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"Uyadela wen' osulapho!"

AbaQulusi in and around the
Anglo-Boer South African War 1899-1902

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- Ben Khumalo - Seegelken -

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abaseyukuphinde
bavivele ukuyolwa izimpi

nor ever again be trained
for war

und sie werden nicht mehr lernen,
Kriege zu führen

en hulle sal nie meer leer
om oorlog te maak nie

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0. Foreword

1. Introduction

"Anglo-Boer War" - "South African War"

It is not uncommon that one and the same event be named differently by different interest-groups - even at one and the same time.

The operation commonly known as "the Anglo-Boer War", "die tweede Vryheidsoorlog", "impi yamaBhunu namaNgisi", "der Burenkrieg", has - for almost a century now - been in the mind of historians, analysts and commentators and has been dealt with from a variety of angles with the result that a somehow detailed and reliable account can in the meantime be found.

Which of the many names has - in the meantime - gained such acceptability that it can be regarded as being the most appropriate? I prefer the term "Anglo-Boer South African War".

Generations of writers have - up to recently - upheld the erroneous claim that the military operations between 1899 and 1902 in this part of the world have merely been a "white man's war", and have - by so doing - deliberately overlooked "the fact of a great deal of involvement" and participation by blacks (African, Coloured and Indian people) in that conflict.

The war was not simply a clash between British and Boer forces on South African soil. It was a war of ideals and visions, and men and women of many nations sailed to Africa to take up arms or serve in ancillary roles.

Fighting on the side of the Boers were many nations - among them French, Germans, Italians, Hollanders, Russians and the Americans of the Irish Brigade, while the British brought in troops from the Colonies - Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Critical approach and unbiased research have in recent years brought forward invaluable contributions towards authentic and more reliable historical recording: Bill Nasson in his recent publication highlights "the relationship between warfare and the black societies" who "endured and supported" that war "with their human and material resources". He points out:

"... everyday-life for peasants, workers and other groups of people was often deeply affected by the challenges or pressures of the war, depending on whether they faced shortages, experienced invasion or seized market opportunities to make money by providing essential supplies."

Sources for historical research have always been holding the details in store needed in our discussion today:

*Every slope, hill, valley or stream -
Every town, historical building, battlefield and memorial has a
fascinating tale to tell, an event to commemorate, a poignant
memory to recall.*

The black societies were no mere piece of scenery incapable even of giving witness on an earthquake of such vigour as this war had been! That war indeed had a significant impact on their lives - "indeed sufficient for it to be termed South African War, to reflect the reality of a war of South African society.

1.2 AbaQulusi - "Ostriches and Strategists"

Studies having - to a large extent - already been made on Black involvement and participation in general and the role of African, Coloured and Indian people in particular, my contribution today will bear the title "Uyadela wen' osulapho!" - the cry of envy by an advancing Zulu warrior to the comrades ahead of him, encouraging and urging them (in spite of them being already wounded) to carry on the fight. My contribution will concentrate merely on that qualitatively small section of the African inhabitants of the region lying roughly between the oPhongolo, uMzinyathi and iMfolozi Rivers - the region of eBaQulusini - once renamed to "Nieuwe Republiek", later part of the "Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek", the "Transvaal", later part of the British colony being then named "Northern Natal"; today part of the Province of "KwaZulu-Natal" with the towns of Vryheid, Utrecht and eDumbe (= `Paulpietersburg`) as points of orientation.

Notes compiled during research-tours on oral history since 1996 will hopefully throw some light into the issues underlying the role played by abaQulusi - the inhabitants of eBaQulusini - in "keeping British imperial and Boer republican forces in the field" in the period under review.

AbaQulusi. Who are they? Who were they?

Linguists and orators name them:

“Inqaba kutholwa!
Isidindi somtshiki!”

what would - more or less - mean:

“Erheblich schwer aufzuspüren!
Büschel von gewöhnlichem Gras!”

„Extremely difficult to find!
Tuft of common grass!”

The word “ukuqulusa” means “remaining exposed whilst believing oneself to be under cover”; thence the praise-poem on them:

“Bathi bacashile;
kanti baqulusile!”

“... wöhnen sich im sicheren Versteck;
dabei liegen sie völlig in Sicht!”

„... believe themselves under cover;
they actually are but wholly exposed!”

“Ostriches! Izintshe!” was the opinion of a researcher on South African history on hearing this description. The quest for being out of reach by invaders is adequately expressed in the comparison to that familiar bird in Africa, the ostrich.

