

# Who Ruled by the Spear? Rethinking the Form of Governance in the Ndebele State

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**Abstract:** The current intellectual stampede over issues of governance in Africa has given birth to ahistorical evaluations of the crises bedeviling the African continent. Pre-colonial traditions and cultures have been unduly blamed for bequeathing politics of disorder on the post-colonial state without being carefully studied separately. This article offers a rebuttal to the emerging 'African exceptionalism' thesis that blames pre-colonial traditions and cultures for the bad governance systems being witnessed in Africa. It is a nuanced and systematic interrogation and rethinking of the Ndebele system of governance in the nineteenth century. The article arrives at the conclusion that one cannot generalize about pre-colonial African systems of governance as they were not only diverse but also complex, allowing for good governance and bad governance to co-exist uneasily and tendentiously across space and time. As such the single-despot model preferred by many Eurocentric scholars is too simplistic to explain the complexities and diversities of African political systems. Even post-colonial despotic rulers cannot justify dictatorship and violation of their people's rights on the basis of pre-colonial African traditions, cultures and histories because human rights and democracy were organically built into pre-colonial African systems of governance as this case study of the Ndebele demonstrates.

## Introduction

One of the earliest attempts to understand the ontology of African political systems and the forms of African governance is the collaborative anthropological work of M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard. In this work, sweeping generalizations were made about diverse African societies to the extent that African forms of governance were divided into centralized and decentralized forms. Centralized forms were seen as undemocratic and decentralized were reduced to democratic governance.<sup>1</sup> The achievement of independence by African states that was attended by problems of deepening democracy and increasing participation of all citizens in political processes elicited new interests in understanding African political systems and why democracy was difficult to institutionalize in Africa. A number of explanations emerged including Eurocentric and Afrocentric pessimist paradigms that blamed African pre-colonial traditions for bequeathing authoritarian forms of governance and disorder on the continent. For

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v10/v10i2-3a4.pdf>

instance, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz linked the crisis of democracy with African culture that allowed for patrimonial forms of governance.<sup>2</sup> Chabal and Daloz emphasized continuities of pre-colonial political traditions across the colonial and postcolonial periods as important in explaining current failures of governance in Africa. To them, the crisis of governance in Africa is one of “modernity rooted in the deep history of the societies in which it is taking place.” Sounding apologetic of the contribution of colonialism to the current failures of democracy in Africa, Chabal and Daloz argued that “time has long passed when we, Westerners, had to expiate the colonial crime of our forefathers.”<sup>3</sup> Instead, they posited that the essential feature “most important to emphasize is the significance of continuities in the political practice from the pre-colonial period.”<sup>4</sup> To them, colonialism failed to overcome “the strongly instrumental and personal characteristics of traditional African administration.” Their conclusion was that African cultures were ontologically hostile to good governance and effective administrations.<sup>5</sup>

The thesis of continuities between precolonial political systems and African traditions into the postcolonial period is countered by scholars like Mahmood Mamdani and Peter P. Ekeh who emphasize the contribution of the legacy of late colonialism to problems of democratization in postcolonial Africa. According to Mamdani colonialism bifurcated colonial populations into citizens and subjects. This became the beginning of hierarchized citizenship determined by race within which white settlers enjoyed citizenship rights and Africans as subjects suffered under decentralized despotism called indirect rule with the African chief at its apex.<sup>6</sup> Colonialism ossified Africans’ identities into rigid ethnic groupings and sealed these through legal coding. This created many problems for Africa. In the first place it meant that African nationalism developed as ethnic consciousness. In the second place, it created the intractable problem of the ‘native’ and the ‘settler’ which is sometimes termed the national question.<sup>7</sup> In an endeavour to install democracy, many postcolonial regimes concentrated on de-racializing civil space while at the same time reinforcing decentralized despotism inherited from the colonial state at the local level as recognition of African traditions and customary law.<sup>8</sup> Mamdani’s arguments resonates with those of Peter Ekeh who argued that colonialism introduced two public spheres (one for whites and another for blacks) that resulted in Africans imbibing bourgeois ideologies, making them to “fight alien rulers on the basis of criteria introduced by them.”<sup>9</sup>

My concern in this article is to rebut what I will call the ‘continuities thesis’ between precolonial systems of governance and the postcolonial because this gives ammunition to some postcolonial African dictators to justify their non-accountable styles of governance and blatant violations of human rights on the basis of African tradition. Even long presidential incumbency by one person and life presidencies are justified on precolonial tradition.<sup>10</sup> The ‘continuities thesis’ is founded on a false impression that democracy and human rights were brought to Africa by people from the West. The case study of the Ndebele state is used here to rebut the ‘continuities thesis’ on democracy without necessarily ignoring the ‘inventions of traditions’ by colonial regimes as well as African nationalists and postcolonial governments that has compounded African problems.<sup>11</sup> The main weakness of the constructivist paradigm that gave birth to the ideas of ‘inventions of tradition’ in Africa is that it tended to privilege white agency

over that of Africans. African creative agency was sacrificed at the altar of missionary and colonial agencies.

One of the glaring gaps in the debate on governance in Africa is the lack of nuanced studies grounded on precolonial African political systems of governance. There is a general belief that precolonial governance was nothing but a long night of savagery and violence within which the spear played a fundamental role under what Carolyn Hamilton termed “terrific majesty.”<sup>12</sup> Writing about the Ndebele south of the Limpopo River, Peter Becker saw nothing in them but a “path of blood” in their trail of violent conquests.<sup>13</sup> Thus besides rebutting the ‘continuities thesis,’ this article is a thorough revision of the earlier characterization of the Ndebele system of governance. It reveals Ndebele notions of democracy and human rights in the nineteenth century.

Mathew T. Bradley defined democracy as “a configuration of governance molded by general values, biases, prejudices and nuances of a given culture.”<sup>14</sup> Like elsewhere, precolonial notions and practices of democracy and human rights were informed by diverse African histories, African traditions and were expressed in different languages and articulated in different idioms. Denial of rights and freedoms permeated precolonial conflicts since not all African precolonial governments were democratic or respected human rights. The common reality was that democracy and human rights co-existed uneasily and tendentiously with authoritarianism, patriarchy and militarism.<sup>15</sup> But few scholars who chose to study African systems of governance during the precolonial era tended to use the single-despot model that was not confirmed by historical realities on the ground in Africa.<sup>16</sup>

A single-despot model of African governance systems is inadequate because African societies were very diverse in their ontology, thus defying simple generalizations. Each of the pre-colonial societies had unique sets of rules, laws and traditions suitable for particular contexts and historical realities. These rules, laws and traditions, commonly termed customs, formed the basis of how people would live together peacefully as part of a community, state and nation. Earlier African formations like those of Egypt in North Africa, Nubia and Axum in North East Africa, Ghana, Mali and Songhai in West Africa, and Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe in Southern Africa, produced different political and economic systems of governance relative to their environment of operation as well as historical circumstances of formation.<sup>17</sup> Because of their magnitude, they all evolved complex systems of governance that could hardly fit into a single-despot model.

