

# THE ANGLO ZULU WAR UNNECESSARILY DESTROYED THE ZULU NATION

By Dr David Glyn-Fox

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Despite the destruction of property and catastrophic loss of life, particularly regarding the Zulu people, the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 did not directly destroy the Zulu nation in itself. However, it was certainly the catalyst for it, due in large part to the partition of Zululand which was enforced upon conclusion of hostilities. This act divided the Zulu people to such an extent that its forces are still with us to this day. It caused civil war and bitter rivalry, turning Zulu against Zulu. It is necessary to follow the brutal conflicts and key characters following the Anglo Zulu War to appreciate why the latter was the springboard for such a telling effect upon the ordinary Zulu.

After the war, Zululand was divided into thirteen separate chiefdoms, handed out to high-ranking Zulu indunas who had capitulated early in the conflict or actually helped the British in some way or another. None of these chiefdoms, or kinglets, was granted to King Cetshwayo, the ruling Zulu monarch at the time, as he was held responsible, erroneously, for the war by both the British and Colonials. The partition of Zululand was instigated by General Sir Garnet Wolseley as part of his plan for the pacification of Zululand. However, this would only become viable after the Zulu King was captured and stripped of his powers. While the King remained at large, he was a rallying point for resistance to British forces. Therefore, this final act was necessary to convince the northern Zulu indunas, amongst others, that further resistance against the British was futile and all were ordered to surrender by 10<sup>th</sup> August 1879 or deemed to be hostile and treated accordingly. By this time anyway, virtually all Zulus had seen enough of war and wished simply to be allowed to return to their homes and continue their pastoral existence. Unfortunately, very few would peacefully achieve this ambition, for soon the country was embroiled in civil war, not helped by Wolseley's aforementioned proclamation that the kingdom was to be divided into thirteen independent chiefdoms, the inheritors of which would be announced at a meeting convened at oNdini for this purpose, to which Zulu dignitaries would be invited.

Although most British troops had left Zululand soon after the battle of Ulundi, there were still enough left for Wolseley to implement his Zululand policy. Lt. Colonel C. M. Clarke was placed in command of a column distilled from the 1<sup>st</sup> Division which Wolseley himself accompanied. This column reoccupied the destroyed Royal homestead at Ulundi and it was from this camp that constant patrols were dispatched to capture the Zulu monarch. A second column formed from the remnants of Wood's disbanded Flying Column was commanded by Lt. Colonel Baker Russell and whose objective was the pacification of northern Zululand, particularly the abaQulusi clan who were fiercely loyal to the Zulu Royal House and who had given Redvers Buller such a perplexing time at Hlobane. While the King was still free, these Royalist factions were thought to be still highly dangerous, this same thinking being applied to the more recent conflict in Iraq, where it was also considered that the capture of Saddam Hussein would quench the spark of further resistance. As we have since discovered to our cost, this was not to be and thus the lesson expressed by the Zulu aftermath was never really learnt. As in Iraq, the Anglo Zulu War itself may have been over, but many thousands more were to dye the earth red with their own blood during the next decade as the Royalist Zulu faction, known as the uSuthu, would clash time and time again with their rivals the Mandlakazi, under Chief Zibebhu kaMapitha.

It is interesting to contemplate the future of Zululand had the Anglo Zulu War never been fought. Obviously, the Zulu power would sooner or later have been broken as more and more whites began to infiltrate South Africa and one wonders how the poor rural Zulu people would have responded to current British firepower. Air strikes by F3 Tornados and Stealth bombers would have seemed like Armageddon to them and we can only be grateful that "the Zulu question" was acted upon in 1879. But in its own way, Armageddon did come to the Zulu people for they suffered terribly after the AngloZulu War and the terror came not from the skies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but largely from their own people shortly after 1879. The question that has to be asked however is that if the Anglo Zulu War had never taken place, would Zibebhu, the leader of the Mandlakazi faction ever have dared to challenge the might of King Cetshwayo's uSuthu's? Probably not, and Zululand would probably have remained much the same for many generations to come. But with the King's removal and the kingdom about to be divided into its thirteen administrative parts because of the Anglo Zulu War, then in a very real way, the conflict with the British was literally responsible for setting in motion the civil strife that was to follow. There is no real way of escaping this daunting probability and it is yet another part of our history where we should hang our heads in shame.