I presume it would be of interest - for a moment - to look back on some intervals in the short history of eBaQulusi in the period under review:

Jeff Guy in his outstanding record, “The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom”, gives a concise account on the origin and the socio-political system in eBaQulusini prior to the outbreak of the military conflict today known as the Anglo-Boer South African War:

In the region around Hlobane a recruiting point and a royal centre of influence for the then still developing Zulu Kingdom had to be established round about 1820. King Shaka kaSenzangakhona kaJama wakwaZulu sent Nhlaka Mdlalose to ascertain that the venture goes underway.

This “ikhanda! (as such royal centres of influence were called) was named eBaQulusini. It was placed in the charge of a senior, female member of the Zulu lineage, Mnkabayi kaJama wakwaZulu, daughter of King Shaka’s grandfather, Jama kaNdaba wakwaZulu.

The people - of different clan origins - who were attached to this royal homestead as officers tended in time to establish their private homesteads in the vicinity, and others were sent by the king to settle

in this area. By the time King Cetshwayo kaMpande kaSenzangakhona kaJama wakwaZulu came to the Zulu throne in 1872, they numbered thousands.

AbaQulusi were not drafted into the conventional regiments ("amabutho") but fought as a royal section, and they were not represented in the king's council by any sort of "umnumzane", because they represented the power of the Zulu royal house, not a pre-Shakan clan. AbaQulusi were in the charge of "izinduna", the leading ones being important men within the nation, including -some generations later - Sikhobobo wakwaSibiya and Mahubulwana.

Almost 30 years since King Cetshwayo kaMpande kaSenzangakhona came to the Zulu throne, descendants of Mkhosana kaZangwana wakwaZungu, the adviser who had accompanied King Cetshwayo to London and into exile and returned to "Zululand" as his emissary, (his descendants) had established homesteads of remarkable size and high esteem - "KwaBamb'elentulo", "eMeveni", KwaMngani", to mention but a few - in the landscape of KwaMthashana and KwaNgenetsheni.

By the outbreak of the military conflict today known as the Anglo-Boer South African War 1899, abaqulusi had - among other drastic changes - seen and endured "loss of territory" in grand manner. Nicholas Hope in his excellent work on King Solomon, "To Bind the Nation", recalls:

"Large tracts (of land) had fallen into the hands of absentee landlords." (These engaged in what became known as "Kafferboerdery" or - as the abaqulusi themselves called it "ukukhonza eBhunwini", "ukungena/ukusebenza iplazi", "ukushada neBhunu" = to concede to life-long servitude to a Boer). "Squatters" and "labour tenants" had become the only status of residence abaqulusi could acquire in the region that was once their own.

The war regulations of the Boer Republics simply decreed that all male inhabitants between the ages of 16 and 60 were liable for military service, with no stipulation that such mobilisation be restricted only to white `burghers´. ... In the "Transvaal" (eBaQulusini was then part of the "Transvaal"), sweeping martial laws of the later 1890s laid down that Africans could be commandeered for labour service. ... Of course, both Boer states (the Transvaal and the Orange Free State) also had laws, which strictly prohibited Africans from bearing firearms, thereby limiting any mobilisation to the level of non-combatant. (Nasson)

The age-group of male inhabitants liable for military service at the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer South African War in eBaQulusini 1899 comprised of men of the "amabutho" (= age-regiments) sworn in under King Cetshwayo kaMpande between 1873 and 1879

- o the regiments iNgobamakhosi, uVe, uFalaza (omncane nomdala) -

as well as the regiments sworn in under King Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo kaMpande in 1866 and 1888

- o the regiments iMbokod'ebomvu, uFelaphakathi and uDakwa.

Eileen Krige, "The Social Systems of the Zulus", provides some orientation as to the age-groups that witnessed the political changes and military conflicts under discussion.

1.3 Collective Memory and Oratory

Historians, analysts and commentators relying mainly on libraries, archives and encyclopaediae have - for a change - to learn walking on foot to those sources of information and knowledge Africa (and not only Africa!) has always known and treasured: sources of oral history.

Bill Nasson, "Uyadela wen' osulapho!", Nicholas Hope, "To Bind the Nation. Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu Nationalism" and Jeff Guy, "The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom" have in research and presentation of their outstanding contributions to recording and preserving the heritage of the peoples of Southern Africa - not only displayed great competence in consulting written sources of information and knowledge; they have taken a laudable step further in throwing light into the events of our immediate past by posing questions and addressing issues hitherto regarded as peripheral if not irrelevant. Through them I learn 'walking on foot', 'posing questions' and 'listening' to slopes, hills, valleys and streams telling their tales.