### **The Ndebele and historiographical debates**

The Ndebele have attracted a lot of studies ranging from those by precolonial travelers, missionaries, colonial officials, anthropologists, novelists, poets and historians. What was widely reported was their reputation for what was considered to be ‘bloodthirsty savagery,’ ‘martial spirit,’ ‘splendid despotism’ and ‘noble savages.’ These descriptions captured contradictory representations of the Ndebele within British colonial imaginations. Within the colonial imagination, the Ndebele fell victim to exoticization and demonization.<sup>18</sup> Later writings on the Ndebele were heavily influenced by early literate observers’ writing on the Ndebele and missionary records became primary records for later academic works on the Ndebele.

The major historians who have written on precolonial Ndebele history are Kent Rasmussen on the Ndebele South of the Limpopo, Terence Ranger on Ndebele politics during the scramble period; Ngwabi Bhebe on missionary activities in the Ndebele state; David Beach on Ndebele-Shona relations, Julian Cobbing on Ndebele history from 1820 to 1896; Pathisa Nyathi on the Ndebele history from 1820-1896; Enocent Msindo on Ndebele-Kalanga Relations from 1860s to 1980s, Bjorn Lindgren on Ndebele ethnicity, Ray Roberts on Ndebele royal family, and my own work on Ndebele political system and their notions of democracy and human rights.<sup>19</sup> Except for my work, the theme of democracy is avoided in the writings on Ndebele history save for a focus on revision of Ndebele-Shona relations which were described as characterized by violence by colonial writers bent on justifying colonialism. Among all these writers, Cobbing produced a more comprehensive revisionist study of the Ndebele history, though the issue of governance and democracy was not his central concern.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that Beach alluded to the myths dominating articulations of Ndebele history and tried to explode some, he continued to describe the Ndebele state as a 'mfecane' state that was organized along military lines.<sup>21</sup> Msindo's recent writings accept old-fashioned descriptions of the Ndebele state as militaristic and authoritarian to the extent of seeing my concern with democracy and human rights among the Ndebele as "a *Zansi/Nguni-centric* view of Ndebele history, which defends pre-colonial political misdemeanors."<sup>22</sup>

The scholars who continued to emphasize Ndebele politics as a terrain of violence failed to distinguish between two phases in Ndebele history. The first phase of Ndebele history running from 1820-1840 was dominated by migration and violence and covers the turbulent years of the 'mfecane.' The second phase of Ndebele history running from 1841-1893 saw the Ndebele transforming themselves from a life of migration and violence to a new full-fledged settled heterogeneous nation on the Zimbabwean plateau. Violence became minimal and Beach used this to explain the resurgence of Shona power.<sup>23</sup> The distinguishing features of this 'settled phase' and its processes of consolidation of Ndebele power included a ceaseless search for consensual governance. The issue of rights and human rights that were pushed to the peripheries of politics during the formative stage of the state now came to the centre the state politics.<sup>24</sup> The actual realities of power shifted during the 'settled phase' to the control of the means of production which superseded the control of the means of violence as the base of wealth, power and privilege. Major institutions such as *amabutho* (age sets) which were largely geared towards the military, were quickly civilianized to suit the exigencies of a less aggressive environment on the Zimbabwean plateau.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Moffat, a London Missionary Society (LMS) agent and long time friend of Mzilikazi Khumalo tried to appropriate all positive changes in the Ndebele state as products of his missionary efforts including the reduction in offensive wars. All positive changes in Ndebele politics were to him attributed to his interventions and interventions of Christian God.<sup>26</sup> The civilianization process also saw the practice of celibacy being relaxed.<sup>27</sup> These reforms meant that those Ndebele men who were renowned for courage and prowess in warfare were permitted to marry and build villages for themselves. The king allowed the right to marry and to establish a family to be accorded to many people during this phase of Ndebele history. Renowned fighters found themselves settling down to carry out civilian oriented duties like administering the segments of the Ndebele state, since the state had expanded greatly.<sup>28</sup>

The office of the king was transformed and ritualized leading Julian Cobbing to write of the rise of an ideological glorification of the person of the monarch.<sup>29</sup> The king assumed the role of a successful rain-maker, administering a system of grain production, distributing cattle, and heading a cult of ancestor worship. At this time the king's importance was best described in ritual terms. The king became the "rainmaker in chief" and "a collector of charms and medicines designed not only to secure rain but to protect the state against the machinations of its enemies."<sup>30</sup> On top of this, the king administered justice, maintained a monopoly over the important long-distance trade to the South, and distributed the proceeds of tribute and of raiding. As put by L. Vail and L. White, Mzilikazi was no longer the absolute and arbitrary tyrant of "European travelers" tales.<sup>31</sup> The king became involved more in ivory trade and spiritual satisfaction of his people.

A strong aristocratic group emerged, quite different from that which had held power because of its military prowess in the 1820s and 1830s. Achievement or meritocracy was increasingly replacing ascriptive status in the Ndebele state. Commenting on this new power development, Cobbing noted that without king "there would have been an inchoate collection of feuding chieftaincies."<sup>32</sup> However the king was no longer able to exercise absolute power with this new development. Relatively strong subsidiary chiefs and headmen who maintained a great deal of independent wealth and power based on personal ownership of cattle and achievement had emerged. 'Royalisation' was taking new forms via marriages to women of royal blood. As the power of this group increased, kingship vigorously ritualized itself to the level of ideological glorification through veneration of the king's ancestors who were invoked and propitiated in national ceremonies as the state's protectors.<sup>33</sup>

The refugees and captives of earlier decades and those who were acquired in the southwest now coalesced into a nation, broadening the heterogeneity of the Ndebele state. Some of them assumed powerful positions as chiefs and commanded a lot of respect from the king. Under the *abenhla* (those from the North) social strata that formed south of the Limpopo River, there emerged a third additional social strata of *amaHole*.<sup>34</sup> *AmaHole* were those people who were assimilated into the Ndebele state within the Zimbabwean plateau. They were the latest entrants into the Ndebele society. The top and proud *Zansi* (those from the South) who left with the king from Zululand became a minority only identifiable through their Nguni *isibongo* (surname) such as Mkhize, Gatsheni, Khumalo, Mkwanzani, Sithole and Gumede.<sup>35</sup>

