

Revitalizing Memory in Honour of Maseko Ngoni's Indigenous Bantu Governance

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis we will show that individually we still have memory, which allows us to recognise our ways of living. To recognise is to remember. Thus, we intend to offer ways of regenerating Maseko Ngoni governance by reviving the personal memories of the Ubuntu collective through embracing our languages, histories, politics, medicine, economics and spirituality. The research methodology used in this thesis is inclusive of all Ubuntu sacred oral evidence while challenging some written sources and welcoming others as ways of sharing our personal memories as an act of reviving our collective knowledge (memories). We show that this shared knowledge is the basis of our sustainable Indigenous governance because it is motivated by respect for the land and the people (inclusive of all living things).

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GLOSSARY OF BANTU WORDS

<i>Abantwana</i>	(all children)
<i>Alumuzana</i>	(Village Head)
<i>Amadlozi</i>	(ancestral spirits)
<i>Amai</i>	(mother)
<i>Amajaba</i>	(young men)
<i>Amakosana</i>	(lesser chief)
<i>Ambuya</i>	(maternal grandmother)
<i>Assegai</i>	(generally meant a throwing weapon)
<i>Baba</i>	(father)
<i>Baba mukulo</i>	(male elder)
<i>Chiwaya</i>	(cattle kraal)
<i>Dadakazi</i>	(female father)
<i>Difaqane</i>	(the scattering or forced migration)
<i>Emakhandzamili</i>	(those found ahead)
<i>Gogo</i>	(grandmother)
<i>Iklwa</i>	(stabbing assegai)
<i>Inkakazana</i>	(younger girls before puberty)
<i>Indlovukati</i>	(Great Queen Mother)
<i>Inkatha</i>	(nation)
<i>Inkosikazi</i>	(the mother of the nation)
<i>Inkosi ya makosi</i>	(Paramount Chief)
<i>Innyathi</i>	(buffalo)
<i>Impi</i>	(army)
<i>Isanusi</i>	(diviner)
<i>Isibongo</i>	(eponymous)
<i>Izintombi</i>	(young girls after puberty)
<i>laweni or omphala</i>	(boy's dormitory)
<i>Mafuko</i>	(clan systems/governance)
<i>Pfuko</i>	(single clan)
<i>Mama mukulo</i>	(female elder)
<i>Mfecane</i>	(literary translated as shattering or crushing)
<i>Munzi</i>	(village)
<i>Nqabaneni</i>	(the little shelter)
<i>Nyanga yemithi</i>	(medicine man or herbalist)
<i>Seano</i>	(totem or object of reverence)
<i>Sikhulus</i>	(chiefs)
<i>Umkulumqango</i>	(The Great Deviser or The Great Spirit),
<i>Unkulunkulu</i>	(The Greatest of All)
<i>Umnikazi we Zinto Zonke</i>	(The Owner of All Things)

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I would like to begin by thanking my ancestors for the guidance they have bestowed upon me in this life. I would also like to acknowledge that without the wisdom and teachings I gained from Baba Mukulo (Elder Father), Mama Mukulo (Elder Mother), Baba (Father), Ambuya (Maternal Grandmother) and Amai (Mother), I would not have been able to write this thesis. I hope they have the satisfaction of knowing that their teachings were not in vain. I greatly appreciate all your efforts to educate me as I am a better Ubuntu Ngoni because of your efforts.

The support of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Jeff Corntassel has been invaluable and cannot be expressed enough. To Dr. Taiaiake Alfred thank you for encouraging me to be comfortable about speaking from my Indigenous perspective. To Dr. Francis Adu-Febiri thank you for inspiring me to be a leader who trusts in our own Indigenous wisdom without having to fear the compromise of scholastic achievement. To Dr. James Webster who was an important source of Afrikan information, thank you. To Isaiah Achilla, my brother, I am grateful for your ideas, support and tireless editing. To Adam Barker: thank you for your editing ideas. Finally, I would like to thank my partner and friend, Mandeep Bhalru, for her support throughout this whole process.

PREFACE

First and foremost, it is important that I acknowledge my ancestors. I exist because they exist. If there is anything that I would like you, the reader, to take away from this thesis it is this: Memory is history and history is memory. In doing this thesis I have learned that to remember is to recognize and to recognize is to remember.