Through interviews on individual life-history with a sample of descendants of war-survivors in eBaQulusini over an extended period of time, I hope to be able to take up the line and enable interested persons today to find out and hopefully realise to what extent and on what reason the African peasants in that part of the country participated at and were involved in the military conflict of that time. We could - together - learn in view of conflicts facing us today.

Eloquent as they always have been, and being uniquely gifted in thoughtful use of word and tone, the abaQulusi have left us an archive of immeasurable size and invaluable wealth behind. Explore it with me!

2 "Uyadela wen' osulapho!"

For his recent publication on Black participation in the Anglo-Boer South African War 1899-1902 Bill Nasson, Professor and Head of the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town, chose the title, "Uyadela wen' osulapho!", which is a cry of envy by an advancing Zulu warrior to the comrades ahead of him, encouraging and urging them - in spite of them being already wounded - to carry on the fight. I thank Bill Nasson for his work.

Survivors of the military conflict under discussion narrate the episodes and recall words of wisdom, hymns and chants based on those "severe losses as a result of military operations demolishing their livelihoods and blighting their future."

Bill Nasson sums up: "Theirs was a war for survival".

Mentioning names of persons, mountains and valleys, descendants of survivors recite idiomatic expressions, sing the tunes and tales of woe and narrate what came to pass - almost a hundred years ever since then:

2.1. Casualties

2.1.1 uMlazana kaManzini wakwaZungu kwaMthashana

"Mlazana, ... was iNgobamakhosi" a today 80-year old granddaughter recounts: "Troops of Boers that used to befall and loot the region of KwaMthashana, eMakhwabi up to eMahloni and eNtabamhlophe those years, were reported to being once more on their tour.

"Mlazana refused this time to run for his life - as everybody used to on such occasions - (He told everybody, he would not go) to hide in the gorges and caves (at KwaMatshekazi) anymore.

"... He - a veteran of the Battle of Hlobane - with scars and splinters of bullets in his limbs - having meanwhile lost eye-sight (certainly not of old-age!), leaning on a stick for support - called in dismay:

 ` Sengwayo! ... No! ... No! No! Never again! How long should this still carry on? Being hunted for, haunted at, pursued! What wrong have we done?

 No! I'm not running away! No longer! I'm not going to hide; not in the caves anymore! Not a bit shall I ever move from here! Let them come; I'm waiting! ... Cetshwayo!´

"They arrived. The Boers! Armed.

They harassed him,

 insulted him,

 ill-treated him,

 pushed and dragged him all over the yard,

 tortured him,

 stuck and gouged his eyes out,

 slained him and cut his head off,

 tore his body into pieces,

then they skewered parts of his body and pinned them on the poles at the cattle-kraal, then they threw parts of his body into the grain-stores - some in the drinking water down the stream iNgulana.

"When the rest returned from their hiding-place, they found the homestead in ruins - having been devastated. The cattle had been driven away. A few of the remainder lied maimed, bleeding and flinching all over the yard; some were already dead. ... Blood ... blood everywhere! ... (Actually) a battle-field after everything that had not

fled for life had been butchered so cruelly. A nasty scene! One shivers over it up to this day!"

This Zungu clan of "KwaBamb'elentulo" on the banks of iNgulana (today called "Balladonespruit"), civilians - "non-combatant peasants" - were to see yet more havoc and endure severe losses as the "Anglo-Boer War" (?) swept across.

2.1.2 "Kafferboerderei" and "imali yezipokwe"

Magqugqumela kaMlazana wakwaZungu of the homestead „KwaBamb'elentulo" in KwaMthashana on the banks of iNgulana (today called "Balladonespruit") served in his later years after the end of the war 1902 up to about 1928 on horse-back as an "iphoyisa" (a so-called "native constable", toiling as "messenger boy", "scout" and some sort of a "human hunting dog" in one person). He was about 40 years of age when the war broke out - age-regiment "uFelaphakathi".

Together with a fellow "iphoyisa" of his age, Hlimbithwa Xhakaza of Mbizankulu under the slopes of Mzinyana, Magqugqumela Zungu drove herds of cattle to far-away grazing-grounds and had not been home for a long time already when Mlazana, his very father, was brutally murdered. The cattle he was catering for belonged to a certain "Shambokwe" (= sjambok!) - "umnumzana", as the Boers insisted to be addressed those days.

