situation in the kingdom. Simmering unrest, made evident from their own inquiries, had persuaded the two external governments to review the arrangements made in 1890. The government committees, for all their failings, had made one thing clear: The power, if not the right, to govern Swaziland had shifted from the Swazi capitals to Pretoria and Cape Town—London.



Now, as the Swazi leadership had come to believe, that right itself was put in jeopardy by the provisions of the 1893 Convention. Pressed by advisers whose motives were not always in the interest of the kingdom, they had to make a choice: either to go along with the dictate of the external powers or to try to stay its course. Their decision was made easier because fresh winds were blowing through the capitals, reviving the spirit of past achievements and facing up to the tarnished image of probity and pride left in the wake of the concessions. It was not intended to be a radical break with the past; traditions were too well entrenched for that. It was more a gambit to restore to the Swazi kingship a greater measure of freedom—to hold off, though the odds were heavily against its doing so, the subordinate African role already seen to be a fact of life in neighboring kingdoms.

The first official notice to the British government that the Swazi regency might resist transfer to the Republic came in a telegraphed message from the High Commission in mid-February 1894. Several Swazi *tindvuna* had traveled to Pietermaritzburg to see Henriques Shepstone, eldest son of Sir Theophilus,<sup>2</sup> who, because of his father's death, was now, by Swazi custom, head of the Shepstone family. Their mission was to tell him that the regency would not sign over the kingdom to the Boers, "fearing that the King will punish them when he comes of age three years hence."<sup>3</sup> Loch added a disquieting note: "Fear there may be difficulty in settling question." It was an understatement of what became one of the most contentious issues in modern Swazi history.

It is not easy to disentangle the skein of rumors, pressures, and deceptions that, along with honest doubts, contributed to the Swazi rejection of the 1893 Convention and the proposed organic proclamation. A number of strands can, however, be detached and identified. The first has to do with the posture of the two cooperating powers. Despite occasional lapses, Britain and the Republic had generally been sensitive to local Swazi sentiment. Inasmuch as Swaziland, possibly more than any southern Africa kingdom, endured the European presence with its cultural endowment relatively intact, gives evidence of that. No other kingdom had within its borders foreign elements with greater potential for subverting local customs and conventions. That this did not happen can be ascribed, in part at least, to recognition by the external powers that the kingdom, if left alone, would cause few problems.

However, by the 1890s circumstances had changed. To the Pretoria government, gaining control of Swaziland was now an antecedent to its quest for a road to the sea; and to the British, giving it up was a condition for gaining unimpeded access to the resources of the northern territories. Yet in spite of these imperatives, the failure to anticipate the Swazi reaction to an unwanted change in governance was a mistake. Pretoria may have

sensed a problem, but London was slow to react. Loch may have had some foreboding because, at Colesburg, he asked Martin to “give every assistance”<sup>4</sup> to the Republic in its negotiations with the queen-regent and council. But when resistance was encountered, Loch and the Colonial Office took a tough, uncompromising stand, and Martin was put in the unenviable position of having to plead a case for the Boer republic that he had, until then, consistently rejected.

The failure to consult with the queens and council was an obvious miscalculation. It raised queries at Zombodze, a suspicion of the motivation of the outside powers, growing stronger since Mbandzeni’s death. Then the absence of Swazi representation at Blignant’s Pont and Colesburg was resented, especially as the Government Committee was invited. The Swazi did not lack articulate spokesmen: Within a year of Colesburg, a delegation was dispatched to Cape Town (but not allowed to travel further than Natal), and another went to London to present the kingdom’s case against a transfer. Offy Shepstone’s activities had some bearing on events, resulting in his final fall from grace in Swaziland. The documents show that he became an advocate in the Republic’s camp; that he assisted Esselen in building a case for unilateral control of the kingdom by the Republic; and that he received, on several occasions, substantial payments from the Kruger government. Yet in fairness it must be said that Shepstone’s conversion to the view that the future of the kingdom would be more secure in the hands of the Republic was no more improbable than the apologia being put forward by Loch and the Colonial Office to justify the British government’s conversion to the same point of view. To be sure, other influences were at work. It would be naive to think that prominent British concessionaires faded into the woodwork after the closure of the “white committee.” Miller, Forbes, and Thorburn, among others, worked quietly behind the scenes, advising the queens and meeting with the queen-mother and some of her retinue at Miller’s house.<sup>5</sup> These men were apprehensive; their livelihood was bound up in the kingdom, and they had doubts about their prospects under the Republic.

In addition, there were those, mostly from Natal and Zululand, who came into the kingdom on personal missions or seeking to influence events. Stephen Mini, Cleophas Kunene, Walter Kopela, and Alpheus Nkosi were well known at the capitals. Mini was a concessionaire, Kunene was associated with the Edendale mission, Kopela and Alpheus Nkosi served from time to time as royal messengers or as interpreters and witnesses to official documents. All were products of mission schools in Natal, and with the limited opportunities for employment open to educated Africans, they moved back and forth to and from the kingdom. Brought up in the British milieu, they were naturally anti-Boer. Kunene became a sometime tutor to Bhunu and moved on from there to become the queen-mother’s principal

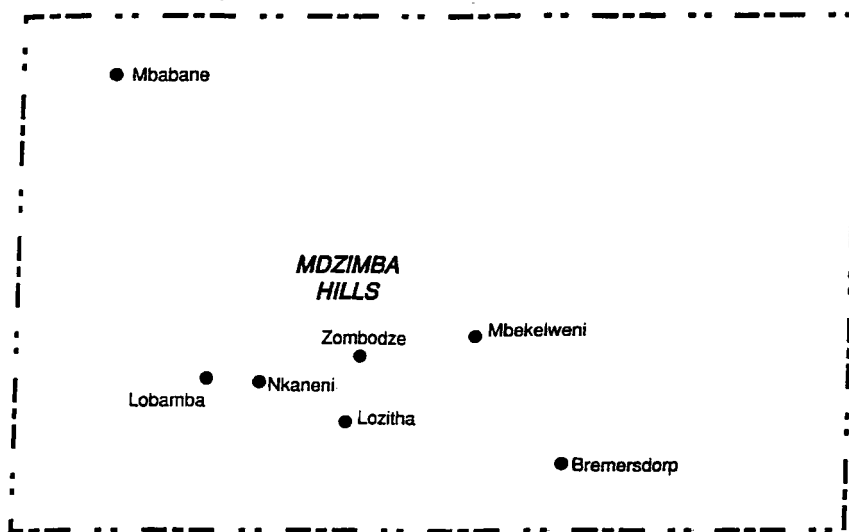
adviser. Mini was said to be urging the queen-regent not to sign the organic proclamation; and Kunene, who played a prominent role throughout the episode, was working openly against a settlement.

The proposed transfer clearly agitated the Swazi capitals. At center stage with leading roles in the drama of rejection were two remarkable women: Tibati Nkambule, the queen-regent, and Labotsibeni Mdluli, the young king's mother. Both were among the late king's wives. Tibati was strong, traditionalist, and highly respected by her peers but no longer in her prime; so much of the ferment turned on the mercurial temperament of Labotsibeni. Once established as queen-mother, she moved assertively to the front; and in the shifting sands of loyalties within the Dlamini household, she soon became a skilled tactician. But before that happened, she passed through agonizing months of doubts, misgivings, and disturbed emotions. Her wishes were ignored by the council, she said; she was being kept apart from Queen-Regent Tibati; and she feared for her life and that of her young son Bhunu, who, she felt, was being denied his rightful place as king. "I don't like being kept down. I want to rise to the top,"<sup>6</sup> she exclaimed to Martin during an emotional visit to his office in company with the king.

Her prejudices were undisguised. She resented some of the coterie surrounding the queen-regent. She had a strong aversion for the Boers and threatened to kill herself if the Republic took control of the kingdom. When Martin sent James Stuart to inform her that a message had come from Queen Victoria, she at once assumed that it would urge submitting to the terms of the Convention:

If the Queen's Government say that we are to be taken by the Boers, and if Tikuba, Mjokora, Queen Regent, Mgogo and others with them, including Mr. Shepstone, are in favour of going to the Boers, yes, even though all, even my own, forsake me and accept the Boers, I will still go on to England, a woman and alone, to lay my case before Her Majesty, and to seek her protection. You see I have on this skin, it is knotted across my chest here, you observe I am now undoing it, I take it off. There, it is off. Do you understand, my child, do you understand what I mean? I see you do not. Well, this skin is to me what this coat you have on is to you, it covers my body, it surrounds my heart, I love it because it protects me, it keeps me warm, just as you love your coat. Do you think I am going to throw this skin off and put on another that I do not care for. No, I cannot throw it off. This skin is the Queen [Victoria], the other skin is the Boers. But see here, I tie this skin over me again as it was before. There, it is tied up as it ought to be, and as it ought to remain.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, Queen-Regent Tibati was not easily roused to take the lead in resisting the external powers. But even she and her mentors on the council began to have doubts about the organic proclamation; and in time, the Government Committee was faced with solid opposition from the queens



Swaziland Capitals: Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century (not to scale)

and council. Tibati's apparent about-face dismayed the Committee. "You white people don't hear what we have to say. You work on one line and we on another,"<sup>8</sup> she charged during a stormy meeting at Nkaneni after Shepstone's dismissal.

The crisis over the 1893 Convention and the organic proclamation clearly gave rise to a resurgence of Swazi leadership, and Labotsibeni was principally responsible. She brought a new vitality to flagging Dlamini fortunes and gave fresh energy to the council. Not since Mswati II's days had the capitals been witness to so much strength of purpose. An older generation of councilmen—princes, chiefs, and lesser headmen—surrounded Tibati; some were close to Offy Shepstone, others had taken part in concession deals with Boers and Britons; most had gained positions of influence during Mbandzeni's reign or earlier; and few stood out as men of marked ability.

Now a new generation was coming on the scene: young chiefs and warriors denied the possibility of gaining honor in warfare and blocked from influence at the capitals by the presence of the old men. Labotsibeni, consciously or not, changed all that. As soon as Bhunu came of age and assumed the kingship, and again after Tibati's death, a change in the ministry became evident. The character of the council was altered; a younger breed of headmen was advanced; young warriors, some of them the king's companions, took over the guardianship of the royal kraals at Zombodze and Nkaneni; and the cautionary decision-making process of past years gave

way to a more personal, decisive rule. But there were weaknesses and potential dangers. The young warriors were not as disciplined as in former days; drinking was said to be rife at the capitals and, according to some reports, within the royal kraals. Tradition was being flouted shamelessly, a number of elders complained; and Bhunu, not yet out of his teens, was already showing signs of intemperance. Tekwane, a former council member, confessed to Offy Shepstone:

I am quite beaten by the talk of the young men in power because it is so different to the talking of the old heads of the nation; everything is gone wrong now the old men have gone. According to our law and custom everything was formerly discussed and thoroughly enquired into by the old men of the nation. I have no confidence that anything will go right with these young men who are now in power.<sup>9</sup>

If the delay in sorting out details of the 1893 Convention served to smooth its passage through opposition hurdles in Britain and the Republic, it had the opposite result in Swaziland: It provided time for concerted opposition to emerge. After Colesburg, the queen-regent was told that no action would be taken without the Swazi's consent; but no official word of pending changes was given until eight months later, in December 1893. The Committee then explained what was to happen, and Martin was asked to "inform the Queen and Council that H.M.'s Gov't. consider its terms equitable in the interests of the Swazi nation"<sup>10</sup> but to make certain that "no undue pressure" was brought to bear on them to obtain their consent.

The initial reaction of the Colonial Office was to look upon Swazi resistance to the Convention as a passing stance. To some extent, reports from Swaziland supported that point of view. While Shepstone and Esselen were alarmist, relaying reports about the restless mood of the Swazi and the possibility of rebellion, Martin discounted such claims. Police investigations failed to uncover evidence of impending sedition. District officers at Lebombo, Hlatikulu, and Piggs Peak observed no signs of a crisis situation: The Swazi were busy working at their crops. In consequence, no plans were made to meet a possible emergency. Loch went on leave to England, Leyds and Kruger bided their time, and the Government Committee continued with routine administration. But by the end of April 1894, the prospect of the regency refusing to cooperate could no longer be ignored, and alarm bells sounded. Miller led a delegation of residents, mostly British, to ask for protection against a probable insurrection. General Cameron, Loch's interim successor, suggested that Martin stay on for another year until matters settled down; and the colonial secretary asked if Henriques Shepstone could go to Swaziland to calm the queens and council because "his position of eldest son of Sir Theophilus gives him special influence with the Swazis."<sup>11</sup> Soon afterward, Loch was ordered to forego his leave and return

at once to Cape Town to try to resolve the “acute crisis” that had arisen in Swaziland. The high commissioner set sail on the first available ship.

By the beginning of August 1894, it was clear that the situation in Swaziland was coming to a head. While reports from the countryside continued to record peaceful pursuits, so much so that de Villiers, secretary to the Government Committee, wrote in his annual report: “As far as I am aware the country is in a peaceful state, and everything goes on quietly. . . . During the service year nothing of importance took place.”<sup>12</sup> But the capitals were bustling with activity. Early in May, the queens had sent another message to Henriques Shepstone, this time more extreme. The kingdom would not join the Republic, and arbitrary actions such as beaconing a western boundary and passing laws against “killing off” must be repealed. If not, they would send a deputation to England to plead their case directly before the queen. Henriques Shepstone came up in August and talked with Labotsibeni, acknowledged to be leading the resistance: Was Her Majesty the Queen angry? she asked. What wrong had the Swazi done to be “thrown over” by England.<sup>13</sup> And she reaffirmed in the strongest terms that she would not sign the organic proclamation.

Not long afterward, the Swazi council called an open meeting, attended by the Government Committee and other Europeans as well as Swazis. The two queens, Bhunu, and chiefs and elders from the capitals were present. The atmosphere was tense; both queens condemned the proposed organic proclamation, echoed by the king. Swazi objections were spelled out and expanded: They had never consented to the 1890 proclamation or the establishment of a concessions court, they said; they had not been privy to the late king’s dealings with concessionaires; the king was not being paid monies due to him from concession rentals; and even now they were being denied access to information by Shepstone and the Government Committee. They refused to be “pushed over” to the Boers and would appeal in person to the English queen. Martin telegraphed an urgent report on the meeting to the High Commission:

At meeting yesterday Queen-Regent and everybody who spoke, with exception of Theo. Shepstone, John Gama, positively denied all knowledge of Organic Proclamation authorizing Concessions Court. . . . Queen-Mother asked how it was Proclamation signed by young King, not by her. Theo. Shepstone explained that it was signed by young King at Somboti, by some others at his office, and for Queen-Regent by proxy. Queen-Regent and Council now consider Court really cause of this country being handed over to the Boers.<sup>14</sup>

In the meantime, word reached Bremersdorp that the British government would receive a Swazi deputation. The queens appointed three men of rank and three others—Longcanga, a son of the former king, Sobhuza I; Zibok-

wana, Bhunu's guardian and a nephew of the late king Mswati II; and Mnkonkoni, whose mother was a daughter of Mswati; as well as Mhlonishwa, Mabovu, and Cleophas Kunene. British protocol required a high-level mission, but Shepstone claimed that only Longcanga was important and respected; the others, he said, were "detested by many Swazi"<sup>15</sup> and were chosen by the queens without the approval of council. James Stuart,<sup>16</sup> at the time attached to Martin's staff, was appointed by the High Commission to be official interpreter and was put in charge of the party.

The deputation reached London early in November 1894, and discussions with officials at the Colonial Office began at once. They had six meetings with the colonial secretary, Lord Ripon, and, near the end, presented a petition to Queen Victoria, pleading for her protection. Next day, the queen sent a friendly but not encouraging reply, and they proceeded without delay on their return voyage. At Durban they were met by Loch and Martin, and the high commissioner was optimistic that the odds now favored a positive response from the Swazi leadership.

That was a mistake. When the deputation reached Swaziland on December 27, there was no royal welcome and no fanfare. On the contrary, there was speculation that the delegates would be punished for not bringing back good news, and they were not heard from for several weeks. Then the council sent word to the chiefdoms that a meeting would take place at the queen-regent's place on February 15, 1895, to receive the London deputation's report. On the appointed day, more than 300 Swazi chiefs and headmen gathered at Nkaneni kraal, and several thousand warriors stood outside the enclosure. "The meeting was one of the very largest and most representative ever held in the country,"<sup>17</sup> Loch was told, but numbers alone gave him little consolation. The queens were not pleased with the British government's response to the Swazi mission and made that clear. Shepstone, who thought it prudent not to attend, was reviled by a number of speakers, including the king. Mhlonishwa acted as spokesman for the London deputation, and he was bitterly defensive. He blamed Stuart for the failure of the mission to England, accusing him of having misrepresented the Swazi position and rushing the delegates home before they had time to present their case fully.<sup>18</sup> The meeting ended with a resounding rejection of the organic proclamation—a triumph for the queens. It was not a good day for the Committee or the British government; but whatever satisfaction Pretoria may have gained from British discomfiture must surely have been dulled by the underlying anti-Boer sentiment that pervaded the gathering.

Despite the apparent unanimity at the February meeting, there were doubts as to whether it really represented the popular will or even that of a majority of chiefs. Stuart, in his methodical way, had traveled to Bremersdorp from Mahamba, as well as calling on eastern chiefdoms, and found the Swazi peaceful and at ease, the chiefs more interested in local

matters than in a possible Boer takeover. Henriques Shepstone, in an interview with the *Times of Natal* after his trip to Swaziland, stated that the queens and council, contrary to Swazi custom, were taking actions without reference to the nation. Esser, the attorney general, told the press that the agitation at the capitals was caused by “about a dozen European adventurers who have no direct interest in Swaziland whatever”<sup>19</sup> but who had the confidence of the queen-mother. Offy Shepstone had earlier complained, after a visit from the queen-mother, that she had been led astray by the intrigues and interference of white persons and was dependent on the advice of previously exiled members of the royal household. “The young queen is so misled,” he declared, “so impulsive and so headstrong, she may cause serious trouble, especially as the warriors at her kraal are all young men.”<sup>20</sup>

Although such statements may cast doubt on the measure of support for the queens’ protests, the fact remains that if opposition to the organic proclamation was nothing more than a palace revolt, it was a highly successful one. Its force was strong enough to sweep along the aging Tibati and the elders, together with doubting Thomases among chiefs and headmen who may otherwise have ignored the rukus at the capitals. That some were forced to comply by threats of retaliation is probable; the queens and king had already shown a tendency to be intolerant of opposing views.

The firm rejection of the 1893 Convention by the Swazi leadership upset the calculations of the colonial establishment, and to avoid being caught napping a second time, an alternative plan was drafted. It needed, of course, approval by the Republic’s government, and there was no assurance it would be given. Pretoria had reason not to worry. If the Swazi refused to accept the terms of the 1893 Convention and the Republic moved into the kingdom against their wishes, the British government would be placed in an awkward spot. Would they accept a unilateral takeover by the Boers or want to go back to the discredited 1890 model? The colonial secretary was furious. He placed the blame for the breakdown on the Swazi queens and gave Loch “wide discretion” in trying to arrive at a solution.<sup>21</sup> Loch had gone back to England to complete his leave, and when he returned to Cape Town in November, he requested a meeting with Kruger. The response was lukewarm, but the president eventually agreed and a meeting took place at Volksrust. A new Convention, eliminating the need for Swazi consent through an organic proclamation, was drawn up and signed on December 10, 1893.<sup>22</sup>

It was a contingency arrangement: If the Swazi could be persuaded to sign the original 1893 organic proclamation before December 31, the 1893 Convention would come into force; if not, the newly drafted substitute Convention would take effect in February 1894.<sup>23</sup> In most details, the substitute version replicated the clauses of the previous document, but Loch



sought changes that could strengthen both the British and Swazi positions. Kruger was conciliatory on minor points but had to consider the attitude of the *volksraad*, which had only grudgingly given approval to the original Convention. He declined to grant any participatory role for the British government in a Boer administration after the transfer of Swaziland. Her Majesty's Government had to make do with undefined consular representation. Still, the alternative version had more of the hallmarks of a British document. Loch was satisfied that it offered more protection to the Swazi and that it provided better channels for redressing grievances, both to the Swazi and to British interests.

## Chapter 9

# The Boer Administration

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On February 20, 1895, a proclamation appeared in the *Staats Courant*, the official gazette of the government of the South African Republic, stating that from the following day “[A]ll rights and powers of protection, legislation, jurisdiction, and administration, over Swazieland and its inhabitants,” would be exercised by the Pretoria government. Conditions in the Swazi kingdom, it claimed, had for a long time not been satisfactory “either to the Whites or to the Natives and did not afford satisfactory security for life and property as well within Swazieland as on the border and beyond”; and so the Republic and British governments had “come to an agreement” over a change in the administration of the kingdom.

Thus began a new dispensation for the Swazi, ending, for a time at least, moves toward mastery of the kingdom going back to the first contacts between Potgeiter’s *trekboers* and Somcuba’s *tindvuna*. It was, in almost all respects, a victory for the Boers—a gratifying conclusion to years of plodding persistence. Four weeks later, a second proclamation extended the laws of the Republic to all the inhabitants of Swaziland. The proclamations were a public notification of what had been agreed upon at the Volksrust conference in December 1893. For the Swazi did not consent to the organic proclamation, and despite their opposition, the British and Republic governments had gone ahead with the transfer of sovereign rights over the kingdom as determined by the 1893 and 1894 Conventions. There was, however, a reserving pledge: Swaziland would not be incorporated into the Republic, a safeguard that, if honored in the long run, would prevent the kingdom from becoming nothing more than a scattered ethnic group.

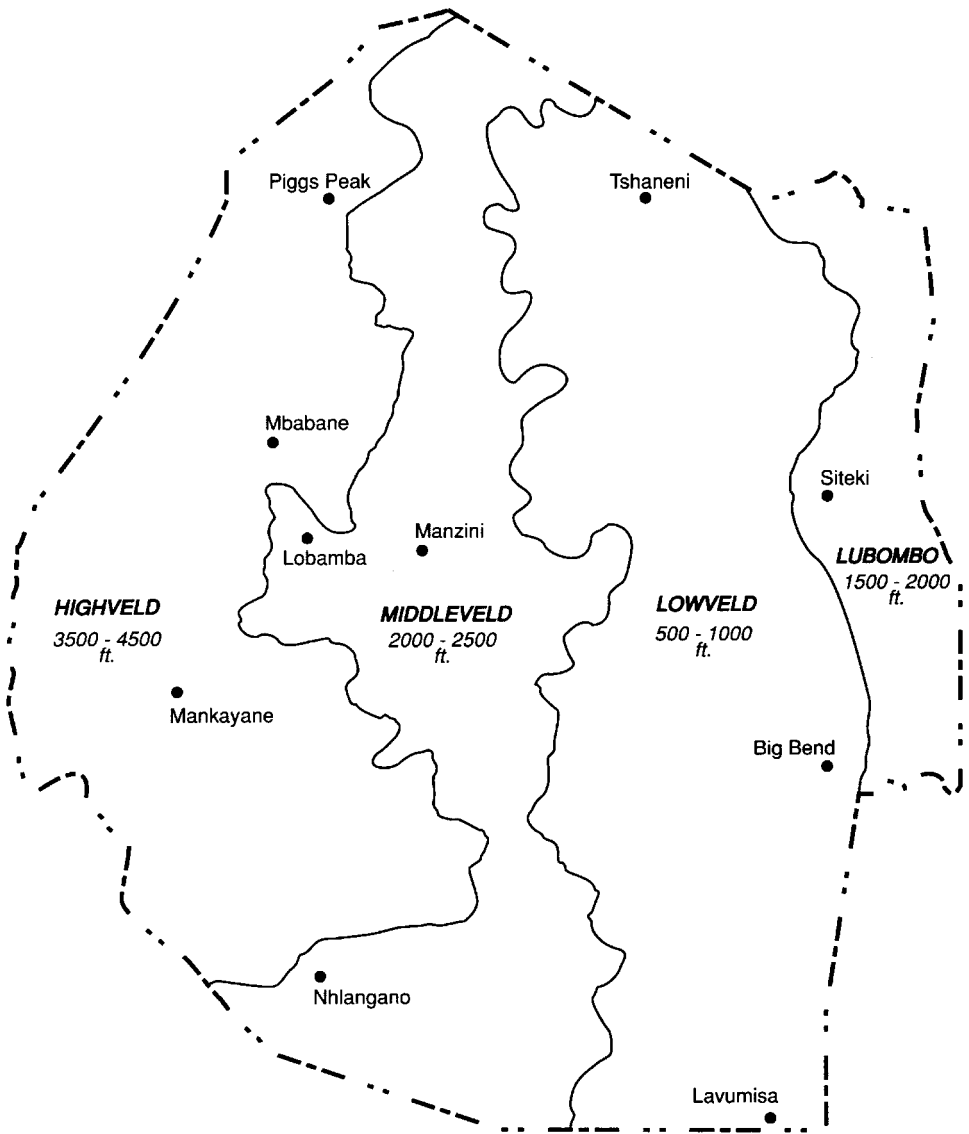
Within weeks, the process of changing the European guard was well in hand; magistrates, police, and junior and senior administrative staff moved

out to be replaced by Boers—some, to the dismay of the Swazi, officials with reputations blemished by their record of hostility to the kingdom's inhabitants. Johannes Krogh, already familiar with the Swazi situation, was named to the senior post as special commissioner; and Martin, though reluctant, was persuaded to stay on until a British consul could be appointed. The transition was not forced or rushed—having waited so long, the Republic could afford to be deliberate.

No matter what their private feelings, the Swazi queens and young king appeared to accept their defeat with stoicism. Generations of tradition had schooled the Swazi to admit reality, whatever its face, with dignity and reserve. The British were going, or so it seemed, and the Boers were coming in; and to allay their fears, President Kruger sent two of the Republic's most experienced statesmen, Piet Joubert and N. J. Smit (both well known to the Swazi leadership), to prepare the way for the new administration and to ensure a trouble-free transition. Yet none of those involved in the exercise—Boer, Briton, or Swazi—could have foreseen how brief the tenancy of the new regime was, indeed, to be. Had they so known, some of the difficulties that lay ahead could conceivably have been avoided.

Sensitive to anti-Boer pressures at work in Swaziland and in deference to traditional ceremonies then in progress, the Republic held off issuing its proclamation until after mid-February 1895. By then the facts of a change in governance were well known within the kingdom, and the chiefs, at least, were aware of the implacable opposition of the queens and Bhunu to the Boer takeover. Joubert and Smit did their best to dispel rumors and suspicions, conducting their mission with, in Loch's words, "tact, consideration and judgment"; and Loch reported to the colonial secretary that "I consider peaceful acceptance of Convention by Swazis as being very hopeful."<sup>1</sup> No amount of diplomatic cajoling could overcome the frayed emotions of past months, however; but it was the Europeans, not the Swazi, who first broke ranks.

Bhunu was now declared to be of age to be installed formally as king. The queens invited Martin, but not Esselen, to be present at the ceremonies. Both the British and Republic governments envisaged Bhunu's taking over as having a calming effect in the kingdom; and Pretoria, as the responsible government, arranged that Joubert and Smit be present at his coming of age.<sup>2</sup> Whether by intent or through crossed signals, the ceremonies were conducted on February 19, before the delegates of the new governing power arrived. Martin did attend and in a gracious speech commended the Swazi to accept the Convention, urging Bhunu to "rule his people mercifully, as his father [Mbandzeni] did." He reminisced: "It is a long time since I came to Swz., and then I remember the King's father. I watched him (Young King) growing up from a little boy until now he is a man . . . and I see him brought here today, and before you all, invested with the grave responsi-



Relief Map of Swaziland (not to scale)

bilities of ruling a people.”<sup>3</sup> Queen-Regent Tibati, in reply, referred to Martin as the “eyes of the Queen [Victoria] in the country,” implying that they still looked to Britain for protection.

The Kruger government was furious at what took place and demanded that Martin be recalled at once. Loch rejected the demand, pointing out that declaring Bhunu of age was a Swazi right, not that of the Republic. But at the same time he reprimanded Martin; and five days later Martin’s resignation, offered some weeks before, was accepted. The issue was made more difficult in that, following the outright condemnation of Shepstone by the queens and Bhunu, the British government withdrew recognition, but Pretoria did not. Martin had long withheld his reservations about Shepstone’s alleged contacts with Pretoria, but speculation that the former king’s agent was to be given a role in the new administration was desponding. He telegraphed Loch: “If Shepstone is to officially fill up appointment of any kind in the country . . . I should be compelled to decline to act.”<sup>4</sup>

Martin was probably the best of the senior British officials sent to Swaziland. Throughout his stay, he was subjected to criticism, within the kingdom and outside, by those who wanted a stronger stand against both Boer and Swazi; and sectors of the English-language press belittled his leadership. Unlike Shepstone, he was never on familiar terms with members of the royal household, nor with leading chiefs and headmen; but he was trusted, and they came to him in confidence. In the end, even that trust evaporated because the British were seen to have failed the kingdom, and Martin was deemed to be part of their establishment. In March, on the eve of his departure, he broke his own strict rules of protocol by not calling on the king and queens for a formal leave-taking. His temporary successor as British consul, James Stuart, observed wryly, “The Swazi King and Queens were not unduly alarmed at his going”;<sup>5</sup> but in the troubled years ahead, they must have regretted the loss of a prudent adviser and man of principle.

Taking into account the intense opposition from the queens during preceding months, the transition went off smoothly. Krogh used his powers as commissioner with moderation and a certain amount of panache. His relations with the Swazi and the British were considerate and correct. His rapport with Martin became strained toward the end, but he had an easier relationship with Stuart and certainly with the permanent consular appointee, Johannes Smuts.<sup>6</sup> Smuts was of Cape Dutch extraction, a fact that prevented his being given the trust of British concessionaires and was used in Britain to discredit the arrangements made for Swaziland.

That there were tensions at the capitals must, of course, be obvious. The Swazi leadership was not willing to recognize that the British consul was in a subordinate role. Until his departure, they continued to deal with Martin as in the past. When he urged them to go to Krogh, they thought that he was rejecting them, a suspicion confirmed by the manner of his going

away. For weeks, Stuart had no contact with the queens, and when he was finally given recognition, Martin's faux pas was mentioned: "How can a man appoint himself?"<sup>7</sup> the queen-mother and some chiefs asked: Martin should have presented him to the king and council as his successor. Yet the misunderstanding of the consul's role persisted. When Smuts had his first meeting with the council, he noted that Labotsibeni did most of the talking and that the king seemed not to comprehend that British and Boer officials were not on an equal footing in the kingdom.