So, what were these thirteen kingdoms that were to be the catalyst for so much unrest? After the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, the British Government gave Wolseley instructions to come up with a settlement that ensured the security of Zululand's British ruled neighbours and with the proviso that this must also avoid an unnecessary expense and the responsibility of direct annexation by the Crown. As aforementioned, this only became possible after King Cetshwayo's capture, thus taking the heart out of the uSuthu faction particularly. Now that the Zulu monarchy was suppressed, the way was paved for implementation of the peace terms, which initially seemed rather lenient to many Zulu, who expected to be punished severely on account of British lives lost during the war. The thirteen kinglets were each placed under a pliant chief appointed by Wolseley. Each chief was carefully selected according to their loyalty towards the British Government, thus ensuring that the Royalist influence could be stifled. As is well known, the Zulu power was based on the amabutho system and by thwarting this (none of the thirteen appointed chiefs commanded anything like the military power of the former Zulu kings) Wolseley calculated that to preserve this new found power, these kinglets were expected to be pro-British and gain favour by reporting any insurgencies to a specially appointed British Resident. Wolseley exerted much pressure on certain chieftains, such as Hamu, the King's brother who defected to the British in March 1879. For example, prior to the King's capture, Wolseley offered Hamu a reward of 5,000 cattle and independent sovereignty over his own district. However, if Hamu did not co-operate fully, the cattle and proposed land grant would be offered to the Swazi. (1) This dangled carrot had the required effect on Hamu's izinduna. This sort of tactic was often more effective than force when initiating peace terms.

Although Wolseley's settlement caused harsh repercussions, he did however understand that the Zulu monarchy and military system were synonymous. He hoped that by deposing the King, abolishing the monarchy and the ibutho military system, he would in one fell swoop bring peace of mind to those on the frontiers of Zululand. He also, by dangling the aforementioned carrot, hoped that the newly raised kinglets would be amenable to collaboration with the British and report any Royalist activities which could then be ruthlessly extinguished before getting out of hand.

The actual divisions of Zululand however, although favourable to the British, were to cause untold problems in the years to come. John Dunn, known as the White Chief of Zululand and King Cetshwayo's erstwhile advisor and confidant and who eventually turned his back on the King and scouted for the British (he was given little choice by the latter) ended up with the largest slice of Zululand in the south of the country, which formed a buffer state between Zululand and Natal. Next to John Dunn's new lands were those of Hlubi Mota Molife, a Tlokwa chieftain who had fought with the British during the Anglo Zulu War. Both these chiefdoms, side by side covered the Natal borders with Zululand. The most able of the Zulu commanders during the war was Zibebhu kaMapitha of the Mandlakazi faction and he was appointed to rule in north western Zululand, the area in fact where the uSuthu or Royalist faction was particularly strong. Zibebhu was also the recipient of a dangled carrot in the form of independent sovereignty to detach him from the Royalist cause. Prince Hamu was given land close to Zibebhu in the north-east on the borders of the Transvaal to provide yet another buffer state to ease the pressure on the Boers. This move was calculated by Wolseley to ensure the suppression of Royalist aspirations in the area.