Such "caretakers of livestock and other property of the burghers on commando" seldom received any remuneration or acknowledgement, well of course food and clothing. Magqugqumela Zungu and Hlimbithwa Xhakaza counted themselves lucky for have escaped the wave of massacre sweeping across eBaQulusini those times and the evictions that were effected shortly after those "terrible times" were believed to be overcome. As "labour tenants", whose surviving children and wives had likewise to meet domestic, agricultural and pastoral needs of "umnumzana" and his household, Magqugqumela Zungu and Hlimbithwa Xhakaza survived the "white man's war" but remained in bondage as stepping-stone for others.

Those who - like Vovo kaMlazana Zungu of the homestead "eMeveni" likewise in KwaMthashana, eBaQulusini - had laboured for absentee landlords (= Kafferboerderei) went through similar blows.

Rebellious tenants who had grabbed Boer stock or who had taken over farms to build new homes, cultivate crops and graze cattle, had a brief tenure. ... returning Boers re-took land.

Few Africans who had sustained grievous war losses received any compensation, and that which came amounted to a crumb or two.

Poverty and near-starvation gripped displaced African communities in many parts of the ex-Boer republics. Most workers ... were victimised by farmers for their wartime loyalty to the British, while others ended up jobless as post-war economic depression hit parts of the country.

The post-war legend of "imali yezipokwe" (= wealth derived from grave-treasures") originates from the notion of a personal servant to a Boer landlord who would even be "given protective custody of young Boer children for lengthy war-time periods, with the result that when they eventually returned to their families they had become partially 'Africanised'. Such personal servants would also take on "the risky responsibility of assisting rural Boer families to slip the advancing British net and escape incarceration in concentration camps." Most of these personal servants - like a certain "Piti" - are believed to be lying buried on deserted ruins of farm-houses in KwaMthashana as 'watchmen' on riches their masters had to leave behind.

2.1.4 armed response

Whilst the interviewed descendants know of no incident of armed response comparable to similar operations in iSandlwana or Hlobane two decades before, the melancholy in the words and the tune of inkondlo yabaQulusi (= their favourable hymn) seems to leave such an impression on them, one would - for a moment - imagine, they themselves composed and sang it for the first time a century ago:

*"Sangena ngomnyama,
ngomnyama KwaMthashana!"
"Ziphi? Naziya!
Uyamqal' okaNdaba!"*

*"Wir zogen ein in der Dämmerung,
in der Dämmerung in Mthashana!"
„Wo sind sie? Da sind sie!
.... provoziert Seine Majestät!"*

*„We pulled in at dawn/dusk,
At dawn/dusk in Mthashana!"
"Where are they? There are they!
... teasing His Majesty!"*

In his novel, "The Boer War", Thomas Pakenham writes on that incident the abaQulusi are commemorating in their "inkondlo" - writing, however, not without that "great artistry" characteristic of "brilliantly written" war-stories for "easy reading":

" Through the war, the meekness of the African majority had been one of the most striking features. None of the peoples who had been worsted in the recent native wars -... - had seized their opportunity to pay off old scores and recover lost territory. ... the Africans had behaved with unexpected restraint. This was all the more surprising, given the way they

had been treated by the Boers, who had cheerfully looted their cattle, flogged and murdered those who helped the British, and even massacred the whole civilian population of a Transvaal village, Modderfontein.

"However, it was now apparent that the natives were stirring. The worm had turned. ... And, in May, a most alarming episode occurred at Holkrantz, near Vryheid, in a part of Zululand annexed by the Transvaal.

"(King Dinuzulu) had protested repeatedly to the British against cattle raids and murders by Boer commandos. The British had done nothing. Recently, the Boers had taken the cattle, burned the kraals, and driven out the women and children of a Zulu tribe, whose Chief was called Sikhobobo (= Sikhobobo). The Boer claimed this was a just punishment for the tribe's helping the British as scouts and guides. (Sikhobobo) claimed that he owed first allegiance to (King Dinuzulu) ... and had asked for his assistance. Potgieter, the local field cornet, then sent an insulting message to (Sikhobobo), read out in front of the men of the tribe: `That (Sikhobobo) and his people were no better than fowl-lice and challenging him to come to Holkrantz and retake his cattle before they were all consumed.´ (Sikhobobo) took up the challenge in traditional Zulu fashion.