For most British residents, the kingdom's transfer was not a welcome transition. Although the improbability of a British protectorate being established had long been emphasized, some had continued to hope and were now embittered by their apparent abandonment by the imperial government. Many of them accepted the popular British stereotype of the Boer as being illiterate, rough, and only partially civilized; and the prospect of having to accede to burgher status in order to exercise their civil rights was thought to be demeaning. Nor was it yet known how an acceptance of burghership might affect their standing at home.<sup>8</sup> For some it was a genuine dilemma, but for others, including those whose livelihood depended on government, having to serve a Boer administration presented no difficulties.

Krogh was a fair-minded administrator and sought to apply the laws of the Republic in a spirit of moderation. Nine weeks after the transfer, local laws passed by the former government committees were repealed, excluding game laws and regulations to control grass burning. In June, an amnesty for all prisoners was announced to "assist in the promotion of internal tranquillity and peace,"<sup>9</sup> and two months later, a proclamation threatened to ban those "causing strife" in the kingdom. The status of non-Boer European residents was clarified: White males who were in Swaziland since April 20, 1893, would, on application, "be entitled to all the political privileges of a full burgher of the South African Republic."<sup>10</sup> Goods and produce from either the kingdom or the Republic would be free of duty, and five entry ports were named. To avoid defaulting of payments due under the king's private revenue concession, the commissioner instructed that all government revenues be paid directly to his office. By the end of the first year of Boer administration, Swaziland appeared to have settled down to a reasonably regular routine.

An appearance of prevailing harmony may possibly have been deceptive because the Swazi leadership had persisting concerns. First, Shepstone's continued residence in the kingdom after he had been told to leave was seen by the king as an affront to his authority. Shepstone was known to have a loyal following among certain chiefdoms and regiments (it was said that he could muster support from fourteen important regiments) and could, in consequence, be a subversive force in the kingdom. At meetings with Krogh, and also with Martin, the king insisted that the new admin-

istration send him packing. Britain did withdraw formal recognition, but the Republic continued to treat him as a valued intermediary. When he eventually did go, in the same week as Martin, he was appointed by the Republic to a new post, special registrar of deeds for Swaziland; but his office and all documentation connected with it would be in Pretoria. While the solution may have satisfied the queens and king, it roused the ire of some British concessionaires.

The arrangement caused delays in registering transactions, and to add insult to injury, documents had to be prepared in Dutch. Since the ownership of commercial and industrial operations was in the hands of British-financed corporations, protests were heard in London as well as Johannesburg and Bremersdorp. The British government took a stand on the relocation of the deeds office, but the law officers of the crown advised that they had no case and that the Republic was free to impose a language restriction if it so wished. Protests over the deeds office continued for almost three years and was only resolved when Shepstone resigned his post. The office was then returned to Swaziland, not, as Pretoria made clear, because of any "right" commercial interests had but as a matter of convenience.

A second concern for the Swazi was the rapid buildup of Boer police and military in the kingdom. Once the changeover was in place, the Republic moved quickly to provide a police contingent of substantial strength. The Swazi were alarmed, and British residents felt that their presence could lead to trouble, not prevent it. Bhunu complained to Krogh and Martin, obviously fearing a military putdown. Europeans, on the other hand, suspected that the Swazi were planning an uprising. A report was circulated that the king had sent messengers to the chiefdoms, asking them to mobilize, and had himself withdrawn to his mountain stronghold with a thousand or more warriors. When Krogh confronted Bhunu with these reports, he denied them. It was customary, he said, for a new chief to show himself to his warriors, and he was merely following tradition. Despite the assurance, reinforcements continued to arrive; commando units near the border were alerted, and a number of mounted detachments and artillery pieces, as well as quantities of ammunition, were brought forward. Having finally won control of the kingdom, the Republic was not in a mood to put its possession at risk.

Even more troubling for the Swazi was the selection and appointment of Boer justice of the peace. The provisional government committee had divided the kingdom into two districts, north and south, and an eastern district was added later on. Each district was presided over by a justice of the peace who was given the ordinary powers of a magistrate. After the transfer, Pretoria replaced the former incumbents and raised the number of divisions to five, one of them situated at Zombodze with no territorial responsibility. Three of the new appointees had a notorious reputation and

took little time in living up to it. A burgher named Schoeman was given responsibility for the Peak division, and he abused his office from the start by trying Swazi cases and dealing harshly with those brought before him. Eventually, the Pretoria government acted on repeated complaints, and he was “gravely censured and cautioned”<sup>11</sup> and pressured to resign.

What seemed more incredible, the three Ferreira brothers were given appointments: J. J., whose conduct while native affairs commissioner at Wakkerstroom had generally been criticized, was put in charge of the southeastern division; Gert, who had been a leader in the movement to gain independence for the Little Free State, was sent to Mankayane; and Ignatius succeeded Schoeman at Piggs Peak. Strong protests were made against these appointments, and Krogh was told the men would be replaced, but nothing happened. State Secretary Leyds, with uncharacteristic candor, told the British agent in Pretoria why not: “It appears that Messrs. Ferreira are not only officers of this State [Swaziland], but have their families, farms and cattle there; in other words, are inhabitants of Swaziland, much respected, and of great influence amongst the Boer population there.”<sup>12</sup> Stuart informed the High Commission that the problem was “agitating” the kingdom after months of tranquillity. No one could say with certainty what jurisdiction the justices did have, until Krogh finally obtained a ruling that their mandate was restricted to Europeans. Stuart’s reports to the High Commission were optimistic, reflecting on the good behavior of the Swazi.<sup>13</sup> When the High Court sat in 1897, for example, there were no cases before it. The judge commended the Swazi and the administration on the lack of crime, especially as the temptation for cattle theft was great, owing to dwindling herds in the wake of cattle disease.

This does not mean that Swaziland was free from tension. There was suspicion and limited trust on all sides. Some Britons resident in the kingdom felt betrayed by their own government, but others found the new regime to be tolerable. The Krogh administration tried to tread a careful path, but the special commissioner was firm as well as fair. It is probable that the machinery of government, for Swazis and Europeans alike, worked more smoothly than it had under the government committees. Then, of course, the new regime had power to a degree that former members of the shared administrations must have envied. Taken as a whole, the Swazi kingdom was most likely better governed, more disciplined, and certainly more secure during the four-odd years of Boer rule than it had been since the advent of the “white committee.”

English-language publications tended to characterize the Republic’s management of Swaziland as being repressive, but the evidence does not support that point of view. There were problems, to be sure. The queens and king never became reconciled to Boer administration. The populace generally was only marginally affected by the changes. The Swazi wanted, above all,



to live their customary lives; but circumstances now were such that some external surveillance, whether protective or intrusive, had to be accepted. In this regard, experience favored the British over the Boers. That state of mind was not new: It was the guiding principle in Swazi policy under Mbandzeni and the former regency. Labotsibeni understood that. When she pleaded for the imperial queen's protection, it was not because she wanted British rule or that she had a special regard for the Britons in her kingdom. She wanted only to ensure that Bhunu enjoyed the sovereign rights of previous Swazi kings; and she surmised that there was less chance for that under an interventionist Boer regime.

The Swazi were not subservient to the Krogh administration. There was no lessening in complaints to the commissioner and the British consulate, and channels for redress were perhaps more open than they had been under the government committees. There were, however, in Stuart's words, "clouds on the horizon"; some, such as the pending hut tax, had been anticipated; but others, like the Bhunu-Mhbababa incident, had the effect of a looming thunderbird presaging disaster.

Unruly behavior by freewheeling Europeans had been a fact of life for the Swazi since the arrival of the concessionaires. The presence of so many Boer police after the transfer may, as already noted, have been a restraining influence. But if, as Smuts suggested, their commandant, van Staden, was an illiterate who "has no knowledge of drill or discipline,"<sup>14</sup> not much confidence could be placed in the rank and file. With no recreational outlet except the canteens, a few no doubt became part of the problem in maintaining law and order. There was, however, another aspect to the presence of the police. They came originally to prevent a possible rebellion and were thus armed and equipped, a troubling feature for Swazis. For the king, in particular, it aggravated insecurity. During the years of his minority, he walked in the shadow of his mother; and now as king, he wanted to make evident his independence. There was talk that he had broken with Labotsibeni and was using his mountain kraal as a refuge. There were murmurings among chiefs that the kingdom had lost direction; the British-Boer Conventions had shown its want of leadership, reducing the kingship to secondary rank: The downgrading of title from king to paramount chief in 1893 was a case in point. Having a contingent of armed Boers policing the kingdom could be construed as further proof of weakness at the top.

Paralleling the intake of Boer police was an increase in the number of advisers at Zombodze; but these were Labotsibeni's men, not Bhunu's. With the future of the kingdom decided against her wishes, the queen-mother turned to the advice of others, European and Swazi. While her relations with Krogh and Smuts were on the surface equable, a rash of protests was going over their heads to London and Pretoria. Some of her advisers were old hands who worked quietly behind the scenes. Their opposition to the Boer administration was reinforced by British critics at home

and overseas. Stuart reported that Langston, a Durban lawyer staying at Zombodze, was urging the Swazi leadership "that they should persist in their refusal to recognize the local administration."<sup>15</sup>

The Kruger government was aware of efforts to discredit its administration of Swaziland. In August 1895, Krogh issued a proclamation threatening punishment and expulsion to persons taking actions likely to disturb the peace. When the high commissioner demurred, Leyds pointed out that the proclamation was almost identical to one promulgated by Loch himself in Bechuanaland four years earlier. He argued that the action was necessary because people "in and outside the kingdom" were trying "to rouse the Swazi against the South African Republic." He added: "Even from England messages are sent from Members of Parliament to the Paramount Chief, giving him counsel and advice not to be friendly with this Government, but to remain steadfast in a hostile attitude."<sup>16</sup> When Stuart, the most perceptive European observer of the Swazi scene, left at the end of August 1895 after eighteen months in the kingdom, he reported that conditions were "most satisfactory." The Swazi, he said, put little faith in "the protestations and advice of white agitators."<sup>17</sup> Granted that this was a conservative view, it must be given weight. There is compelling evidence that the anti-Boer campaign in Swaziland was largely orchestrated by outsiders.

A perennial problem in the kingdom since the arrival of the Europeans, already dealt with but not solved by the government committees, was the liquor question. Stuart saw it as "the principal cloud on the horizon"; and after Krogh's public notice of September 1895, forbidding sales to Swazis "subject to the most severe penalties of the law,"<sup>18</sup> Pretoria authorized an inquiry. Its report was understated; all canteens, it said, were in British hands and "[d]runkness amongst the Swazies has . . . never been so bad as is alleged."<sup>19</sup> That ran counter to other observations. When Smuts took on the British consul's role, he accused the police of averting their eyes: "One need only ride a few miles along the Delagoa Bay transport road to see waggon after waggon proceeding to Bremersdorp laden with cases of gin, quantities which cannot possibly be consumed by the white inhabitants of the country, and must therefore be destined for the native trade."<sup>20</sup> There were ten canteens within easy reach of Zombodze, and the European population in the kingdom, for whom they were ostensibly intended, was fewer than 400. A mission at Bulungu, near the western border, claimed that large stocks were being provided secretly to prominent chiefs and that the kingdom was in danger of being corrupted. Hints of drunken orgies implicating the king were circulated but were never corroborated. Smuts wrote to Krogh, "I think it due to the Paramount Chief to add that I have never heard of his having been seen under the influence of drink."<sup>21</sup>

Other complaints, perhaps with greater substance, were made against the king. Matsha, a powerful chief from the Lubombo, sent word that he was in danger of being "eaten up" on the king's orders. Tekwana, an important

chief with a large following, had his kraals burned down; and Villem reported that three kraals were “eaten up” near the Komati river and that his brother had already been killed by the king’s warriors. To add to the list, a Swazi named Shabati was killed, witnesses said by Bhunu, during a disturbance at a canteen near Zombodze.<sup>22</sup> When questioned about the reports, Bhunu took an aggressive stance, arguing that the “killing off” proscription destroyed his authority. People no longer obeyed him, he said, “and as for the white man’s punishment by imprisonment, they regarded it as being taken to a place where they got lots of food.”<sup>23</sup>

Still, there were portents of trouble ahead for Bhunu. A gathering of the Swazi nation, called for mid-October 1895 to celebrate his accession to the kingship, turned out to be a disaster. Some 10,000 Swazi assembled at Zombodze, including the principal regiments and most chiefs and headmen. On the eve of the ceremonies, after visiting the site, Queen-Regent Tibati suddenly passed away. And on the following day an integral part of the celebration—killing a beast for sacrifice—was botched by the young warriors. Both incidents were seen as a bad omen by Swazi, boding ill for the future. The king, crestfallen by what happened, canceled the ceremonies and sent the warriors home. Tibati’s death was followed by a traditional period of mourning, and crowds of mourners, from the kingdom and neighboring chiefdoms, came to “cry” and pay homage. She was one of the last of the old school, more respected, possibly, than loved and accustomed to viewing the kingdom in a now vanishing perspective.

The most serious rupture between the Swazi and the Bremersdorp administration developed from what came to be known as “the hated hut tax.” Unlike most Africans living under colonial rule, the Swazi had never been taxed by a European power. A prescript of the 1894 Convention, however, introduced a change. The external governments had agreed that, after the transfer, the Swazi should be required to pay hut tax. To lessen the impact of what was bound to be an upsetting exaction, a three-year period of grace was allowed: collections would begin in February 1898. As the time approached, Krogh issued a routine notice, warning that the tax was coming due. A later supplement provided that Swazi in difficult circumstances would be given a six-month temporary deferment.

By then, the queen-mother and king were planning an appeal to Pretoria and London to have the 1894 Convention renounced or modified. Acting on information that it was due to be reviewed, they sent a deputation of five chiefs and two advisers to Pretoria to present their case to President Kruger.<sup>24</sup> Mbhaba, the queen-mother’s chief *indvuna*, spoke for the group, listing a number of grievances, and the president, who was gruff but friendly, asked for evidence to support the complaints. Following the meeting, plans for sending a deputation to London were shelved, but the proposed tax continued to rankle, and a decision was made to resist it. There

were grounds for Swazi objections because the kingdom was passing through hard times. During the summer of 1896, crops were destroyed by locusts. A year later rinderpest, a dreaded scourge, infected cattle herds; and redwater fever, a milder complaint affecting most animal stocks, was brought in from the north. The effects were devastating for the Swazi economy, and many chiefdoms were impoverished—hardly a propitious time to introduce a tax.

As the date for collections to begin drew near, opposition became more vocal, and Pretoria feared a repeat of the queen-mother's performance over the organic proclamation. In a meeting with Smuts, she derided the judgment of the two external governments and "after indulging in . . . heroics about hanging herself on the day she is asked to pay,"<sup>25</sup> he told the High Commission, she made it clear that she had no intention of paying or asking her people to do so. The young king was equally forthright. At a two-day conference with Krogh, attended by some 100 chiefs and headmen, he questioned why Swazi should pay for a Boer administration: "You wish to make these people rich out of my father's people,"<sup>26</sup> he charged. When it became certain that no respite was in the offing, he requested that collections be made through the chiefdoms, but that was rejected. It may be ironic that it was Offy Shepstone, well removed from the Swazi contravention, who is reputed to have persuaded Kruger to grant a six-month deferment in cases of hardship—a fitting denouement, perhaps, to his saga with the Swazi kingdom.<sup>27</sup>



## Chapter 10

# Assassination: The King's Part?

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During the evening of April 9, 1898, an incident occurred at Zombodze that threatened to efface the Dlamini succession in the Swazi kingdom. As first reported, a quarrel had taken place at the capital between warriors from the Giba and Mgadhela regiments, and several were killed. As later confirmed, it was not an interregimental squabble but a planned, deliberate assassination. The victim was the queen-mother's chief *indvuna*, Mbhaba Nsibandze, whose standing within the kingdom was, in effect, that of chief minister. The perpetrator, or so it was claimed, was the young king himself.

To put the incident into perspective, the custom of "eating up" and "killing off," though strongly opposed by both the British and Republic governments and forbidden by the provisional government committee's edict of 1890, had never been abandoned. It was, as had been argued by Queen-Regent Tibati and the council during meetings on the ill-fated organic proclamation, an ingrained custom among the Swazi that could not be swept aside overnight. It was also, as Bhunu had so recently told the British consul, a means by which the king could maintain authority over chiefs and people. Nor were there lacking precedents for a king turning against influential members of the council—Sandlane Zwane's death gives evidence of that.

There was, however, a difference between the Bhunu case and that of his father or earlier kings. Swaziland was no longer an independent kingdom; and the 1894 Convention, as well as previous Conventions and proclamations by the two external powers, had clearly stated that "civilized behavior" was a condition for the continued exercise of limited jurisdiction in matters affecting the internal welfare of the Swazi.

The facts in the case seem clear enough. It was a Saturday night, and some warriors were partying not far from the royal kraals. A fire was started at one of Mbhaba's huts, and he came out to see what was going on. He was set upon and murdered, along with two of his retainers. The king was present outside, whether as malefactor or as an accessory or possibly by accident was never positively established. The following day the incident became known, and wildly different versions were heard. If superstition was endemic to the Swazi way of life, then rumor was the addiction of the European. As had happened after Zwane's death, and again more recently with the "eating up" of former Chief Minister Tekuba,<sup>1</sup> Swazis were fearful of what might happen next. Boers and Britons living in the kingdom shared an apprehension that fighting might break out and that they could be victims if a maelstrom were to follow. Pretoria and Cape Town were alerted at once, and the new high commissioner, Lord Milner, with his flair for the dramatic, began a barrage of telegrams, instructions, and reports to Bremersdorp, Pretoria, and London.

At the time, of course, the facts were not so clear. Some of the confusion resulted from conflicting reports coming from Zombodze. Messengers were sent to Krogh and Smuts by the queen-mother to say that the death of Mbhaba and his two retainers resulted from an accident, and those responsible were being sought. Then the king sent word through Zibokwana and Alpheus Nkosi that "Mbaba was killed on his orders for reasons which he will subsequently state."<sup>2</sup> But when Krogh asked him to come to Bremersdorp to give an account of what took place, he claimed illness. Soon the council sent a message that the "killing off" was its responsibility, and neither Bhunu nor his mother was involved. Later, Labotsibeni and leading members of the council came to Bremersdorp to say that the council was fully responsible, even though they knew it was no longer permitted to shed blood. Krogh was not satisfied and again asked that the king come with his explanation.

A few days later, Bhunu did come in, accompanied by his mother, members of the council, and several hundred warriors. He refused to discuss the assassination, saying it was a matter for the council; and Zibokwana spoke for the council, absolving the king of any blame. Krogh indicated that the issue would be investigated further. Bhunu protested and the queen-regent asked that any more discussions on the subject be held at Zombodze. Krogh rejected the suggestion. Bhunu then joshed the commissioner, saying he was angry with him, that he "could swallow him up"<sup>3</sup> for bringing so many Boer police into the kingdom. As might be expected, various interpretations were put on that comment, some Europeans affirming that the king had threatened to defend himself with force.

Although there was no indication as yet that the king might be prosecuted by the Republic, the issue was being stirred up within the kingdom and outside. Swazi chiefs were said to be divided. Bhunu was not, by most

accounts, popular in the chiefdoms. His personal habits ran counter to customary standards; he offended many outlying chiefs by ignoring their requests; he was not in the eyes of the older generation sufficiently prudent or wise; and he did not consult the nation or seek the elders' advice. What had happened, in fact, since Mbandzeni's death was that a sizable number of chiefs, possibly a majority, no longer saw themselves as being an integral part of the traditional governing process. During the regency of Tibati, Swazi administration, already put at risk by the European presence and the intrusion of the two external powers, suffered from inversion and uncertainty. Tibati's hard line against suspected enemies and her differences with the younger and volatile queen-mother worried those who saw the need for working together to safeguard the nation. With Bhunu's coming of age,<sup>4</sup> with a pattern of errant behavior already established, confidence in the leadership receded even more.

There were other, more immediate concerns at work. A growing estrangement between the king and his mother appears to have been generally suspected. Labotsibeni was said to be losing faith in Bhunu's suitability for the kingship and was looking more to his younger brother, Malunge, who, according to rumor, was being doctored in preparation for kingship. There was another disturbing rumor circulated by Zombodze watchers. Three days after Mbhaba's assassination, Smuts wrote to Milner: "For more than a year I have known that the Paramount Chief and his mother have not been on very good terms, and that he suspected Mbhaba of having illicit intercourse with her."<sup>5</sup> Swazi custom laid down strict and somewhat complex rules about relationships between the sexes; and a violation of the code by a senior chief and a widowed queen could be considered a grave offense, punishable by "killing off." When Labotsibeni sent Mordaunt, a British trader who was a friend, to inform Smuts of Mbhaba's death, he said that she was terrified for her own safety; and as Smuts informed the High Commission: "Mr. Mordaunt tells me that he gathers that the charges brought against Mbaba are that he has tried to poison the Paramount Chief, that he has spent his money, and that he has had illicit intercourse with his mother. He thinks that Longcanga, Zibokwana, Inslaba and Jokovu are the men who instigated or advised the Paramount Chief to order Mbaba's death."<sup>6</sup>

The Kruger government did not react at once to the assassinations. Immersed in controversy with the British government over problems in the Transvaal, Pretoria appeared to be undecided on a course of action. "Killing off" was contrary to the laws of the Republic, and these were now the laws of Swaziland. But did South African law apply in this context, a quarrel between two Swazis, albeit the king and a senior councillor? On the other hand, would a fine, imposed outside the courts, be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of "civilized" justice?

Even before the Mbhaba incident, the Republic was losing patience with



the situation in Swaziland. The opposition of the queen-mother and her advisers, the openly negative attitude of the king, the powerful anti-Boer propaganda suffusing Britain, and the excessive cost of maintaining a military as well as a civilian establishment in the kingdom provided persuasive evidence that existing arrangements were not productive. Two possible courses of action lay open: Abolish the paramount chieftaincy and decentralize authority among more malleable Swazi chiefs or integrate the Bredersdorp administration more closely with that of the Transvaal. There were even rumors that the Kruger government was grooming a young Swazi royal to be named paramount chief in a more friendly Swazi regime.<sup>7</sup>

If there were doubts in Pretoria, there were none in Cape Town. The recently appointed high commissioner, Lord Milner, wanted a quick resolution. His knowledge of the situation was academic; he had not visited the kingdom and had probably never met a Swazi. But once he turned his lucid intelligence to the task, he saw the independence of the kingdom as being at risk and the possibility of Republic gains. It was becoming "increasingly probable" there would be fighting, he informed the Colonial Office, urging that Britain not be passive: "It is evident that if we wait till there is a fight in which the Swazies are certain to be beaten, it will be difficult subsequently to secure for them any degree of independence. I think that we ought to act now if you attach value to maintaining this."<sup>8</sup>

Joseph Chamberlain, the colonial secretary, was prepared to go along; and from then on, the conduct of affairs was left, to a remarkable extent, in Milner's hands. Smuts and the British agent in Pretoria were instructed to encourage Republic officials to follow a moderate course in Swaziland. But State Secretary Leyds was a stickler for the law: The authority of the South African administration in the kingdom had to be maintained, he stated; Bhunu was accused of murder, and a fine would not be an adequate punishment if found guilty; glossing over such incidents would only lead to their recurrence later on; and the conduct of the Swazi king toward his own people was known to be reprehensible and must be curbed. In other words, the ordinary processes of justice should be applied. The High Commission, supported by the Foreign Office, did not agree. The 1894 Convention, they claimed, provided no justification for trying a Swazi king under South African law in a European court.

So the matter stood for months, virtually at an impasse. Meanwhile in Swaziland tensions were on the rise. Many Boer residents found Krogh's cautious response unacceptable. The British were openly critical. Three weeks after Mbhaba's death, Miller published a strong censorious article on Bhunu's general conduct, disparaging the failure of the local administration to take firm action.<sup>9</sup> The fact was that British financial interests in the kingdom were not satisfied with the 1894 settlement. Their influence at the capitals had been supplanted by that of others, the Kruger govern-

ment was not encouraging capitalist enterprise in the kingdom, and the climate for outside investment was not improving. Resident Europeans were generally not at ease. The buildup of Boer defenses did not slow down, and the overall posture, as seen by Swazis and Europeans alike, was preparation for war. By then the Boer military presence was formidable: 550 infantry, 466 cavalry, a troop of field artillery, a number of quick-firing guns with 20 men, ambulance and telegraph servicemen, and another 200 soldiers and possibly a contingent of burgher commandos ready to be called from across the border. On top of this, there were between 200 and 300 armed police—a total force of more than 1,500 men.<sup>10</sup>

Confronted by such a show of strength, the Swazi had reason to be disturbed. The queen-mother sought assurances of peaceful intent from Krogh because the Ferreiras warned that the king was to be arrested, and others claimed that a Boer attack was imminent. When she came to Bre-mersdorp with some councilmen to speak with Krogh, the party was met by a detachment of armed police. “Why do they run for their guns when they see us coming?” Zibokwana asked angrily. But the queen was calm and self-possessed. She apologized for being late, and her words to Krogh were those of an aggrieved mother: “Chief . . . you see before you a woman without a husband, one who has had a lot of small children whom she has looked after and brought up. But now those children are grown up; they do what they like. . . . I do not now control them, and they are responsible for their actions.”<sup>11</sup>

Eventually a date was set for an inquiry into Mbhaba’s death. The king was summoned but did not appear, and rumors were that he had fled the country. Pretoria was upset and suspected British collaboration in the alleged escape. Joubert stated that if the king left the kingdom in existing circumstances, he had in fact abandoned the paramount chieftainship. Milner telegraphed the Colonial Office: “The question has entered a critical phase.”<sup>12</sup> Labotsibeni denied knowledge of Bhunu’s movements but acknowledged that he feared for his life. Joubert instructed Krogh to call together a select group of trusted chiefs to discuss an alternative Swazi government. Then it was learned that the king, with a party of 18 followers, had reported in to the British magistrate at Ingwavuma in Zululand. “I have fled my country because Boers are invading it, and are bringing in arms to kill me. I have seen their troops with my own eyes,” he explained to Gibson, the magistrate there.<sup>13</sup> He and his party were sheltered at Es-chowe<sup>14</sup> during the next eight weeks while Cape Town and Pretoria exchanged views on an acceptable settlement.

In Swaziland, the passing weeks of continued suspense moved public sentiment toward the king. When the queen-mother learned that the Republic contemplated transferring the king’s authority to a perhaps unfriendly conclave of chiefs, she at once appealed to Smuts: Could this be done without the British government’s consent? She was not reassured

when told it would be a decision of both governments. She was not invited to Joubert's meeting and did not attend—nor did most of the chiefs invited; and those who did affirmed that, in the absence of the king, the queen-mother took precedence as head of the nation. Milner proposed that Bhunu be encouraged to return under specified conditions; and after prolonged negotiations with Pretoria and opposition from Boer and British hard-liners, that was agreed. The conditions were not onerous. First, the king must make his own decision without duress. He could bring back with him twenty of his retinue, unarmed, and a British official must accompany the party.<sup>15</sup> Second, an inquiry would be held at Bremersdorp under the incumbent landröst, Tengbergen. It would not be a trial, and the king could go back to his kraal as soon as the evidence was heard. Until a decision was reached by the two external governments, however, he would be deprived of any authority as paramount chief. Finally, even if the evidence pointed to his having played a part in the Mbhaba assassination, the king would not be brought to trial or suffer imprisonment or deposition.

It was by no means certain that Bhunu would return. Nor was there much confidence among Swazis at home that if he were allowed to come back, he would not be arrested and deposed. The Swazi were bound to see the Bhunu affair in a different light from the Europeans. If Mbhaba was guilty of the offenses alleged, custom decreed that he deserved punishment. Bhunu was king, for better or worse; and Swazi adherence to kingship was a bond not easily severed by acts of human frailty.

In the end, Bhunu decided to return. On the last day of August, he and his authorized party reached Bremersdorp.<sup>16</sup> Krogh and Smuts had asked that there be no demonstrations, and the Swazi complied. But as the procession entered the village, with a bugler from the police escort sounding a victory march, "a crowd of volunteers, police, and others" cheered loudly.<sup>17</sup> Smuts was upset and assured the king that he was not "a prisoner being brought back in triumph." The return journey was not, however, all clear sailing. The Republic insisted that its officials must take over when the party arrived at the Swazi border, and a detachment of police was detailed to meet it. Labotsibeni was upset when told by Krogh of this arrangement. "Is he a prisoner?" she asked angrily. "You go and meet your generals and we have nothing to do with it, and if Bhunu comes we shall go and meet him."<sup>18</sup> She was not appeased when told that the order had been given by Milner and Kruger, dismissing their judgment with an emphatic "I am not pleased."

On September 5, 1898, five months after the Mbhaba assassination took place, the inquiry got under way. Two well-known Transvaal lawyers took part: D. J. Esselen for the state and H. H. Sauer for the king. Krogh was the first witness, and he was asked about another killing in which Bhunu allegedly had been involved. Sauer objected, and when the *landröst* ruled

against him, he walked out of the court in protest. It was not a good beginning. The Republic apparently had gathered evidence on a number of earlier "killings off" in which the king's hand was suspected and intended to introduce these at the hearing. The summons to Bhunu did not, however, specify other allegations, and Milner pressed the point that such evidence could not be used. Kruger grudgingly conceded, remarking that it was shameful if Bhunu was to be allowed to get away with previous transgressions against "civilized behaviour."

Some twenty witnesses were called, but only two were prepared to give firsthand accounts. Ganda, described by Smuts as "a remarkably intelligent boy" of eight years or so, was the state's star witness. He claimed to have seen Mbhaba and his two servants struck down, the king using his *assagai* on one of them. Umvundeni, the second witness to the incident, testified that he saw the king set fire to Mbhaba's hut. He weakened under cross-examination, but Ganda stood firm. The boy lived at Zombodze and was, it was said, on friendly terms with the king and queen-mother as well as with Mbhaba. Sauer subjected him to vigorous cross-examination for several hours but could not break down his story. On reading the evidence later on, the state attorney in Pretoria, Jan Christian Smuts, concluded that Ganda was probably the only truthful witness at the hearing;<sup>19</sup> and there is no doubt that he made a favorable impression.

Basically, the state's case against the king rested on three presumed facts: his message to Krogh and Smuts that he had ordered the killing, Umvundeni's claim respecting the fire on Mbhaba's hut, and Ganda's testimony that he had seen him stab one of the servants. The defense did not challenge these charges except in cross-examination. Sauer argued that the council was responsible for Mbhaba's death and that, in the context of Swazi law, there were valid reasons for its decision. Several elders stated that Bhunu was not in the confidence of the council because he had not yet met all the requirements for kingship. Others testified that witch doctors had been consulted about Bhunu's recurring illnesses and had pointed to Mbhaba as the person responsible. Armed with this assessment, a select circle of elders agreed that Mbhaba must be punished. In keeping with custom, the council was not informed until the eve of carrying out the punishment; and the king was not forewarned. With little else to go on, Sauer rested the defense on that scenario.