Between these four buffer states were the mini kingdoms of nine other chiefs who initially were to benefit from Wolseley's settlement. These nine chiefs received their awards because they either defected early from the Royal cause or actually collaborated with the British. One problem that some of these faced however was the fact that they enjoyed no hereditary status in their new areas and making themselves obeyed by their new subjects was an almost unbearable burden in the years to come. (2) It is not difficult to understand why Wolseley's attempt at neutralising Zululand was to cause such strife to the Zulu people. Wolseley in effect, divided Zululand against itself and sparked off long standing feuds between the Zulu monarchy and the more powerful chiefs like Zibebhu. Prince Hamu expected to become King after Cetshwayo was dethroned and sent into exile. Instead, his reward for early defection to the British was to be merely appointed one of the thirteen chiefs, although his Royal umuzi in north western Zululand was said to be of a size suitable for a King. If Hamu was to be disappointed with his "cut of Zululand", others were even more so and the seeds for internecine warfare were soon sown. Another problem with the settlement apart from placing warring factions next to each other was that no provision for containing conflict should it arise had been provided for. It was soon to arise.

The two main factions that developed from the settlement were the Mandlakazi under Zibebhu and supported by Hamu and the fiercely loyal Royalist uSuthu faction under such chiefs as Ndabuko and Shingana. One of the main problems here was that the anti-royalist supporters under Zibebhu and Hamu were to rule over the precise areas where the uSuthu faction was particularly strong, although Wolseley saw it as a means of ensuring that the uSuthu in this region would be wary of promoting

Royal aspirations. Although Wolseley had taken steps to ensure that all the borders with Zululand were protected by buffer states, using compliant chieftains, he had not taken into account how deeply these two factions were alienated from each other. Zibebhu and Hamu however lost little time in harassing the neighbouring uSuthu who were to suffer much ill treatment as a consequence. In May 1880, a uSuthu deputation including both Ndabuko and Shingana arrived in Pietermaritzburg to plead their cause for King Cetshwayo's return from the exile in the Cape. The mission failed, as did a second deputation in April 1882.

Many, particularly white Colonials, believed that if Cetshwayo were to return, the chances were high that he would reconstitute the Zulu army and become a possible threat again to his white neighbours. This he may have done to some extent but only, I believe, to defend himself from his warring Zulu neighbours. It is now well known that the Zulu King tried all means possible to avoid war with the British, but there were some in Natal who fervently supported the view that Cetshwayo was behind much of the troubles in that part of South Africa. With these thoughts in his mind, the British Resident in Zululand, Melmoth Osborn, actively supported the view of the Mandlakazi's and counteracted the uSuthu initiatives. The uSuthu had tried peaceful means to obtain their objectives but it soon transpired that not only were they up against the Mandlakazi, but also the British Resident. It would only be a matter of time before these two main antagonists clashed with each other and it is interesting, if not a little surprising, that Osborn had no armed forces at his disposal with which to keep the warring factions apart. And if this is surprising, Osborn's attitude was even more so, because it was his blank refusal to accept the uSuthu appeals which helped enormously to fan the flames of war. The fact that the uSuthu had been spurned by Osborn was affront enough, but it was also noticed by them that Zibebhu's faction had managed to curry favour with the British Resident.

It is interesting to conjecture at this point that had King Cetshwayo been repatriated with his people at an earlier date, would the future slaughter of countless people have been averted? Would the Mandlakazis have dared to oppose the Royalists at this time? With King Cetshwayo back in the fold earlier, perhaps many more would have rallied to the Royal cause and Zibebhu would have knuckled under. We will probably never know. In antagonism caused by installing the thirteen petty chieftains in such an off-handed manner, Wolseley's famous settlement was already showing more than a few cracks. Many among the uSuthu were clamouring for King Cetshwayo's return and the desperate King himself, hearing of the problems besetting his former kingdom began petitioning his many influential visitors for an audience with Queen Victoria in order to state his case for his restoration. Many of these visitors were very impressed with King Cetshwayo's dignity and sincerity, but this in itself only partially helped his cause. The real reason that the Zulu monarch was granted an audience with the Great White Queen was the stark realisation by the British Colonial Office in London that Wolseley's settlement was rapidly breaking down. Britain wished to avoid direct annexation of Zululand, which was considered not an option, and so it was that the King was permitted to come to England to plead his case.