"That night, 6 May (1902), his impis, armed with guns and assegais, attacked Potgieter, killed fifty-six Boers, wounded three more, and recaptured 380 cattle, at a loss to his own force of fifty-two killed and forty-eight wounded. ...

"Thus, the Transvaal was now threatened from two sides: the natives were stirring, and the(Boer) women and children were correspondingly vulnerable, just when their men-folk were least able to protect them. These commandos - "bitter-einders" they called themselves - were a dwindling band, facing extinction as a military force. This was how Botha had summed up the situation in the Transvaal in early May; Acting President Burger, and even General De la Rey, agreed. `Fight to the bitter end?´ asked De la Rey,. `Do you say that? But has the bitter end not come?´"

AbaQulusi recall the decisive encounter with the Bitter-einders at KwaMthashana (= "Holkrantz") not without grief; the descendants of the Bitter-einders as well.

2.2 Survivors

Heads of homesteads and their descendants retrospectively ascribe the fortune of having survived to their having been successful in "simply doing nothing!" Yet others escaped being killed exactly by adhering to

the one or the other side of the conflict-spectrum and by not resisting being picked for compulsory duty.

2.2.1 domestic chores and sexual services

Washerwomen and cooks were not the only domestic servants under command; women generally named "Aia!" were charged with baby-sitting and intimate care including even breastfeeding. Hardly a single homestead in the whole area of eBaQulusini did not have one or some of their women having provided services of such intimate nature to Boer commandos and their families during the war.

Khelestina Mhlungu, sister to Mahhuku Nyandeni of KwaNgenetsheni, would later after the end of that war - as an old-aged head of a big clan - reach for her breast, pointing at it, narrate to her grandchildren, repeating: "Babencela la, nibabona-nje sebezigqaja! ... Baze balishiye, badele!" („They used to suck here! Don't mind them looking down upon us! ... Up to satisfaction did they drink; until they couldn't anymore!").

Reports of abaQulusi women "teeming around camps to provide sexual services" - ukungogisa (= "... for half a crown!") - to soldiers, followed by a series of unplanned pregnancies and an outbreak of venereal disease - ugcusula - constitute the major part of interviews on life-history with female survivors and their descendants.

"... In which homestead would one not come across amavezandlebe (children not of both married parents - an impolite word for them) with names like: uMntukaziwa (the person unknown), uNdodenjani (what kind of man is this?) ... `Lifil' izwe!´ (´Cry, the beloved country!´)"

The somewhat amusing praise-name given to Nomashishi kaGxobela wakwaMasondo hints on a mode of survival as provider of sexual services that must at least have been pretty adventurous. His friends at old age used to recall and humorously chant at him:

"Ikat' eleswel' indoda
laye layokhwelwa kwaMthashana!"

"(Rollige) Katze ohne männlichen Partner
bis sie (zufriedenstellend) gedeckt/beschält wurde in
Mthashana!"

„(Cool/Sexy) cat wanting/lacking a mate
hence at last (satisfactorily) covered at Mthashana!"

On festivities in eNdumakude at the homestead of the Mthethwa younger men used to be amused at the pleasure with which the very few survivors of compulsory labour at war recalled particular instances.

Salatiyela kaMlazana wakwaZungu of "KwaBamb'elentulo", age-regiment "uDakwa", the "Wesleyan preacher", would find it "embarrassing" when his elder brother - one age-regiment older ("uFelaphakathi") - simply divulged "isifuba" (= "our top secrets") similar to Nomashishi's amusing reminiscences, asking (rhetorically): "Who doesn't know of these things? Who are you trying to please? ... Do you expect me to applaud at that?"

He was not the only one of his age to live with memories he was reluctant to ever share with anybody else.

2.2.2 "oS'qhath'amatomu!"

Having dealt intensively with horses in precarious situations demanding intuition and alertness, Nhlangula Magwaza from below the slopes of iNtshenteka remained - due to endured ill-treatment and overworking - for the rest of his life mentally disturbed, playing through over and over again the scene of many restless horses on his left and his right having to be calmed down and led out of swamp terrain:

He would - for hours - be moving around on the yard whilst everybody else is conversing at a sip of beer in a cool hut or under a tree; would gesticulate, whisper, sigh, kneel down, crawl, ... till he was wet of sweat - fatigued, with a hanging tongue and a non-appealing appearance ...