Despite the attention given to it, the Mbhaba hearing had some of the elements of a charade. Britain and the Republic agreed beforehand that no matter how culpable the evidence might show him to be, the king would not be brought before the courts; but he could be fined at the discretion of the two governments. That conclusion to the affair was insisted on by Milner, and the Kruger government went along reluctantly. For Milner, such an arrangement would deprive the Republic of any visible gains from the crisis and ensure continuance of the status quo established by the 1894

Convention. The requirements of political justice would be served even if they fell outside the pale of judicial processes. For the Swazi, not only would it mean the reinstatement of the king; it would put a brake on any constitutional change that might be envisaged by the Republic.

The *landröst* closed off the hearing on September 24. Before doing so, he invited Krogh and Smuts to speak, and both publicly rebuked the king for his past conduct. Copies of the transcribed evidence were sent to Pretoria and Cape Town for final judgment. The state attorney admitted that a jury, on the evidence presented, could acquit the king, but by circuitous reasoning, he recommended a verdict of guilt. Milner, armed with critical assessments prepared by Sauer and Johannes Smuts, took the opposite view, expressing "extreme surprise" at the Boer conclusion. "Though the affair is shrouded in mystery," he wrote, "the evidence entirely fails to fix upon Bhunu direct responsibility for this crime."<sup>20</sup> The two governments then agreed to fine the king £500 plus the expenses of the hearing.<sup>21</sup> Mbhili, a senior chief who was spoken of as Mbhaba's probable successor, suggested before the hearing that if Bhunu was thought to have done wrong, he should be fined and the matter put to rest. Had his advice been taken, the kingdom would have been spared a five-month trauma.

An announcement of the governments' decisions was scheduled to be made at Bremersdorp on November 21. A large crowd gathered, including the king's mother and the council. Bhunu rode in with an impressive escort of warriors who stood outside the courthouse in parade formation. Krogh and James Stuart (Smuts had gone on leave) both addressed the king. The commissioner's comments were brief and moderate, advising Bhunu that he was to take up again his duties as paramount chief and urging him to act responsibly. Stuart spoke at greater length, his words directed to those present as well as to the king, deploring violence and calling for peaceful coexistence in the kingdom. The Swazi listened impassively, and no discussion followed. They walked silently from the courthouse; and Bhunu, his inheritance restored, rejoined his warriors and rode back to Zombodze, no doubt relieved and probably somewhat chastened.<sup>22</sup>

Swazi reaction to the disposition of the Mbhaba affair was a sense of relief, and there was a perceivable change in mood within the kingdom. "I have never before been regarded in such a kindly spirit and such warm feelings by the Swazis,"<sup>23</sup> James Stuart wrote. Milner's strategy had, in fact, worked better than he could have foreseen. The High Commission had taken on the protective role formerly exerted by the Shepstones, whereas the Boers were seen as wanting to punish, even depose, the king. During Bhunu's weeks at Eschowe, the queen-mother had moved closer to the British consul and, despite earlier misgivings, had come to trust his word. When, after the crisis had passed, she learned that he was going to Cape Town, she sent for Smuts and, in the presence of the king, asked if

he would take her son Malunge with him so that he could be educated. She then asked Malunge if he would like to go with Smuts. "Yes, if the queen pleases,"<sup>24</sup> was the reply. Smuts was disconcerted but explained the difficulty: Both governments would have to agree, and he was leaving shortly. He notified the High Commission, but Cameron, acting for Milner, was negative, so the matter was dropped and no effort was made to reopen the possibility.<sup>25</sup> Neither the British nor the Boers had much use for educated Swazis.

Be that as it may, there were other problems and misunderstandings. The hut tax fell due while the king was in exile, and Labotsibeni wanted to hold off collections until he could be consulted, unmindful that he had no right of veto. The Ferreiras began collections before the starting date, and there were complaints of cattle seizures and even flogging in instances of noncompliance. Taken on the whole, however, the tax collections went off smoothly. By the end of the first year, some £14,000 was collected—a remarkable sum in the circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Still, neither the king nor the queen-mother was satisfied: To them, paying taxes to support an administration they did not want was wrong. From the beginning, British and Boer policymakers linked taxes with regular employment, and the message was taken up by the Krogh administration. Young Swazis had not responded well to work opportunities in the mines, either at home or on the Rand, and the commissioner urged the king to encourage them to join the labor force; apart from providing income for the family, it would be a deterrent to irresponsible conduct.

At first, the reaction at Zombodze was negative. Mining company agents were entering the kingdom with offers of employment, bypassing both the chiefdoms and the king. This was seen to be another affront to the king's prerogatives, and in April 1899, Bhunu personally led a delegation to Pretoria to protest. A few weeks later, however, he entered into a fifteen-year contract with a recruiting agent from the Republic, Thuys Grobler, granting him what amounted to a monopoly over the recruitment of labor in the kingdom. The king contracted to provide a complement of able-bodied males, between seventeen and forty-five years of age, as requested from time to time by Grobler; in return, Bhunu would be rewarded at the rate of ten shillings a head. The scheme had Krogh's approval, but Smuts was skeptical because decisions on terms of employment and rates of pay would rest with the agent; and even companies operating in Swaziland might have to deal with him. On the other hand, the contract could bring an element of control to recruiting and, in that sense, be an improvement over the situation on the Rand. Yet a worrisome question for the Swazi was: Would the new arrangement result in forced recruitment?

As has been noted, Bhunu's continued residence at Zombodze became an issue during the landröst's inquiry. It was not in accord with Swazi

custom and did, indeed, belittle his claim to kingship. So in June 1899, he decided finally to establish his own headquarters. He favored his mountain retreat at Mpondweni, but since it was not easily accessible, he chose another site, Ezabeni, on a lower range of the Mdzimba mountains toward Mbekelweni. It was a healthy spot with a lovely view along the valley that now houses the National University; but it was still rudimentary, and he did not appoint an *indvuna* as custom called for.

When Smuts returned from Cape Town, the king, accompanied by Zibokwana, Mbhili, and other members of the council, paid him a visit. The queen-mother wanted him to come to Zombodze, they said, to talk about the recent meeting at Pretoria between the king and Kruger. Smuts was puzzled and said he would prefer to discuss such matters with the king, who was, after all, head of the nation. Zibokwana scoffed at the suggestion, saying that the king "was still a child and cannot discuss matters without his mother and councillors"; and the British consul must come when the queen called him. This caused some unpleasantness, and Smuts commented on the king's demeanor: "Ngwani's [the king's] behaviour throughout was most polite. . . . [T]he great change for the better which has come over him since his flight to Zululand is generally admitted and remarked upon."<sup>27</sup>

Bhunu was then, as he had been for months, a sick and exhausted young man. Official reports, reflecting local gossip, had for years attributed his frequent bouts of illness to drinking. There was, undoubtedly, some truth in that; but it was said particularly by those who wanted to denigrate his conduct. "The P. Chief is yet a mere child . . . saddled with this grave responsibility."<sup>28</sup> John Gama commiserated during the troubles over Mbhaba, blaming the king's weakness on the queen-mother and on the young, impetuous warriors with whom he spent his time. When, early in June before a decision was made to hold an inquiry, Labotsibeni sent Cleophas Kunene to Mpondweni, he found the king embittered. The council had arranged for Mbhaba's death, he said, and he had only "supplied the means." Now those responsible had deserted him and would not admit to the European authorities "the whole case of Umbaba's death and the circumstances leading thereto. . . . The Paramount Chief does not see why he should be made a scape-goat for the offences of others."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the strain of the long months of suspicion and uncertainty over the Mbhaba affair had broken Bhunu's will as well as mellowed his temperament. For after the outbreak of the South African war and he had reached the ultimate goal of Swazi kingship—an independent kingdom uncircumscribed by the European presence—he was not able to sustain it: He died at Zombodze on December 11, 1899.<sup>30</sup>

## *Chapter 11*

# War in South Africa

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The untimely death of the young Swazi king coincided with severe setbacks for the British army in the South African war, a struggle that began in October 1899 and lasted for the better part of the next three years. Differences between the British and South African Republic governments, orchestrated to a dissonant pitch from Milner's High Commission in Cape Town, had pushed President Kruger into delivering an ultimatum that the British were not prepared to accept. In the short term, neither Bhunu's passing nor the "white man's war" had an appreciable impact on the internal affairs of the Swazi; but the long-term consequences were serious, a watershed in the kingdom's history.

Bhunu's death marked no change in the continuum of royal authority. Labotsibeni had long been seen as the temporal as well as spiritual head of the nation, and her transition from queen-mother to queen-regent was, if anything, likely to enhance her role in matters of state. The war itself, between two powers intimately connected with the kingdom for as long as the oldest chief or elder could remember, was bound to be seen in different lights. For Bhunu, Joubert's handing over the keys of the administration opened the door to a new beginning; but it came too late, and the responsibilities of office passed quickly into other, abler hands. For Labotsibeni, the war was both a liberation and a test of strength. The withdrawal of the Boer administration, along with police, soldiers, and most of the resident burghers and their families, and the corresponding exit of the small but influential British community, was in one respect a wish fulfillment; but in another it deprived her of a moderating brake on the exercise of power. For the ordinary Swazi the war was, all things considered, a rever-



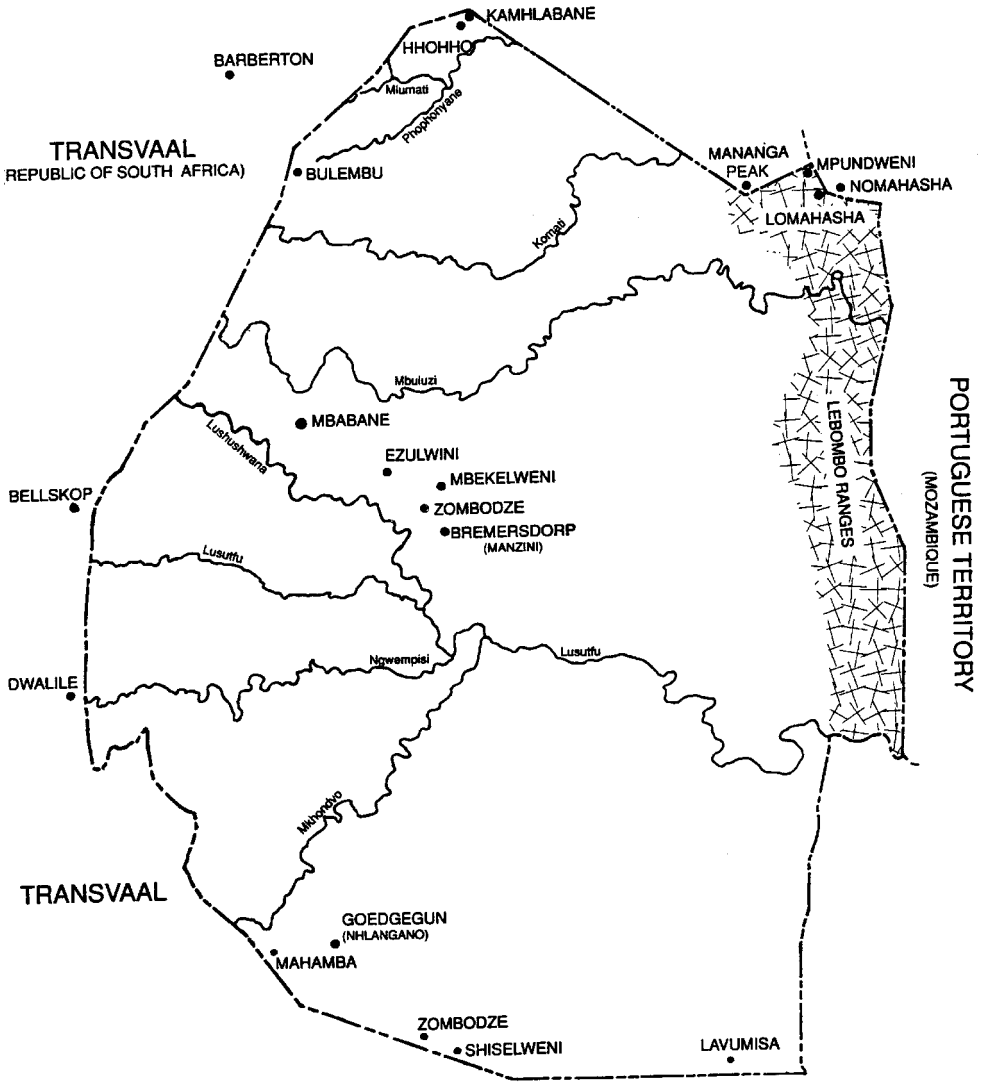
sal. By curbing trade and farming, thereby reducing the means of satisfying basic needs, it forced back Swazis to a less sufficient existence.

The treaty of Vereeniging, which ended the war, bore directly on the Swazi only insofar as it detached the kingdom formally from the late Republic's control.<sup>1</sup> Labotsibeni, supported now by her younger sons, Malunge and Lomvanzi, had looked toward a British victory as a prelude to a renewed, independent Swaziland. But neither the British military command nor commercial and mining interests with operations in the kingdom saw that as an option. And Milner, as high commissioner, took it for granted that Swaziland would be under British control, either as an annexure to the Transvaal or as a protectorate; and he prodded the British government to define its status. When that was done, belatedly because the British government was not certain that it wanted to take on a responsibility already refused, the results were such as Labotsibeni and the council could hardly have imagined.

Swazi reaction to Bhunu's death was mixed. A number of prominent chiefs were not confident about the state of affairs at the capitals, and some were openly critical. The questionable lifestyle of the late king and his detachment from the problems of the chiefs meant that his credibility rested mainly on the fact of kingship. But even that was questioned; he was not an only son, and his mother had been Mbandzeni's principal wife—two customary impediments to the exercise of kingship. From the beginning, his mother had suffered from muted opposition within the Dlamini circle, and it is likely that she had hoped for Bhunu's taking on a more responsible mode of life. There were reports that she was leaning toward his younger brother, Malunge.

Yet after the hearing into Mbhaba's assassination, Bhunu became something of a folk hero. John Gama claimed that Swazi fears over raiding and "killings off" stemmed not from the king's actions but from those of the queen-mother and her entourage. There may be truth in that, as there may well be in Labotsibeni's claim that vandalism, supposedly ordered from Zombodze, was in fact the work of chiefs seeking to settle private grievances. This much is clear: during the months preceding the South African war, the situation in Swaziland was relatively calm. Resentment against the hut tax did not abate, but Krogh reported that opposition was subsiding. James Stuart, briefly back in Swaziland, confirmed that, adding that more than 2,000 Swazis attended the *ncwala*, the first gathering of the nation since the Mbhaba affair.

Meanwhile, the European community worried over the situation in the Republic, and rumors of a pending British-Boer war were current. The Pretoria government sought to economize; selected services in Swaziland were brought under administrative departments in the Transvaal. Smuts informed Milner that the special commissioner's role was "gradually dwin-



Swaziland: Late Nineteenth Century (not to scale)

dling down to that of clerk or recorder to a set of South African Republic officials by whom the administration of Swaziland is really carried on.”<sup>2</sup> To counter this, fearing that a move toward integration might ignore their interests, the Swaziland Mining, Industrial and Commercial Chamber was formed under the chairmanship of Miller, comprising some forty members with capital invested in the kingdom.

The threat of war was causing apprehension. Some resident farmers moved their cattle into Portuguese territory. The Piggs Peak Mining Company evacuated the wives and children of its European employees. A mission organization in Durban asked if it should withdraw its missionaries. By September 1899, it seemed that a break was imminent, and Milner telegraphed Smuts: “Warn British subjects you may have to withdraw.”<sup>3</sup> By the end of the month, Boer families were moving out, and burghers were called up for military service, to be issued “arms and accoutrements” in Bremersdorp. On September 28, police in Piggs Peak put up a public notice advising all families to leave; and a week later Krogh made it official: Every European should leave the kingdom except the burghers commandeered for service. By then, almost all women and children had already been sent away.

Rumors of war and of possible Swazi reaction to it were rife for some months. Milner sent Smuts an urgent telegram based on press reports: “Swazis are watching events, and are determined to rise if there is any open rupture between us and the South African Republic.”<sup>4</sup> Smuts was taken aback but promised to report any signs of Swazi unrest. The British agent in Pretoria, acting on a private tip, gravely wired the High Commission that “Bhunu offered his services and those of his nation to the Boers yesterday.”<sup>5</sup> That was not true: The reality was that the Swazi were nervous and on guard. There was a feeling, induced no doubt by the presence of so many Boer police and military, that the British were afraid of the Boers. When someone suggested that the Boers were boasting they could smash the British army, Labotsibeni irritated Smuts by asking, “Is your country at peace? . . . If the Boers are so wide-mouthed, and say that the English are cowards, why don’t you fight them?”<sup>6</sup> John Gama reported that many outlying chiefs had come to his Lubombo kraal to inquire about the situation. He said that they “hope there may be a war between us and Boers, and thus a change in the Government of this country. They are very sore about taxation.”<sup>7</sup>

For strategic reasons, neither Cape Town nor Pretoria wanted Swaziland to become involved in the war. The Kruger government was conscious of Swazi opposition to its administration of the kingdom; and British intelligence was not impressed by the fighting potential of Swazi regiments. An eve-of-war assessment noted a decline in Swazi strength. “The Swazis were at one time a fine military race, but through famine and drink they are now much deteriorated; and are not likely to prove of much value for

offensive actions in the open, although as guerillas they might give trouble.”<sup>8</sup> The prospect of ethnic Africans serving as combatants, on either side, in a struggle between Europeans was particularly abhorrent in southern Africa; and neither side was prepared to brook the criticism that would follow if the Swazi were encouraged to take on a fighting role.

Nonetheless, the situation at Bremersdorp was sensitive. By midsummer of 1898, relations between Krogh and Smuts had cooled off, and both were watching for any covert contacts with the king or queen-mother by the other. Joubert sent a long, fatherly message to Bhunu, urging him not to become involved in the war. He urged the king to be tolerant; not to harm women, children, or defenseless persons, black or white; and to look after the property being left behind. He then pressed on him the burden of administration: “You, Bhunu, are now the only person who, as long as the war may last, has power in Swaziland over everything.”<sup>9</sup>

For the most part, the Swazi were spared the displacement and disorder normally associated with a civilian population caught within a war zone. Unlike European families who had to abandon homes and seek a temporary life elsewhere, the kraals and chiefdoms remained relatively secure. As the war progressed and reports of Boer successes circulated, there was some fear that the country might be reoccupied. But apart from one or two incidents, the neutrality of Swaziland was respected. Problems did arise, of course, especially after the withdrawal of the police. The majority of Boer and British men fit for military service either volunteered or were called up; but a few, mostly men who lived on the fringes of the law, welcomed the absence of security forces and chose to stay behind.

No British troops came close to the kingdom during the early months of the war, but near the western border, a sizable number of burghers established commando posts. It was reported that four commando units were deployed on the Transvaal side to defend Boer farms against possible British strikes. Patrols apparently were not sent across the Swazi border by either side, but there were reports of looting. Almost all storekeepers and canteen owners were British, and many of them had left their stocks intact, believing that they would be returning in a matter of weeks—an open temptation for the commandos. Grosvenor Darke, one of the early concessionaires and a friend of Labotsibeni, was given rough treatment by local burghers near his home, and his store was ransacked. Some men from the Oshoek encampment went as far as Bremersdorp to loot supplies, and it was said that they were selling stolen liquor to Swazis.

There was little direct communication between the kingdom and the outside world. The *Times of Swaziland* ceased publication on October 7. Krogh withdrew to the Bells Kop post, and his staff were either serving with the commandos or occupied elsewhere in the Republic. Most British families went to Natal, some to the Cape, and a few returned to Britain,

disillusioned by their experience. A transit camp for evacuees was set up on the Lubombo near the Portuguese border.<sup>10</sup> Smuts, Miller, and Forbes stopped there for a time, along with many others; but the news trickling in from the fighting fronts was not encouraging, and they moved on. Smuts went home to Cape Town, and Miller sailed for England to report to the directors of the Swaziland Corporation. Forbes toyed with the idea of raising a volunteer force to keep watch on the eastern border, but his negotiations with the British army command broke down.

Bhunu seems to have taken Joubert's entreaty seriously and, during the few months left to him, made an effort to control the situation at home. The regiments were constrained from becoming involved, and at Bremersdorp, the king's men were said to be keeping watch on government buildings. The impression gained from wartime evidence is that the Swazi generally were circumspect, favoring neither Boer nor Briton; behaving better, no doubt, than Europeans who took advantage of the kingdom's neutrality to avoid the war. It was not an easy time for the ailing king. When Dyer Macebo, Smuts's Zulu interpreter, sought sanctuary at Mpondweni because the police were looking for him, Bhunu told him not to stay because spies were present at the capitals; and he provided two of his men to guide him through to Zululand.<sup>11</sup>

With the king's death, the situation in the kingdom appears to have become less controlled. Labotsibeni was at the best of times strong willed but, when faced with tragedy, sought explanation and redress through traditional sources. She was convinced that Bhunu had been poisoned. Witch doctors were asked to "smell out" the culprit, and they pointed to one of the leading chiefs, Zibokwana, who had carried out important missions for the kingdom and was a member of the last deputation sent to England. Despite the trauma of the Mbhaba affair, Zibokwana was put to death, apparently with the queen's assent. The Swazi commonly believed the poison theory. Mordaunt, writing from the Lebombo camp, stated that the Swazi "followed out their old custom . . . and had some people killed, amongst whom were Zibokwana," and that he had written to the queen to deplore what was happening.<sup>12</sup> A Zulu messenger, sent by Gibson to investigate, confirmed that killings took place. The poison supposition, he said, was widely believed by Swazi, leading to unrest and violence.<sup>13</sup> The queen-regent denied complicity in any "killing off" except Zibokwana's. She was concerned about critics and sent Lomvanzi to Dinizulu, the Zulu king, to tell him formally of Bhunu's passing; and he stopped at Gibson's magistracy to assure him that his mother had ordered no one killed except the one who had to be punished.<sup>14</sup> It is more than likely that, apart from the killing, there were other violent incidents. This had an unfortunate impact on public opinion outside the kingdom. Critics were quick to seize upon negative reports. The character of Swazi leadership was questioned, even in official British circles, with undertones that they were not to be

trusted to manage their affairs with equanimity. William Pigg, a prominent concessionaire, complained to the *Natal Mercury* about the negative views on Swaziland carried in the English-language press. "Such reports," he wrote, "are calculated to have a baneful and poisonous influence on the public mind of South Africa and England."<sup>15</sup>

The kingdom was not wholly free from warlike actions on its territory. There were two important exceptions—the activities of "Steinacher's Horse" and the burning of Bremersdorp by a Boer commando. The two were connected: The commando was sent into Swaziland because Bremersdorp had been occupied for several months by what was considered by the Boers to be a band of robbers. The occupants were, in fact, more than that. They were part of an unorthodox but officially supported army unit operating from Lomahasha. They were British only to the degree that their commander was given field officer's rank and the unit was subsidized from the imperial war chest. Steinacher was a central European who offered his services to the British command. He was accepted and given the task that Forbes had earlier bid for: to raise an armed force to intercept enemy and supplies trying to pass through the eastern border to the Transvaal. He recruited and trained a mixed body of some 500 men.

Their activities caught the attention of General Kitchener, the British chief of staff. They took charge of Bremersdorp; patrols were sent across the kingdom, and kraals and farms were raided even in Portuguese territory. The army command was pleased, but the queen-regent disliked such interference and had little regard for the unit's officers, some of whom were known at the capital.<sup>16</sup> She was upset when a Swazi, accused of spying, was shot summarily without the sanction of Zombodze. Reports on the situation reached Milner, and concerned about the effect on Swazi neutrality, he contacted the army command. Kitchener's reply was forthright: "I think it would be well to encourage Swazi Queen . . . to turn Boers out of her territory. A little show of force would have an admirable effect."<sup>17</sup>

The Bremersdorp incident had a different outcome. In mid-July 1901, the Boer commandant at Ermelo, Louis Botha,<sup>18</sup> sent word to one of his field commanders that robbers were causing trouble in Swaziland and the Swazi queen had authorized that they be driven out. He ordered caution: "Your men must be clearly warned on the border not to molest the Swazi nation in any way . . . be most careful, but make a decisive end to these robbers."<sup>19</sup> The commando acted quickly. It crossed into Swaziland on July 21, but Steinacher's men were withdrawing toward the Lubombo. They were followed, and a skirmish took place. The commander reported a successful engagement, adding, "As Bremersdorp was used as a refuge for robbers . . . I have burned the town to ashes."<sup>20</sup> Botha's acknowledgment was tough: "I must inform you that you have acted absolutely contrary to our principles in burning to ashes the town of Bremersdorp."<sup>21</sup> The com-

manding officer was suspended, and despite his making a heated defense of his action, he was discharged. The queen-regent sent a message to the British commander at Barberton, expressing regret over the destruction of Bremersdorp; but she made no mention of her own apparent collusion in bringing in the Boer commando.

Two other incidents appear in the records and point to some involvement by individual Swazi chiefs against the Boers. At Hlatikulu, a number of poor squatter families stayed on, and a local chief undertook to drive them away. In the ensuing melee, several Boers were killed. In the second incident near Sidvokodvo, a chief named Tintita, professing to have been sent by Zombodze, persuaded local warriors to kill a group of thirteen Boer graziers who had stayed behind with their cattle. The local chiefs were deeply troubled, and word was sent to the magistrate at Ingwavuma, who passed it on. Milner reported to the Colonial Office that the crime "is of a shocking character," giving rise to "grave anxiety" about future Swazi conduct toward the Boers.<sup>22</sup> Yet fears of the Swazi actively supporting either side were not well grounded. The British may have misjudged the extent of Swazi support for their cause, but they had been given warning of a probably unresponsive Swazi attitude. In an eve-of-war analysis, War Office Intelligence reported: "Since the retrocession of the Transvaal and the defeat of the British forces by the Boers in 1881, the feeling of the native tribes towards the British Government has greatly changed. Prior to this date the natives had a great respect for the power and belief in the justice and faith of Great Britain, while they disliked the Boer. That dislike remains but their belief in England has gone."<sup>23</sup>

The question of the Swazi leadership's aspirations for the future of the kingdom was troubling the British. That the queen-regent and council had not deflected from a long-standing Swazi posture, envisioning a kingdom kept safe from external threat by the rivalry of its neighbors, is evident, and it can hardly be doubted that they looked forward to a return to the pre-1894 arrangements when European control was manifestly weakened by internal dissension. As the war progressed, Labotsibeni was said to be acting as if she were an independent monarch. Forbes suggested that she and the chiefs "hate any white authority and interference . . . [T]hey only prefer the British to the Boer because they think they will get more freedom."<sup>24</sup> Smuts wrote to Milner that because Britons were returning, the queen-regent would insist that "as she was able to maintain independence of her country without our assistance, she has grounds for maintaining continued independence."<sup>25</sup> Even John Gama warned that a strong hand would be needed to curb Zombodze's ambitions if the British took control at the war's end.

With the tide of war turning in Britain's favor, the government announced in May 1900 that it was annexing the Orange Free State and the

Transvaal. Circumstances changed, and it was forced to delay acting on the Transvaal until September. Smuts left for Pretoria en route, he hoped, to Swaziland to take up his post. Once arrived at Barberton, he sent a message to the queen-regent asking that the council come to discuss with him the future government of the kingdom. Two weeks later, a reply arrived by messenger: The queen-regent was pleased that Smuts was back but, unfortunately, could not discuss the kingdom's affairs except at Zombodze in the presence of the council. Provoked by the reply, Smuts asked Milner for an escort—100 or so armed men—to cover his return to the kingdom. Milner did not oblige and, to Smuts's annoyance, suggested that he go in alone. Europeans were, at the time, coming back to Swaziland to recoup their livelihood, but the queen-regent's messenger saw no Boers along his route. Burghers were moving to their farms in the southwest, posing no threat to Bremersdorp or Zombodze. Uncertain of the situation and with no help from the military, Smuts returned to Pretoria, disappointed at the failure of his mission.

Although his plans for an official British presence in Swaziland fell apart, the high commissioner insisted that the kingdom's future be decided, raising the issue frequently with the Colonial Office. In November 1900, the colonial secretary asked him to make recommendations. The choice seemed to be a protectorate or annexation. The former would be simpler but would require "a more complete machinery of government,"<sup>26</sup> Chamberlain wrote. However, the war was not yet over; the Boers changed their strategy under new leaders and were making a remarkable recovery. So Milner delayed responding to the request until the end of the following April, prior to his going on leave to England. He recommended that the Swazi kingdom be administered for the present as a dependency of the Transvaal. Chamberlain agreed in principle, and there the matter stood for months. Kitchener replaced Milner while on leave, and the Swazi question was not high on his agenda. In the meantime, others were attempting to redraw the map of southern Africa. The new governor of Natal, McCallum, suggested that Swaziland be a protectorate under the High Commission until the concessions were sorted out; afterward, because of the natural affinity between Swazi and Zulu, it should be administered by Natal. The reaction outside Natal was negative. The kingdom's industrial economy was tied in with the Transvaal, and economic interests took precedence over cultural ties.

The peace terms eventually agreed upon at Vereeniging and Pretoria in May 1902, though still requiring the approval of burgher commanders in the field and the endorsement of the British government, for practical purposes ended the South African war. No reference was made to the future of Swaziland in the final document, nor does it appear to have entered into the discussions—assuming, perhaps, that suzerainty would pass automatically, under the 1894 Convention, from Pretoria to London. In late September the change was formalized: Letters patent were issued to provide



for a British government for the Transvaal, and the colony was to include "territories which formed part of the territories of the South African Republic"<sup>27</sup> at the time of annexation. But the kingdom had not been incorporated into the Republic and had never been a territory of that or any other state. So when Milner, in November 1902, abolished martial law in the Transvaal and made known that the abrogation extended to Swaziland, eyebrows were raised at the Colonial Office. Such an extension could not be made, Chamberlain informed him: A separate order-in-council, applied specifically to Swaziland, was needed. The Colonial Office had two principal concerns: Which was the better choice, annexation or a protectorate? And what should be done about the concessions?