Democratic spaces opened up in line with new social and political realities. The Ndebele society became more tolerant, accommodative, and open to the reality of the numerical dominance of non-Nguni groups. These non-Nguni groups were gradually accorded more and more rights so as to placate them. Raiding which had been relied upon as an economic as well as a political ploy was changed. Raiding lost much of its attributes as an economic ploy and became largely a political ploy meant to weaken neighbours of the Ndebele and to punish the recalcitrant chiefs. In the words of David Beach, raiding became target-specific.<sup>36</sup>

## Power and Governance Structures

The Ndebele system of governance crystallized around the person of the king (*inkosi*). This reality led some scholars to misinterpret this to mean that the Ndebele king was despotic and

dictatorial.<sup>37</sup> There is no doubt that the Ndebele king was powerful, but not to the extent of becoming an absolute monarch with all power concentrated in his hands. The Ndebele society had developed very elaborate mechanisms which acted as checks and balances on the power of the king. The hierarchy of power facilitated communication between the leaders and the ordinary people. It also facilitated communication between the lesser chiefs and the senior leaders up to the king (see Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1. Hierarchy of power in the Ndebele state**



Figure 1 demonstrates that even though the Ndebele king was at the apex of a power hierarchy he was not an autocratic ruler with absolute powers. Other powerful officials were active in the governance of the state as well checking absolute dictatorship. These included the *indunankulu yesizwe* (prime minister/head of the government). The king became largely a ceremonial head of state. During Mzilikazi's rule, Mncumbatha Khumalo occupied this post and even acted as a regent after his death in 1868. Mncumbatha was described by the Ndebele as *umqamelo wenkosi*, which meant the *pillow* of the king. He was so described because the king relied on him for advice.<sup>38</sup> He acted as a deputy to the king. He represented the king on various important occasions and could sign treaties on behalf of the king as happened in 1836.<sup>39</sup>

The Ndebele king did not rule by decree. State policies were subjected to serious debate, and meetings were considered important in deciding the future of the state. A loose group of the king's personal confidants comprising inner advisers, collectively termed *umphakathi*,

played a crucial role in determining state policy. They also deliberated on the difficult judicial decisions. Another set of advisers of the king were a large group of the state's prominent men collectively termed *izikhulu*. It was through these two councils that the ordinary Ndebele people were able to participate in the government of their country. *Umphakathi* and *izikhulu* operated as representative councils. The members of these councils, however, were mainly rich people, rather than ordinary persons. They were not freely chosen by the people, their positions were largely hereditary.

In theory, the king was the head of state, head of government, religious chief, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and the supreme judge of all criminal cases. In practice, however, the king was basically a ceremonial head of state in all these posts and a source of unity in the state. There is need to note that there was always tension between forces of centralization and those of decentralization of power. The Ndebele king tried to keep as much power in his hands as was possible, but the leaders of *izigaba* worked tirelessly as well to gain more and more power and increasing influence in state affairs.<sup>40</sup> It was these people who practically commanded the armed forces during military assignments. They also determined outcomes of difficult judicial decisions. While the king could differ with the views of his advisers on a number of issues, he was often forced to endorse the popular views of his advisers.<sup>41</sup>

The leaders of *izigaba* rather than the king were the practical representatives of *amahlabezulu* (the ordinary population). The king had to listen to their views in order to keep in touch with the popular sentiments of his people. Chiefs of *izigaba* were initially appointed by the king especially during the inception of the state and the formation of specific *izigaba* as the state grew. Provincial chiefs, however, had to work hard to cultivate the allegiance of the people within the territorial area of their rule. Upon the death of an appointed chief, the king's power to appoint another chief fell away as the deceased chief was to be succeeded by his eldest son from his senior wife (*indlu enkulu*). If the senior wife failed to produce a son, other sons from junior wives were accepted as successors.<sup>42</sup>

Despite all these elaborate mechanisms of governance in the Ndebele, the system of governance was not fully based on consensual politics. It was characterized by a mixture of democratic tendencies on the one hand, and aristocratic, autocratic and/or militaristic tendencies on the other. Tension, competition, jealousies, and violence also characterized Ndebele system of governance.<sup>43</sup>

Kinship was one major ideology in the Ndebele state that was a source of both strength and weakness. Both Mzilikazi and Lobengula were known for suspecting their own relatives to be their worst enemies and for harshness towards male royals, giving rise to the popular Ndebele idea of a blood brother as *umfowethu* (*umfo* means enemy). The whole idea of a royal house limited the chances of ordinary people to participate fully in the governance of the state and to attain higher posts. Only those connected to the royal family could readily attain the posts of senior chiefs.

Politics in the Ndebele state were not open to competition as in modern day democracies. Power was hereditary, that is, confined to royal houses. While the Ndebele conceded that power was to be contested, they never tolerated opposition to the incumbent leader. Their popular ideology was *alikhho ilanga elaphuma elinye lingakatshoni* (no sun has ever arisen before another one had set).<sup>44</sup> The Ndebele emphasized that power belonged to those with power. The

ruling Khumalo house was praised as *nlangamandla* (those who rule because of their power).<sup>45</sup> Mzilikazi ruled until he died of old age without a clear successor. The Ndebele feared even to mention the issue of succession when Mzilikazi was still alive.<sup>46</sup>

The Ndebele governance was also characterized by patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy referred to a form of domination based on strictly personal loyalty to a father-like ruler who invoked the sanctity of tradition to justify his acts.<sup>47</sup> Ndebele patriarchal ideology exalted the leadership of older men. Women, young men, and captives, generally stood outside the centre of power. The Ndebele king was a 'father' figure and the people he governed conveyed their respect by referring to themselves as his 'children.' Political life was acted out in terms of personal relations rather than in terms of depersonalized and institutionalized law. The Ndebele considered themselves as one family (*uMthwakazi*) and the family was an idiom through which political conflict and alliances were expressed.<sup>48</sup>

White observers tended to emphasize the existence of injustices and cruel punishment among the Ndebele without a clear analysis of Ndebele notions of justice and punishment. Rhodesian colonial officials, especially the Native Commissioners, wrongly assumed that Africans brought cases to them because they offered a superior kind of justice that was far much better than that offered by African pre-colonial governments.<sup>49</sup> Others argued that among the Ndebele democracy and human rights were unknown because the judiciary system was characterized by only two forms of punishment, that is, fines and death.<sup>50</sup> Robert Moffat described the Ndebele system of justice as "tyrannical in the strictest sense of the word" and that the king's word was law.<sup>51</sup> All these were distortions and falsifications of the Ndebele notions of justice and punishment.