Nhlangula Magwaza turned to be called "nguS'qhatha-matomu" - a name derived from his intensive handling of (imaginary) horse-reins. During the war, Nhlangula Magwaza was one of those who "accompanied burghers into the field to perform a variety of tasks, such as looking after ammunition supplies, loading rifles, handling horses, preparing food, collecting firewood, and attending to wagons and livestock." They were called agterryers (after-riders or mounted retainers).

In pressing circumstances, ...agterryers not only was to their masters' ammunition reserves and rifle replacement during combat, but also fought alongside them.

... A great gap in our knowledge concerns the identity and lives of individual agterryers. They hardly left

written records of their war service, and the surviving diaries of their masters contain only the most fleeting references.

Bhlinda wakwaKhumalo of eNgome, age-regiment "uPhefeni", would be seen and heard calling jovially and chanting the whole day long:

"Nant' izwi!
Nant' igama!"

"Hier ist ein Wort!
Da ist ein Name!"

„Here is a word!
There is a name!"

Such traumatised survivors with a steep career in that "white man's war" seldom - if ever - received any medical care, let alone then remuneration or compensation of any kind. (vide: "uPhefeni" wakwaNyandeni, uyise kaMancumbana).

2.2.3 "izinhloli nezimpimpi"

Mbazwana Nhlengethwa spoke with disrespect of men of his age who had not fought in that war: "amanina" ("feminine loafers!"), whistling, singing and chanting:

"Zinsizwa, nithini na?
Kumnyam' ehlathin'!
Sengath' angakaphind' okaNdab'
ay'hlomise!"

"Kameraden! Gibt's was Neues?
Düster sieht's aus!
Möge Seine Majestät wieder einmal
Krieg erklären!"

„Comrades! Any news?
We are in a deadlock!
Would His Majesty one more time please
declare war!"

Mbazwana Nhlengethwa had been one of those servants whose skills and reliability as scouts and spies for "infiltration, long-range reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering" earned them a comparatively better status among fellow servants. They were "better fed, better clothed and often regularly remunerated and rewarded for risky accomplishments". Risky accomplishments (uPhefeni wakwaNyandeni recalls):

“Izinhlamvu uzizwa zedlula
zithi: `phrr!´, `phrr!´ »

« Kugel hörst du vorbeisausen
... `phrr!´, `phrr!´ ”

„Bullets. You hear them flying pass,
... `phrr!´, `phrr!´ ”

They had also “to carry out tasks of sabotage which involved a lot of muscle. In the latter guerrilla stages of the war, these included the shifting of trees and boulders to block mountain tracks, the digging up of railway track and the felling of telegraph poles.”

Questions remain:

How did these scouts and spies stand the stress and trauma of the war? Did they have a clear idea of what they and their masters were fighting for?

While we lack the evidence to address such questions adequately, we can make one or two overall observations: one is that scouts and spies, agterryers and others who went to war did so for different reasons. As farm labourers in eBaqulusini some were abruptly commandeered on the basis that service in the field was a form of compulsory duty.

To refuse was to incur floggings, cash fines or the forced eviction of their families from farms. ... desertion (“ukweqa”) could cost life. Commandants regarded them as bound by contract, with no right to withdraw from work or leave service in the field for any reason. Disloyal agterryers were given short shrift if caught: some commandos place `dead or alive´ bounties on the heads of deserters while others vengefully tracked down absconding servants and had them summarily executed.

2.3 Idiomatic expressions

In employing idiomatic expressions to gain information on events in the past, we would like to bear in mind that such idiomatic expressions are - in the true sense of the word - archives and encyclopaediae waiting to be explored. Sibusiso Nyembezi maintains: “The proverbs are a collection of the experiences of a people, experiences some of which have been learned the hard way.”

Such experiences are stored in this special manner, and from generation to generation they are passed on, ever fresh and ever

true. The new experiences of the younger generations are themselves embalmed in this special manner, and in that way the language is enriched more and more.

Looking closer at an idiomatic expression or a proverb (for example the theme of our discussion: "Uyadela wen' osulapho!"), one discovers that idiomatic expressions are, in fact, ordinary everyday words. "Not only that, but they are, ordinary statements."

They cease, however, to be ordinary when people begin to accept them as clever expressions of some "truths", and because of that, give them a place apart.

It is important for us to realise that an expression must be accepted by the people in order to give it the status of a proverb. Such acceptance is not voluntary in that people never go out of their way to popularise an expression voluntarily. They use it because they like it, and because it appeals to them, but the usage is spontaneous. In that way do proverbs arise.