Indeed, the constitutional position of the Swazi kingdom was to remain in limbo for some time. When Milner returned from England, he was faced with a massive task. Kitchener's policy of "total war" as a countermeasure to Boer commando tactics had devastated crops, herds, and property in rural districts of the Transvaal and had driven tens of thousands of Boer women and children into concentration camps. Recognizing that, the peace terms were generous in guaranteeing funds for reconstruction; and Milner was given the awesome task of masterminding the process of restoration. Even with the appointment of a lieutenant governor for the Transvaal to ease the burden of administration, not much time or thought could be given to deciding on a role for Swaziland. Nonetheless, the situation in the kingdom could not be ignored. Former residents and army volunteers were coming back, and mining companies and industrial operations were anxious to resume their activity.

Meanwhile, within the kingdom life was returning to normal. For Swazis, some of the privations caused by the war were easing; and for Britons and Boers it was a matter of trying to piece together their former mode of life; and while some did well, others fell by the wayside. The Dlamini dynasty had survived and, in spite of factions, was to a considerable measure strengthened. The queen-regent was in charge, now supported by her able young son Malunge and by capable advisers from among the Swazi, chief among them Josiah Vilakazi.

## *Chapter 12*

# The British Takeover

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Toward the end of August 1902, a few weeks after the British government authorized Milner to establish an ad hoc administration in Swaziland, the newly appointed commissioner for native affairs in the Transvaal colony, Godfrey Lagden, placed before him a memorandum on what should happen to the indigenous population:

In interests of their development it is our duty to foster industry among them by raising their standard of life in such a way as to create new wants, and by teaching them that their future prosperity depends upon industrial habits of a regular nature. . . . In learning to labour they lay up a store for their own betterment, and in labouring industriously they do something on their part to justify us in our efforts to elevate them gradually to higher standards. They should not be alien to the development of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Although not original, it was a brave vision, likely to appeal to the high commissioner and his bright young men; but, unhappily, it turned out to be a mirage. Amid the euphoria of victory and the challenges of reconstruction, utopian schemes were never at a premium. What was missing were favorable circumstances in which to try to carry them out; and these were never created in Swaziland.

The negatives can be traced. First, the British felt that they had to establish order in the kingdom. As war fever receded, Labotsibeni was portrayed more adversely by senior British officials. The apparent presumptions of the Swazi queen-regent—now aging, frequently ailing, and with no warrior force to speak of—were seen to be an obstacle to the exercise of imperial control. There was, in addition, a lack of funding and a dearth of pro-

gressively minded officers; the first, in fact, precluded the second, because the insistence on balanced books and locally financed administration made it impossible, in a climate of relative poverty, to undertake constructive development.

Third, there were deeply ingrained local attitudes that had to be modified. It was a common complaint that young Swazi males were seldom work prone, that they responded poorly to the opportunities of the labor market on the Rand and within the kingdom. Perhaps in framing instructions to accompany letters patent for the Transvaal and its territories, which called for the promotion of education and Christian belief, the framers hoped for an infusion of the Protestant work ethic; but neither of these was readily available to the Swazi. Finally, and possibly more significant, the ethos of the colonial system did not support the vision. No matter its initial merits or objectives, by the early 1900s the colonial structure in southern Africa was riveted to the status quo, insensible of countervailing influences and an unlikely candidate for self-renewal.

Although, as has been noted, the Swazi had little direct involvement in the South African war and, as with the *mfecane*, were spared the suffering and destruction inflicted on their neighbors, the situation in the kingdom when hostilities ended was by no means favorable or secure. First, the economy was weak. Mining interests had largely withdrawn at the beginning of the conflict, and the industry was effectively shut down. The displacement of the small Swazi work force may not have been serious in itself, but the closure had the effect of ending the spin-off in currency, goods, and services that inevitably attaches to a productive operation; and this was bound to have some impact on the chiefdoms. While the number of Swazis taking up employment in the mines was low relative to other indigenous groups south of the Zambesi river, the remuneration gained (an average of fifty-three shillings a month in 1899) trickled down through extended families and the chiefdoms.

Again, the departure of Europeans from the kingdom had some negative results. Boer farmers and graziers, as well as British merchandizing and service classes, had to some extent made use of local labor, as did, to a lesser degree, the civil establishment.<sup>2</sup> Thus, although the Swazi cannot be said to have been more than passive participants in a cash economy, its collapse or disappearance could not but have a detrimental effect. Beyond that, and of greater consequence for the chiefdoms, during the last months of the war the kingdom was racked by what has always been a major threat to communal survival in southern Africa: famine brought on by drought and cattle disease.

Furthermore, the Swazi leadership was unsure of what lay ahead. The queen-regent, in spite of her acumen and resolution, was not really in a strong position. Her hopes, like those of a majority of chiefs, undoubtedly

had been for a British victory; but reports of the ebb and flow of the fighting during the war months had been disquieting. When, at last, British forces took over Boer encampment sites along the western and southern borders of the kingdom, and Steinacher's men were still positioned at the eastern approaches, the possibility of the Republic's regaining control was remote. Yet the British command's attitude toward the government at Zombodze was, to say the least, distant and detached. Apart from Smuts not very resourceful effort to get established as British commissioner, almost no formal contact with the queen and council was initiated. Indeed, the Swazi posture of neutrality raised doubts about the queen-regent's reliability rather than approbation.

Then, too, the political situation was not stable. Although assertions that the kingdom was in a state of anarchy, that the queen-regent had instituted despotic rule, and that she was hanging on to power against the wishes of the populace had no rational foundation, there are indications that all was not as tranquil as it might be. The evidence suggests that her wartime rule had been arbitrary and fitful and that her relations with a number of chiefs were not harmonious. Part of the problem lay in her personal insecurity. Since the withdrawal of the Krogh administration and Bhunu's death, she had to carry alone the full weight of government—a burden made heavier by internal discord and the precarious position of the kingdom in relation to the warring powers. It is doubtful if she was fully supported by the council or free from the criticism of influential chiefs. Miller's suggestion that she was beset by adverse rumors within the kingdom may have had a grain of truth. Certainly, she seems to have been isolated at Zombodze, possibly more feared than revered; and it was not until she was able to lean on the strong arm of her son Malunge, whose intelligence and maturity were in marked contrast to Bhunu's, that the traditional authority of her role began to be reasserted.

If there was uncertainty about the future among the Swazi, there was as much among colonial officials. Milner, with his usual foresight, observed to Chamberlain in July 1901 that a commission would have to be appointed to examine concessions and decide on the future government of the kingdom. He had, in fact, started planning a new administration for the Transvaal well before the Vereeniging proposals.<sup>3</sup> Johannes Smuts was the second choice for the registry of deeds in the colony, and he accepted, probably pleased to give up his aborted posting to the kingdom. Milner telegraphed Chamberlain: "For Swaziland, where we shall require a very strong local administration after the war, I propose Saunders of Zululand."<sup>4</sup> But Saunders did not want the job; the salary offered was £1,500 a year, £300 less than Krogh had been paid by the Republic; and at Lagden's suggestion, the appointment was offered to F. Enraght-Moony, who shortly before had been moved from Basutoland to Zoutspansberg.

The Colonial Office was slow to react, and toward the end of June 1902,

Milner again telegraphed the colonial secretary: "Great doubt seems to exist as to legal position of Swaziland, and my council and I are all agreed in thinking that it ought now to be formally annexed to the British dominions and provision made for Government. Think the simplest plan would be to annex it and incorporate it in the Transvaal but I should need your formal authority to do this."<sup>5</sup> A month later, Chamberlain responded, suggesting an order-in-council declaring Swaziland to be a protectorate, which he thought to be the present status of the kingdom. But he prefaced a warning: "Before deciding to annex Swaziland the position created by the Concessions should be, I think, fully considered."<sup>6</sup> That was the obvious entanglement that gave rise to the British government's hesitation.

Enraght-Moony entered the kingdom on August 24, 1902, three years after Krogh's and Smuts's departure, accompanied by a small staff and a few police from the South African Constabulary. He sent a message to the queen-regent and established a camp at Mbabane rather than going on to Bremersdorp. Three days later, Malunge and a number of chiefs came up with greetings from the queen-regent; and Enraght-Moony made the journey down to Zombodze on August 30. Labotsibeni received him cordially and asked for "considerate treatment" from the British government for her people. He reported that the Swazi had been impoverished by the drought: "There are no supplies of any kind to be obtained, and all grain is extremely scarce, in fact, unprocurable."<sup>7</sup>

Enraght-Moony's appointment turned out to be a stopgap measure. He had limited resources: a tentative commission, reporting to Lagden rather than to the high commissioner; a skeleton staff and a minuscule budget; and only the most basic accommodation at Mbabane. In the circumstances, he tried to carry on a holding operation, maintaining order and entering into a neutral relationship with the inhabitants—Swazi, Boer, and Briton. His eighteen years of service with the Basuto made him tolerant of African customs. While not excusing the "eating up" and "killing off" reputed to have been committed during the war years, in reports to Lagden he sought to place such conduct in perspective: "It must be remembered that they lack the means of civilized communities for enforcing law and order, and that, without resorting to these methods, a condition of anarchy would arise in their clans infinitely worse than the evil we so strongly, and rightly, condemn."<sup>8</sup>

Until some semblance of government on European standards was reestablished in Swaziland, it was difficult for the European community to conduct its affairs. The constitutional position was unclear: No laws had been promulgated; no magistrates had been named; there were no law courts, and the deeds office had not reopened. Allister Miller took the lead in rallying support for action. He sent a memorandum to the directors of the Swaziland Corporation in London, pointing out the advantages of annexing the kingdom to the Transvaal. The current situation was intolerable,

he claimed: "The Special Commissioner—a Native Affairs Official—dictates his will to the Europeans, backed by *le droit du plus fort*." Miller's views were shared by many leading concessionaires who felt that incorporation into the Transvaal would cut expenditures and open the way to a settlement of concessions claims acceptable to present holders. The memorandum reached the Colonial Office through a British shareholder of the Swaziland Corporation. The colonial secretary was informed that the corporation had ample capital and that there were "other large capitalists interested in the development of the country."<sup>10</sup>

The Swaziland Corporation's intervention added weight to Milner's importunities, and in June 1903, an order-in-council placed Swaziland as a protectorate under the governor of the Transvaal. The task of spelling out the details fell to the recently appointed lieutenant governor, Arthur Lawley, who, with the able attorney general Richard Solomon, drafted a proclamation to put the order into effect. The draft included a scheme for settling the concessions problem that was not acceptable to the Colonial Office, and the new colonial secretary, Oliver Lyttleton, telegraphed at once that it was not to be acted on. Officials in Johannesburg were understandably miffed, but the matter rested there, and Swaziland remained in limbo for another fifteen months.

Meanwhile, much was happening elsewhere in southern Africa. The Milner administration, combining the office of high commissioner with the governorship of the Transvaal, and later the Orange River Colony as well, was heavily engaged in reconstruction and politics. Kruger, along with Leyds and senior war commandants, was out of the country, having taken refuge in Holland,<sup>11</sup> but other Boer leaders who had stayed behind were being cajoled into accepting civic responsibilities. A major effort was under way to overcome the travail of those who survived the concentration camps or had been banished to remote parts of the colonial empire. The gold mines on the Rand were on an uphill swing, complaining only of a shortage of labor. Other industrial ventures were progressing, and plans were afoot to attract a large body of British immigrants to the subcontinent: to impel prosperity and to counter what was considered to be the backward outlook of the Boers and the indolence of the indigenous populations. To those observing it from the outside, it was a heady experience; and it is not surprising that the situation in Swaziland—a state of measured immobility—frustrated those Europeans who had put their trust in the future of the kingdom as residents or investors.

So when Milner returned in January 1904, he again took up the question. He urged that Lawley's draft be approved or at least that portion of it providing for local administration. The position of the kingdom "devoid of legal foundation" was "profoundly unsatisfactory," he told the colonial secretary: "It must not be forgotten that, though the native question is

perhaps the most urgent, there is now also a considerable white population in Swaziland, and their dissatisfaction at the present state of affairs is becoming as loud as it is, in my opinion, justified.”<sup>12</sup> And he added a veiled threat to the British government: If the situation in Swaziland “ever becomes generally known, it would be regarded by public opinion, both here and at home, as rather a grave scandal.”

The Colonial Office still quibbled: Who was to pay for the administration? What revenues could be expected from Swaziland? Milner thought a revenue of £40,000 would more than cover the costs, but Lyttleton was not persuaded and took no action. The high commissioner returned to the subject in May, and finally the British government conceded. Lyttleton telegraphed that he “was disposed” to authorize a proclamation; and Milner and Solomon set to work to revise the concession clauses. At the beginning of October 1904, a new draft was forwarded to London. “This has been a laborious business,”<sup>13</sup> Milner complained; but confident that the re-drafted version would be approved, he issued a proclamation on October 3.

The proclamation of 1904, presented two and a half years after the peace agreement, set up an administration in Swaziland and extended the laws of the Transvaal to the kingdom. It provided for a high court and judicial organization and recognized the Swazi’s right to govern themselves within limits previously imposed. Besides introducing a legal basis for the exercise of British rule, its most important contribution was to provide a process for settling the concessions muddle. To this end, it established a concessions commission with wide-ranging powers of inquiry and decision; and the commission was to begin its work at once.

Milner had already authorized a study of the concessions, delegating the task to J. F. Rubie, a Johannesburg lawyer who, with the assistance of William Scott, an old hand in the kingdom, prepared a confidential report based on the materials available. Their recommendations,<sup>14</sup> submitted in February 1903, provided guidelines for the later investigations of Smuts and Grey. Rubie clarified the constitutional question, asserting that the British government, by the terms of the Vereeniging treaty, assumed all rights and responsibilities previously exercised over Swaziland by the Republic. Because the decisions of a concessions court would be binding, however, the legality of canceling any concession confirmed by the court would not likely be upheld if challenged. But the right to expropriate with compensation was inherent in any government, so this could be done in the case of monopolies and tax-free trading concessions. Land concessions should be examined in a Swazi context and adjustments made in the light of their prior occupation and future needs.

The report urged the British government to act quickly to remedy the obvious injustice of many concessions: To delay would energize opposition

from those now holding them. Thus, a survey of all land concessions should be made and a commission appointed to assess compensation to holders where expropriation was needed; and to ascertain the land requirements, for present and future use, of the Swazi population. The Colonial Office accepted the report and minuted it with a foreboding observation: "This is an able report, and shews clearly the necessity of taking action as regards the concessions before anything can be done to administer the country. . . . Besides the concessions question, there are 2 other matters that must be included in any general settlement of Swaziland:—(1) the provision of reserves for the natives, (2) the retention or abolition of the Paramount Chieftaincy."<sup>15</sup>

Johannes Smuts was transferred from his deeds office to head the concessions commission. His familiarity with the kingdom and its problems gave him strong credentials. Rubie and W. H. Gilfillan were named as members, with Scott as secretary.<sup>16</sup> The commission set to work at once. Because the proclamation had identified monopoly and exclusive rights concessions as being subject to possible expropriation, they were given priority. The Swaziland Corporation, by far the largest concession holder, bypassed the commission and proposed directly to the high commissioner that it surrender its twenty-two concessions in exchange for freehold title to some 1 million acres of land and that certain mineral rights under the unallotted mines concession be confirmed to it in perpetuity. Milner handled the proposal with kid gloves. He forwarded it to the commission for comment and reserved negotiations on the proposal to the High Commission. Despite this, Smuts prepared a strong critique of the corporation's proposals and especially on Miller's role in concession transactions, concluding that "the Corporation's claim is not entitled to favourable treatment."<sup>17</sup>

On completing its submission on the Swaziland Corporation, the commission moved to the Swazi kingdom. By the time it arrived, the surveys were well under way. Circuit hearings began in September 1904 and continued at intervals during the next two years. Officials outside the kingdom fretted over the cost and slow progress, but Smuts refused to be rushed. Statements appeared from time in the *Official Gazette* until, finally, a full report was made public in June 1908.<sup>18</sup>

By any test, the work of the concessions commission was detailed and fair. The tangled web of subdivisions, overlaps, restrictive rights, transferred titles, and conflicting claims was approached with meticulous care, and the judgments made were acknowledged to be defensible. The surveying, in particular, was difficult and time-consuming, made more so by the fly-ridden summers in the lowveld and the dense mists on the higher ground of the western hill country. But the surveyors persevered, and Smuts was



able to claim that “when the work of the Commission is finished, Swaziland will be one of the best—if not the best—and most completely surveyed territories in Africa.”<sup>19</sup>

In general, the Swazi reaction to the presence of the commission was negative. The queen-regent and chiefs assumed that it was the first stage of a process that could lead to the partition of the kingdom. When Smuts arrived, a Swazi deputation was in England, and Labotsibeni was in no mood to cooperate with the visitors while the issue was still unresolved. She resented having survey teams hiking at will across the kingdom, and her suspicion that beacons were placed to demarcate lands to be denied to Swazi was shared in the chiefdoms. Thus, despite the fact that Smuts and his party were once on familiar terms at the capital, they found themselves in a cool, friendless environment.

Although the decisions of the concessions commission were, with few exceptions, accepted and implemented, the concessions issue was not fully resolved. There remained the sensitive problem of sorting out what was termed “native land rights”: If partition prevailed as policy, how should the land be divided? While prototypes existed in other African territories under British control, not many satisfied the demands of the indigenous populations, and none paralleled the complexity of the Swazi situation. The 1904 proclamation envisaged that the concessions commission, as its final task, would mark out Swazi and concession areas throughout the kingdom, but no guiding principles were laid down. After Lord Selborne’s appointment as high commissioner, responsibility for the kingdom was transferred from the Transvaal administration to the High Commission. No doubt influenced by criticism of Smuts and his colleagues by prominent concessionaires, a decision was made to have a separate partition team. Thus, the Swaziland Concessions Partition Proclamation of 1907 called for a different arrangement.

George Grey,<sup>20</sup> who had some experience in the northern territories and was well connected in British government circles, was named to carry out the partition. He arrived in Swaziland in November 1907. His instructions called for a partition settlement with a generous provision for the Swazi: The lands to be set aside for their use must be “ample in quantity and good in quality,”<sup>21</sup> taking into account an increasing local population through births. Aware of the Swazi leadership’s aversion to the work of the previous commission, Grey met with the queen-regent on arrival to explain his mission. He wanted her to ask local chiefs to assist in the inquiry—to point out their traditional holdings and to indicate areas of importance to the chiefdom; but she was evasive. When Sihlelo, a principal chief in the Peak district, sent a messenger to ask if he should cooperate with Grey, she explained that the council must decide; and she gave a similar reply when Grey sought guidance in the Zombodze area. As a result, although Grey

claimed to have visited the kraals of nearly every important chief, only a few consented to work with him—mostly those not on good terms with Zombodze. Yet among those who were negative, he said, “I met with little or no incivility and no hostility. I found the chiefs usually courteous and polite and often apologetic for being unable to give me the information I asked for.”<sup>22</sup> He was disappointed but did not blame the chiefs: “I must attribute directly to the influence of the Chief Regent and her councillors the fact that the natives themselves have had so little part in the work of partition.”<sup>23</sup>

When completed, a year after his arrival, Grey’s apportioning of lands to Swazi raised remarkably few objections from chiefs. Labotsibeni and the council were, of course, opposed in principle to what they perceived to be an unjust severing of the kingdom and its resources. Most major concession holders ignored the inquiry. Grey claimed to have called at their homes and written to others, but they failed to respond.<sup>24</sup>

Thirty-two Swazi areas were established, affecting 181 land concessions and small portions of unencumbered crown lands. Taking the average Swazi family as consisting of seven persons, the ground set aside for each household averaged sixty-eight acres—more than the Smuts commission recommended and considerably more than proposed by the Swaziland Corporation. Looking to future needs, it was estimated that the areas reserved would support a population of some 160,000, almost double the number identified in the census of 1904.<sup>25</sup> Taken as a whole, the lands to be set aside for Swazi use amounted to almost 2,500 square miles, slightly more than one third of the kingdom’s area, but barely meeting the colonial secretary’s minimum expectation. To many in the colonial service, it was a model exercise, conducted with discretion and fairness, but Grey was not sanguine about its long-term effects: “It seems likely that my division of Swaziland will remain a monument for future generations to criticize and suffer under. . . . I have . . . locked up much beautiful, fertile country, from which whites are to be forever excluded. Let us hope that the Swazi will progress and be worthy of the benefits we ensure for them.”<sup>26</sup>



## *Chapter 13*

# Annexation or Protectorate?

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In some respects, the period following the South African war was traumatic for the Swazi leadership. Whether the kingdom was to be given “considerate treatment” as a result of the changeover in administration appeared to be problematic. After the lacunae in external oversight during the war years and the petty factionalism between Zombodze and the chiefs that seems to have accompanied it, there were some whose expectations of the new political order were, perhaps, utopian. Although the “change of government” hoped for by the chiefs who confided in John Gama had come to pass, and Enraght-Moony’s unobtrusive role as Britain’s first commissioner gave promise of an easy relationship, there were disquieting signs. For Labotsibeni and the council, the apparent distrust implied in the attitude of the military command, even after hostilities ceased, did not make for confidence. The failure of the British government to signify its intent for the future governance of the kingdom was sure to raise doubts. To the queen-regent in particular, the prospect of a return to former times—with guaranteed protection but minimal interference from the government of the British queen—was far from being a certainty.

Milner’s proclamation of 1904 was, essentially, the beginning of official British rule in Swaziland, and some of its provisions were clearly disaffecting for the Swazi leadership. The fact that the new administration was centered in Johannesburg, not at the distant seats of power in Pietermaritzburg or Cape Town, was itself disturbing: Could it be a foreboding of closer supervision of the kingdom’s affairs? There had already been distressing signals. The hut tax, which had bedeviled relations with the Republic, was to be imposed again, only this time at double the rate that had been set by the Boers. There were rumors that the kingdom might be in-

corporated into the Transvaal: Influential interests, led by Miller, were promoting that as a logical step, especially advantageous to trade and industry; and Lagden, the native affairs commissioner, was in favor. Returning residents were taking possession of their concessions, raising doubts about the status of traditional Swazi rights over the land. And casting a shadow over Zombodze was a report, said to be from reliable sources, that the British government might invalidate the kingship by disclaiming the appointment of a paramount chief.

Then, changes were taking place in the colonial establishment that could affect the course of imperial policy toward Swaziland. Milner, having turned down a seat in the British cabinet, resigned his post as high commissioner; and his successor, Lord Selborne, was said to be a committed imperialist. Lesser offices in South Africa were being taken over by appointees who had no prior experience of the Swazi. Indeed, the proclamation must have made it clear to the queen-regent that the reins of power, held firmly in her hands since Mbandzeni's death, were slipping from her grasp. Monitoring the passage of events from the royal enclosure at Zombodze, and waiting anxiously for the rain medicines to work, she surely must have had an inkling that the bad old days of the Boer administration might soon turn out to have been a halcyon interlude.

Fortunately, pressures from the British authority were not felt at once. Enraght-Moony was a cushioning buffer against external regulation. Tax collecting, when resumed, was not strictly enforced; the constabulary were given no cause for overzealous enforcement of the law; business and industry had not begun to recover from the wartime lull; storekeepers and tradesmen were slow to set up shop in the kingdom because the Swazi had no money or goods with which to buy or barter. The fact was that the kingdom was mired in poverty—drought, cattle disease, poor crops, and barren pastures—and had no reserves carried over from the war.

Such were the conditions existing in the Swazi kingdom when the proclamation of 1904 was issued. The order-in-council of the previous year confirmed its status as a protected territory, so the proclamation was intended to make provision for a viable British administration. Enraght-Moony's title was changed to resident magistrate, and several assistant magistrates were named. The proclamation reaffirmed that the laws of the Transvaal would apply in the kingdom, and a special criminal court was established with jurisdiction over both Swazis and Europeans. In civil cases the Swazi would be subject to the customary authority of the king and chiefs, whereas European litigants would, in the first instance, be heard by newly appointed assistant magistrates. From both, an appeal could be made to the resident magistrate. Beyond that, appeals could be taken to the circuit court for Swaziland, presided over by a Transvaal judge, and from there to the Supreme Court of the Transvaal.

While the proclamation of 1904 had little immediate impact on the Swazi populace, the queen-regent and council could not but see it as a further advance toward arbitrary control by the Milner administration. Coming on top of the reimposed hut tax and the failure of appeals to Johannesburg to gain any respite from it, and followed, within months, by the cancellation of the king's private revenue concession, the mood at Zombodze was bound to be discomposured. By all reports, the kingdom was in poor spirits. Efforts by the chiefdoms to recover from the lean years of the war were frustrated by continuing reversals of nature; and people were suffering, European farmers along with the Swazi. The imposition of the hut tax in a ravished economy, at a higher rate than was current in other southern Africa territories, provoked resentment and gave rise to a flurry of activity at Zombodze.

Enraght-Moony reported that the queen-regent and chiefs were "dead set" against the proclamation, so Milner, before leaving for England, made a quick trip to the kingdom. He met the Swazi leaders in mid-July 1904 but failed to satisfy them. After the meeting, the queen-regent sent Malunge and Alpheus Nkosi to Pietersmaritzburg to obtain the services of an advocate. A petition was prepared, signed by the two queens, Labotsibeni and Queen-Mother Lomawa, and by sixty-eight chiefs. It was, on the whole, a moderate brief, reflecting basic concerns.<sup>1</sup> It criticized reductions in the jurisdiction of traditional courts, "a blow at power . . . of our Chiefs and Paramount Chief"; urged that the Swazi be represented on the proposed concessions commission; and stated unequivocally that land partition was not acceptable: "This section is abhorrent to the Swazi people." Labotsibeni had already made a plea for Swazi schools, and this was repeated in the petition. "My people are not yet civilized," she declared. "They need teaching."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the sentiment of assistant magistrates, working day to day in the chiefdoms, best reflects the underlying mood of ordinary Swazis. An officer standing in for the resident magistrate wrote to the High Commission that the local population was "in a state of alarm over what may be the findings of the Concessions Commission"; and he added:

The Swazi has a keen sense of justice and if he thought that his case had been fairly fought before an Imperial Court, even though he was beaten, he would take the beating philosophically and would probably give no further trouble; but if he thought he had not been fairly treated and the Commission decided to infringe on what he considered his rights I think there is little doubt trouble will follow.<sup>3</sup>

In July 1905, a deputation of thirteen senior chiefs met with the new high commissioner, Lord Selborne, at his residence in Johannesburg. The mission included Chief Minister Logcogco and Tekuba, who had served in the same position under Mbandzeni. Tekuba was the principal spokesman.

He insisted that concession lands had been rented, not sold, by the late king; and he objected to a concessions commission "coming into their country to take away their land from them."<sup>4</sup> Selborne was polite, but when told that the queen-regent wanted to send a delegation to England, he replied that it "would serve no useful purpose,"<sup>5</sup> unwittingly setting the stage for a serious conflict of interests later on.

In the meantime, changes were taking place in the colonial establishment that were to have serious consequences for the Swazi kingdom. In Britain, Joseph Chamberlain gave up his office as colonial secretary; and Selborne, who succeeded Milner, lacked his predecessor's single-minded confidence. His views as high commissioner were shaped in part by the rebellious mood of many in Southern Africa and having served as First Lord of the Admiralty, he was inclined to see them as mutinous crews running amuck on the high seas. Yet he wanted to be fair: "Equal rights for all civilized men" was his stated policy, but he observed that "a gulf separates the vast mass of natives from the most moderate conception of civilization."<sup>6</sup> He was alarmed, however, by the "very strong anti-native prejudice" among Europeans in southern Africa. Not long before his arrival, the Natal legislative assembly, almost exclusively British in membership, had passed a resolution warning against creating a "native state" in Swaziland; it "would be detrimental to the interests of South Africa and the cause of civilization."<sup>7</sup>

Despite the negative stamp of much European opinion in southern Africa, there were many who favored a liberal approach to the "native question." Policies with respect to indigenous and non-European populations differed widely, reflecting the attitudes and experience of resident Europeans and external investors. A greater measure of tolerance existed in the southern Cape and, to a limited degree, in parts of the Transvaal; but the Orange River Colony and, even more, Natal, stood firmly against any movement toward an open society. Recognizing this disparity, and as part of his effort to forge common policies for the new South Africa, Milner had established in 1903 an Inter-Colonial Native Affairs Commission under Godfrey Lagden. The commission undertook an extensive survey of local conditions and recommended policy changes.<sup>8</sup>

While not bearing specifically on the Swazi, the commission had a strong Swaziland connection. Two of its members, Lagden and Krogh, had held senior posts in the kingdom. In addition, Allister Miller and a Swazi chief gave evidence. Miller, in a lengthy brief,<sup>9</sup> took exception to communal tenure (it discouraged incentive), mission schools (they taught impractical subject matter), and higher education for natives ("the most disastrous thing we can give to the Natives"). Asked why he was pessimistic about current trends in the kingdom, he asserted that the Swazi had degenerated, blaming it partly on the uncertainty brought on by the concessions.

The final report of the commission rejected the advice of many European

witnesses against spending public money on African education. While not endorsing compulsory attendance, it urged support for mission schools and industrial training; and it recommended the establishment of a Native College to train teachers and provide opportunities for higher education.<sup>10</sup> On the role of chiefdoms, it was supportive, pointing out that representation, free expression of opinion, and shared responsibility were fundamental in the system; but it acknowledged that some educated Africans were critical, claiming that the system tended to inhibit initiative.

Selborne no doubt profited from the work of the Lagden commission, but his pattern of leadership tended to be more reactive than responsive. In fairness, he was faced with many problems: a miners' strike on the Rand; Cape coloreds upset because the Vereeniging treaty had deprived them of the right to vote; regional differences with respect to the customs union; controversy over the immigration of Indians and the importation of Chinese laborers to work the mines; and overall, discussions on a political union to embrace all British territories and colonies in southern Africa.

The British government's order-in-council of December 1906 transferred responsibility for Swaziland from the Transvaal administration directly to the High Commission, so Selborne decided to make changes. He wanted a clean sweep of the local administration. For the third time in five years, the title of the senior British official in the kingdom was changed—from special commissioner to resident magistrate to resident commissioner—and Enraght-Moony had the distinction of wearing all three hats. But although an "admirable and conscientious official," Selborne told the colonial secretary, he was not capable of managing "the very difficult natives and whites in Swaziland"<sup>11</sup> and had to go. To replace him, the high commissioner found "a man of strong character and possessed of excellent administrative qualities"<sup>12</sup> in the person of Robert Coryndon; and de Symons Honey, who handled Swazi affairs at the High Commission, was appointed government secretary. Provision was made for a larger establishment in the kingdom: Assistant commissioners were put in charge of the four newly defined administrative districts; the South African Constabulary was replaced by a newly organized Swaziland police force; and while the judicial arrangements of 1904 essentially remained in place, the powers of the resident commissioner were strengthened: He was given the final say in appeals from traditional courts, even from that of the Swazi king.