Keeping the above points in mind, it is important to remember that our memories inform Bantu governance based on our experiences acquired from our interaction with our lands. These Bantu experiences are encoded through communal discourse using our languages. Thus, we share and store our memories through songs, poems, stories, cave paintings and all other mannerisms of Bantu sacred oral evidence. Bantu governance is endemic to all that is Bantu because it is based on shared values and philosophies about inclusion and creating the greatest participation among the Bantu; whereas colonialism is based on hierarchy, competition and exclusion from meaningful participation. In this research I show that it is Bantu memories that colonialism has and is still trying to cohesively steal away from you and me by employing diversionary trickery and lies. By engaging in our Bantu knowledge I will not allow the colonial system to lull me into forgetfulness; if I forget these experiences, then colonialism offers itself as the only viable and sensible governance for the present and the future. In my experience with colonialism, I have only known it as an institution of taking --- yet its maker would like me to believe that it is all about giving. I will not be fooled again by colonialism for I am raw and in pain from their wicked ways. I therefore write in response to colonialism, which threatens to annihilate our ways of being, if we do not act against it.

CHAPTER ONE – REVITALIZING MEMORY IN HONOUR OF TRADITIONAL MASEKO NGONI GOVERNANCE

Kings, blacksmiths, and slaves can forget, but the heart of the Ngoni remembers everything.

-Soninke Bard

The way verbal memory works in oral art forms is quite different from what literates in the past commonly imagined. In a literate culture verbatim memorization is commonly done from the text, to which the memorizer returns as often as necessary to perfect and test verbatim mastery. In the past, literates have commonly assumed that oral memorization in an oral culture achieved the same goal of absolutely verbatim reception... [not recognizing] instances of simultaneous recitation in oral cultures were hardly sought for.

-Walter J. Ong, 1990 in .

To illustrate the importance and interrelatedness of Ubuntu¹ languages let us start with a formal Maseko Ngoni greeting as taught to this student by Mama Mukulo (Elder Mother, herbalist and diviner): “Sanibona” meaning “We see you” but also implies that at

¹ The term Bantu has a complex history within scholarly circles. Noël Mostert in *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa people* (1992: 79) strongly describes the subtleties of the controversy in the following words:

They represent today's nearly two-thirds of the Bantu-speaking people of South Africa, and include two large individual groups, the Xhosa and the Zulu. Like the word Bantu, the term Nguni is the term of academic linguistic convenience arbitrarily settled upon by an earlier generation of historians. It therefore offers no help in deciding the continuities and emergence of the Nguni during the critical past millennium.

Supporting Noël Mostert in the devaluation of our words and our identity Robert O. Collins in *Problems in African History* (1968: 57) claims that:

The term Bantu was first coined by Dr. Wilhelm Bleek in a book published in 1862 entitled *A Comparative Grammar of South African languages*. Bleek observed that nearly every language spoken on the southern third of the African continent used prefixes, which could be attributed to a set of what he called “proto- prefixes,” presuming a generic relationship and implying an aboriginal source.

Anthropologist, archaeologists and other white academics have had the audacity to label us as Negroids and strangely this deed has had the power to remove our identity (Joel A. Rogers 1972; Martin Bernal, 1987; and Cheikh Anta Diop, 1974). Once we were Negroids we gained the title of backward people with no culture or civilization, in short this is how the nigger came to be an instrument. No more a human, we were things to be exploited as observed in the writing of J.D. Omer-Cooper: “By the early nineteenth century, whites in the Cape referred to their coloured servants as *skepsels*, meaning living instruments rather than persons entitled to human rights (1987: 31).”

In the Toronto Star's newspaper (Ideas column) Ron Charach's provocative article, entitled *Don't Call Me White*, succinctly captures the creation of racialized terminology within the scientific community:

The concept of “Caucasian race” sprang from the enlightenment's passion for classification and the romantic's obsession with human morphology. It was first proposed by the German scientists Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) and was based primarily on the skull features, best exhibited by the Georgians, a people living in the southern Caucasus.

The Caucasus held a strong attraction for Blumenbach and other contemporaries because of its (imagined) proximity to Mount Ararat - where, according to Biblical legend, Noah's Ark eventually landed after the Great Flood. Sound scientific so far? (August 21, 2005).

Ron Charach goes on to state that the term Caucasian became synonymous with white people being of the “master race” and white itself was associated with the following characteristics:

goodness, purity, clean sheets, snow, enlightenment, spirituality, (“the white light”), and mother's milk – though anyone who has seen real mother's milk knows it to be yellowy, or at best, off-white. In stark contrast is what we think about black [relating to and associated with Negroid]: evil (black heart), darkness, filth and depression (what Churchill called his “black dogs”) (August 21, 2005).