Again, we do not find any people whose special task it is to evolve proverbs. Proverbs are not made in the same way as jokes and riddles. An individual may, quite unwittingly and quite unintentionally, make a statement, which may have a certain appeal to the listeners who will repeat it to others, and in that way an expression becomes part of the privileged utterances of a language.

For an expression to be appealing, the choice of words must be good, and they must aptly describe a given situation. When people use the expression, they feel that no better words could have been chosen to describe the situation.

A variety of proverbs venturing in the interviews on life-history of descendants of war-survivors in eBaQulusini could bring us closer to understanding the dynamics of the situations in which such proverbs used to be employed. Needless to say: These words have their origin and relevance far beyond the confines of eBaQulusini.

2.3.1 "Iqili lidliwa ngamany' amaqili" (A crafty person is `consumed` by other crafty people)

In English: "Set a thief to catch a thief." A crafty person employs cunning to outwit other people. Because he knows the tricks of the trade, he will be able to catch other tricksters.

2.3.2 "Uyow'phemb' ungawothi" (You will kindle it <fire> but you will not warm yourself at it).

During the cold season, it is a common sight to see people light fires in order to warm themselves. Naturally, one taking the trouble to light a fire expects to be able to warm him-/herself

at it, i.e. he or she expects to get a reward for his or her effort. "You will do the work but will not reap the fruits of its labour"

2.3.3 "Ukusuza komnumzane kwesulelwa kumfokazana/ngomfokazana"
(The breaking of wind by the headman is blamed on the commoner)

When children are around and the head of the homestead breaks wind, they are blamed for it. If there is a dog lying nearby, he will be blamed and be immediately driven out for having broken wind. Somebody else must be blamed for it.

"The lowly bears responsibility for the wrongs of those higher in status."

2.3.4 "Amathony' ayathonyana" (The hypnotists hypnotise one another)

This is generally applied to people who are notorious for witchcraft, when they join battle against each other. It also means that good acts beget good acts.

2.3.5 "Uyadela wen' osulapho" (You deserve, indeed, to be envied for being already that far)

This is a cry of envy by an advancing warrior to the comrades ahead of him, encouraging and urging them - in spite of them being wounded - to carry on the fight.

2.4 Hymns and Chants

A sample of tunes, songs, hymns and chants venturing in the interviews on life-history of descendants of war-survivors in eBaQulusini could bring us closer to understanding the dynamics of the situations in which they used to be celebrated:

2.4.1 "Yith' abashokobezi bempi!
Yith' abashokobezi bempi!"

"Wir sind es,
die die treibende Kraft der Schlacht sind!
Wir sind es,
die die treibende Kraft der Schlacht sind!"
„It is we who are the driving force behind (this) battle!
It is we who are the driving force behind (this) battle!"

2.4.2 "Sangena ngomnyama,
ngomnyama KwaMthashana!"
"Ziphi? Naziya!
Uyamqal' okaNdaba!"

"Wir zogen ein in der Dämmerung,

in der Dämmerung in Mthashana!“
„Wo sind sie? Da sind sie!
... provozieren Seine Majestät!“
„We pulled in at dawn/dusk,
at dawn/dusk in Mthashana!“
“Where are they? There are they!
... teasing His Majesty!”

2.4.3 “Sizwa bethi laduma,
laduma, langoqana!”
“Wir hören welche sagen, es habe gedonnert,
gedonnert und gebebt!”
„We hear somebody say, there had been thunder,
thunder and tremor!”

2.4.4 “We maThosh’khomando!
Sixoleleni, nithath’
into yen’ eniy’funayo1
Safa saphela emzini
Yiwo amaThosh’khomand’!”

“Ihr Nacht-und-Nebel-(Taschenlampen)-Kommandos!
Verschont uns und nehmt, wonach ihr sucht!
Wir kommen alle um im Ort
Es sind diese Nach-und-Nebel-Kommandos!”
„You, Torch-Kommandos!
Leave us in peace/ Spare us; take with you
What you are searching for!
We perish - all of us here;
It is the Torch-Kommandos!”

2.4.5. “Hhashi likaNongqay’
Hhashi likaNongqay’
Selasehlula thina!
Nguban’ owath’ indlela
yedlul’ esangwen’?!“
“Molo-molo! Molo-molo!”

“ ‘s Pferd des Wachhauptmanns
‘s Pferd des Wachhauptmanns
drüber sind wir schon weg (... ärgern/wundern
uns lange nicht mehr!)
Wer sagte (= Wo gibt’s denn das, dass),
der Weg am Tor vorbei führt?”