Coryndon was a relatively young colonial officer, considered to be an outsider.<sup>13</sup> Most of his African experience had been with the Chartered Company in Rhodesia, and he had served briefly as secretary to Cecil Rhodes; but since 1900 he had been administrator of Northwest Rhodesia. His instructions for the Swaziland appointment indicated two priorities: gaining the confidence of the queen-regent and bringing the land partition issue to a final conclusion. Yet his relations with African chiefs during prior



assignments had not always been easy, and an expectation that he could charm the Swazi queen-regent was perhaps misguided. He had little use for diplomatic niceties. Action and results were his forte, and he soon concluded that the queen-regent and her advisers had no zest for either.

Although Labotsibeni and the chiefs were dismayed by the initial actions of the Milner administration concerning the kingdom, they respected the high commissioner and felt comfortable with Enraght-Moony. The changes heralded by the 1907 proclamation, after five years of uncertain British rule, were received with cautious optimism, a faint hope that what they deemed to be punitive measures could be erased or modified. Among the issues that disturbed them, four were looked upon as major problems: the hut tax, reducing the powers of traditional courts, the private revenue concession, and above all, the implications of the proposed land partition.

That there was a need for second thoughts on the hut tax had become obvious. Its introduction, even at the rate originally set, would not have been welcomed. Enraght-Moony sensed that probable reaction and, as a precaution against demonstrations, sent troops to thickly settled areas for several weeks of organized patrolling. But no disturbances took place, and even so, Milner was not likely to change his mind. He had imposed the tax, and extended it to Swaziland, to help pay for the civil administration he was setting up in the Transvaal and the kingdom. In the future, adult males would be asked to pay £2 a head and an additional £2 for each wife after the first in a polygamous household. Apart from those affected, the hut tax was criticized as an unnecessary hardship by many European residents in the kingdom. The Colonial Office questioned its being applied in Swaziland, and the Aborigines Protection Society saw it as being oppressive, pointing out that the "wife tax" was a violation of Swazi custom. Since then, evidence had accumulated that the tax was giving rise to widespread opposition among the rural populace. While a few chiefs cooperated with the administration,<sup>14</sup> and the resident commissioner tried to establish stricter measures for collecting, the Swazi generally were openly resistant. In fact, returns supported lowering the levy because revenue from the tax was not increasing incrementally.

Just as agitation over the hut tax became the first divisive wedge between ordinary Swazi and the British administration, so tampering with the traditional court system roused the ire of the chiefs. The problem was not new; a reduction in the chiefs' powers with respect to criminal offenses was made by the Government Committee, and further restraints were imposed by the protocol of 1898.<sup>15</sup> Now, under proclamations in 1904 and 1907, final judgment in civil cases was removed from the chiefs' courts and handed over to the resident commissioner. Despite a "notwithstanding clause" stipulating that Swazi chiefs "shall continue to exercise jurisdiction according to native law and custom in all civil disputes in which natives only are concerned," Swazi litigants were given the right to lodge an appeal

outside the traditional system. This meant that they could go beyond the chiefdom, or even the king, in their quest for justice. Inevitably, that was seen to represent a denigration of the chiefdom as well as depriving the paramount chief of one of his few remaining vestiges of kingship, placing him in a subordinate role vis-à-vis the resident commissioner.

The cancellation of the king's private revenue concession in mid-February 1905 was a bitter blow to the queen-regent and the royal household. While no accounting for the £1,000 a month paid to the king was asked for, the Kruger government had punctually advanced the funds to Krogh each month to be handed over to the king. No payments were made since the outbreak of the South African war, and the British authority, having taken on the obligations of the concession, must now decide on a course of action. The main argument against cancellation had already been put forward by Rubie: The court confirmed the concession, and legally, its disallowance would be hard to defend. It was not a terminal contract and, as such, should be passed on to Mbandzeni's successors. The kingship had many calls on its largess, and funds had to be provided to support the regiments and maintain the royal establishment.

To the Treasury Board in London, with its austere appraisal of overseas expenditures, the terms of the king's private revenue concession were a scandal; so there was no questioning of Milner's decision. Yet the obligation remained, and if the concession were canceled, some compensation would have to be paid. The Republic, through its agents, had purchased the concession for £18,000. Its last payment to Bhunu was made in October 1899. If the arrears, based on what had been collected, were made up, the amount would be some £22,000. So the resident magistrate suggested that this amount be given to the queen-regent and no further payments be made. Solomon, the attorney general of the Transvaal, thought that would be unfair; he recommended that the arrears be paid and then an allowance of £1,000 a year be provided for the queen-regent; and this was decided. Labotsibeni was not pleased. She considered the proffered settlement an outrage and refused to accept any payment. For her, it was more than a matter of income. Straited circumstances among the Swazi had not erased custom; most chiefs tried to meet royal levies and urged their people to do so. What upset the queen-regent was the demeaning of kingship implicit in the cancellation. Since Mbandzeni's death, she had given her heart and mind to preserving the royal legacy, not for herself but for the future king—the boy who was to become Sobhuza II. Her firm conviction that the kingdom was being wronged by the British administration steeled her resolution.

As already noted, when Selborne took over from Milner, he met with a delegation of Swazi chiefs at his residence in July 1905. On the question of the king's revenue concession, he gave no ground: Milner's decision would stand. For Coryndon, that ended the matter. Milner as governor of

the Transvaal and Selborne as high commissioner, both with direct responsibility for Swaziland, had spoken; and there was to be no challenge to their decision. Swazi talk of taking the issue to England or bringing an action before the courts was plainly not supportable. The Swazi were puzzled by the reaction of the new officials: "We cannot understand how it is that that concession was cancelled and the other concessions are still standing,"<sup>16</sup> Josiah Vilakazi complained. And Malunge, speaking for his mother, could not accept the resident commissioner's repeated denials: "Although we may seem to be blind as we keep on coming about the same thing there must be something that we see therefore the Government should listen to us patiently and let us explain what we wish to say before them. We should be pleased to have a full explanation and not simply to be told that as the High Commissioner has given his decision it is final."<sup>17</sup>

No doubt instructed by a Natal advocate who she consulted, Labotsibeni was persuaded that there were legal grounds for questioning the decision on the king's revenue concession. Before taking any action, Milner had admitted to the resident magistrate that the position was not clear: "As regards the Revenue Concession, this is, no doubt, a point of the greatest difficulty, and the one on which we ourselves are on the least sure ground."<sup>18</sup> The queen-regent was not averse to taking advantage of an opponent's "least sure ground." The possibility of taking the matter to the courts was mooted at Zombodze, but she favored another course of action. Supported by Malunge, the council and her advisers—"the Zombodze party," as Coryndon dubbed them—she determined to carry her protest to the throne of England.

The prospect of partitioning the land, evolving from proposals made in the proclamation of 1904, became a matter of deep concern to the Swazi. Once the proclamation was made public, rumors and misinformation were spread rampantly; some of it, the administration claimed, circulated from Zombodze. Soft talk from officials in Mbabane was said to be a ruse to deny Swazi access to the fertile regions of the country. Fears were heightened by the subsequent activities of the Smuts and Grey missions: survey parties and officials roaming the countryside without a warrant from Zombodze or the chiefs. Despite the efforts of the administration to allay suspicions, the barriers placed in the way by the queen-regent made communication difficult.

This is not to say that the reservations felt at the capital were without cause. The Swazi leadership was well aware of the segregated pattern emerging elsewhere in southern Africa. African reserves, and forced displacement and resettlement, were no longer figments of the imagination. Many Swazi had experienced the restraints tied in with land reform in Natal and the Transvaal, and their fears of a similar situation being imposed at home were not unreal. To restrict their movements, to deny them

land taken over by their forebears but now claimed by concessionaires, was looked upon as a grave injustice.

For the new high commissioner, the complex state of affairs in Swaziland became a source of great uncertainty. He called on de Symons Honey to gather together all correspondence and documentation relating to Milner's dealings with the kingdom. At the end of the year, he confessed to the colonial secretary in a confidential memorandum: "During the year in which I have been in South Africa, the condition of affairs in Swaziland has given me increasing anxiety and perplexity." The proclamation of 1904 had anticipated a separation of rights and a division of lands between the Swazi and concession holders, and the Smuts commission had already started its inquiries. Yet the queen-regent and council were not happy with what they feared was about to take place; the Swazi delegations' meeting with him in Johannesburg had made that crystal clear. "I have good reason to believe," he wrote, "that what the Queen Regent and the Swazis themselves desire is that so far as they are concerned matters should be left entirely alone. . . . What they object to is any attempt to divide the indivisible, that is, to separate the native rights which exist . . . from the concession rights."<sup>19</sup>

That was the crucial issue, but there were others in dispute: the rise or fall of the hut tax; what allowance should be given to the queen-regent to make up for the voided king's revenue concession; the status of traditional courts; and reports that some farmers in the south were evicting Swazis from their lands. Selborne's litany may have surprised Lord Elgin, but he responded favorably to the request that the high commissioner go to the kingdom to try to find a way out of what appeared to be a morass.



## *Chapter 14*

# A Test of Wills

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With both sides moving on a collision course, the confrontation between the queen-regent and the British administration was bitter and divisive. Although substantive issues were at stake, differences took on the appearance of a personal quarrel. On one side were the queen-regent, Malunge, and their advisers, especially the Vilakazi brothers. On the other stood men whose claims were represented as imperial policy: Coryndon, Selborne, and at times the colonial secretary, Elgin. If the contest seems to have been mismatched, it was: the power and prestige of a vast empire challenged by a tiny, obscure kingdom, almost hidden on the nethermost rim of Africa.

Labotsibeni was under stress. Her disappointment at the measures taken by the British government was compounded by criticism at home. She had continued to conserve the rain medicines in her own possession after Bhunu's death; and the long, unyielding years of drought were seen as evidence that her ministrations were of no avail. Then, not every Swazi was happy to be governed by a woman; and the queen-regent's always personal, sometimes harsh, and often capricious style of leadership brought on estrangements.

The Mbabane administration was frustrated. Coryndon was young, ambitious, and something of a martinet. There was a model to British colonial rule, a standard pattern in relationships between ruled and ruler, fashioned by experience, mutual respect, and deference; and Swaziland did not conform. It was not a question of the Swazi trying to undermine the administration, of untoward behavior, or of an indifference to laws and regulations: The Swazi were remarkably compliant in most respects. The problem was, as the resident commissioner put it succinctly, that the administration felt that it was being thwarted in the exercise of "real control."

True to their Swazi background, the queen-regent and chiefs assumed that justice rested ultimately with the British monarch. They should pay their respects in person to King Edward VII<sup>1</sup> because bad decisions by his officials could be overturned on his authority. Thus, a mission to England became a paramount priority. While some of her advisers may have seen it as an opportunity of gaining sympathy for the Swazi cause, Labotsibeni saw it differently. To her it was a challenge, a chance to call into question the pretentious claims of her adversaries by presenting her case before the throne of the great king overseas. Yet for Labotsibeni and the Swazi chiefs it was to be a painful disappointment—a lesson in the awesome strength of an entrenched bureaucracy.

There is no doubt that by the end of the South African war and during the first years of British rule, a number of Swazi chiefs were alienated from the queen-regent and her entourage at Zombodze. It was evident that the council was not functioning as it should; possibly at no other time had so many chiefs and headmen been cut off from having a consultative role in the kingdom's affairs. On the other hand, a show of unity, almost a national consensus, had developed in opposition to the hut tax and was rising again because of the rumored consequences of land partition. But there was more suspicion than trust on all sides. Labotsibeni's seeking advice from agents outside the official fold annoyed Coryndon and Selborne; and the Swazi leadership could not but be aware that the Mbabane administration was paying Swazi informers to report on activities at Zombodze.<sup>2</sup>

Malunge, the late king's brother, had grown in character and intelligence, and there were some among the chiefs who would welcome his translation to the kingship. Enraght-Moony reported earlier that Labotsibeni had proposed to the council that he be named acting head of the kingdom during the minority of Sobhuza, but some chiefs did not agree. Even if the chiefs had agreed, there would have been obstacles. Sobhuza, born in July 1899, was named to be king and shown to the people, and the British government was sure to stand by the legitimacy of the choice already made. Malunge was said to be under the influence of Josiah Vilakazi, and in the resident commissioner's mind, that influence was detrimental to a good relationship between the Swazi and the administration. The prospect of Malunge being raised to the kingship or becoming acting head of the nation disturbed Coryndon.<sup>3</sup> There were rumors of a plot to kill the young heir apparent and of plans for an armed uprising. Selborne was alerted, and the colonial secretary was informed, so London warned the administration that the safety of the boy Sobhuza must be carefully guarded.

The presence of the two Vilakazi brothers<sup>4</sup> troubled the resident commissioner. Unaware that they were Swazi, related to Zulu royalty, he objected to their taking part in council meetings. He brooded over possible ways to get them out of the country and called on the high commissioner

to use his authority: "I distrust Josiah Vilakazi more than anyone else, he has great influence over Malunge. . . . He is an exceptionally intelligent native and exceptionally deep. Nominate Benjamin or Philomen Nxumalo to be [the queen-regent's] Secretary; these are educated men of undoubted Swazi blood and birth and are amenable."<sup>5</sup> But in the course of time, he concluded that the advisers were only second strings in the Zombodze symphony: Resistance to the administration was centered in the conductor, the queen-regent herself. What needed to be done, above all else, was to break the iron will of Labotsibeni.

In reports to the high commissioner during the summer of 1907, Coryndon repeatedly raised the question of eliminating his noxious opposition. He even proposed a scheme for deposing the queen-regent, suggesting that factors were coalescing "to create at least a vague feeling of unrest and suspicion" throughout the countryside that could be worked to the advantage of the administration, including "the rather stricter methods of native administration which I have found necessary to introduce."<sup>6</sup> He discussed his plan with the police commissioner and with the two most influential British residents, Miller and Forbes; and all were in agreement: "Till she is safely away I shall never feel happy; . . . it is because she is a very real centre and focus of Swazi affairs, and withal an experienced and subtle leader, that she is and always will be an obstacle to our real control."<sup>7</sup> His plan was to depose Labotsibeni by elevating the boy Sobhuza to the kingship at once. If it were done, the Swazi would accept it; quick action "will be both wise and popular action." The high commissioner was sympathetic, but he was not persuaded. A move to oust the queen-regent and hand over the kingship to her grandson should be initiated by the Swazi themselves, not by the British authority; and he instructed Coryndon to be cautious, to take no action in the matter.

In May 1906, Selborne suggested to the Colonial Office that he visit Swaziland, giving a detailed account of the state of affairs in the kingdom as he understood it to be and the options open to him. "The Swazis as a nation are undoubtedly in an unsettled state of mind," mainly because of "the fear of the establishment of reserves and the burden of the Hut Tax."<sup>8</sup> His purpose in going to the kingdom was to assess the situation in person, "to hear at length everything the Queen Regent wishes to say to me; and to hear also anything the concessionaires wish to put before me." He concluded with an exceptional demand: Rather than follow the normal routine of colonial decision making, which would delay decisions and add to the unrest, could he be given powers "to settle all the questions . . . on the spot after hearing all the parties concerned?" And as a sort of coup de grâce, he asked that he be allowed to tell the queen-regent that his decisions were final—not to be countered by further appeals, petitions, or delegations, even to the king of England.

Two months later, the colonial secretary responded, authorizing the jour-



ney to Swaziland. He gave Selborne “practically a free hand” in deciding on the revenue concession and the hut tax; and he granted him “absolute and final discretionary powers” in dealing with concession rights, “subject only to following condition, viz., that the settlement on which you decide must not be less favourable to Swazis than that which the Smuts commission were carrying out under Proclamation of Lord Milner.”<sup>9</sup> It was an anomalous grant of powers in the circumstances and may have been an unfortunate turn of events for the Swazi. While the normal process followed in the colonial system, passing up the line from an officer in the field to the resident commissioner, and through the High Commission to the Colonial Office, undoubtedly was time-consuming, it had one definite advantage: It made sure that arbitrary actions or unwise decisions would be vetted. Senior officials at the Colonial Office were men of long experience with a comparative view in judging what might be best in a particular situation. No astute secretary of state for the colonies would ignore their minutes.

Selborne spent four days in Swaziland, from September 13 to 17, 1906. The stated positions of contending parties in the kingdom were already familiar to him, and armed with plenary powers to arrive at quick decisions, his manner was brusque and his questions pointed. But at the initial meeting with him, the queen-regent was not intimidated: “We ask the high commissioner how to go, and not hold us by the neck,” she said; “I am not educated, and we can not go without an adviser.”<sup>10</sup> The gist of the Swazi position was that the concessions should be allowed to run their course and then revert to the nation. Several of the senior chiefs spoke, and Malunge was sharp in cross-examining Selborne on his position with respect to the kingdom. In summing up the Swazi stand on the land question, Josiah Vilakazi put the issue clearly: “What we Swazis want is to go according to the rights of the concessions, to have the same rights as the concessionaires, that when the time of the concession is up, they should hand those rights back to the Swazis.”<sup>11</sup>

On the last day, Selborne gave his decisions at a public meeting attended by Swazis and Europeans. With regard to appeals from traditional courts in civil cases, the 1904 proclamation would stand. The power of the chiefs had been taken over by the British king: “He has great experience in ruling natives.” He was not ready to give a decision on partition but reprimanded the Swazi for not facing facts; Mbandzeni had sold the land and the concessionaires had “exactly the same rights over the land as the tribe which owned it enjoyed.”<sup>12</sup>

It was not all negative, however; the governor had come with a stick and a carrot. £20,000 of the monies accumulated in the private revenue concession would be put in a trust fund for the paramount chief, with the interest to be made available annually. Thus, at 4 percent, the queen-regent would have an additional £800 each year, a total income of £1,800; and

he handed her the balance from the accumulated fund, some £2,500. Then he gave his decision on the hut tax—it was to be reduced by half, both for adult males and for wives after the first; no household would pay more than £3 a year. And as a final gesture to the queen-regent, he would establish a school at Zombodze and find a teacher for Sobhuza and the sons of chiefs.

It was an adroit performance but not convincing to everyone. The queen-regent, although pleased by the promise of education for the future king, had reservations about the trust fund. The chiefs, in turn, had looked forward to the restoration of their traditional judicial rights and were disappointed; but the decision on the tax was welcome. Yet no decision was given on the crucial issue of partition.

Before leaving for Swaziland, Selborne had received a cautionary note from Elgin indicating that, on the land question, he would favor “the completion of Lord Milner’s settlement as soon as possible or leaving the natives alone for a few years,”<sup>13</sup> then giving them a choice of paying rent to concessionaires or moving to prearranged reserves. The Swazi-preferred option of letting land concessions run their course and then revert to the kingdom was not mentioned. In Selborne’s talks with concessionaires in the kingdom, they pressed for partition. “A division of rights is most necessary,”<sup>14</sup> Forbes assured the commissioner, and would be accepted by the European community if not more than half of each land grant was reserved for the Swazi. Miller went further, insisting that not more than one third be reserved for Swazi use. And back in London, among colonial officials, a consensus seemed to be building for some form of partition. Still, the high commissioner returned to Johannesburg with the land question not yet resolved.

He placed some of the blame for the difficulties on “successive British governments. If they had been willing to take a greater share of responsibility in the past, the present situation never could have arisen.”<sup>15</sup> He felt that things could not be left as they were: “Some of the more unscrupulous whites will deliberately endeavour to make trouble” for the Swazi. Two choices remained: either to partition the land in a way that the Swazi would have as much freedom of movement and continued occupation of the chiefdoms as possible or to make no formal separation of rights but to pass a law giving concessionaires who lived and worked on their lands a guarantee of ownership, subject to the government being empowered to buy them out, if the need arose, in the interests of the kingdom. He had put these two alternatives to concessionaires in Mbabane, but they favored unfettered partition. So he finally decided to accept Miller’s formula: Two thirds of all land grants would be the property of the claimants; the other one third would remain with the Swazi.

The colonial secretary acceded to Selborne’s judgment but doubted if the Swazi would accept it and, to meet that contingency, laid down some

constraints. The land set aside for Swazis must be “in every respect suitable and ample”;<sup>16</sup> the million or so acres of crown land would be excluded from the one-third, two-thirds equation; and in the case of the Swaziland Corporation’s holdings, “more than a third will be taken at the cost of the Concessionaires.”<sup>17</sup> The colonial secretary naturally reflected political changes that had taken place in Britain. The government elected in 1906 was liberal in outlook as well as in name, and while not emphasizing so-called native problems in southern Africa, some of its supporters were deeply concerned. But Selborne, detached from political priorities, brushed off the warnings. An arrangement with the Swaziland Corporation was “practically settled,” he replied.

In the final analysis, the high commissioner had been given a plenary power of decision, and he exercised it. His judgment was clearly swayed by his experience in the kingdom. In a revealing letter to Smuts, he defended his position: “At the request of the concessionaires, at their request, not at the request of the Swazis, I am dividing the country between the concessionaires and the Swazis. In my opinion, the concessionaires were quite wise to clamour for partition, because the concessions over the land were practically worthless so long as the natives had unrestricted rights to prior use.”<sup>18</sup> Expanding on this theme in an address to the European community on his next visit to Swaziland, he took full credit for the partition. It could not have been done, he argued, by “ordinary parliamentary methods”; it required “the exercise of autocratic power.”<sup>19</sup>

Coryndon explained the terms of the proposed land policy to the Swazi council. Selborne’s visit had not dispelled worries at Zombodze or among the chiefs. They bided their time for some months and then made their decision: A deputation would be sent to present their grievances to the British king. When told of the proposed expedition to England, Selborne was indignant; and he asked the colonial secretary to send “a really stiff reply” that the trip would not be authorized. Such a visit “will be harmful and cause increased trouble and fresh misunderstanding,”<sup>20</sup> he claimed. Elgin agreed: The decisions made were final, and a deputation would be of no effect.

Early in June 1907, Coryndon had a long querulous meeting with the queen-regent and council. He advised the high commissioner: “I found a strong body of opinion to exist on this matter . . . Swazi chiefs have come to attach some considerable importance to a deputation to England.”<sup>21</sup> He made bold to suggest a change in strategy. Perhaps the queen-regent should be allowed to send a deputation to England, not to advance her grievances but as a courtesy visit to the king. At his meeting with the council, Coryndon had pointed out that such a visit would annoy the king if the decision on partition was objected to: The king had given his decision and could not change it. “I want the King to be annoyed and call me before

him to ask me what I want,” Labotsibeni retorted. “I don’t want to be stopped because I want to be told direct.”<sup>22</sup> Malunge joined in: “How is it possible to annoy the King? Would it be right if we told an untruth and said we were satisfied when we are not?”

To Selborne and Elgin, the queen-regent’s stance was an undisguised rejection of British authority. Their anger was fueled by critical reports in the press castigating the government’s policy. Pressed by Coryndon, who wanted to avoid a major confrontation with the Swazi leadership, Selborne modified his stand and urged the colonial secretary to authorize a Swazi delegation, “to get the evil over quickly”<sup>23</sup> and to try to gain some benefit from it. Elgin demurred; he was “very doubtful as to the expediency of allowing a Swazi delegation.”<sup>24</sup> The Swazi were bound to continue insisting, Selborne responded: “They can only be prevented from going by force,”<sup>25</sup> and he doubted if the imperial government would countenance that. Elgin finally gave in: “I agree most reluctantly that deputation must be allowed to come but . . . not include Regent,”<sup>26</sup> he telegraphed the High Commission. As arrangements were made, Elgin was firm that the queen-regent should not be part of the deputation; her presence and strong personality would attract too much attention from the press and critics of the government.

The Swazi deputation left Mbabane on October 23, 1907, and arrived in London on November 16. A. G. Marwick acted as interpreter and was put in charge of the party. The group consisted of Malunge, Logcogco (Mbandzeni’s brother), Manikiniki and the two Vilakazis. No time was wasted. They met with the permanent undersecretary at the Colonial Office and, two days later, with Elgin the colonial secretary. The undersecretary was considerate; Elgin somewhat less so. First, they raised the question of the private revenue concession. “Is it not a fact that you were fully consulted by the High Commission?” the under-secretary questioned them. “No, we were never asked,”<sup>27</sup> Malunge replied. Josiah Vilakazi referred to the possible creation of a council of chiefs to work with the administration so that the council would know what was planned before it was put into force. Elgin took up the suggestion, asking that they discuss it with the high commissioner. They had expected detailed discussions on a petition that they had earlier submitted, but it was passed over. The colonial secretary told them the decisions already made were the king’s decisions and could not be altered. He explained the devolution of powers under the British crown, that those chosen to be the king’s representatives spoke only his words and they must be obeyed—a concept that surprised the chiefs. Their audience with Edward VII was carefully staged and was over before it really began. Outside the royal presence and government, they met some sympathizers, including the future prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald; but altogether they felt that their cause had been neglected. They left England early in January 1908 and reached Swaziland on February 2.

The expedition to England was a failure: It accomplished nothing, as the Mbabane administration had warned. In March, Coryndon met with the queen-regent and council. Malunge reported for the deputation—"a faithful and detailed report," the resident commissioner said. The young chief was not bitter and did not seek to cast blame, but older chiefs were clearly depressed. The elders were perplexed by the plan of partition. They had grown up with Mbandzeni and served with him while he was king. He had not sold the land, they insisted; how could he have done so without their knowledge or that of the council or people? He had only given it out on loan. Malunge took up the point and parried: The deputation had paid rent to stay at a house in London; if they had stayed longer, would the house eventually belong to them? Labotsibeni spoke ("rambled," Coryndon reported to the High Commission): "I am not at all satisfied. . . . All that is being done now is quite dark. I have lost my husband and my son, and all these things are discussed with me, a woman. . . . If Mbandine sold the land, where did he think his children were going to live? . . . I have no more to say, but where am I going to live with these people of mine? Have they also been sold? . . . Were my people also sold?"<sup>28</sup> At the end, Malunge said that he wanted to see the concession documents, and the resident commissioner promised to make them available. It would be the first Swazi perusal of "the papers that killed us" after more than a quarter of a century.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the most serious issue to arise from the meeting in London was a difference in interpretation about the future disposition of lands. When in October 1907 Coryndon explained the terms of Selborne's decision on partition, Josiah Vilakazi spoke for the queen-regent and council and posed some questions. He asked what proportion of the whole the one third reserved for Swazi represented. Coryndon gave his opinion: "There are no figures available, but I do not think I am far wrong in saying that not more than one-half of the total area of the country will be held by the Concessionaires."<sup>30</sup> Then Vilakazi asked if crown lands would be available to Swazis. "Yes; they will. They will not be white man's land at all." He added that lands on short-term lease—less than ninety-nine years—would also be made available for Swazi use after their term expired. When he read the report of the meeting, Selborne contradicted Coryndon's statements: "I do not consider myself prohibited from putting a white man on any Crown land which may now or hereafter be available."<sup>31</sup> Not aware of Selborne's intervention, the Swazi accepted Coryndon's explanation as policy.

That belief was reinforced during the meeting with the colonial secretary. Elgin's statement on crown lands supported Coryndon's interpretation. That, certainly, was the impression gained by Malunge and Vilakazi, both of whom were present at the meeting in Mbabane as well as London; and Marwick, who was also present at both meetings, was insistent that the high commissioner was wrong.<sup>32</sup> Responding to the delegation, Elgin out-

lined the partition plan: "I believe that taken in conjunction with lands belonging to the Crown, it will make so ample a provision for the native occupation that it is not too much to say that half the land will be in their occupation . . . [and] there is a power reserved to take even more land from the concessionaires."<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, crown lands and expired concession leases were not reserved for the exclusive use of the Swazi. On the contrary, in certain instances when so-called European land was on sale, a clause in the deed prohibited the transfer of title to a "native," in the event the property changed hands. Placed in the context of what they had been led to believe, the divergence between policy and action embittered the Swazi, casting doubt on British integrity.

One more residual from the meeting with Elgin: The suggestion of a council of chiefs to liaise with the administration was not a new idea; a similar body had been started in Basutoland and was functioning in a limited way. But officials at the Colonial Office saw merit in the suggestion and passed it on to the High Commission. Coryndon was not in favor, and Selborne's reaction was blatantly offensive, demeaning the character of the queen-regent and the Swazi, thus giving credence to a crude caricature.<sup>34</sup> Elgin did not respond to the comments, but the new colonial secretary, Lord Crewe, admonished the High Commission that it "must bear in mind the importance of ascertaining and paying regard to native opinion with respect to legislation affecting native interests and rights."<sup>35</sup>



## *Chapter 15*

# Partition Carried Through

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The Swazi lost the battle over partition. They had, as they admitted, “no power to stop the Government,” and the decision to divide the land was made against their wishes. But not everyone in the local British administration was convinced that the apportionment of land—one third to Swazis, two thirds to concessionaires—was adequate or just. For concessionaires, it was a victory of sorts. They welcomed, by and large, what they hoped would be an end to the indefiniteness, but some worried about the short-term effects. Residents in the Hlatikulu district, heavily populated by burghers, asked that Swazi living on their farms not be moved away because their services were needed on the farm and the farmers were too poor to pay hired help. Influential concessionaires were more positive, however. Miller saw the partition decision as the final putting down of traditional Swazi authority, thus opening the gates to modernization and prosperity.

Yet the contention that the coexistence of traditional and concession rights would impede development and lead to conflict in the long run, a decisive argument for colonial officials, was never conclusive. “Government think they are stopping the whites and natives quarreling,” Malunge said to Coryndon, “but we have been living with them all along without quarreling.”<sup>1</sup> The reality turned out to be that progress and prosperity, for Swazi and resident Europeans alike, eluded the kingdom for close to half a century after the partition; and the establishment of reserves, a divisive policy at best, can be taken as a probable factor in the failure to move forward.

However, the struggle for the land was not over. The Swazi leadership, in common with most Swazi, did not think that the kingdom had been “fairly treated.” Under the leadership of Malunge, now formally acknowl-



edged as prince-regent, the course of the Swazi initiative changed direction: Gain the confidence of the British government by cooperating, insofar as possible, with the administration; and buy back, when the opportunity emerges, portions of the encumbered lands. For waiting in the wings, his domain divided and its future uncertain, was the boy Sobhuza. To the queen-regent, Malunge, and the chiefs, that was the pertinent challenge for the future: to salvage and preserve the boy-king's inheritance. Because, as Chief Minister Logcogco prophesied: When the child takes on the kingship, he will want to put things right.