He stayed at 5 Melbury Road, an imposing building off the Old Brompton Road and crowds flocked to see the King whose warrior hordes had destroyed a British column at Isandlwana. All those who saw him were impressed by his bearing and regal demeanour and despite the slaughter of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment at Isandlwana, he became extremely popular on the streets of London, and was thus soon whisked across the Solent to the Isle of Wight where he met Queen Victoria at Osborne House. I purposely visited Osborne House for the main purpose of following, more or less, in the Zulu King's footsteps. I vividly remember standing in the same room where the Queen received her guests and tried to obtain a mental picture of that memorable occasion. Many people were there during my stay, but I imagine few, if any, were experiencing the thoughts that were running through my mind. I wondered if he took time out to view the Anglo Zulu War relics that are housed to this very day at Osborne. Whether he did or not will perhaps never be known, but what *is* known is that he sufficiently impressed the Queen and her advisors to allow him to return to his homeland, despite the fears of some that he may reconstitute the Zulu army under a reunited Zululand. This fear was quite understandable from the viewpoint of the Colonial Secretary, who felt he was under a moral obligation to protect the thirteen appointed chiefs who had actively collaborated with the British to the detriment of the Royalist uSuthu faction. His answer was to allow King Cetshwayo back to Zululand, but as ruler of a kingdom one third of its normal size. This of course meant that there had to be a new partition of Zululand.

One of the main reasons for the first partition of Zululand into thirteen separate kingdoms was to stifle the Zulu military system and that any return on the part of the King would possibly not only prolong the life of the Zulu army but as aforementioned, perhaps reconstitute it. However, to meet this possible threat, the return of the King was accompanied by imposed terms, one of which was that his authority only extended to the central portion of the old Zulu kingdom. The block of Zululand to the north-east was placed under Zibebhu of the Mandlakazi and the territory to the south, known as the

Reserve Territory was created for John Dunn and Hlubi's chiefdoms. Both these north and south territories were devised to form buffer states for Natal and the Transvaal respectively. They would also be used as a sanctuary for Zulus who either objected to the return of Cetshwayo or wished to avoid coming under the imposed rule of the Zulu Royal House. There were several other terms imposed upon the King, including being overseen by a British Resident, but if Cetshwayo wished to return to his homeland, he had no choice other than to submit to such terms. He assented to the latter on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1882 and on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1883 he was at Port Durnford, ready to precede to his allotted territory.

A hut tax had been imposed to pay the wages of various commissioners who would administer the country. In fact, this implied that Natal controlled the southern third of Zululand. (4) This hut tax business would have further ramifications in the not too distant future and would lead to much bitterness.

The King's return to Zululand was not a happy affair. Resentment and hostility was festering and to make matters worse, ten of the formerly independent chiefs appointed by Wolseley, fell within the boundaries of the King's reduced domain and therefore, came directly under his rule. It is hard to understand the logic intended behind the British involvement in all of this. Time and again they placed warring factions in each other's backyards where it was obvious to anyone with a modicum of sense that it would only be a matter of time before deep-seated hostilities would flare up and result in more bloodshed. Surely, it would have been more advantageous to place the groups loyal to the King in one area and others, like Zibebhu and Hamu in another? Common sense however seldom entered into such issues, so it is hardly surprising that the simmering pot eventually boiled over. Equally, those uSuthu who had already suffered under the chiefs appointed by Wolseley, now looked for revenge on account of Cetshwayo's restoration. Raids began almost immediately, even as the King began building his new royal homestead called oNdini. Within days of the King's arrival, the fiercely loyal abaQulusi attacked Hamu's Ngenetsheni on 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> January. In February, three companies of uSuthu from the King's new homestead joined Chief Somkhele's forces in a raid against the hated Zibebhu, followed by other raids later in the month. Raid followed counter raid as the civil war intensified. All of this of course flew in the face of Cetshwayo's restoration terms and he was apparently reminded of this on numerous occasions by Henry Francis Flynn Jnr, but the hatred between the warring factions ran too deeply. Zibebhu was particularly reviled because he had expelled the uSuthu from their own heartland after the 1882 settlement, killing women and children and taking cattle and the uSuthu were having no more of this and were determined to have their revenge on Zibebhu's forces. They began to mobilise for war, concentrating primarily in the territory under Mnyamana Buthelezi, forebear of Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The uSuthu force numbered approximately five thousand and were commanded largely by Prince Ndabuko, mobilising in territorial factions rather than in the old age-matched amabutho system. As in the American Civil War, brother often fought against brother in these Zulu conflicts. For example, Zibebhu's half brother, Makhoba, commanded some of the uSuthu forces which would shortly be arrayed against Zibebhu's Mandlakazi.