„Horse of the watchman
Horse of the watchman
We no longer bother that much about it
Who (on earth) said (or: What behaviour is that at all?)
the path may (of late) go pass by the gate?”

2.5 Names and Praise-poems

A selection of names and praise-poems (izibongo; izigiyo) venturing in the interviews on life-history of descendants of war-survivors in eBaQulusini could bring us closer to understanding the dynamics of the situations in which they were given and `lived up to´.

2.5.1 uNomaNgisi

A baby-girl would be given such a name. "AmaNgisi" are "the English" (people). The eldest bearers of this name in eBaQulusini were born during or shortly after the Battles of iSandlwana, Hlobane, Nkambule and Ondini ("Ulundi") in 1879.

2.5.2 uSotsha/uNomasotsha

A baby-boy (uSotsha) or a baby-girl (uNomasotsha) would be given such a name. "isotsha/amasotsha" = "soldier/soldiers". The Zulu-Boer encounter at eNcome ("Blood River") in 1838 brought about that orphans and infants since then often receive this or similar names to record the circumstances at birth.

2.5.3 uMpini

A baby-boy would be given such a name.
"impi" = "battle/war", "empini" = "in the battle/ at war".

2.5.4 uSangalane

A baby-boy would be given such a name. "Red maize/mealies" (resorted to only in times of dire need resulting from drought or willingful destruction at war).

2.5.5 "Inkom' enebala!"

Praise-poem for a light-complexioned young woman.

2.5.6 "Ikat' eleswel' indoda laye layokhwelwa kwaMthashana!"

praise-poem to Nomashishi kaGxobela wakwaMasondo:

"(Rollige) Katze ohne männlichen Partner
bis sie (zufriedenstellend) gedeckt/beschält wurde in
Mthashana!"

„(Cool/Sexy) cat wanting/lacking a (male) mate
hence at last (satisfactorily) covered at Mthashana!"

2.6. Records

Written records on the South African War 1899-1902 are available in adequate number and variety of standards:

2.6.1 Reports

2.6.2 Research

NASSON, Bill (1999): South African War 1899-1902.
Arnold. London. 1999

NASSON, Bill (1999): Uyadela Wen' Osulapho.
Black participation in the Anglo-Boer War. Ravan,
Randburg, 1999. (further hints for "Additional Reading"
page 56)

3 Conclusion

A hundred years afterwards we are gathered at the various venues of that military conflict that left many children, women and men mourning. We think back together in order to move from here together in a future for all in a reconciling society:

Legacy

The many children, women and men in eBaQulusini a century ago who endured that "war for survival" we are commemorating these days, lay on our shoulders a legacy urging to be realised. This legacy is:

Masihambisane! Masibuyisane! Masifundisane!

°We ought to leave all wars behind us!

Let us walk together

- from dusk to dawn -

together

- from yesterday to tomorrow. Masihambisane:

Not forgetting any child, woman or man

gone or lost through fire or sword;

Not overlooking any child, woman or man

again facing or taking fire or sword.

Masihambisane.

°We ought to be midwives to a reconciling world today!

Let us join hands and

together

- go between -

walk and talk

with those

again facing and taking fire or sword.

Masibuyisane.

°We could soon be mothers to a reconciled world!

Let us learn together

to sing and dance:
`Never again
should any child, woman or man
go or be lost
through fire or sword! `

Sing and dance with me
till
every child, woman or man
again facing or taking fire or sword
also joins in and sings:
Never again
Should any child, woman or man
go or be lost
through fire or sword! `

Masifundisane.

That is the legacy on our shoulders today.

Vision

I hope. I see it happen: The idiomatic expression "Uyadela wen' osulapho!" undergoes a dramatic change and gains a new meaning, as children, women and men today look back together on the events and operations in eBaQulusini and elsewhere and start competing in words that give courage and in deeds that open new horizons for all, singing and chanting jovially: "Go on! Well done, fellow-peacemaker! Keep it up! ... Uyadela wen' osulapho!"

This will attract our neighbours and nations of the world who were also touched by the bloody events of those years to come streaming to the hills and valleys of eBaQulusini and other venues of commemoration, singing among themselves and with us all:

"Uyadela wen' osulapho!
I wish I could
be where you already are,
fellow-peacemaker!
A hundred years to come
may we all together sing:
Fellow-peacemakers,
how good is it
we left all wars behind.
Uyadela wen' osulapho!"

Ben Khumalo-Seegelken
August 2000