When Selborne arrived in Swaziland for a second visit in May 1909, he had more on his mind than land partition claims and game hunting. For some time he had been engaged in a scheme for uniting, under a central government, the disparate British possessions in southern Africa. Late in the previous November, a national convention, representing the four established colonies—the Cape, Orange River Colony, Natal, and the Transvaal—had met at Durban to consider the possibility; and discussions were still going on. While decisions rested ultimately with the four colonial legislatures and the British Parliament, Selborne was a driving force behind the scenes. He was convinced that the High Commission territories must be included “and not be left as imperial administrative islands floating in a South African national sea.”<sup>2</sup> The Colonial Office was dubious, supportive of the union proposal but concerned that an attempt to include the territories might be controversial and wreck the proposed scheme.

Rumors that changes were in the wind reached Zombodze as early as August 1908, and the queen-regent asked the resident commissioner if they had any bearing on Swaziland. Coryndon could not say, and Selborne hesitated to give an opinion until the trend of the discussions became clear. Before the end of the year, he reported progress and some weeks later telegraphed to Mbabane that portion of the proposed legislation which would affect the kingdom directly—the “schedule” to the draft union act. Coryndon was absent from the kingdom, so Honey, the government secretary, consulted with the Swazi and European leaders to canvass their reaction. They met with him in separate sessions on January 12, 1909. The Swazi turnout was unusually large—seventy-three chiefs and twenty-eight headmen, along with the two queens and prince-regent. Honey explained that the four self-governing colonies had produced a plan of union and that Swaziland would, along with other British territories, eventually be brought into it. The immediate Swazi reaction was negative. “We have only been told that there will be a Union. We have not been told the object or what good it will do,”<sup>3</sup> Malunge objected, and Labotsibeni said that she felt “pressed down.” Honey was patient, asking that they defer judgment until they had more information. The Europeans, at their meeting, did not comment, waiting until the full proposal was made available.

For Swaziland the “schedule,” setting out terms and conditions under which territories outside the four colonies would be admitted, was the crucial document. Selborne had a hand in preparing the final draft, but changes were made as it passed through the legislatures. There was no consensus that the territories be included, in spite of the high commissioner’s advocacy. Ultimately, the schedule was accepted along with the main proposal, although some critics still regarded it as unnecessary baggage for the proposed Union.

Under the schedule, responsibility for the three territories—Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland—would be given to the government of the Union, not the Parliament; and the prime minister, as the administering authority, would be advised by a commission of three members who had no political involvement. The high commissioner’s office would be replaced by a new top post, governor general of South Africa, and the incumbent would have final say if differences arose between the prime minister and the commission. Each territory would have a local administration headed by a resident commissioner. It appeared to be a cumbersome arrangement, but it was intended to provide checks and balances to safeguard the indigent populations from the whims of a possibly prejudiced elected Parliament.

Honey informed Selborne that the Swazi found the schedule repugnant. They felt that the British government was “weighing them down”: the concessions settlement, partition, and now the threat of annexation to a South African government, “possibly or almost, in their minds certainly, an unsympathetic Government. They would like to be left alone.”<sup>4</sup> In a meeting with the queen-regent and chiefs, Selborne tried to allay their fears. He spoke positively about the proposed Union. Swaziland would gain no immediate benefits, he said; the Union “is for the sake of the whites”—a comment that, along with tactless criticism of the queen-regent the previous day, angered the chiefs. Malunge spoke forcefully: “We are just like the ground. But how is this? We are loyal to the King, and we are loyal to the Government. How is it that with all this we are not consulted in any way, and we are not asked if we like the thing or not. We are simply forced to it. . . . We are not like animals; we are human beings.”<sup>5</sup> Labotsibeni intervened: “I am asking the same question. Are we animals?” Other chiefs spoke, reverting to the past: their service to the British in the war against Sikukuni and the unkept promises then made to them by British officials. Selborne was nonplussed by the tone of the Swazi reaction and tried to reassure them.

His meeting with the European community was scarcely more successful. Some landowners were still unhappy with the partition solution as being too favorable to the Swazi. Others, including industry spokesmen, were critical of the wording of the schedule. No distinction was made between the three High Commission territories; all three were described as “native

territories.” Basutoland was, of course, properly so described since foreigners were not allowed to own land there. But in Swaziland, they argued, two thirds of the land was held by Europeans, and a large investment of capital from outside had made possible the industrial and commercial bases in the kingdom. There were objections also to the proposed governing structure. Swaziland would no longer answer to a representative of the crown but to a South African commission. That, they argued, was a reversion, turning back the clock in Swaziland by at least fifty years. They had enjoyed self-governing privileges since Mbandzeni granted a charter to the white committee, but neither their history nor their special status was given recognition in the Union proposal. For the high commissioner these complaints were trivial. He saw the schedule as providing legal safeguards for the African population over time, when direct control by the British government was no longer in place. As he pointed out to the colonial secretary, prejudice against Africans had not abated, shared as much by senior men in government as by the majority of Europeans in southern Africa. Some constitutional protection for the indigenous peoples was necessary.

The South Africa Act of 1909, including the schedule, established a federal constitution with a strong central government, comprising only the four self-governing colonies. In discussions at the Foreign Office, Botha, who was shortly to be named prime minister in the first Union government, raised the possibility of Swaziland being transferred at once since it was “a special case” in view of the heavy European involvement there. The colonial secretary was politely negative, pointing to the difficulty of doing so while the movement of Swazi to reserves was under way and the promise made by the British government to consult them before implementing the schedule.

Lord Gladstone, who succeeded Selborne and was named the first governor general of the Union, was diplomatically evasive when approached by Botha less than two years later. In the meantime, the colonial secretary had given a secret pledge to the House of Commons that it “would have the fullest opportunity of discussing the matter before any such transfer would take place.”<sup>26</sup> In the agitated prewar atmosphere of the times, there was little likelihood of the British Parliament responding sympathetically to a demand that the Swazi kingdom be handed over to the Union government against the Swazi people’s wishes.

The mood in Swaziland was not relaxed. District commissioners reported that there was strong opposition to the kingdom being tied in with a Union government. There were reasons for Swazi opposition. Talk of closer union with South Africa went hand in hand with stricter regulation in domestic affairs—bothersome curbs on accustomed liberties that curtailed what had been routine usages in daily living. Overshadowing all of this was the specter of resettlement, for most of the Swazi population a foreboding prospect.

The logistics of resettlement (the “transfer” as British officials called it) from concession lands to the newly established reserves placed a heavy burden on the administration as well as on the traditional leadership. It has been estimated that some 20,000 Swazis were moved from their kraals to new locations on reserves between the years 1909 and 1914.<sup>7</sup> That accounts for one fifth of the total Swazi population in the kingdom as recorded in the 1911 census report. The fact that the exercise was carried out without serious incident is noteworthy, especially in view of the generally gloomy atmosphere in the kingdom. Coryndon and Honey developed the master plan—the government secretary probably more so because he had a penchant for detail that the resident commissioner lacked.<sup>8</sup> The strategy was to stagger the movement from concession lands to the reserves over a five-year period, thus avoiding the appearance of compulsion and encouraging a systematic withdrawal from the kraals to a new location. It would also permit chiefs and headmen to view the reserved areas assigned to them in order to assess their needs; and a gradual, unhurried progression would be more in keeping with the Swazi lifestyle.

Under the terms of the 1907 partition proclamation, the movement to reserve lands must be completed within five years, with a terminal date of June 30, 1914. Swazis living on concession lands were given a choice: They could either move to the reserves or, if the landowner were willing, remain where they were. The vast majority did decide to move. For a people with singular ties to the land, it could not have been other than a wrenching experience. Much of the credit for the success of the operation must be given to the district commissioners. Several of them, Marwick, Nicholson, and Warner, for example, along with Police Commissioner Gilson, were capable men who empathized with the Swazi predicament and had a trusting rapport with chiefs in their districts.

Perhaps the most important influence in bringing about a smooth transition, nevertheless, was the intervention of Malunge. His trip to London taught him the uselessness of further opposition. “The land has been divided . . . the partition is now finished, it is done,”<sup>9</sup> he protested to Selborne at the meeting in Mbabane, refusing to discuss the matter further. When it appeared that the movement to reserves was bogging down, he took the lead by encouraging chiefs to work with the district commissioners. Toward the end of the operation, he visited chiefdoms to persuade the rank and file to pass over to the new locations. Although she questioned the justice of the exercise, the queen-regent did not stand in the way.

There were, of course, problems along the way. Coryndon and Honey sent regular reports on progress to the High Commission, but in spite of assurances that all was going smoothly, it was evident that not much was happening. Neither landowners nor Swazi seemed anxious to begin the dislocation. The administration devised a somewhat complex paper agreement for situations where Swazi opted to stay on the concession land as

tenants, but by mid-June 1914, only nine agreements had been signed. Honey explained that chiefs, in light of the Swazi's ill-fated experience over concessions, were unwilling to put their mark on documents and that most arrangements were being made verbally. In a few instances, especially in the heavily populated Hlatikulu district, reserved areas soon became congested; so additional land was made available for those who could not be accommodated with their chief.

The impression gained from official dispatches is that Coryndon and his staff were protective of Swazi interests throughout the relocation process. Part of the reason was Swazi antipathy to being swallowed up in the Union package. Part of it was a mistrust of burgher aspirations, especially that of the farming community. The recently organized Swaziland Farmers' Association was composed largely from the British minority. Many of the burghers, some of them living in the Transvaal, had little contact with the predominantly British staff in the administration. Part of it also stemmed from the passivity of the Swazi themselves and the feeling of some in the European community that they could not be trusted.

Several occurrences do point to an effort to stir up trouble. In 1911, rumors were spread that the Swazi were planning to rise against the administration; and again in 1912 there was a report that Malunge had gone to England to protest against the "enforced ejection" of the Swazi from their homes. Neither was true; the Swazi were working their plots, and Malunge was at Zombodze. Shortly before Christmas 1913, the Transvaal police were alerted that Swazi were massing along the border, obviously planning to attack Boer farmsteads. Word spread quickly; the burghers set up laagers and sent off their wives and children to the safety of Ermelo. Botha was notified, also Gladstone, and the Colonial Office got word of it. Everyone seemed to know of the pending attack except the Swazi. Labotsibeni was incensed when she was told, insisting that it could not be true. Coryndon drove to Lake Chrissie to see for himself and met hundreds of Boer women and children trudging homeward, still not sure what might be waiting for them there. What apparently happened was that young Swazi males working outside the kingdom were returning in large numbers to take part in the *ncwala* ceremonies and as they were attired as warriors, a rumor was started. The incident revealed the suspicion and mistrust that lay beneath the surface calm. It was no coincidence, perhaps, that it happened against a backdrop of growing unrest in South Africa where miners were on strike and there was widespread disenchantment among Africans over the Union government's land policy.

The queen-regent was growing old, worn down by nearly a quarter century of tense encounters with Boer and British administrators and the disappointments felt along the way. Her sense of history was personal and pragmatic: "I am Mbandine's successor," she told Coryndon at a meeting

with chiefs. "I do not want to be blamed as he is being blamed."<sup>10</sup> Increasingly, her hopes were for her grandson Sobhuza, and her concerns were for his welfare and preparation for the role he had to play. Thus, she was satisfied to stand aside from the routine of governance and to let Malunge carry part of the burden. Although still young, not yet out of his twenties, he was already a respected member of the Swazi establishment. With little schooling by European standards, he had been carefully brought up on Swazi tradition and custom and, since his trip to England, had a better understanding of the ways of the outside world. His relations with the chiefs made possible a revival of the open consultation of earlier kingships and a renewal of trust. It is probable that through Malunge's leadership, traditional processes in government worked more effectively than they had since the early years of his father's kingship.

By the same token, the administration had mellowed. Coryndon, with the backing of his superiors, had come out of his struggle with the Zombodze party a clear winner; and he was disposed to be magnanimous. In a preface to his annual report for 1908, he underscored his winning: "When a definite administration was established, it found under the control of . . . the Chief Regent, who is a woman of extraordinary diplomatic ability and strength of character, an experienced and capable opposition with which it was, for some time, incapable of dealing."<sup>11</sup> But in the same report a district commissioner was writing: "The distrust of the chiefs and people towards the Government has not perceptibly decreased." Faced with that ambivalence, the resident commissioner undertook a series of solid initiatives, partly to gain the trust of the queen-regent and chiefs but clearly in the interest of the kingdom as a whole. First and most compelling was tackling the scourge of east coast fever. The Swazi were cattle people; their herds were an expression of prestige and wealth and their most prized possession. Sometime in 1903 oxen coming in from Delagoa Bay carting supplies for Steinacher's Horse became infected with a then-unknown disease and passed it on to Swazi cattle. The consequences were ruinous. Through time, Swazi herds were reduced by more than half, and the whole of the kingdom, except the lowveld, was smitten by the disease. Coryndon called in a veterinary officer, W. A. Elder, who urged drastic action. To meet the costs, the high commissioner authorized Swaziland to borrow £100,000 from the administration in Basutoland, and under Elder's guidance, a massive program of branding, slaughtering, burning, fencing, and dipping began. The queen-regent and chiefs endorsed the program and agreed to levy an additional tax on adult males to help pay for what became a costly enterprise. The campaign was long and arduous, but by 1915, east coast fever was almost wholly eliminated from the kingdom.

Next was the inception of a national fund for the benefit of the Swazi people. Labotsibeni offered to provide a monthly sum from her subsidy, and every Swazi adult male over eighteen was asked to contribute one

shilling. The chiefs agreed to the project with “an entire lack of hostility,” Coryndon reported. The queen-regent’s priority was education: “My object is to erect a big Boarding School or Institution for the civilization of Swazi youths,”<sup>12</sup> she said. But she agreed that monies collected could be spent on other projects, such as eradicating cattle disease and replacing stocks. Coryndon managed the fund, and the colonial secretary suggested that “a board of chiefs” work with him. “No good purpose would be served by consulting the Chief Regent and Chiefs on the details of Expenditure, nor have they expressed any wish to be consulted,”<sup>13</sup> he replied. Later, when he submitted his first accounting of the fund, the Colonial Office was not impressed: “One had hoped . . . that the Swaziland National Fund might be the starting point of a more progressive native policy in Swaziland . . . but it would appear . . . this hope may as well be discarded at once,”<sup>14</sup> the report was minuted. As it happened, almost all the funds collected over the next decade were used for the east coast fever project—a reasonable decision in the circumstances but a blow to educational advancement.

The third inducement was an increase in the queen-regent’s subsidy. She asked for that, pointing to the rising cost of living and, to support her claim, gave a listing of her monthly expenses.<sup>15</sup> Coryndon was sympathetic, and an additional £250 was approved. At the same time, she was handed the balance of funds left over from the king’s private revenue concession—slightly more than £1,300. Later, a separate subsidy of £250 a year was provided for Malunge as prince-regent, thus relieving the queen-regent of that expense.

Despite improved relations, there were misunderstandings. Two in particular worried the Swazi and troubled the administration: first, the question of providing title deeds to the Swazi nation for reserve lands; and second, the problem of permitting the Swazi to buy crown or privately owned land situated outside the reserves. Basing his action on the laws of England, Selborne had decreed that land concessions granted for ninety-nine years or more would be converted to freehold title. In January 1912, Gladstone, in an effort to simplify matters for those who were occupying and working their land, extended the decree “to provide a grant of freehold title in substitution for the concessionaires’ existing title”;<sup>16</sup> in other words, landowners would in the future be entitled to freehold title, no matter the terms of the original concession.

The Swazi leadership, already bothered by the discrepancy between the legal status of concession and reserve lands, were not pleased by Gladstone’s action. In May 1911, a petition requesting title deeds to the reserves was presented to the resident commissioner. It was signed by the majority of chiefs or headmen (115 in all) as well as the two queens and Malunge. “Why should there be so much distinction between the white and black subjects of the King? White people get due title to their possessions; black people do not,” Malunge questioned. Coryndon understood their concern

and sent a strongly worded dispatch, supporting the petition, to the High Commission: "The history of the Swazis during their thirty years of contact with civilization has not been entirely fortunate. I think that no one who is familiar with that history could well withhold some degree of sympathy for their . . . petition to be given some tangible guarantee of inalienable possession of what remains of their heritage."<sup>17</sup> Gladstone was obliging to a degree but worried about the reaction in South Africa where strikingly different legislation was under review. He was willing to provide a document describing native reserves as being for the "sole use and occupation of Swazis," but he would not issue an order-in-council similar to that provided by Selborne to concessionaires. It was "both unnecessary and undesirable," he wrote—unnecessary because there was sufficient security in existing laws and the "schedule"; undesirable because "for various reasons, it may not be politically expedient."<sup>18</sup> He advised Coryndon, "If you cannot convince them they must remain unconvinced."

Clearly, there was to be no easy resolution of the title issue, and the controversy lasted for a number of years. As time went on, the Swazi became more insistent, and Coryndon was generally on their side. They claimed that Selborne's declaration in 1909 that there could be "no better guarantee than the law" was meaningless; proclamations were being amended year by year. They wanted title to their lands for three reasons: first, their experience of the concessions court where the existence of a paper document became the crux of the decisions taking away their land; second, the possibility of the kingdom being transferred to South Africa with its increasingly narrow restrictions on African ownership and occupation of lands; and third, the impermanence of regulations derived from proclamations, as evidenced in the kingdom's recent history. A suggestion was made that perhaps land titles could be given to chiefs as individuals, but Labotsibeni vetoed that: Title had to be given to the king in trust for the nation.<sup>19</sup> Eventually, the Swazi saw that the legal position was difficult and softened their stand. But the Swaziland Native Areas Proclamation of 1913, which was intended to bring the matter amicably to a head, was so convoluted that officials at the Colonial Office minuted the draft as "doubtful" and "unintelligible": "It will not satisfy the Swazi if they want a title."<sup>20</sup>

Partition continued to be a source of great anxiety to the Swazi. They held that the sixty or so acres to be provided for each household was far from adequate; it did not take into account the extended family. As there were no hospitals, orphanages, or clinics, the head of the household had to provide for every need of families covering several generations. The problem was not academic; there was a vast acreage of unused government-owned land, increasing every year through attrition or European estates reverting to the crown.



During Gladstone's term of office, petitions by Europeans for the purchase of crown lands went through the resident commissioner, and in many instances, small grants were made without the prior approval of the high commissioner. Generally, such sales were to former residents or to farmers who were working their land without title; or, in at least one instance, a grant of thirty acres each, at minimum cost, was made to a number of Boer squatter families from the Hlatikulu area who had been dispossessed by the resettlement. There were also requests for land on a larger scale. The Mushroom Land Settlement Company, set up by Lord Lovat, obtained an option on some 35,000 acres, much of it in the lowveld, intended to become a settlement for British immigrants; but it did not prosper.

Swazi chiefs and the leadership at Zombodze learned of these transactions with apprehension. In mid-October 1913, a delegation, led by Malunge, went to Barberton to meet the high commissioner, somewhat miffed that he would not come to the kingdom. They were accompanied by Coryndon and members of his staff. Malunge presented a brief, asking for additional land and title deeds to what they had. Gladstone was noncommittal, but in responding to the petition, which referred to the availability of crown lands, he said that he would give any application his "best consideration."<sup>21</sup> Selborne had, of course, earlier suggested that areas of crown land might be made available to Swazi on the basis of individual rather than communal tenure, but Coryndon had not followed through on that. When, in January 1911, Malunge raised with him the question of Swazis buying land outside the reserves, he was negative. Eighteen months later, he said that he was no longer opposed to purchases of smallholdings because the Swazi attitude toward the administration had changed for the better. During the next several years, the question remained in abeyance; nothing was heard of Swazi land purchases excepting that a small plot near Bremersdorp was sold to Benjamin Nxumalo, a friend of the administration.

During the early months of 1914 the calm was shattered. Three alarming dispatches reached the Swaziland administration. On February 26, a telegram from the Native Recruiting Corporation, informing that Malunge had stopped at their offices in Johannesburg requesting a loan of £5,000 to buy land: Would the administration guarantee the loan? On March 20, an advertisement and a leading article in *Abantu*, the Zulu paper, to the effect that the queen-regent was raising funds to purchase land: Every Swazi male working outside the kingdom was asked to contribute £5. On April 20, an urgent wire from Miller saying that Swazis were indiscriminately buying land "suitable for European settlement"; and residents were up in arms. Coryndon sent for Malunge, who had just returned from the founding meeting in Kimberley of the South African Native National Congress, precursor to the present-day African National Congress. Malunge confirmed that, at the request of some chiefs, he had negotiated for a loan and had

obtained it on a guarantee of 1,000 head of cattle. The council, he said, had learned that the European community was pressing the High Commission for legislation to forbid the sale of land in non-reserve areas to Swazis, and the Swazi delegation's tepid reception at the Barberton meeting with Gladstone convinced them that they were facing difficult odds.<sup>22</sup> The chiefs had already collected some £5,000, and there were more European landowners in Swaziland willing to sell. The resident commissioner was not unduly perturbed and reported to the High Commission: "I believe that on the whole it will be wise not to stand in the way of the proposed action of the chiefs; in fact I believe that we have at present no power to prevent it."<sup>23</sup> He referred, in passing, to Selborne's hope that individual tenancy be tried in Swaziland: The land being purchased would be suitable for that.

Gladstone was upset, not so much by the loan as by the fact that it had been negotiated with a recruiting agency.<sup>24</sup> He told Honey to get the Swazi to pay off the loan with the money already collected. He was prepared, he said, to let them have a substantial acreage of crown land on installment: Use the national fund as the source for payment. In Coryndon's absence, Honey discussed the issue with the queen-regent, and she agreed to consult his office before entering into further transactions. However, problems continued to emerge. Malunge was stricken with malaria, and collections from the chiefdoms were falling off. Labotsibeni continued dealing with European owners of land near Zombodze and in the Ezulwini valley, offering above-market prices. To validate her transactions, she brought in Pixley ka Seme, an African lawyer noted for his advocacy of African rights. Officials at the Colonial Office were bemused at what was happening; a churlish minute to the correspondence suggested that Mbandzeni seemed to have passed on to his descendants his "peculiar talents for business."<sup>25</sup>

On June 17, Malunge, Vilikazi, and ka Seme came up to Mbabane with a proposition: The queen-regent wanted the resident commissioner to take control. She was prepared to hand over all funds raised from her people for purchasing land if the administration, in consultation with her, would take charge of all future purchases she wished to make for the nation, as well as take responsibility for those already in passage. Honey agreed to the first but would not guarantee past purchases until he had seen the deeds and consulted with the high commissioner. But when he reviewed the deeds and took into account oral transactions, he had reason to be perturbed. Through signed deeds of sale and verbal commitments, the Swazi had negotiated for the purchase of 37,500 morgen of private lands at the excessive cost of £47,500; and only £10,000 had so far been paid.

In the months ahead, other problems intervened. The kingdom was passing through a series of dry seasons with predictable consequences. In November, Honey reported that the resettlement on reserves "may now be considered at an end."<sup>26</sup> Then to her dismay, the queen-regent was bereft of her main support: Malunge had entered hospital, seriously ill, and his

condition was reported to be critical. He is “the only Chief in Swaziland today really representative of the Nation,”<sup>27</sup> Honey advised the High Commission. In the meantime, the European war was beginning to have an effect; markets for Swaziland’s mineral and other exports were dwindling, and unemployment became a fact of life for those affected.

## *Chapter 16*

# Regency to Kingship

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For the Swazi, the European war of 1914–18 was a remote conflagration. At the beginning, the chiefs showed some concern, and the queen-regent assured the resident commissioner of the kingdom's loyalty. But as the months went by, interest gave way to the neutrality of indifference, broken only when demands were made of them to become involved. Those demands were never great, nor was the response. Labotsibeni did authorize a fund-raising drive throughout the country to aid the war effort, but when a call came from South Africa for mule drivers to work in the labor-straitened mines, and word came for Swazi males to join an overseas labor battalion made up of southern Africans, the chiefs went through the motions of recruiting, but few young men were willing to answer the calls. The European community in the kingdom was, naturally, more responsive. Even though a shadowy divide separated Boer and British reactions to the war, especially after the pro-German rising in southwest Africa, the posture was, on the whole, one of support for the allied cause. British residents were visibly patriotic. This was their war, in an intimate sense that could not be shared by Boer or Swazi; and their response was conditioned by that feeling.

Yet the impression remains that the war was enervating for the Swazi kingdom. Neither the leadership at Zombodze nor the administration in Mbabane seemed capable of rising above the ennui of routine. It was not until near the end of hostilities in Europe, and the coming of age of young Sobhuza in concert with it, that the energy of the Swazi leadership was rekindled. But, by then, its influence was forestalled by the intervention of prominent members of the European community into what had been the official preserve of the local administration.

Echoes of the peace terms at Versailles and the promise of a League of Nations raised expectations even as far away as Swaziland. Encouraged by advisers caught up in the spirit of the times, the Swazi looked toward a new political dawn, a replenished sovereignty under a fresh, invigorated kingship. European captains of industry put their faith in the work ethic, seeking prosperity in more open market links with their South African and Portuguese neighbors and a greater say in the administration of the kingdom. Two visions of the future, the one idealistic, the other pragmatic—with neither focused sharply on what was real. The Mbabane administration, with limited resources and a mild aversion to change, was charged by both, perhaps unfairly, with having no vision beyond a lingering loyalty to the status quo.

Late in August 1914, de Symons Honey, the acting resident commissioner, informed Lord Buxton, who had recently arrived in South Africa to take over from Gladstone as governor general, that the outbreak of war in Europe had no appreciable effect on Swaziland. In a general way, that situation was to continue during the next four years. Coryndon gave a rosy account of conditions in the kingdom, admittedly in support of a proposed rise in the Swazi tax: “Work is plentiful both in and outside the Territory, and wages are good: the local mines pay a minimum wage of £2 per month and food, while the rates on the Witwatersrand Mines are considerably higher. Food is also plentiful at present and spring rains having fallen at the proper time, the food prospects for the next year are excellent.”<sup>11</sup> Given the context, the description may have been overextended, but it probably did come close to the actual situation.

The Swazi were settling in on the reserves. The lands allotted to them were, for the most part, of good to medium quality, although chiefs continued to complain of lack of space for growth. Crops were productive within the limits expected from fairly primitive cultivation methods. Throughout the war years, employment in the South African mines continued at a reasonable level so that the flow of remittance money into the kingdom was only reduced marginally. Within the kingdom, the tin mines did not close down, and other enterprises remained in place. By the end of the war, there was evidence of increasing diversity in crops; cotton and tobacco were being developed as a cash crop by European farmers, and a few Swazi were said to be moving into cotton production. The evidence suggests that Swazis suffered few privations that could be attributed directly to the war.

Toward the end of 1915, it was announced that Coryndon would be transferred to Basutoland as resident commissioner. His eight years in Swaziland had been transitional and had given rise to controversy. But relations with the queen-regent and chiefs had so improved that there was genuine concern at his leaving. The Swazi had taken Coryndon’s measure and ac-

cepted him as an able, energetic man who, in spite of initial differences, was empathetic to their interests. The European community was also favorably disposed. Mordaunt, secretary of the Swaziland Farmers' Association, informed the High Commission, "The relations between Europeans and Natives have improved to such a marked degree . . . that the Europeans view with some uneasiness any disturbance of the present personnel of the Government."<sup>2</sup>

Swazis and resident Europeans were, in the event, looking for continuity. So they turned to de Symons Honey, who had come to Swaziland at the same time as Coryndon. Local opinion was rallied to support him; the queen-regent and council, and the Farmers' Association, petitioned the high commissioner that he be given the senior post. Gladstone was amenable, and the Colonial Office eventually made the appointment.<sup>3</sup> Honey was open and conscientious but essentially a desk man—his administrative skills not open to question but his capacity for leadership less certain. His first commitment was to changes in staff. Bertram Nicholson, later described by the governor general as the ablest officer in the territories, came in as government secretary; and Marwick went to Hlatikulu, the most populous district, as his successor.

The finances of the kingdom at the change of command were by no means exemplary. The £100,000 borrowed from Basutoland had gone the way of the proverbial loaves and fishes, most of it expended on the cattle fever scourge. In 1914–15, liabilities exceeded assets by some £95,000, with a deficit in the recurrent account for that year of £6,350. Ironically, the sale of crown lands became the frosting on the administration's seedy financial cake; and the reluctance of both the administration and the European community to allow the Swazi to feast freely at the table is not surprising. Yet, on average during the war period, the Swazi contribution to the overall revenues of the administration—through hut taxes, pass fees, and dog licenses alone—exceeded by far collections from European sources. In the year already noted, for example, revenues raised from the Swazi for these three components amounted to more than £28,500—nearly 65 percent of the total revenue taken in. Inevitably, the Swazi council became aware of this and raised it as an issue with the administration. Finding sources of revenue had been a perennial problem for local administrators since Colonel Martin's days, and the legacy of mounting debts was worrying. The Colonial Office was not sympathetic, and annual estimates from Swaziland were subjected to careful scrutiny. Higher hut and personal taxes on Swazi males were suggested, but Honey felt they were already carrying a disproportionate share of the financial burden—in taxes and contributions to the two national funds.<sup>4</sup>

Malunge's illness and death in 1915, followed by a period of national mourning, effectively stopped fund-raising throughout the kingdom. Afterward, because of rumors that Labotsibeni was using the land fund for

private purposes, the chiefs refused to cooperate. The debt was still worrisome, so the district commissioners were asked to take charge of the collecting. They succeeded admirably; by mid-August 1916, some £40,000 had been collected, more than enough to cover the debt, so the land-purchase fund was closed. At the same time, the Swazi were contributing to the national fund. Cattle disease had virtually been eliminated by 1916, and it was possible to begin supporting other “purposes of native benefit,” including schools. The administration, hard-pressed for general revenues, took advantage of the situation. It withdrew its small grant for African education, transferring the cost to the Swazi national fund. This prompted criticism at Zombodze and a question to the resident commissioner at council: “What has become of the school founded by Lord Selborne in 1908?”<sup>5</sup>

Resident Europeans and outside investors could claim that their contribution to the kingdom, through indirect taxation and diverse fees and imposts, in addition to providing employment and services through capital investments, was the mainspring of the Swazi economy. To a degree, the claim was defensible. But the Swazi were not the principal beneficiaries of European enterprise. The economy of the reserves was, at best, at a subsistence level. Insofar as it needed outside stimulation, the chiefs and populace looked to the South African mines. For most Swazi, sufficiency consisted in the possession of a homestead, a herd of cattle, and the provision of grazing land. Remittances from mine workers represented a significant additional asset, especially important for meeting tax demands and voluntary contributions. In fact, Zombodze, no less than Mbabane, looked to the mines for monetary assistance. In launching her plea for the land-purchase fund, Labotsibeni had appealed to the loyalty of the mine workers, and she sent Lomvanzi with two other chiefs to cover mine heads from “Johannesburg to Witbank.”<sup>6</sup> “All Swazis are informed . . . that the Queen Regent desires that they shall work this year because . . . in the coming winter, the Swazis are to go to one side and the whites to the other,” the *Abantu* notice read.<sup>7</sup> Successive administrators had long since seen remittances from outside workers as the surest guarantee for tax payments.<sup>8</sup> In urging chiefs to encourage young men to work in the mines, commissioners from Krogh to Honey were seeking, as much as anything else, to bring the finances of the kingdom into balance.