Towards the end of March, the uSuthu advanced into Mandlakazi country heading for Bangonomo, Zibebhu's umuzi. Zibebhu had with a small force, too small to face the uSuthu horde descending upon him, so with this small force and a handful of white mercenaries led by Johan Colenbrander, he fell back on the Msebe Valley. Unbeknown to the uSuthu, the wily Zibebhu had set a well-laid trap which the former blundered straight in to. The battle of Msebe had begun, but it was to be a rather one-sided affair. The Mandlakazi, having set their trap, practically enveloped the uSuthu forces, ruthlessly attacking and killing with great ferocity. In a short time, the uSuthu survivors broke and fled towards the Nongoma hills, leaving behind well over a thousand of their number slain on the battlefield. This figure is disputed amongst historians. David Rattray for example, suggests as many as four thousand uSuthu perished at Msebe. The truth will probably never be known, but it is reported that only ten of Zibebhu's forces lost their lives, which is an incredible result by any standards. Zibebhu had ably demonstrated that he was by far, the most able of the Zulu commanders both during and after the Anglo Zulu War of 1879.

News of Msebe came as a bitter blow to King Cetshwayo. His immediate plans to reassert his authority lay almost in tatters and with it too went Britain's 1882 settlement. Zulu fighting Zulu was not exactly what the British had intended by restoring King Cetshwayo. It was not only the loss of at least one thousand of his fighting men at Msebe that dismayed the King, he also lost a number of his trusted indunas, including their commander and brother to the leader of the opposing forces, Makhoba kaMapitha. The King himself lost his maternal uncle, Mgwazeni kaMbhone and one of his brothers, Prince Sitheku kaMpande was captured. Mnyamana must have been in deep depression for it is alleged he lost ten sons at Msebe and Ndabuko reportedly lost five. Zibebhu had won a stunning victory in the face of superior numbers by his clever military tactics and this placed him on a more secure footing to

those who followed him. It is surprising however that the uSuthu fell into the Mandlakazi trap for by this time the traditional mpondo fighting formation, which Zibebhu employed, should have been familiar to all, right down to even the uDibi boys. Perhaps it was the broken ground which shielded much of the Mandlakazi movements, or perhaps it was because the King had not authorised this uSuthu foray and thus the warriors were only half-hearted from the start. Whatever the reason, the rout was complete and devastating. Buoyed up by this successful manoeuvre, Hamu and his Ngenetsheni systematically raided their uSuthu neighbours in the wake of Msebe. The phrase "strike while the iron is hot" could well be applied here. Zibebhu and Hamu lost no time in following up the carnage at Msebe. The aforementioned Ngenetsheni depredations were carried out on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1883, the same day as the battle of Msebe and on 5<sup>th</sup> April the Mdalose were attacked by six amaviyo under Hamu with the northern abaQulusi being hit the following day. On 11<sup>th</sup> April, twelve amaviyo attacked Prince Mahanana, an erstwhile uSuthu supporter. While Hamu was on the rampage, Zibebhu too was following up his newfound advantage, raiding along the Black Mfolozi River up to the Nongoma range where many uSuthu had fled from Msebe. He followed this up by turning north to attack Masiphula's emGazini. Things were getting out of hand.