In the Ndebele state, notions of justice and punishment were closely intertwined with Ndebele customs and traditions. Political leaders of the state performed both administrative and judiciary roles. In the execution of justice the political leadership summoned the wisdom of other traditional officials in society such as *izanusi*, *izinyanga*, *izangoma* (diviners, wise men and magicians respectively). At times even the services of the religious shrine such as Njelele were sought to establish justice.<sup>52</sup>

*Amacala* (criminal cases) were basically divided into two categories, that is, *amacala amakhulu* (serious crimes) and *amacala amancane* (minor crimes). The serious crimes included *ukubulala* (murder), *ubuthakathi/ukuloya* (witchcraft), *amacala ezombuso* (political crimes) and *ubufebe* (prostitution and adultery).<sup>53</sup> The king commonly dealt with serious crimes whereas minor crimes such as *ukweba* (theft) and *inxabano emagumeni/emizini* (domestic misunderstanding) were dealt with by either *abalisa* (headmen) or *izinduna* (chiefs) depending on the gravity of the case within their respective territorial jurisdiction. Even *abamnuzana* (heads of households) could deal with very minor cases without the interference of either a headman or a chief.<sup>54</sup>

A clear system of justice ran from the household up to the state level and there were clear channels and mechanisms of dealing with various crimes and punishment. Conflict resolution mechanisms were also available to cater and protect both communities and private interests. While an attempt was made to achieve even handed justice in the Ndebele state, the judiciary system, like other state institutions, was prone to abuse and manipulation by the 'big men' such as the king, chiefs, headmen and senior men to the detriment of others.

Witchcraft was considered to be one of the most serious offences equal to murder. It was considered prejudicial to the lives and property of others in society. Death and illness were not considered to be natural among the Ndebele. They were attributed either to the anger of *amadlozi* (ancestral spirits) or witchcraft. Diviners and magicians usually raised accusations of witchcraft (*ukunuka abathakathi*) and their allegations usually led to trials.<sup>55</sup>

In many occasions those who were accused of witchcraft were punished by death. The Ndebele public ideology has it that *umthakathi kancengwa uyaphohozwa ngenduku* (there was no sympathy for wizards and their fate was execution).<sup>56</sup> A number of examples help to strengthen this view. In 1880 Lobengula had his own favoured sister, Mncengence killed because he thought she was responsible for the barrenness of the royal wife, Xwalile.<sup>57</sup> In a separate occasion, Xukuthwayo Mlotshwa, the chief of Intemba, had nine people of his own family executed because he suspected that his illness was caused by them.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the emphasis in the Ndebele public ideology that witches' punishment was death and that there was no sympathy for them, it is also evident that among the Ndebele doubtful and unproven charges of witchcraft did not lead to execution. Instead, unsubstantiated accusation of witchcraft led to banishment away from the mainstream of the Ndebele society. Villagers were reluctant to harbour suspected witches and a place of refuge came into being for the victims of such charges at a place called eZihwabeni between Solusi and Plumtree.<sup>59</sup> *Amagusu amnyama* (dark forests) of Matebeleland North were also places 'where witches were thrown to live.'<sup>60</sup> In these places of exile, those accused of witchcraft were supplied with meat and grain from the state coffers.<sup>61</sup>

The other serious crimes were those related to political crimes (*amacala ezombuso*). Those accused of these crimes faced serious consequences. The clear case in point was that of 1840-1842 known as the *Ntabayezindunacrisis*.<sup>62</sup> Mzilikazi descended mercilessly and ruthlessly on his close relatives, including his own children and his wives, because they were accused on political grounds.<sup>63</sup> Political opposition and harbouring political ambitions were considered as criminal.

The prominent and powerful members of the Ndebele society tended to manipulate and abuse their power and positions in the *umphakathi* and *izikhulu* to eliminate one another by accusing each other of witchcraft and plots against the king. The accusation of witchcraft was used as a political weapon in moves for favours. One of Mzilikazi's closest confidants, Manxeba Khumalo (the son of Mkaliphi Khumalo) was executed in August 1862 on a charge of witchcraft elaborated by his rivals in the *umphakathi*. In 1854 Mpondo, another of Mzilikazi's confidants was executed because he was accused of witchcraft.<sup>64</sup> The real crime, however, was that they were too close to Mzilikazi to the extent that they generated jealousy from their colleagues who also wanted to be nearer to the king.

During the crisis of 1870-1872 following Lobengula's controversial accession to the throne, prominent men like Mtikana Mafu and Thunzi Ndiweni who were respected by Mzilikazi were eliminated after being accused of being witches and for plotting against the king. Lotshe Hlabangana, a close confidant of Lobengula was in 1880 accused of witchcraft by his rivals. He survived execution at that time only to be executed in September 1889 on a charge of having misleadingly commended the Rudd Concession of 1888 to Lobengula.<sup>65</sup>

Despite all these executions, Tabler (one of the early literate observers on the Ndebele history) pointed that Mzilikazi was not as despotic and tyrannical as portrayed other white

observers. He criticized the use of western Christian standards to evaluate the Ndebele justice system. To him, Mzilikazi was influenced by public opinion to carry out executions for witchcraft offences.<sup>66</sup> Even among Ndebele oral tales, Mzilikazi is portrayed as *inkosi ebunene* (a sympathetic and kind king) and is said to have pardoned a number of accused people whom public opinion wanted severely punished or executed. It was even mentioned by some informants that if ever a criminal, including those accused of murder and witchcraft, happened to run away to seek asylum in the capital, he or she became immune to further harassment or execution.<sup>67</sup>

Some of the methods used to punish offenders, such as piercing through anus of an offender with a sharp stick and tying stones around the neck of an offender before being thrown into water (mentioned by observers like Robert Moffat) were horrific, though rare. What emerges from the above is a hierarchy of rights and governance running from *umuzi* (nuclear or extended family) under *umnumzana* through *himizi* (villages) under *abalisa* (headmen), through the *izigaba* (provinces) under *izinduna* (chiefs) to the *ilizwe* (kingdom) under the overall administration of *inkosi* (king).<sup>68</sup> These arrangements in the Ndebele state, like every facet of Ndebele life and work, were shot through with political import. There were complex dialectics between egalitarianism, competition, tensions, clan and family intimacies, mutual assistance, communalism, co-existing with domination, violence of the 'big men,' seniority, aristocratic, and militaristic tendencies, under-pinned by patriarchal ideology and an all embracing ideology of kinship.<sup>69</sup>