An account prepared for a book to be published on the colonial empire’s contribution to the 1914–18 war claimed that before hostilities began the German consul-general in Johannesburg undertook a survey of Swaziland’s resources. Beyond that, it continued, “Swaziland came in no way in direct touch with the war.”<sup>9</sup> Official reports from the kingdom during the conflict tended to support that statement. In 1916, the government secretary stated: “Except in the case of a few educated natives, the war continued to arouse little interest either as to its proceeding or its result”<sup>10</sup>; and again the fol-

lowing year: "The natives generally have evinced little interest in the progress of the war and have responded badly to the call for labourers overseas."<sup>11</sup> As has already been noted, these reports do not reflect the whole picture.

Faced with an acute shortage of labor in the mines, the Union government sought help from the territories. When the request reached Swaziland, the queen-regent asked for time to consider it with the chiefs. The request was for wagon drivers, and the answer was negative. The chiefs were unanimous; Swazis knew no work except mining and cultivation, and they had no experience with mules or horses. Labotsibeni then offered that if Swazi were needed in the fighting, they would gladly go; but the offer, if serious, was not taken up. Honey did not press them; bearing in mind the upheaval of past years' strikes, the Johannesburg mines were not enticing when viewed from the sanctuary of Swaziland.

As the war progressed, with massive casualties on all sides, a need arose for labor recruits to release soldiers to fight in the trenches; and in 1917 the allied command turned to Africa as a reservoir of untrained manpower. Swaziland was asked to provide 100 men to proceed overseas to the Western Front. Because the initial response was poor, chiefs proposed that men of working age be given a choice: Either volunteer for overseas labor or pay an additional tax of ten shillings. Honey passed on the suggestion, but the High Commission was not in favor: It could be seen as forced labor.<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after the outbreak of a rebellion in southwest Africa, a call for volunteers to quell the uprising was sent out. About thirty Europeans from Swaziland indicated their willingness to take part and were sent as a unit to their objective. In due course, the rebellion was quashed, the unit was disbanded, and the men returned home. They had taken part in skirmishes; a few of the men had won commendations, as did their commanding officer. Apart from their role in southwest Africa, European volunteers from Swaziland were prominent in many spheres. Some served with other units in Africa, but the majority elected to go to the Western Front. They served as officers and in the ranks, and a number were cited for valor. At home, women were actively involved in war work, in some cases, farms and homesteads were left in their care, and a few went overseas as nurses. Although the Boers were less committed than the British, many reacted positively, and some were persuaded by the decision of the Botha government to support the allies.

In September 1917, Buxton made an official visit to Swaziland—the first such occasion since Selborne's departure six years earlier—and he sensed an upbeat mood among both Swazi and Europeans. At a meeting with the Swazi council, Vilakazi read a brief with few complaints or demands. He apologized for the poor response to the labor contingent but emphasized that Swazi were supporting the war in other ways. But on one thing the



Swazi were firm: It was rumored that, as soon as the fighting ended, the kingdom would be taken over by the Union government; and to this they were "utterly averse."<sup>13</sup> Buxton was reassuring: They would be consulted before any action was taken. Discussions with resident Europeans centered on obstacles to progress: impassable roads and few bridges for river crossings;<sup>14</sup> no wire communication; inaccessible markets because of restrictions imposed by the Union government and Mozambique. The railway project should be revived—the Portuguese had completed their part of the bargain twenty years ago, but no action had been taken on a link through Swaziland. The governor general was urbane and promised to do what he could.

As the war moved into its final stages, however, a different stance came to view in Swaziland. First, the imminent coming of age of Sobhuza emboldened the queen-regent's critics. Intrigue was never a stranger to the Swazi capitals. Labotsibeni and the council were aware that, after Sobhuza's accession, they would be held accountable for what had happened since Mbandzeni's death; and to their critics the record was not commendable. Second, the European community was frustrated by the retarded state of the kingdom's infrastructure. Nothing had been done to encourage development, they felt, since the British government took charge at the beginning of the century. Farmers and industrialists were stymied by extraneous factors over which they had no control. Third, the Mbabane administration, hemmed in by fiscal restraints, had neither the means nor perhaps the will to try to overcome the barriers.

So also at Zombodze, the queen-regent, in poor health and aging, had not responded fully to the demands of office since Malunge's death. Her remaining son, Lomvanzi, had no discernible qualities of leadership. Honey met regularly with the council and was always open to unscheduled visits. He was taken aback, therefore, when at the end of September 1918, Vilakazi, on behalf of the council, presented a list of complaints. "From the taxes we contribute we receive scarcely any benefit,"<sup>15</sup> he said. Six months later, the chiefs were called to Zombodze to sign a petition of grievances. By earlier standards, the petition was extreme. It called for an acknowledgment of the kingdom's independence, a delegation to Britain to present their case, and a public declaration that under no circumstances would the Swazi kingdom become part of the Union of South Africa.

Being taken under the wing of the Union government had been an unremitting worry for the Swazi since the Act of Union. They were aware of the prevailing opinion that a transfer was inevitable, but Labotsibeni refused to accept it as a possibility. Her best defense, despite past failures, appeared to be an appeal to England. The Europeans, on the other hand, were divided. Many Boer farmers in Swaziland supported Hertzog's opposition nationalists over the Botha-Smuts governing party in South Africa and welcomed the idea of incorporation. British residents were precautionary: If the kingdom was to be transferred, they said, firm conditions must

first be obtained. The railway line must be carried through; resident Europeans must be allowed to vote as a bloc in Union elections and not be split off to several electoral ridings in the Transvaal; and the delimitation of Swazi reserves must be “rigidly maintained.”<sup>16</sup>

The British-led Swaziland Farmers’ Association<sup>17</sup> became the vehicle for opposition. Irrespective of background, the agricultural community had not achieved prosperity. Whatever their expectation, many were not much better off than Swazis on the reserves. With the administration’s help, they had overcome the scourge of cattle disease, but neither Pretoria nor Lourenco Marques would lower the import barriers; and in this respect, Honey and the High Commission were seen to be impotent.<sup>18</sup>

Early in January 1919, W. B. Lovermore, a prominent farmer, sent a letter to the northern Farmers’ Association urging action to bring about reforms. It served as a catalyst for vocal opposition. Meetings were held and resolutions passed criticizing the administration. The Colonial Office expressed surprise at the “very bitter remarks about the non-progressive tendencies of the Administration.”<sup>19</sup> The farmers suspected that Honey, with the indulgence of the High Commission, was using revenue from the sale of crown land for general expenses rather than for capital improvements. Thus, when a large block of government-owned land in Hlatikulu district was put on public auction (in spite of the protests of the queen-regent and council), and was sold principally to residents of Natal and the Transvaal, local Europeans were upset. When it was revealed that the payments realized—some £53,000—had been put into the general account and not set aside for public works, the administration was roundly criticized. Then the last straw: Honey announced that resident Europeans would be levied personal taxes—a poll tax and a surtax on incomes over £1,000, along with a tax on undeveloped mineral concessions. All three were necessary, he claimed, to bring revenues into line with expenditures. Mining companies protested, and the farmers raised the issue to the level of principle: They wanted a voice in the administration—they would not submit to taxation without representation. Honey explained to the high commissioner: “The European population is growing, and its claims become more insistent each year without, unfortunately, an expansion of the public revenue. . . . In education, posts, roads, and the general machinery of Administration they receive more than they contribute, in other words they benefit by taxation on the natives.”<sup>20</sup> District officers supported his defense, citing the imbalance in tax revenues between Swazis and Europeans. T. A. Steward, serving at the Lebombo, protested: “In probably no country in the world do the white people contribute less in the way of direct taxation than they do in Swaziland, and the local people are alive to the fact.”<sup>21</sup>

As discussions progressed, the emphasis shifted from economic concerns to having a consultative role in policymaking. When approached on the possibility of setting up an advisory body to work with the administration,

Honey agreed within limits, and Buxton concurred. As the weeks passed on, the Europeans tightened their demands. They insisted that the advisory council be “a popular body competent to legislate for the Territory,”<sup>22</sup> not a nominated committee, as Honey proposed. A compromise was worked out, and a constitution for a European Advisory Council was prepared; and an election was held in September 1921 for a nine-member body.

Meanwhile, the Swazi had not given up their demands. They were worried by the activities of the Farmers’ Association and thought it prudent to keep on good terms with the resident commissioner. When Buxton gave up his post and went back to England, they sent a delegation to Cape Town, including Sobhuza, to bid him goodbye.<sup>23</sup> Later, when the Duke of Connaught, a grandson of Queen Victoria, took over as governor general, another high-level delegation, again accompanied by the young king, made the long trip to Cape Town to greet him. In the autumn of 1921, on the eve of Sobhuza’s installation, the council presented the resident commissioner with a new petition, wide-ranging in its claims and demands.<sup>24</sup> Honey was privately informed, however, that the petition was intended more for local consumption—to persuade Sobhuza that the queen-regent and council had always been sedulous in defending the kingdom he was now to inherit.

Custom prescribed the rituals to be followed in preparing Sobhuza for the kingship, but the Swazi leadership seemed to realize that these were no longer enough. Labotsibeni wanted him to spend six years at a school in England, and Malunge had supported her; the experience, he said, “would give him wisdom and understanding and make a man of him.”<sup>25</sup> Chief Minister Logcogco concurred: “Our own inability to understand makes us desire understanding in our chief.”<sup>26</sup> But the war and the protective attitude of British officials prevented his going so far away; and Honey thought it would be best for him to attend an African school, so the well-reputed school at Lovedale in the Cape was selected. Malunge’s sudden death in January 1915 brought home to the Swazi the advantages to be gained from strong leadership. Who was there to take his place? Lomvanzi was the obvious choice but was not highly regarded by the chiefs; Honey remarked, “Neither his character nor intelligence are well spoken of.”<sup>27</sup> Logcogco, Mbandzeni’s brother, was respected but too old. In the end, no one took Malunge’s place, and the full weight of office fell again to the queen-regent. It was not easy for her; apart from her infirmities, she confided to Honey that now that Sobhuza was coming of age “she is being accused of having caused the deaths of her two sons, Bhunu and Malunge, and of her daughter Tongatonga.”<sup>28</sup>

By custom, Sobhuza could not go alone to Lovedale, so eight chiefs’ sons of similar age were selected to go with him. Labotsibeni added three young girls to the list, and at the beginning of term in 1916, the twelve prospective

Swazi pupils arrived at the school. Unfortunately, their studies were interrupted by an outbreak of typhus in the eastern Cape, and the boys, but not the girls, were brought back to Swaziland. After the scare receded, Sobhuza did not want to return to Lovedale. Private tutoring was arranged, but there were problems over the teachers. It was officially reported that "a certain amount of pressure had to be brought to bear"<sup>29</sup> to get the king to return to Lovedale. Nevertheless, the experience at Lovedale opened up new vistas for young Swazi aristocrats. Labotsibeni was pleased by reports of progress, but she changed her mind about coeducation, and the council conveyed her opinion that girls would be better placed at female schools where their chastity would be less at risk.

African education had never been a high priority with Boer or British administrations in southern Africa. Swaziland, weighed down by a stereotype that its indigenous population was less developed and consequently less ready to be exposed to Western models of instruction, suffered more than most from this neglect. The royal school at Zombodze was only a beginning in the queen-regent's mind; and Malunge, chiefs pointed out after his passing, had planned that there should be a boarding school in each of the five administrative districts. This did not happen, so liberal education for Swazi youths was left to the generosity of mission societies. The mission schools, representing a variety of churches, were independent and individual; their common link was an annual inspection by Basutoland's director of education, who reported to the administration. His reports were more indicative of the poverty of resources available than of the attitudes or progress of Swazi youngsters.

Government-funded schools did exist for European children living in the kingdom. By 1918, eight such schools were functioning, with another providing instruction for colored children. The leading school was in Mbabane, an Anglican foundation intended for children in the European community. It was a favored establishment. The Basutoland inspector noted critically in 1921 that its government subsidy for a single pupil surpassed the total amount provided for any of the Swazi schools.

Toward the end of January 1919, Labotsibeni informed the resident commissioner that Sobhuza would not continue his studies at Lovedale: "It is my desire as well as that of the Chiefs that . . . Sobhuza should be formally installed this year."<sup>30</sup> Honey was surprised; the boy had attended boarding school less than three years, and the administration had hoped for a more complete education.<sup>31</sup> The break was necessary, she explained, because he had to pass through certain rituals and be treated with medicines to prepare him for his role as king. From the administration's point of view, the timing was awkward. The war had ended, and those who had served overseas had to be provided for. Discussions between the High Commission and the Union government over Swaziland's transfer were taking place, while at

home both Swazi and European settlers were asking for fundamental changes in the government of the kingdom. Still, Sobhuza had been king-in-waiting for well nigh twenty years and had reached the age deemed suitable for assuming the kingship.

As it happened, there was no urgency. The council vacillated on setting a date, and it was rumored that Labotsibeni was hedging because she was not yet ready to hand over to Sobhuza's mother, Lomawa, custody of the rain medicines—an action required in Swazi tradition. In any event, the ceremony was delayed until the end of December 1920, and even then tradition was thwarted by heavy rains and swollen rivers. So few chiefs were in attendance that the queen-regent, not satisfied that the demands of protocol had adequately been met, arranged for a second informal installation, explaining to Honey that from then on the administration should deal directly with Sobhuza as king, not with her. When the second ceremony was called for, a larger representation of chiefs was present. Labotsibeni spoke movingly of her travail of thirty-two years since Mbandzeni's death. Then turning to the young king, she said: "I have brought him up as a Swazi prince ought to be brought up . . . [but] I cannot give him my experience."<sup>32</sup>

The next day, Sobhuza was brought up to Mbabane, accompanied by a representative body of chiefs, to make an official call on the administration as paramount chief of the nation. The queen-regent, her work now done, withdrew to the relative seclusion of the royal enclosure at Zombodze—the last, perhaps, of the great Swazi queens.<sup>33</sup>

# Glossary

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## SISWATI WORDS USED IN TEXT

*assagai*—short spear used for close combat

*eMbo-Nguni*—Swazi forebears

*impi*—a body of warriors

*indvuna* (pl. *tindvuna*)—senior Swazi officer

*inkhundla* (pl. *tinkhundla*)—regional council

*libandla*—council of citizenry

*liqoqo*—inner council of king's advisers

*mfecane*—wanton aggression during Zulu wars

*ncwala*—first fruits ceremony in praise of kingship

*ndlovukazi*—traditional title of queen-mother

Ngwane—historic name of Swazis and Swaziland

*ngwenyama*—traditional title of king

siSwati—language spoken by Swazi people

*Somtseu*—Zulu-Swazi name for Sir Theophilus Shepstone

## OTHER EXPRESSIONS USED IN TEXT

“crying”—mourning deceased person

“eating up”—raiding property

elders—senior advisers to the king

headmen—representatives of chiefs or chiefdoms

“killing off”—murderously assailing

*landröst*—South African Republic magistrate

*pitso*—Sotho word for peoples' assembly

“smelling out”—witchcraft detection

*trekboers*—Cape Dutch settlers who moved north

# Notes

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NOTES

- C United Kingdom, Public Records Office, Command Papers  
CO United Kingdom, Public Records Office, Colonial Office Papers  
DO United Kingdom, Public Records Office, Dominions Office Papers  
SS Republic of South Africa, State (Transvaal) Archives  
SwA. Swaziland National Archives

## CHAPTER 1

1. A. F. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa in 1835* (London, 1936), 167.
2. J. R. Masson, *Prehistoric Swaziland: An Archeological Outline* (Lobamba, 1981).
3. Genealogical tables are given in H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy: Rank among the Swazis* (London, 1947; reprint, New York, 1980), 232; and in J. S. M. Matsebula, *A History of Swaziland*, 3rd ed. (Cape Town, 1988), 18.
4. A. T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (London, 1929); and Bryant, *A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes* (Cape Town, 1964).
5. M. Wilson, "The Nguni People," in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 1 (London, 1969–71), ch. 3.
6. Useful studies in Swazi clan histories have been prepared by a team of young scholars working in Swaziland. Their papers may be seen at the National University of Swaziland at Kwaluseni.



7. For brief unpublished accounts of the Mamba chieftaincy, see R. S. Mamba, "A History of the Mamba Kingdom"; and B. B. Sikhondze, "The Birth of the Mamba Clan in Swaziland" (National University of Swaziland at Kwaluseni, 1985).

8. *Kingdoms* and *chiefdoms* are not clearly differentiated in southern African history. Some writers use the terms interchangeably; others see the emergence of state formation as the dividing point. In Swaziland, contemporary usage generally limits the title *king* to the Dlamini head of the kingdom—the *ngwenyama*.

9. The Swazi have two separate capitals, one occupied by the king and the other by the queen-mother. The king's residence is the administrative capital or headquarters of the nation; the queen-mother's is the spiritual or ritual center. Both have survived the modernization of state institutions in this century and continue to have a significant role in the cultural identity and governance of the Swazi. They are distinct, of course, from the present-day seats of parliamentary government at Lobamba and Mbabane.

10. Matsebula, *History*, 12.

11. The word *Swazi* probably came into common usage during Mswati II's kingship, but A. G. Marwick suggested that it was in use earlier. SwA. RCS 115/14, "Historical Notes," 1. The word and its derivatives are used in this work to designate the post-Shiselweni period, that is, the period after Sobhuza I transferred the capitals from Shiselweni.

12. P. Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires* (Johannesburg, 1983), 24–25.

13. No exact date can be given for Sobhuza I's accession to the Ngwane leadership. Matsebula indicates 1816 in his chronology, but an earlier date is more likely.

14. "Paying tribute" was an acknowledgment of superior strength and normally followed a conquest. The custom did not strictly represent an exacted punishment, for it implied a protective relationship between the donor and the recipient. Payment was commonly made in cattle or skins on terms agreed to by both parties.

15. The fact that Sobhuza I was absent from Shiselweni for at least several years and did not return until the Ndwandwe's influence had waned suggests the move north was a forced withdrawal. Matsebula, *History*, 20; and Bonner, *Kings*, 27.

16. Swazi kings are expected to establish a residence apart from that of the queen-mother or the late king and sometimes carry over previous place names.

17. Matsebula, *History*, 26; Kuper, *Aristocracy*, 14.

18. Sobhuza I's principal wife was Tsandzile Ndwandwe, one of Zwide's daughters.

19. *Mfecane* refers to the dispersal of clans and chiefdoms that took place as a result of Ndwandwe and Zulu wars of conquest. An important consequence of the upheavals was a change in the demographic picture of southern Africa, affecting directly most kingdoms except the Swazi.

20. Sobhuza I died about 1840. His successor, Mswati II, was not of age to assume the leadership; and in the regency that followed, Tsandzile Ndwandwe became a dominating force.

21. Bonner, *Kings*, ch. 3.

22. Most challenges to the Dlamini chieftainship came from within the family—a natural consequence of polygynous unions and the absence of the right of primogeniture.

## CHAPTER 2

1. On the death of a Swazi king, a successor is selected indirectly. A council of elders chooses a new queen-mother; and her son is then named to be king and shown to the people. The former queen-mother becomes queen-regent.
2. Kuper, *Aristocracy*, chs. 6 and 13.
3. H. O. Mönnig, *The Pedi* (Pretoria, 1967).
4. During the “great trek” a community of some 300 *trekboers* settled at Ohrigstad in what is now the Transvaal.
5. Bonner, *Kings*, 58–77.
6. After Sobhuza’s move from Shiselweni, Swazi chiefdoms were categorized according to their geographic location at the time.
7. Swazi in the northern Hhohho area, where Mswati had his headquarters, still refer to him as having been “a cruel king.” A. M. Nxumalo, “Oral Tradition Concerning Mswati II” (unpublished survey, University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, 1976).
8. J. Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (Johannesburg, 1982). Zulu strength, after Shaka’s successes, was gravely weakened by factional strife.
9. P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us* (Johannesburg, 1983), ix.
10. *Ibid.*, 30.
11. SwA. RCS 115/14, n.d.; de Symons Honey, “A History of Swaziland” (unpublished manuscript), 40.
12. Matsebula, *History*, 45–46.
13. An *indvuna* is a Swazi official appointed to serve the king or queen-mother or the heads of chiefdoms. Normally, *tindvuna* are selected from prominent families, and those serving at the capitals are considered to have great influence.
14. Bonner, *Kings*, 94–102.
15. H. Kuper, “The Development of the Military Organization in Swaziland,” *Africa* (1937), 54–57, 176–205.
16. The regiments were not made up of full-time warriors; men were called from the chiefdoms when required.
17. Women did most of the agricultural labor and herd-boys looked after cattle.
18. B. A. Marwick, *The Swazi* (Cambridge, 1940).
19. The works of H. Kuper and B. A. Marwick touch on the Swazi chiefdom, but a thorough study has yet to be made.
20. Conflicting oral traditions have obscured the date of Mswati’s death. Honey and Matsebula indicate 1868; Bonner suggests 1865.
21. Honey, “History,” 44.
22. Bryant, *Olden Times*, 331.
23. Honey lists twenty-four of Mswati II’s sons as having a claim to eligibility for the kingship. “History,” 53.
24. CO897/13/150, no. 2; Dec. 22, 1877.

## CHAPTER 3

1. F. J. Perkins, “A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland to 1910” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1974), 100–104.

2. Merensky and Grutzner, from the Berlin Missionary Society, came to Natal in 1858, intending to establish missions among the Swazi; but they were rejected by Mswati II because of the incident at Mahamba.

3. Dutch *trekboers*, also known as *voortrekkers* or *trekkers*, settled mainly in what is now the Transvaal. The word *Boers* refers to descendants of Dutch settlers in the Cape, including those who migrated north.

4. An extensive literature exists on the subject of the Boer resettlements. A good account is given in Eric A. Walker, *The Great Trek*, 5th ed. (London, 1965).

5. The documents are variously referred to as "agreements," "treaties," or "deeds of sale."

6. The *volksraad* is the Republic of South Africa's elected Parliament.

7. Zoutpansberg joined the first South African Republic (part of present-day Transvaal) in 1858; Lydenburg and Utrecht entered in 1860.

8. Theophilus Shepstone, acting for the British government, annexed the South African Republic in 1877.

9. Rudolph's transfer from British to Boer government service was not unusual; it reflects the perceived common interests of Europeans in southern Africa.

10. "Rudolph Agreement," July 1, 1875; and CO879/29/95, enc. 2; Feb. 9, 1878.

11. The concept that decisions vital to the nation must be deliberated by the people runs through Swazi tradition but has not always been respected.

12. W. J. Leyds, *The Transvaal Surrounded* (London, 1919), 237.

13. Theophilus Shepstone was known to Swazi and Zulu as *Somtseu*. Brought up in Cape Colony, son of a Wesleyan missionary, he spent his life in southern Africa's colonial service and was recognized as an authority on the ethos of south-east African ethnic groups.

14. The Boer commandant was subsequently court-martialed and fined for the inaction of his men.

15. Sir Garnet Wolseley served as high commissioner for South East Africa from 1879 to 1880.

16. Of some 8,000 warriors involved, more than 400 were killed and as many wounded. Wolseley lost only 13 men and 35 wounded out of a force of 3,000 imperial troops and volunteers.

17. C2584/104, enc. 1; Mar. 12, 1880.

18. Adrian W. Preston, ed., *The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley, 1879-1880* (Cape Town, 1973), 179.

19. A. G. Marwick, "The Attitude of the Swazi Towards Government and Its Causes" (Pretoria, 1955).

20. The commission was headed by James Alleyne, an artillery captain, and was accompanied by three Swazi *tindvuna* sent by the king.

21. C2505, enc. 1; Dec. 29, 1879.

22. CO879/14/158, no. 2, enc.; July 8, 1878.

23. CO879/17/215A, no. 49; Dec. 5, 1879.

24. C2695/17, enc. 6; Jan. 10, 1880.

25. Offy Shepstone recounts in his diary that he had an argument with John Gama over the relative fighting qualities of Boers, British, Swazi, and Zulu; and Gama insisted that the Zulu were the masters.

26. C4980/70, enc. 1; Oct. 17, 1886; and enc. 2; Dec. 8, 1886.

## CHAPTER 4

1. CO879/25/330, no. 69, enc.; Apr. 29, 1886.
2. CO879/29/359, no. 2, enc.; Apr. 12, 1887.
3. N. G. Garson, "The Swaziland Question and a Road to the Sea, 1887–1895," in *African Year Book*, vol. 2 (Cape Town, 1967), gives an account of efforts to control access from Delagoa Bay.
4. CO879/29/359, no. 87, enc. 2; Jan. 9, 1888.
5. SwA. RCS 138/20; Sept. 30, 1887.
6. A record of the hearings is given in CO879/29/359, no. 144, enc.; Aug. 1, 1888.
7. SwA. RCS 138/20; June 19, 1888.
8. SwA. RCS 138/20; June 21, 1888.
9. SwA. RCS 138/20; June 28, 1888.
10. CO879/29/359, no. 28, enc.; June 29, 1888.
11. CO879/29/359, no. 144, enc. 1; Aug. 1, 1888.
12. CO879/29/359, no. 156, enc.; Oct. 25, 1888.
13. CO879/29/359, no. 151, enc.; Oct. 6, 1888.
14. SwA. RCS 138/20; Sept. 1, 1897.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Vermaak's concession (Sept. 12, 1860) covered about 100 square miles. It included much of what is now known as the Ingwavuma area in KwaZulu-Natal.
2. Matsebula, *History*, 54.
3. Coetzer's concession (Aug. 20, 1874) was given in perpetuity at an annual rental of £1.
4. The Maritz-Ferreira concession (Oct. 3, 1877) comprised almost 30,000 acres in the southwest of Swaziland.
5. Robertson was given a lease on land (July 18, 1880), tenable only as long as he cared for the birds.
6. The majority of the concessions were for fifty years, renewable for another fifty. Some were for different durations, and a few were not renewable. No logical pattern is evident in the grants made, and it is not clear if those given in perpetuity were meant to be at the king's pleasure.
7. Although he was the king's chief minister during most of the period, Zwane's mark appears on a few documents only.
8. A powerful king like Mswati II could conceivably act without consulting the council, but custom also required the consent of other chiefs whose land might be affected.
9. SwA. J113/04; Feb. 24, 1887.
10. C5089, no. 39, enc. 3; June 1, 1887.
11. *Ibid.*
12. The MacLachlan-Carter concession (May 7, 1882) covered a major portion of the northern Peak area.
13. *Report of the Detailed Decisions of the Swaziland Concessions Commission* (Pretoria, 1908), 4.

14. Some documents included provisions for the rights of Swazi. Concessionaires, for example, were not to interfere with cultivated land or Swazi grazing areas, or the gardens, kraals, or huts of those already living there.

15. The numbers are based on lists prepared by Offy Shepstone for the concessions court; on data compiled in 1902 by de Symons Honey while he was secretary for Swaziland affairs at the British High Commission; and on the report prepared by Rubie for the Transvaal attorney general in 1903.

16. John Gama, Stephen Mini, and Levi Vilakazi were given concessions. Gama was a loyal supporter of the Shepstones: He was given two grants—mineral (Feb. 17, 1887) and land (May 28, 1887) based on the Lubombo. Mini, who became prominent as an adviser to the queens, obtained a large but useless grant (Feb. 21, 1887) for mining coal in the south. Vilakazi also received a mining grant (Apr. 17, 1890), and the documents indicate that another Swazi, Umzeneni, may have received a concession. Apart from John Gama's land, on which he settled, none of these concessions were worked, and they were later sold.

17. Established in 1888, the "white committee" consisted mostly of British traders and storekeepers.

18. Two months after obtaining the concession, Harington transferred title to Naph Cohen of Barberton. He, in turn, transferred it to F. C. Eloff, who was apparently acting for the Pretoria government.

19. Thorburn obtained a grant of 170,000 acres of prime agricultural land at an annual rental of £25 (Mar. 20, 1888). His banking concession (May 26, 1888) was sold in 1891, along with many of his other interests, to the Umbandine Swaziland Concessions Syndicate. Eventually, the National Bank in Johannesburg obtained a sublease and opened a branch at Bremersdorp on July 1, 1897—the first banking operation in Swaziland. His two "unallotted" concessions were later acquired by the Syndicate.

20. SwA. J201/02; July 31, 1902.

21. J. F. Rubie, "Swaziland Concessions Report" (Pretoria, 1903), app. A, 4.

22. Forbes's concession (Mar. 10, 1882) was for fifty years renewable at an annual rental of £300.

23. The king's revenue from concession rentals and other payments has been estimated as high as £15,000 a year.

24. Sandlane Zwane was the father of one of Mbandzeni's wives and served as chief minister for many years, probably the ablest Swazi statesman of the century.

25. Shepstone's first contract provided for a commission on completed transactions. After his reengagement, his entitlement was half the initial payment and subsequent rentals on all concessions registered. Six concessions were in his name or shared, the majority providing for his retaining half the working profit.

26. CO879/29/359, no. 47, enc.; Oct. 8, 1887.

27. Two Britons, J. R. Harington and Naph Cohen, both holding concessions in Swaziland, were acting as agents for the South African Republic. S53922, R10214/93, Aug. 21, 1893.

28. CO879/31/374, enc.; Oct. 4, 1888.

29. The term "organic proclamation," meaning a pronouncement by the traditional authorities, seems not to have been in common usage by the Colonial Office and may have been coined to meet the Swaziland situation.

30. C7212, no. 10, enc.; Sept. 29, 1890.

31. It is probable that the king and queen-mother did not give their consent to the creation of a concessions court. When challenged by the queen, Shepstone admitted that her mark was inserted by proxy and that the king was approached casually without witnesses.

32. C7212, no. 15, enc. four; May 7, 1891.

33. C7212, no. 86, Dec. 1, 1892.

## CHAPTER 6

1. The London Convention of 1884 reaffirmed the provisions of the Pretoria Convention of 1881 and granted additional demands of the South African Republic, including a minor adjustment of the Swazi-Transvaal boundary on the southwest.