The uSuthu under Mnyamana, Ndabuko and Ziweddu had during this time concentrated their scattered forces in the almost impenetrable and mysterious Ngome Forest. Advancing again, they were sufficiently numerous to cause Hamu to withdraw his forces into two strongholds on both sides of the Phongolo River, and from here the Ngenetsheni counter attacked. It became a game of tit for tat, both sides gaining and losing ground. Again Zibebhu demonstrated his exceptional military talent by creating a diversion in favour of Hamu's forces when on 13<sup>th</sup> May he raided across the Black Mfolozi in the direction of King Cetshwayo's new umuzi at oNdini. This manoeuvre ought to have forewarned the uSuthu of what was to come, but it appears none of the uSuthu leadership ever thought that Zibebhu might one day attack the King in his own home. Perhaps they thought he wouldn't dare. This oversight was to cause the Royalist faction untold agonies.

In the meantime however, Mnyamana with about one hundred amaviyo, plus a handful of Boers, tried to surround Hamu in his two strongholds on the Phongolo. Hamu however, counter-attacked and drove the uSuthu back across the river, falling back on the Ngome Forest. Here, Mnyamana reconstituted his forces to counter-attack Hamu and to begin with, enjoyed a few successes, albeit against lesser targets. And so again began the game of tit for tat. Back in oNdini however, King Cetshwayo was becoming irritated at Zibebhu's barefaced effrontery and planned an offensive to be rid of this thorn in his side once and for all. Fifty amaviyo from oNdini were dispatched to link up with Mnyamana's forces. This new offensive initially stalled when three amaviyo of uSuthu under Prince Dabalamanzi of Rorke's Drift fame were forced to retreat after a brush with ten amaviyo of Mandlakazi. The swings and roundabouts was again balanced when in early July, five amaviyo of Mandlakazi were routed at the Dlomodlomo Hills by three uSuthu amaviyo, one of which was the famed Ngobamakhosi, well known for their exploits during the Anglo Zulu War.

These relatively mini operations were soon to take a far more serious turn. As aforementioned, King Cetshwayo, frustrated by Mandlakazi incursions, called upon his allies for an all-out strike against Zibebhu. This was to be no punitive excursion, but a well-planned attack from all points of the compass. The King planned to send sixty amaviyo from oNdini who would augment Mnyamana's forces closing in from the west. Other elements would advance from the south-east while the routed uSuthu across the Phongolo would recross and strike from the north-east. Of course, all this activity would hardly go unnoticed. Zibebhu was far too careful to be left open to surprise attacks. His spies would inform him of the King's intentions and this it appears is exactly what happened. In order to appreciate Zibebhu's military genius, we need to take a closer look at his tactics, for those would not only ensure his success, despite all the odds, but also cause the demise of most of the King's most trusted indunas and most of the commanders who fought at Isandlwana during the opening stages of the Anglo Zulu War.

Perhaps using the maxim that attack is the best form of defence, Zibebhu pre-empted the uSuthu and affected a stunning strike of his own. Realising he was more or less surrounded, he left behind what amounted to a substantial rearguard to face the uSuthu at his ekuVukeni umuzi, supported by about a dozen white mercenaries. This rearguard was sufficiently large to dupe the uSuthu into believing that Zibebhu was going to make a stand against Mnyamana who was advancing from the west. What the uSuthu failed to grasp however was that Zibebhu was planning a strike at oNdini itself and to achieve this end he made a forced night march to complete his pre-emptive strike. The four thousand or so warriors still based at oNdini were taken completely by surprise. As it was barely dawn when Zibebhu came within three miles of oNdini, most warriors were either asleep or out on duty for the King, therefore there was little time for the amabutho to arm themselves and form up in battle array. The uSuthu forces, despite outnumbering the Mandlakazi, were in a state of disarray and in a mortal

funk at this turn of events. However, still half asleep, they managed to exit oNdini and form up almost a mile east of the capital to face the advancing Mandlakazi. They were under the command of Ntuzwa kaNhlaka. The uFalaza ibutho formed the left wing of the uSuthu defence while two famous amabutho from the Isandlwana action; the Ngobamakhosi and the uMcijo formed the right wing. The remaining warriors formed the centre or chest and were in some disarray. Unfortunately for the uSuthu, their immediate reserve force of three amabutho was too far away at the kwaNodwengu ikhanda to be of any assistance. Had the uSuthu realised Zibebhu's intentions beforehand, the battle of oNdini may well have experienced a very different outcome and this portion of South African history would no doubt have altered somewhat.