### Accountability and Legitimacy

A closer look at the governance styles of many Nguni pre-colonial societies tempts one to argue that pre-colonial leaders were more accountable for their actions than some present day African leaders. This argument is vindicated by the work of such scholars as Claude Ake and Joseph Cobbah who uncovered that pre-colonial leaders were accountable even for natural disasters.<sup>70</sup> Among the Ndebele, proverbs and praise poems reflected popular expectations of the subjects about their king and the government generally. Ndebele oral literature was also an embodiment of Ndebele claims against their state and leaders as well as a tale of criticism of some of the actions of the king and all those in power.<sup>71</sup> The king and his chiefs were expected to be generous with food and productive resources. They were also expected to provide protection against enemies and drought.<sup>72</sup>

For the king to remain a legitimate ruler, he had to be very humane in his dealing with his people. The Ndebele clearly expressed their fear and respect of their king while at the same time celebrating their king's ability to 'eat' his enemies.<sup>73</sup> Mzilikazi was respected by his people mainly because of his ability to build the Ndebele state, his ability to outwit leaders like Shaka and Zwide, and his ability to seize cattle from his enemies for the benefit of the Ndebele. All these qualities of Mzilikazi's rule were expressed in his praise poems. No Ndebele doubted Mzilikazi's legitimacy because he was the undisputed builder of the Ndebele state.

The Ndebele king's legitimacy was enhanced by judiciously distributing wealth to his people in consultation with other influential men in the state. The chiefs were also obliged to grant some material support to their subordinates. This patron-client relationship had the

potential of making and unmaking of kings. Political power and economic wealth were interdependent. Mzilikazi and Lobengula safeguarded their secular power through the strategic redistribution of cattle and land to their followers. The simple logic of clientage ensured that no one escaped accountability to the governed in the Ndebele political hierarchy.<sup>74</sup>

Some previous scholars distorted the whole issue of property rights in the Ndebele state. One traditional argument was that the Ndebele king owned all the cattle and all the land as his personal property.<sup>75</sup> This was not true, bearing in mind that the king owned land in trust for his people. The right to own property as an individual as well as in association with others was embedded in Ndebele society. Cattle were owned at two levels, that is, individual level and communal level. *Inkomo zamathanga* referred to privately owned cattle, whereas *inkomo zebutho* or *inkomo zenkosi* referred to communally owned cattle.<sup>76</sup>

Land was available to every Ndebele person. The king and his chiefs distributed land to their followers. Land among the Ndebele was neither sold nor bought and every member of the state was entitled to it. The people who lost land to the Ndebele were those who decided to migrate rather than accept Ndebele rule. The Ndebele on arrival in the southwest embarked on a limited national re-organization policy and this process saw some communities like those of Malaba being moved to Tegwani River, and those of Mehlo being moved from the headwaters of Khami River to Dombodema.<sup>77</sup> The idea behind the process was not to deny these people their land but rather the Ndebele intended to create a defence zone against the Nguni using these Kalanga families. Above all, the people who were incorporated and assimilated into the Ndebele society were allocated land and other resources and in return were expected to obey laws, customs, and traditions of the Ndebele. They had to serve in the army and to attend the annual *inxwala* ceremony.<sup>78</sup> The *inkomo zebutho*/national herd or communal herds (*inkomo zenkosi*) were different from the king's personal cattle. They were also different from the privately owned cattle/*inkomo zamathanga*. The differences lay in the fact that the communal herd was state property and while they were under the overall administration of the king, even the king could not use them for his private affairs. It was this state herd that was distributed to the provinces for people to tend and for those without cattle to benefit from them in the form of manure, milk and meat. The power of the king to distribute cattle gave rise to an ideological glorification of the person of the king, especially among the poor who happened to benefit materially from these cattle.<sup>79</sup>

Among the Ndebele cattle (*inkomo*) constituted a vital branch of production as the ownership of cattle determined social status and their acquisition was the major long-term economic objective of all Ndebele males. The Ndebele acquired cattle mainly through raiding and breeding. The cattle, which were seized through raids, were first of all taken to the king for him to distribute to his people. Cattle also expanded by natural growth. It was through the distribution of cattle that the king was able to boost his popularity among his followers. Baines watched the arrival of the raiders from Gutu at Gibixhegu in 1870 and he pointed out that they were fairly distributed following "tolerably equitable principles."<sup>80</sup>

The accountability of the Ndebele leaders was usually expressed during *indlala* (famine), where they had to provide food to the people. The king and his chiefs usually distributed cattle and *amabele* (millet, sorghum and maize) to the starving people. The king and the chiefs kept grain in secure places so as to distribute to their people during times of crisis.<sup>81</sup> *Indlala* among

the Ndebele was not just considered as a natural occurrence. Causes were to be sought for it. Thus, besides distributing cattle and grain to the starving people, the king was also obliged to investigate the causes of famine. If the famine was caused by *isikhongwanalintethe* (locusts), the king and his chiefs had to look for medicine and if the famine was caused by lack of *izulu* (rain), the king had to send people to the rain-shrines like Njelele so as to get an explanation.<sup>82</sup> In this way, the Ndebele leaders tried by all means to be accountable to their people.

Religion played a very significant role in cementing legitimacy of the king. The Ndebele kings were important religious leaders. The *inxwala* ceremony was partly a festival of unity serving as a means of maintaining the power of the king over his people. The numerous men and women who assembled around the capital for *inxwala* ceremonies also came partly in order to renew their allegiance to the kingship, politically to the person of the king, and spiritually to the memory of the royal *amadlozi* as national ancestral spirits.<sup>83</sup> As a result of the central role played by the king in the religious affairs of the Ndebele state, the kingship quickly acquired a deep-rooted religious significance.

Ndebele society however, was not classless even though communalism was common. There were the powerful royals and the weak, captives and non-captives, senior and junior, old and young, women and men, able-bodied and disabled, and elderly and the youth, etc. Power in general was stored in unequal human relations that were underwritten by an ideology of lineage seniority and kinship.<sup>84</sup> In the upper level of the Ndebele state was the royalty who comprised the king and his relatives constituting a ruling aristocracy. The royalty indeed enjoyed privileges and rights that were far above other groups in the Ndebele society. They were the richest as they were given cattle by the king so as to make sure they did not constitute a threat to the king. The royalty received reflected authority from the king. They were the prominent members of *umphakathi*. Mzilikazi's brother-in-law, Maqhekeni Sithole and his cousin, Mncumbatha Khumalo, held influential positions, whereas Lobengula's brothers: Ngubongubo, Sibambamu, Nyanda, Muntu, Silwane, Fezela and Mahlahleni were prominent as his inner advisers.<sup>85</sup>