2. From 1884 to 1894, Europeans in Swaziland were governed by tripartite administrations, shared by Britain, the South African Republic, and the Swazi kingdom.

3. P. Delius and S. Trapido, "Imboekselings and Oorlans: The Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class," in B. Bozzoli, ed., *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* (Johannesburg, 1983), 53–88.

4. C5089, no. 14, enc. 1; Jan. 23, 1887.

5. CO879/25/330, Oct. 9, 1887.

6. C5089, no. 9, enc. 1; Jan. 21, 1887.

7. C5089, no. 34, enc. 1; Apr. 6, 1887.

8. C5089, no. 21, Apr. 11, 1887.

9. CO879/29/359, no. 7, enc.; July 6, 1887.

10. C6200, no. 88, enc.; Apr. 29, 1889.

11. C6200, no. 90, enc.; Apr. 20, 1889.

12. The Shepstone family's service in Natal's African administration spanned several generations. Apart from Offy Shepstone, both his father, Sir Theophilus, and his uncle, J. W., held senior posts in Natal, as did his eldest brother, Henriques.

13. Offy Shepstone obtained a mining grant (held jointly with Arthur Henderson) on December 10, 1886, before his formal appointment as king's agent.

14. C5089, no. 3, encs. 2 and 3; Jan. 17 and 19, 1887. Even if the governor and high commissioner had endorsed the appointment, it is unlikely the British government would have accepted the recommendation.

15. The 1888 charter to the "white committee" was signed by the king and ten members of the council and by seventeen Europeans.

16. Allister Miller, a young man recently arrived from Britain, was brought in from Barberton where he edited the local paper.

17. C6200, no. 95, enc.; May 1, 1889.

18. C6200, no. 64, enc.; Dec. 11, 1888. The message to Natal stated that Quababa, Queen-Mother Tibati's *indvuna*, and another chief, Polini, as well as a number of "lesser *indvunas*," had been killed. G. Ferreira named six dead, including two brothers of Sandlane Zwane; and John Gama listed seven chiefs together with their wives and children.

19. CO6200, no. 152, enc. XI; Aug. 14, 1889.

20. Killie Campbell Collection, MS 154; Miller Papers, "Diary," 148. University of Durban-Westville.

21. Edward Bok, the state secretary of the Republic, proposed in January 1888 that a joint commission be sent to Swaziland. C6200, no. 26, enc. 1; Jan. 20, 1888.

22. C6200, no. 94, enc.; Mar. 14, 1888. The petition had ninety-one signatories, some of whom had no involvement with Swaziland.

23. C5089, no. 39, enc. 31; May 18, 1887.

24. C6200, nos. 20–80; Jan.–Mar. 1888.

25. CO879/29/135, enc.; May 14, 1888.

26. SwA. S12; May 20, 1889.

27. C6200, no. 80; Apr. 2, 1889.

28. C6200, no. 127, enc.; July 19, 1889.

29. C6200, no. 152, enc.; Sept. 25, 1889.

30. C6200, no. 127, enc.; July 19, 1889.

31. *Ibid.*

32. C6200, no. 152, enc.; Sept. 25, 1889.

33. Mbandzeni died at Mbekelweni, after a protracted illness, on November 7, 1889.

34. Wm. Penfold, “The Romance of Swaziland,” Nicholson Papers (University of the Witwatersrand, n.d.).

35. Sisile Khumalo, the queen-mother, was apprehended and killed near Mbabane by Mbandzeni’s warriors while trying to flee the kingdom. According to Matsebula, *History*, 73–75, the incident resulted from a family quarrel and the betrayal of the queen by one of the king’s retainers.

36. De Winton’s “Report” is contained in C6201, no. 3; Feb. 25, 1890. Piet Joubert did not make a written report.

37. C6200, no. 177; Mar. 5, 1890.

38. CO879/25, no. 69, enc.; Apr. 26, 1886.

39. De Winton’s “Report,” Annexure A.

40. C7212, no. 7, enc. 1; Sept. 6, 1890.

41. Martin played down Shepstone’s warnings because they were not substantiated by his own sources.

42. The alleged “Wyldesdale massacre” was widely publicized, with charges that from ten to fifty Swazis had been killed by Tibati’s warriors. An official investigation revealed that it was a case of suspected witchcraft: The local chief wanted the suspects to leave the area, but they refused. Warriors from one of the queen-regent’s regiments were called on to assist, and in the ensuing scuffle, a man and boy were killed. The local chief was tried and acquitted by a traditional court.

## CHAPTER 7

1. Loch apparently did not consult his military commanders, and they called his ultimatum “madness.”

2. Other criticisms were that Labotsibeni was temperamental and that Bhunu was not an only son, as custom prescribed.

3. SwA. S20N; May 6, 1890.

4. C7212, no. 7, enc. 1; Sept. 6, 1890.

5. Martin commended Shepstone’s conduct to the high commissioner.

6. In November 1890, the Government Committee moved its operations to Bremersdorp, some eight miles from Mbekelweni.

7. SwA. S13A, bk. 3; Mar. 9, 1891.
8. SwA. S13A, bk. 3; June 25, 1891.
9. Accounts of abuses are given, for example, in SwA. S20H; July/Aug. 1891; and SwA. S20N; June 12, 1890.
10. Robert McNab and Charles Dupont were given legendary roles by the English-language press, but both faced capital charges in the Portuguese territory.
11. According to estimates prepared for 1890, the Government Committee police numbered forty-two, including thirty Swazis.
12. Shepstone's police are seldom referred to in official reports.
13. SwA. S13A, bk. 3; Aug. 23, 1891.
14. Swazi police received £18 a year plus rations and uniform; European constables were paid £144 a year with, in some cases, a horse allowance.
15. Smuggling cattle, goods, and equipment in and out of the kingdom had become endemic, with Swazi as well as Europeans taking part.
16. SwA. S18; Apr. 30, 1891.
17. A copy of Lagden's Swaziland diary is held at the University of the Witwatersrand.
18. Lagden served afterward in senior positions with Lord Milner's administration in Johannesburg and wrote a history of Basutoland.
19. C7212, no. 44; Jan. 19, 1893.
20. C7212, no. 48; Feb. 10, 1893.
21. C7212, no. 64, enc. 3; May 6, 1891.
22. C7212, no. 61; May 4, 1891.
23. "Anarchy" was an exaggeration; Martin's careful dispatches give a more positive portrayal.
24. The historic obligation dates back to 1879 when Sir Evelyn Wood, acting for General Wolseley, persuaded the Swazi to join British forces in the attack on the Pedi, in return for a promise of guaranteed independence for all time. Matsebula, *History*, 78–79.

## CHAPTER 8

1. SwA. S20E; Feb. 19, 1895.
2. Theophilus Shepstone was raised to knighthood after his retirement following the annexation of the Transvaal.
3. C7611, no. 3; Feb. 19, 1894.
4. C7611, no. 2, enc. 3; Nov. 1, 1893.
5. SwA. S20M; Apr. 6, 1894.
6. SwA. S13F; Mar. 30, 1894.
7. SwA. S13F; Apr. 4, 1894. Stuart remarked that the queen-mother was much agitated as she spoke these words.
8. SwA. S13F; Sept. 1, 1894.
9. SwA. S20M; Jan. 22, 1895.
10. SwA. S13B; Dec. 20, 1893.
11. C7611, no. 6; May 3, 1894.
12. C7611, no. 22; June 6, 1894.
13. C7611, no. 24; Aug. 15, 1894.
14. C7611, no. 25; Aug. 22, 1894.



15. SwA. S3; Oct. 3, 1894.
16. James Stuart was a longtime native affairs officer with the Natal administration and later served in Zululand. Fluent in Zulu and siSwati, his voluminous papers, now held at the University of Natal, are an important source of information on events as seen from the grassroots. A four-volume collection of his papers was published by the Killie Campbell Africana Library: C. de B. Webb and J. B. Wright, *The James Stuart Archive*, vols. 1–4 (Pietermaritzburg, 1976–86).
17. CO879/42/480, no. 224, enc.; Feb. 16, 1895.
18. Neither Longcanga nor Zibokwana attended the meeting, and Cleophas Kunene contradicted Mhlonishwa's version.
19. *The Goldfield News and Barberton Herald*, Oct. 12, 1894.
20. SwA. S20M; Mar. 28, 1894.
21. C7611, no. 36; Oct. 19, 1894.
22. Because it became effective in 1894, the alternate document is referred to as the 1894 Convention.
23. The deadline for consent was extended to February 20, 1894.

## CHAPTER 9

1. CO879/42/480, no. 222; Mar. 17, 1895.
2. President Kruger had forewarned Loch, but it is probable word did not reach Martin before the event.
3. CO879/42/480, no. 232, enc. 13; Feb. 23, 1895.
4. CO879/42/480, no. 207, enc. 7; Feb. 8, 1895.
5. CO879/42/480, no. 238, enc. 5; Mar. 22, 1895.
6. When Johannes Smuts was proposed by Loch for the consul's post, the colonial secretary was negative: "In present state of feeling here [England] it would be impossible to appoint anyone of Dutch origin to be British Consul in Swaziland"; but he later reversed his decision. CO879/42/480, nos. 226 and 258; Mar. 18 and May 31, 1895.
7. CO879/44/499, no. 66; enc.; Aug. 31, 1895.
8. The legal position of Britons who accepted burgher status was later clarified by the British government: They would not lose their rights as British subjects but would not be guaranteed protection if they resided in the Republic.
9. SwA. DO9/156A; enc.; June 18, 1895.
10. SwA. DO9/156A; enc.; Aug. 10, 1895. A list of those who were granted burgher status, prepared in January 1895, named 120 men, including Bremer, Darke, Mordaunt, Penfold, Rudolph, Thorburn, and Shepstone.
11. CO879/44/499, no. 209, enc.; July 24, 1897.
12. CO879/44/499, no. 150, enc.; Sept. 30, 1896. Joseph Chamberlain, the colonial secretary, had asked that the Republic replace the Ferreiras with others "unconnected with past events," but Lord Rosemead, the new high commissioner, was not inclined to press the matter.
13. Stuart's frequent reports to the High Commission generally included an assessment of the mood in the kingdom.
14. CO879/44/499, no. 74, enc.; Sept. 13, 1895.
15. CO879/44/499, no. 57, enc.; Aug. 24, 1895.

16. CO879/44/499, no. 55, enc.; Aug. 16, 1895. A rump group in the British House of Commons did keep in touch with Rathbone and other dissenters.
17. CO879/44/499, no. 61, enc.; Aug. 24, 1895.
18. CO879/44/499, no. 67, enc. 1; Sept. 4, 1895.
19. CO879/44/499, no. 83, enc.; Oct. 11, 1895.
20. CO879/44/499, no. 122, enc. 1; May 15, 1896.
21. CO879/44/499, no. 121, enc.; June 2, 1896.
22. The incident was confirmed; Shabati was said to have been “a great drunkard” and to have insulted the king.
23. CO879/44/499, no. 117, enc.; May 2, 1896.
24. Edmund Fraser, the British agent in Pretoria, stated that Loch and Kruger agreed privately that “seven years” would be the “furthest possible duration of the 1894 Convention.” CO879/53/553, no. 16, Note to enc. 9; Sept. 2, 1898.
25. CO879/44/499, no. 234, enc. 3; Sept. 1, 1897.
26. CO879/53/553, no. 52, enc. 2; Apr. 15, 1898.
27. Shepstone became a landowner in the eastern Transvaal after his retirement from the deeds position. He died in 1907, within a month of Colonel Martin’s death in England. His funeral in Johannesburg was attended by a few of his former friends and enemies from Swaziland; and significantly, some 500 Swazi and Zulu came to pay their respects.

## CHAPTER 10

1. Tekuba was forced to leave the kingdom in 1894, and his chiefdom was “eaten up.” He was permitted to return later on and resumed participation in the council.
2. CO879/53/553, no. 59, enc. 2; Apr. 21, 1898.
3. C9206, no. 10, enc. 3; May 23, 1898.
4. Bhunu was then about twenty years of age.
5. CO879/53/553, no. 62, enc.; Apr. 12, 1898.
6. *Ibid.*
7. The reputed candidate was Masumpa, a young half brother to Bhunu, whose mother had cast her lot with Mbandzeni’s half brother Mamesi after the king’s death. Years before, Mamesi had supported Mbilini’s bid for the kingship and was on good terms with some Shiselweni chiefs as well as with the Boers. CO879/53/553, no. 87, enc. 11; May 27, 1898.
8. CO879/53/553, no. 63; May 25, 1898.
9. *Times of Swaziland*, Apr. 30, 1898.
10. C9206, no. 24, encs. 4 and 6; June 20 and 21, 1898. Information provided to the High Commission by the British agent in Pretoria.
11. C9206, no. 11, enc. 2; May 18, 1898.
12. C9206, no. 21; July 8, 1898.
13. C9206, no. 30, enc. 9; July 7, 1898. Gibson had served for a time as Martin’s interpreter in Swaziland and was on friendly terms with the queen-regent.
14. Bhunu and his party were sent on to Eschowe in Natal, where they could more easily be accommodated. Some later arrivals were detained at Ingwavuma, however, to prevent possible problems, especially as the Zulu were thought to be sympathetic to Bhunu.

15. Saunders, the magistrate at Eschowe, estimated that about eighty Swazis had come down to join Bhunu, including his two brothers, Malunge and Lomvanzi.

16. Some warriors, among them Lomvanzi, asked to remain in Zululand for a time, but British officials, fearing they might stir up the Zulu, refused permission.

17. C9206, no. 43, enc. 2; Sept. 1, 1898.

18. C9206, no. 43, enc. 5; Aug. 22, 1898.

19. C9206, no. 44, enc. 5; Sept. 10, 1898.

20. CO879/53/553, no. 139, enc. 7; Oct. 27, 1898.

21. C9206, no. 53, enc.; Oct. 25, 1898. Bhunu was fined for having allowed "barbarous practices" in the kingdom, not for his alleged role in Mbhaba's death.

22. The Bhunu hearing gave rise to a number of legends. Had the judgment gone against the king, it was claimed, the warriors would have massacred the Europeans present at the courthouse. See, for example, R. T. Coryndon, "Swaziland," *Journal of the African Society* (London) 14 (1915), 250–65. But James Stuart made no reference to the possibility of violence in his firsthand report to the High Commission.

23. CO879/53/553, no. 157; Nov. 26, 1898.

24. CO879/53/553, no. 141; enc.; Oct. 24, 1898.

25. Bhunu asked Stuart later on why Malunge had not been allowed to go to school. They were troubled by the refusal, Stuart wrote, because the request had been made in good faith.

26. CO879/57/573, no. 12, enc.; Feb. 21, 1899.

27. CO879/57/573, no. 34, enc.; May 26, 1899.

28. SwA. SCS 704/98 ("Bhunu Papers" S30IIA); June 6, 1898.

29. *Ibid.*

30. In keeping with custom, Bhunu's death was not revealed for some time. On January 24, 1900, Alpheus Nkosi, on behalf of the queen-regent and council, wrote to Johannes Smuts to advise him as British consul that the king died on December 11, 1899. CO879/64/634, no. 439, enc. 1; Jan. 24, 1900.

## CHAPTER 11

1. The Swazi leadership argued later that the kingdom was formally detached from the Republic when Joubert handed over responsibility to Bhunu. In one sense they were right, but Joubert could not override the provisions of the 1894 Convention.

2. CO879/57/573, no. 37, enc.; July 14, 1899.

3. CO879/57/573, no. 51, enc. 10; Sept. 18, 1899.

4. CO879/57/573, no. 51, enc. 1; May 25, 1899.

5. CO879/57/573, no. 51, enc. 14; Sept. 22, 1899.

6. CO879/57/573, no. 33; enc.; June 28, 1899.

7. CO879/57/573, no. 51, enc. 8; Sept. 13, 1899.

8. War Office Intelligence Division, *Military Notes on the Dutch Republics of South Africa* (London, 1898), 39.

9. CO879/57/573, no. 59, enc. 6; Oct. 9, 1899.

10. A few Britons from the Transvaal crossed northern Swaziland to the Lubombo camp, bringing news of commando locations and the progress of the war.

11. Dyer Macebo reported that the king was very ill, “vomiting blood,” and that “with the power given to him by the South African Republic, has begun to kill in the country.” CO879/64/634, no. 153, enc.; Dec. 23, 1899.
12. CO879/66/644, no. 54, enc.; Mar. 21, 1900.
13. CO879/66/644, no. 273, enc. 1; Mar. 26, 1900.
14. CO879/68/657, no. 254, enc.; May 24, 1900. Dinizulu informed Gibson that “Uzibokwana, Unomahebehebe, Umkonjwa and four women” were put to death but did not implicate the queen-regent.
15. DO119/572, June 4, 1900.
16. CO879/71/668, no. 101; Sept. 20, 1901. Smuts stated that the queen-regent “knowing the antecedents of some . . . of the force, she does not recognize and look up to them as British troops.”
17. CO879/70/663, no. 157, enc. 1; Sept. 4, 1900.
18. Louis Botha later became commandant-general of the Republic’s forces and, after civilian government was restored to the Transvaal, became the first prime minister of the British colony.
19. CO879/72/669, no. 122, enc.; July 16, 1901. The correspondence was included in documents captured by the British and translated for the Colonial Office.
20. CO879/72/669, no. 122, enc.; July 29, 1901.
21. CO879/72/669, no. 122, enc. 4; Aug. 18, 1901.
22. CO879/71/666, no. 45, enc.; Apr. 16, 1901.
23. War Office Intelligence, *Military Notes*, 40.
24. CO879/68/657, no. 47, enc.; Apr. 18, 1900.
25. CO879/70/663, no. 262, enc.; Nov. 3, 1900.
26. CO879/70/663, no. 166; Nov. 3, 1900.
27. R. W. Brant and W. Maycock, *British and Foreign State Papers 1901–1902*, vol. 95 (London, 1905), 432.

## CHAPTER 12

1. CO879/78/705, no. 7, enc.; Aug. 29, 1902.
2. Swazi males committed for offenses were kept occupied not only in public works but also as domestic help for European staff.
3. Martial law was withdrawn in the Transvaal on November 15, 1902, and Milner moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg to establish a civilian administration.
4. CO879/74/682, no. 433; Apr. 8, 1902. Saunders was chief magistrate and native commissioner at Eschowe in Natal.
5. CO879/74/682, no. 764; June 25, 1902.
6. CO879/74/682, no. 1025; July 26, 1902.
7. CO879/78/705, no. 218, enc. 3; Sept. 2, 1902.
8. CO879/81/729, no. 2, enc. 2; Mar. 3, 1903.
9. CO879/81/729, no. 3, enc.; Mar. 7, 1903.
10. CO879/81/729, no. 3, enc.; June 18, 1903.
11. President Kruger died in Switzerland on July 14, 1904.
12. CO879/81/729, no. 10; Jan. 18, 1904.
13. CO879/81/729, no. 15; Oct. 17, 1904.
14. Rubie, “Swaziland Concessions Report.”

15. CO291/57/445; July 11, 1903.
16. J. F. Rubie died before the commission completed its work and was replaced by A. G. Morice. Gilfillan was assistant surveyor general for the Transvaal, and Scott had served in Swaziland in various roles. J. C. Krogh, the former Republic's special commissioner, was invited to join the concessions team later on, and did so.
17. J. Smuts, *Swaziland Concessions Commission Report as to Expropriation of Rights*, Appendix G: July 7, 1905 (London, 1906), 195–203.
18. J. Smuts, *Report of the Detailed Decisions of the Swaziland Concessions Commission*, relative to boundaries, registration of servitudes, periods of enjoyment, etc. in respect of land, grazing, timber, and mineral concessions (Pretoria, 1908).
19. *Ibid.*, 4.
20. George Grey was a younger brother of Lord Grey, who held the post of cabinet secretary in the British government. An appreciation of his work in Swaziland, written by R. T. Coryndon, appears in a privately printed pamphlet: Sir Alfred Pease, ed., *Some Account of George Grey and his Work in Africa* (London, 1914).
21. CO879/96/890, no. 24, enc. 1; Nov. 16, 1907.
22. Grey, *Report*, CO417/469/7; Dec. 5, 1908. Also a supplementary report, Dec. 7, 1908.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Coryndon, in his later appreciation, does not refer to Grey's claim, stating that "his mission received from the first the sympathy and generally the support of the concessionaires." Pease, *Some Account*, 90.
25. The 1904 census was rudimentary and not reliable.
26. Pease, *Some Account*, 8.

## CHAPTER 13

1. The petition is filed in SwA. J138/05.
2. SwA. J138/05, enc.; July 13, 1905.
3. *Ibid.*
4. SwA. J138/05, enc.; July 10, 1905.
5. *Ibid.*
6. CO879/88/779, no. 91; Aug. 21, 1905.
7. CO879/88/729, no. 14; July 21, 1904.
8. G. Lagden, *Report of the South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903–1905*. DO119/752, 1905.
9. Miller's evidence (Oct. 6, 1904) is given on pp. 557–601 of the Lagden *Report*.
10. The constituent British colonies and territories were asked for their reaction to the Native College proposal. The Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Basutoland, and Southern Rhodesia supported it with reservations; Natal and Bechuanaland were negative. Swaziland was not asked.
11. CO417/440, no. 261; Apr. 8, 1907.
12. CO417/440 (Telegram); Jan. 9, 1908.
13. A good account of Coryndon's work in Swaziland is given in C. P. Youé,

“The African Career of Robert T. Coryndon” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dalhousie University, 1978).

14. The district officer at Mankayane reported: “I would like to bring to your notice the great assistance Chief Mboziswa has rendered in the collection of tax.” SwA. 19/07/1141; Sept. 1907.

15. In October 1898, during the Bhunu crisis, a protocol was added to the 1894 Convention, withdrawing Swazi jurisdiction from ten categories of crime, ranging from witchcraft to murder.

16. CO879/81/729, no. 60, enc.; Sept. 17, 1906.

17. CO417/440, no. 437; June 3, 1907.

18. SwA. J138/05; Jan. 30, 1905.

19. CO879/81/729, no. 47; May 14, 1906.

## CHAPTER 14

1. Chiefs from Basutoland and Bechuanaland had already been to England to salute the new king, Edward VII.

2. Enraght-Moony requested funds from the High Commission to pay informers: SwA. J38/04; Aug. 4, 1904. The assistant commissioner at Lubombo passed on reports from spies: SwA. 19/07/1141; May 1907. Chief Selele kept Marwick informed of what was discussed at meetings of the Swazi council.

3. Mordaunt thought Malunge’s appointment as acting head of the kingdom would be good for the country, but Miller and Forbes sided with Coryndon in opposing it.

4. Josiah and Nehemiah Vilakazi were sons of Levi Vilakazi, chief of the Makhamba mission. Josiah took over from Alpheus Nkosi as secretary to the Swazi nation, a position he held for almost twenty-five years. A courtly and diplomatic negotiator, he never won the trust of the British administration. On his father’s death in 1898, he succeeded to the chieftainship.

5. SwA. DO119/814; Dec. 21, 1907.

6. CO879/96/890, no. 7; Aug. 22, 1907.

7. SwA. DO119/814; Dec. 21, 1907.

8. SwA. J105/06; May 14, 1906.

9. SwA. J105/06; July 17, 1906.

10. CO879/81/729, no. 60, enc.; Sept. 14, 1906.

11. *Ibid.*

12. CO879/81/729, no. 60, enc.; Sept. 17, 1906.

13. SwA. J105/06; Sept. 1, 1906.

14. CO879/81/729, no. 61, enc.; Sept. 20, 1906.

15. CO879/81/729, no. 61; Oct. 29, 1906.

16. SwA. 45/07/640; May 16, 1907.

17. SwA. 45/07/2121; Dec. 7, 1907.

18. SwA. DO8/12; Jan. 6, 1908.

19. SwA. DO9/85; enc.; May 14, 1909.

20. SwA. 45/07/640; May 13, 1907.

21. SwA. 45/07/640; June 7, 1907.

22. SwA. 45/07/640, enc.; June 6, 1907.

23. SwA. 45/07/640; June 17, 1907.

24. SwA. 45/07/640; Aug. 14, 1907.
25. SwA. 45/07/640; Aug. 17, 1907.
26. SwA. 45/07/640; Aug. 23, 1907.
27. SwA. 45/07/640; Nov. 19, 1907. Nor was the Colonial Office consulted; Milner advised the colonial secretary after issuing the proclamation.
28. SwA. 45/07/640; enc.; Mar. 7, 1908.
29. Malunge and J. Vilakazi came the next day to see the documents. "I showed them the documents, the *Bona Fides* of which they did not dispute," Honey informed the High Commission; "Malunge did not exhibit much interest in the contents of the deeds." CO879/96/890, no. 57, enc. 2; June 12, 1908.
30. SwA. 45/07/640; Oct. 12, 1907.
31. SwA. 45/07/640; Nov. 23, 1907.
32. Marwick's endorsement of the Swazi position on the crown lands is given in his handwritten manuscript "The Attitude of the Swazi," 59–62. SwA. RSC 591/30; Sept. 27, 1955.
33. SwA. 45/07/640; Nov. 21, 1907.
34. CO879/96/890, no. 43; Mar. 30, 1908.
35. CO879/96/890, no. 48; May 6, 1908.

## CHAPTER 15

1. CO879/96/890, no. 42; Mar. 6, 1908.
2. CO879/97/897, no. 82; May 8, 1908.
3. CO879/100/927, no. 19, enc. 1; Jan. 12, 1909.
4. SwA. RCS 12/09; Jan. 15, 1909.
5. CO879/100/927, no. 101, enc.; May 22, 1909.
6. CO417/529 (Private); Feb. 21, 1913.
7. P. Scott, "Land Policy and the Native Population of Swaziland," *Geography Journal* 117, no. 4, (1951).
8. Coryndon was recommended for the resident commissioner's post in Nyasaland but was rejected by the Colonial Office because it was said he could not manage finances.
9. CO417/470, no. 331, enc.; May 22, 1909.
10. SwA. RCS 178/12; May 13, 1912.
11. CO417/457, no. 616, enc.; July 27, 1908.
12. CO417/502, no. 289, enc.; May 8, 1911.
13. CO417/502, no. 710; Oct. 18, 1911.
14. CO417/502, no. 710; Oct. 30, 1911.
15. Labotsibeni's expense account showed modest allowances to each of her three children and to Sobhuza's mother, Lomawa, and to the council secretary, Josiah Vilakazi.
16. CO417/516, no. 16; Jan. 8, 1912.
17. CO417/516, no. 195; May 18, 1912.
18. CO417/516, no. 195; Apr. 3, 1912.
19. Labotsibeni did not want to add to the wealth or influence of chiefs by giving them more land outside the reserves.
20. CO417/529, no. 463, enc.; June 18, 1913.
21. CO417/529, no. 788, enc.; Nov. 6, 1913.

22. Gladstone did prepare a draft proclamation forbidding the sale of concession lands to the Swazi, but the colonial secretary rejected it, calling it a “drastic measure,” more restrictive than the policy elsewhere in southern Africa except the Orange Free State.
23. CO417/546 (Confidential); July 9, 1914.
24. Three South African recruiting agencies were operating in Swaziland at the time.
25. CO416/546 (Confidential); July 9, 1914.
26. CO416/546, no. 978; Nov. 21, 1914.
27. CO416/546, no. 1056; Dec. 30, 1914.

## CHAPTER 16

1. CO417/546, enc. 1; Dec. 6, 1913.
2. CO417/581, no. 42; Jan. 29, 1916.
3. Honey took office as resident commissioner on January 1, 1917. His salary was £1,200 a year with an expense allowance of £300.
4. Coryndon had set up a “land-purchase fund” separately from the “national fund” and all collections from Swazis, excluding taxes and other officially imposed levies, were placed in these two accounts, as appropriate.
5. CO417/608, no. 581; Sept. 30, 1918.
6. Lomvanzi was accompanied by Chiefs Mabusu and Zwane.
7. *Abantu Batho*, Mar. 11, 1914.
8. For an extended study of Swazi labor involvement with South Africa, and the interconnection between chiefs and mine owners and agents, see Jonathan Crush, *The Struggle for Swazi Labour, 1890–1920* (Kingston, 1987).
9. SwA. RCS 186/18, enc.; Jan. 13, 1918.
10. CO417/581, no. 573; Aug. 19, 1916.
11. SwA. (File) 578/16, Annual Report; 1917.
12. Problems in recruiting forced the early disbanding of the labor battalion.
13. CO417/594, no. 787, enc.; Dec. 5, 1917.
14. Maintenance costs were a major problem because summer rains and overflowing rivers washed away roads and bridges.
15. CO417/594 (Private); Sept. 19, 1918.
16. CO417/625 (Confidential); Mar. 5, 1920.
17. Two branches of the Swaziland Farmers’ Association existed, the north predominantly British and the south with a large Boer majority.
18. During the early stages of east coast fever, both Pretoria and Lourenco Marques placed rigid restrictions on the movement of cattle and cattle products out of Swaziland into their territories. After the disease was brought under control, the restrictions remained in place, despite the administration’s protests and the intervention of the High Commission.
19. CO417/667, no. 628; June 16, 1921.
20. CO417/625 (Confidential); Feb. 27, 1919.
21. SwA. RCS 167/21; Apr. 26, 1921.
22. CO417/625, enc.; Jan. 15, 1919.
23. The delegation to Cape Town included nine chiefs and Sobhuza, with Honey and Gilson representing the administration.



24. The ten signatories were: Labotsibeni, Lomawa, Lomvanzi, Logcogco, Sigula Nkosi, Mandada Mterwa, Colo Nkambule, Msunduka Nkosi, Jokovu Nkosi, and Josiah Vilakazi as secretary.

25. SwA. RCS 718/14; Oct. 19–20, 1914.

26. *Ibid.*

27. CO417/566; Jan. 10, 1915. Lomvanzi was acknowledged as prince-regent in 1915 and given a stipend by the administration but carried no weight in the Swazi establishment.

28. CO417/643, no. 374; May 5, 1920.

29. SwA. RCS 144/18, Annual Report; 1917–18.

30. CO417/625, no. 205, enc.; Jan. 22, 1919.

31. Sobhuza reached Standard VII at Lovedale, comparable to completing junior high school.

32. CO417/684, no. 33, enc.; Jan. 12, 1922.

33. Sobhuza II's accession to the kingship brought to an end the regency headed by his grandmother, Labotsibeni. She died at Zombodze and was buried there on December 6, 1925. The resident commissioner reported that "she continued to the end, and notwithstanding her bad health, to take a keen interest in the affairs of her people." DO9, vol. I, no. 632, Dec. 11, 1925.

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