The uSuthu were still largely rubbing the sleep from their eyes when the Mandlakazi left horn appeared in view over the Mthanuntengwayo Ridge. With their primitive firearms the uSuthu made little impact on the Mandlakazi advance, which swept across the uSuthu front and onwards in an attempt to form an outflanking manoeuvre. The uSuthu were awake enough however to realise the Mandlakazi intentions and their right horn began a ragged and hasty retreat into the valley of the White Mfolozi, pursued hotly by the anti-royalists. It is quite possible that this rout so early on in the battle dictated the outcome. Although an initial stand was made by the uSuthu left horn and centre, the grim and determined advance of the anti-royalists un-nerved the uSuthu who shortly broke and fled westwards before a hand-to-hand engagement could be effected. One of the King's favourite amabutho, the uThulwana attempted to protect their sovereign and former member of this regiment, by making a last ditch stand in the capital itself, but they were soon annihilated. The fugitives from the left horn and chest also attempted to follow their right horn into the valley of the White Mfolozi, but ran straight into the Mandlakazi right horn and a fearful slaughter commenced. Also caught up in this general rout were the amabutho from kwaNodwengu and instead of making a stand, or even an attack, fled more or less immediately. They probably realised the game was over and unless one is on the ground at the time, it is difficult, if not impossible to appreciate matters as they really occurred over one hundred years ago. Zulu was fighting Zulu in deadly earnest and Zibebhu had no intention of being anything other than the outright victor. Very soon the sky above oNdini was blackened with smoke as the Mandlakazi put a torch to virtually all the homesteads on the Mahlabathini Plain. A second relief force advancing to aid the uSuthu, under the command of Prince Ndabuko was informed of the fall of oNdini whilst still some five miles distant from their objective. Deciding that discretion was the better part of valour in this instance, they reversed their footsteps and set about preparing to defend their own base in the Ngome Forest.

Apart from the complete destruction of the capital, oNdini is also famous, or notorious, depending on the viewpoint, for the outright massacre of many of the uSuthu leaders. At least fifty-nine chiefs and men of influence were killed, along with some five hundred uSuthu. King Cetshwayo said after Isandlwana, "An assegai has been thrust into the belly of the nation". Here at oNdini the same sentiment applied, literally! Even women had not been spared, including three of Cetshwayo's wives and three of King Mpande's widows lay dead upon the field of the carnage. One of Cetshwayo's little sons, Nyonyentaba was also among the slain. As if this was not bad enough, many of King Cetshwayo's closest advisers and councillors also lay dead upon the field of battle. There is a memorial today on the site and the list of slain indunas reads like a who's who of Zululand. Ntshingwayo kaMahole, principal commander at Isandlwana lay dead, sprawled across his great oxhide shield with his knobkerrie nearby. He was one of Wolseley's original thirteen chiefs. Others included Mbopa and Seketwayo. One characteristic that appears common to many of these important leaders is that they were obese and therefore not fleet-footed like the athletic warriors under Zibebhu and were easily overtaken and speared. Grosvenor Darke, a trader, hunter and mercenary fighting for the Mandlakazi at both Msebe and oNdini, stated that his own little udibi boys actually ran down and stabbed to death one of the uSuthu leaders. (5)

Even King Cetshwayo did not escape scot-free. He had received two spear wounds between the knee and the hip of his right leg. Although the wounds were superficial and did not appear to hinder his escape, he surely must have realised that the old Zulu order was now well and truly over. But if it was well and truly over, there was a lot more bloodshed and hardship to come for the Zulu people.

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