Below the royalty were the *Zansi* (those from the South) who consisted of those people who left with Mzilikazi from Zululand in the 1820s and their descendants. This group of people in the Ndebele society formed an aristocracy and claimed a number of privileges and rights far above other groups with the exception of the royalty. The senior chiefs in the Ndebele state were drawn from this group. They had power because they suffered with the king during the turbulent years of the *Mfecane* and they had fought for him in various battles of the migratory phase.<sup>86</sup>

There was the *Enhla* group within the Ndebele society who comprised the Sotho and Tswana people and occupied a position below the *Zansi*. Mzilikazi incorporated these into the Ndebele state before crossing the Limpopo River. They had suffered with the king since they accompanied the king up to Matabeleland. The *Enhla* also had a claim to positions of authority and power too based on their longer association with the *Zansi*. They largely occupied positions of headmen under the *Zansi* who occupied positions of chiefs.<sup>87</sup>

Below the *Enhla* were the *Hole* group, which consisted of the Kalanga, Rozvi, Nyubi, Nyayi, Birwa, Venda and other indigenous people of the southwest who were incorporated into the Ndebele state mainly in the 1840s. Some early observers had a wrong impression that the *Hole*

were treated as slaves in the Ndebele state.<sup>88</sup> The *Hole* were subordinated to the *Zansi* and *Enhla* groups socially and politically. Even though they were belittled and looked down upon by others, they were not really enslaved to the Ndebele.<sup>89</sup> After all, they were the largest group in the Ndebele society. By the 1890s, up to sixty per cent of the inner Ndebele state was of *Hole* origin.<sup>90</sup>

To Bjorn Lindgren, the words *Zansi*, *Enhla*, and *Hole*, were taken to convey a sense of ethnic rigidity which ranked the Ndebele state into castes. His anthropological research resurrected the old-fashioned reading of the Ndebele society in terms of castes.<sup>91</sup> The reality is that people continuously moved across these categories as they negotiated new alliances, usually by marriage, merit, and loan of cattle. A respectable *Hole* was able to move closer to the Ndebele chiefs and could become richer than a relative of a chief who had fallen into disfavour. In the Matshetsheni *isigaba*, a *Zansi* man called Sinanga Khumalo was succeeded as a chief by a *Hole* man called Ntuthu Msimangu. Ntuthu was succeeded by another *Hole*, Swina Nkala.<sup>92</sup>

One controversial issue that made early observers describe the Ndebele society as an authoritarian state was that of existence of captives or domestic slavery. In 1829, Robert Moffat mentioned Hurutshe children who were kept by one of Mzilikazi's brothers as slaves.<sup>93</sup> The Ndebele practiced capturing of individuals as well as groups to incorporate into the Ndebele society. However, European observers emphasized the existence of captives as down-trodden slaves among the Ndebele. Such literate observers like Cooper-Chadwick, Kirby and Posselt mentioned Ndebele raiders commonly came with children and women as captives. These captives are said to have had their hands tied behind their backs to ensure that they did not escape.<sup>94</sup> The captives were first of all brought and paraded before the Ndebele king in the capital. The Ndebele king had the duty to distribute the captives. The females who were old enough to be married were immediately distributed among their captors, especially chiefs. The king took a percentage of well-selected captives to reside in the capital and to work as royal servants. These selected captives were termed *imbovane*.<sup>95</sup> Those who remained at the capital as servants of the king received the best treatment, which led them to be fanatical supporters of the king.<sup>96</sup>

Ngwabi Bhebe noted that any Ndebele man of substance such as *amaqharwe* (those who excelled in the military duties) who wanted to have a young captive, female or male, could ask for permission from the king. Permission was granted only on full understanding that the applicant had the means of looking after a captive. The king was really concerned about the welfare of the captives. If the request was successful, the applicant would take the captive to his own home where the latter became, to all intents and purposes, a member of his 'master's' family rather than a slave.<sup>97</sup>

Thomas Morgan Thomas described the social conditions of the captives in the Ndebele society as very humane involving being given good food and being allowed to establish a family and to marry just like all other people.<sup>98</sup> Giving credence to Thomas is Ngwabi Bhebe who noted that even some captives enjoyed being Ndebele to the extent of voluntarily translating their totems from Shona to Sindebele. He gives examples of the Shumbas who changed to Sibanda, Nyangas who changed to Nkomo, Gumbos who changed to Msipa, Shiris who changed to Nyoni, Dzivas who changed to Siziba, Shokos who changed to Ncube and the Moyos to Nhliziyo.<sup>99</sup>

Thomas Morgan Thomas who worked among the Ndebele through the Matabeleland Mission from 1859 to 1870 noted that among the Ndebele, "the African slave is almost his master's equal, and enjoys from the beginning the privileges of a child; and looks upon his master and mistress as being in every respect his parent again".<sup>100</sup>

Thomas added that in the Ndebele state servitude did not "convey the true idea of a slave" because the captives could leave their patrons and live wherever they liked within the Ndebele kingdom and could even be masters on their own right.<sup>101</sup> Captured boys, instead of being kept as slaves as they grew up, were drafted into Ndebele *amabutho* and underwent the same stages as any Ndebele boy. Captured girls too grew up into womanhood in the same way as other Ndebele females and were either married by their own adopted fathers or by other men. They were similarly regarded for *lobola* (bridewealth) purposes as the daughters of the captor.<sup>102</sup>

The issue of the existence of slaves in the Ndebele state becomes an issue in early colonial law records, including instances of the Ndebele keeping as slaves people captured on the Zambezi as well as disputes concerning the slaves brought into the Ndebele state by the Gaza queens who were married by Lobengula. Some later colonial civil cases concerned the slaves of chief Mabikwa.<sup>103</sup> However, the fact that this issue appears from the early colonial law records reflects that the precolonial Ndebele traditional forms of oppression and domination of some group of people over others were now designated as slavery. Even some forms of patron-client relationship between the royalty and their captives could now be seen and interpreted as a form of slavery.

The other issue to consider is gender relations as an aspect of governance. The Ndebele state was a male-dominated society and as such women were perpetually considered to be minors (*abesintwana*).<sup>104</sup> Their custody before marriage was vested in their fathers or eldest brothers where the fathers were deceased. Upon marriage, the custody of women was transferred to that of their husbands. Women were always subordinate to men.<sup>105</sup> Women were not allowed to partake in national issues such as war and they were not represented in the public forums such as *umphakathi* and *izikhulu* where national issues were debated and discussed. Politics was a preserve of men. Women could however affect national policy and politics in general indirectly through their husbands, brothers and sons who were prominent in the Ndebele state.<sup>106</sup>

Women were not a monolithic group of dominated and oppressed people in Ndebele society. The categories of women followed the pattern of the social division or stratification of the Ndebele society into *Zansi*, *Enhla* and *Hole*. At the top were royal women such as the sisters, wives and daughters of the king. There were daughters, sisters, and wives of *amaqhaawe* and other prominent men such as chiefs who were also influential. There were also daughters, sisters and wives of *Enhla* men as well daughters, sisters, and wives of the *Hole* men. At the lowest level were captives who were still undergoing probation. Within the top ranks of women, there was also the hierarchy of senior and junior wives. Taken together, these divisions afforded women different rights and privileges and were affected differently by male domination and oppression.<sup>107</sup>

The royal-affiliated women, like their male counter-parts, received reflected power though not equal to that of their royal brothers.<sup>108</sup> It is unfortunate that the mothers of Mzilikazi and Lobengula died before their sons had become kings, so that we do not know about their

privileges. With a focus on the Zulu *amakhosikazi*, Jennifer Weir has shown that royal women actively participated in state institutions. She noted that among the Zulu, royal women were placed in positions of authority in the *amakhanda* and were invested with a degree of authority and autonomy, because of their age and freedom from ritual constraints. Weir built her case from the works of Sean Henretta who is one of the modern researchers to take exception to andocentric interpretations of pre-colonial leadership, and Carolyn Hamilton who challenged the view of women as a homogenous group marked by universal subordination.<sup>109</sup>

The general insights drawn from other Nguni societies such as the Zulu and Ndwandwe, makes it clear that the mothers of Shaka and Zwibe had privileged positions in society. When Nandi (the mother of Shaka) died she received a state funeral whereas Ntombazi (the mother of Zwibe) was renowned for keeping the heads of the kings whom her son had killed. Helen Bradford was very critical of the dominant attitude among previous researchers to simply view Nguni societies as models of hierarchical patriarchy in which men dominated both domestic and public affairs. She was also very critical of the tendency to see royal women as mere mothers, aunts, sisters, and wives of kings and chiefs. Bradford pointed to the dangers of taking at face value andocentric versions of the South African past. Bradford concluded that the consensus on female subordination and powerlessness was a twentieth century creation.<sup>110</sup>

In the Ndebele state, we learn of some few exceptionally influential women like Lobengula's sister, Mncengence who enjoyed reflected power and authority from her brother, though she was eventually accused of witchcraft and killed. She stayed in the capital, and possessed a lot of cattle just like men. She was consulted on Lobengula's matrimonial affairs and as a favoured sister of the king, she had the privilege of advising the king on state politics.<sup>111</sup> The other influential woman was Lozikheyi Dlodlo, a senior wife of Lobengula. Marieke Clarke who is working on a full biography of Lozikheyi, has pointed out that she was as powerful as any man in the Ndebele state. The king trusted her to the extent that she was given control over the sacred state medicines. Lozikheyi lived in the capital where she was the head queen. She led other queens in dances during crucial national ceremonies. Lozikheyi was also a renowned rainmaker. During the fall of the Ndebele state she played a crucial role in the resistance of 1896 through making war medicines. She became a focal point of Ndebele opposition to British rule. The place known as koNkosikazi in Matabeleland North was named after this powerful woman.<sup>112</sup>

The king's daughters were another group of women who enjoyed privileges beyond that of ordinary women in the Ndebele society. The daughters of both Lobengula and Mzilikazi enjoyed some privileges far above other women. It was in line with the wider stratification of the Ndebele society for them to be married to the *Zansi* and more so to wealthy chiefs.<sup>113</sup> Royal women were widely used for political purposes by their brothers and fathers. Both Mzilikazi and Lobengula deployed their daughters in the creation of alliances between the powerful and wealthy chiefs and the royal house.

Even alliances between powerful states were cemented through the use of royal women. A case in point is that of the alliance between the Ndebele royal family and the Gaza royal family made by Lobengula and Mzila. Mzila sent more than ten women to be married by Lobengula including his daughter Xwalile. Mzila in turn married women from the Ndebele state.<sup>114</sup>

The *Enhla* women enjoyed the 'privilege' of being married by the influential and rich *Zansi* men, although the *Enhla* men were not allowed to marry *Zansi* women. *Zansi* and *Enhla* men generally looked down upon *Hole* women. However, the social stratification that divided the Ndebele society did not succeed in stopping the proud *Zansi* men from having illicit relationships with *Hole* women and subsequently produced belittled offspring termed *incukubili* (half-breeds).<sup>115</sup> It is crucial to note that both Mzilikazi and Lobengula's policies of state expansion and consolidation emphasized increments to their population and social harmony within the state. This entailed encouraging intermarriages among different people of the Ndebele society.<sup>116</sup>

The underlying idea of marriage among the Ndebele was that marriage was not a contract between two people, but rather a pact between the families of the man and the woman which formed a bond of friendship between the members of such families. At times pre-arranged marriages were made although they were rare.<sup>117</sup> The lowest grades of women in the Ndebele state were the captives. They did not enjoy the privilege of being married to men of their choice.

## Conclusion

What is clear from this systematic rethinking of Ndebele governance is that it was a complex mix of egalitarianism, communalism, tensions, competition, co-operation, clan/family intimacies, and mutual assistance. This co-existed with domination, violence of 'big men,' seniority, authoritarianism, aristocratic and militaristic tendencies. All in turn were underpinned by patriarchal ideology and an all-embracing ideology of kinship. This complex situation permitted both respect for human rights as well as their violation. As a result of the complexity of this system of governance, it defies the simplistic single-despot model. There is a lot that constituted good governance co-existing uneasily and tentatively with bad governance. So, post-colonial African dictators are not justified in claiming to be ruling according to African tradition. Eurocentric scholars are also wrong in trying to justify post-colonial crises of governance on the basis of pre-colonial way of doing things in Africa. Perhaps the crisis of governance in postcolonial Africa has more to do with the legacy of late colonialism as argued by Mamdani. This needs another study to closely explore it.

## Notes

1. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940.
2. Chabal and Daloz 1999), p. xvii.
3. Ibid. p. xviii.
4. Ibid. p. 11.
5. Ibid. p. 13.
6. Mamdani 1996, pp. 3-10 and Mamdani 2001a, pp. 4-15.
7. Mamdani 2001c, pp. 63-73.
8. Ibid.
9. Ekeh 1975, pp. 98-103.

10. In Benin, the Marxist oriented dictator Mathieu Kereku when challenged to live power after a long presidential incumbency, he challenged the pro-democracy forces: 'Have you ever heard or seen a retired king in Africa?' He explained that Africa you can only see tombs of kings, which means it was a tradition for kings to die in power.
11. Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983 and Ranger 1993.
12. Hamilton 1998.
13. Becker 1967.
14. Bradley 2005, p.1.
15. Bhebe and Ranger 2001 and Simiyu 1988.
16. Mair 1962.
17. Shillington 1995 and Illiffe 1995.
18. Declé 1900; Moffat 1842 and Wallis 1945.
19. Rasmussen 1978; Ranger 1967; Beach 1896; Cobbing 1976; Bhebe 1979; Nyathi 1995; Nyathi 1996; Nyathi 1999; Msindo 2004; Lindgren 2002; Roberts 2004; and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004.
20. Cobbing 1976.
21. Beach 1986.
22. Msindo 2004, p. 1.
23. Beach 1974.
24. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004.
25. Vail and White 1991.
26. Wallis 1945, pp. xi-xii.
27. According the practice of celibacy, a man could not be allowed to marry and found a family without having proven his prowess in war. Men used to serve in military service for up to 40 years before being allowed to marry.
28. Thomas 1972, pp. 204-206.
29. Cobbing, 1976 p. 54.
30. Ibid, p. 55.
31. Vail and White 1991, p. 92.
32. Cobbing 1976, p. 44.
33. Cobbing 1976, p. 64.
34. See Mhlangazanzhansi 1944, p. 27. The combined number of *AmaHole* was estimated to have constituted 60% of the Ndebele population.
35. Ibid.
36. Beach 1986, pp. 16-20.
37. Becker 1962.
38. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004, pp. 62-65.
39. Mncumbatha signed as treaty with the colonial government at the Cape on behalf of the king, demonstrating how the king trusted this principal of his government.
40. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004, p. 80.
41. This is a popular saying among the Ndebele speaking people about the a mutual way of accepting defeat in an argument and acceptance of popular will to prevail over one person's opinion and thought.

42. Ndlovu, Ndlovu and Ncube 1995.
43. Ibid.
44. This is a common Ndebele proverb warning those who are too politically ambitious to wait for the reigning leader to disappear from the political scene for them to take over. Kings never retired. They died on the throne.
45. The Khumalo royal family praise names encapsulated how they came to be rulers including how Mzilikazi squared up with the feared Zulu king Shaka and defied his oppressive tendencies.
46. Brown 1966.
47. Gerth and Mills 1958, pp. 22-39 and Wylie 1990 p. 45.
48. Nyathi 1995 and Mahlangu 1957.
49. Jeater 1996, p. 1.
50. Child, 1958, pp. 65-70.
51. Wallis 1945, p. 24.
52. Ranger 1999 pp. 15-20.
53. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004, pp. 80-85.
54. Crawford 1970, pp. 5-10.
55. Ibid. pp. 15-20.
56. Sibanda 1981.
57. Cobbing 1976.
58. Ibid.
59. Historical Manuscript TH2/1/1 Thomas Journal, 12 April 18180.
60. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger 2000, p. 25.
61. Historical Manuscript LMS ML1/2/A Robert Moffat to Tidman, 25 December 1862.
62. There is a mountain just outside the city of Bulawayo as one goes to the east where it is said that as the Ndebele settled in Matabeleland some overzealous chiefs like Ngudwane Ndiweni installed Nkulumane the eldest son of Mzilikazi as king of the Ndebele because they thought the king had died. For two years Mzilikazi was missing with another group of Ndebele followers because their journey to Zimbabwe followed two paths. One of the reasons given for this somehow rebellious act was that the Gundwane group wanted to celebrate inxwala ceremony and this could not be done without a king who is supposed to lead the ritual activities. The narration goes on to state that Mzilikazi eventually appeared and was very angry that these people had installed his son as king while he was alive. His response included sentencing a number of chiefs to death who were then executed in this small mountain. This is the Ntabayezinduna crisis
63. Mzilikazi is said to have even killed his rebellious son Nkulumane but this was not supposed to be known by the mainstream Ndebele community. So the popular story was that the heir apparent was taken to his maternal uncles in line with Nguni traditions. But when Mzilikazi died in September 1868, Nkulumane was no where to be found, confirming that he was killed alongside the rebellious chiefs.
64. Cobbing 1976, pp. 155.
65. Gelfand 1968, pp. 237-240.

66. Tabler 1955, pp. 198-200.
67. Interview with Chief John Sangulube, Brunapeg, 10 April 1995.
68. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004.
69. Ibid.
70. Ake 1991 and Cobbah 1987.
71. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007, pp. 160-189
72. Vail and White 1991, pp. 89-92.
73. Ibid.
74. Cobbing 1976, pp. 152-171.
75. This erroneous argument was later used the British conquerors to engage in primitive looting of Ndebele cattle and Ndebele land on the false basis that they had defeated king Lobhengula who was the owner of all these properties.
76. Cobbing 1976.
77. Munjeri 1987.
78. Tabler 1955, pp. 198-200.
79. *Zambezi Mission Record 1*, 1898-1901, pp. 15-18.
80. Baines 1968, p. 45.
81. Ibid.
82. Ranger 1999.
83. *Zambezi Mission Record 1*, 1898-1901, p. 15.
84. Wylie 1990.
85. Cobbing 1976, p. 57.
86. Cooper-Chadiwick 1975, pp. 107-110.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Rhodesian Government Delineation Report, Matshetshe Tribal Trust Land: History of the Tribe, 1964.
91. Lindgren 2002, pp. 54-60.
92. Ibid.
93. Wallis 1945, pp. 11-15.
94. Cooper-Chadiwick 1975, p. 107.
95. In the 1990s, a new pressure group emerged in Matabeleland under the name Imbovane YamaHlabezulu led by the late Mr. Bekithemba John Sibindi. Imbovane referred to those captives who were well selected to work as royal servants. In political terms, however, it meant a small ant that ate maize through barrowing into it until it gets rotten.
96. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004, pp. 80-83.
97. Bhebe 1979, pp. 23-30.
98. Thomas 1864, pp. 235-238.
99. Bhebe 1979, pp. 5-8.
100. Thomas 1864, p. 238.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid. pp. 230-238.

103. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004, pp. 84-86.
104. Guy 1990, pp. 34-45.
105. Mahamba 1996.
106. Declé 1974.
107. Weir 2000.
108. White 1975, pp. 109-112.
109. Hamilton 1985, pp. 42-53.
110. Bradford 1996, pp. 351-370.
111. Mahamba 1996, p. 12-18.
112. Clarke 2000.
113. White 1975, 108-113.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid. The Ndebele public ideology was that *umfazi kalaHole*, meaning for marriage purposes men could marry across the social divides with ease.
117. W181/1 Statement of Various Matabele Connected with the Royal House, November 1973.

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