What is even more infuriating is the appropriation of the term “Bantu” as an invention of their own. This is a classic example of white academic fraud. We are not Negroids (beasts of burden) we are Bantu, a known fact to us since time immemorial. The Zulu high priest Credo Vusa'mazulu Mutwa in *My People, My Africa*, truthfully states that:

The black people of Africa called themselves, and any other people on earth, the Bantu, Watu or Abantu. This loosely means “people” or “human beings”. People of Europe and parts of Asia are called Abantu abamhlope, meaning literally “human beings who are white”, while we ourselves Abantu abansundu, or “human beings who are dark brown”(1969: 18).

a deep spiritual level this student is never alone as his ancestors are always with him. Consequently we see you. The response to this is “Yebo Sanibona” mean “Yes we see you too,” again the implication is that the respondent and her ancestors are in agreement about their observation of us. To our ancestors, to our elders, to our parents, to our sisters and brothers “Sanibona.” Important to note is the usage of “we” throughout the thesis, this is a conscious effort to use the collective “first” person (we), as this is how we communicate as Ubuntu. To use this form of communication is to be traditional and respectful, as we believe that “this student is because you are.” Thus, to speak is to acknowledge our living relations while also honouring our ancestral spirits.

The central question of this thesis has been brilliantly posed by the esteemed scholar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak?” Can we the Indigenous peoples who have been affected by colonialism, analyze this experience and speak about it from our own philosophical and theoretical perspectives? As a Maseko Ngoni this student poses the following research question: Can the personal historical memories of Indigenous governance and responsibilities be an asset to the debilitating and crippling neo-colonial social-cultural and spiritual lives of the Maseko pfuko (clan) in Lizulu? Of course, an answer to this question is an affirmative – yes. By outlining ways to revitalize Ngoni mafuko (clan systems/governance) responsibilities through a personal remembrance of sacred oral histories, this essay will explore how ancient Bantu philosophies not only shaped the pre-colonial era of Maseko governance in Lizulu – but how it continues to enable the current Maseko community in Lizulu to maintain its’ identity. Unquestionably the vitality of the Bantu Maseko Ngoni philosophy, which informed governance of years past, has been undermined and demonized by colonialism.

Thus, colonialism has deprived us of our own experience of governance and in so doing has tried to destroy our individual and collective confidence. Yet, to date we are still collectively glued together, albeit tenuously by personal memories of sacred oral histories that continue to provide us with our distinct sense of identity. The act of collectively re-engaging our true knowledge (personal memory) will give us the foundation for regenerating Maseko Ngoni governance.

Location of Author Within Research

Roots of this student are deeply entrenched in what Nwankwo T. Nwaezeigwe (1997) has identified as the Gomani Maseko Ngoni of Ntcheu, an offspring of the amaZulu, Swazis and baSotho, all major Bantu groups of modern-day South Afrika and Swaziland. Within documented history, ‘Nguni’ and ‘Bantu’ are terms of intense controversy. For example, extrapolating from Dennis Makhudu’s thesis, Vernon February identifies four major Nguni language-speaking groups – amaZulu, amaXhosa, Swazis and amaNdebele (February 1988: 73). February does not reduce “Nguni and Bantu” into a mere “term of academic linguistic convenience arbitrarily settled upon by an earlier generation of historians (1988: xii).” To support his interpretation in the viability and use of the words “Nguni” and “Bantu,” – “its continuities and emergence” – February calls for a thorough re-evaluation of previous studies in which South Afrika was exclusively seen through the lens of “white people who determine the historical processes and project the cultural image of the inhabitants (1988: 68).” Noël Mostert in *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa’s Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa people* (1992: 79) strongly contradicts February and describes the subtleties of the controversy in the following words:

They represent today's nearly two-thirds of the Bantu-speaking people of South Africa, and include is two large individual groups, the Xhosa and the Zulu. Like the word Bantu, the term Nguni is the term of academic linguistic convenience arbitrarily settled upon by an earlier generation of historians. It therefore offers no help in deciding the continuities and emergence of the Nguni during the critical past millennium.

Shula Marks (1970) in “The Zulu Disturbances in Natal,” adds the following detailed analysis:

The term “Zulu” today has a linguistic rather than a strictly ethnic connotation, though it is used in a loose sense to refer to all the chiefdoms and clans of Natal and Zululand. As a result of the conquest of Natal and Zululand by Shaka, the chief of the Zulu people at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the name became widely applied at least to those people actually incorporated into the Zulu kingdom. In fact the use of the term is fraught with difficulties. Many of the Africans adult males in the multi racial colony of Natal were refugees from the Zulu kings and for the most of the nineteenth century would almost certainly have denied the appellation “Zulu.” As late as the first decade of this century, the true “Zulu” contemptuously called the Africans of Natal “Amakafula” (Kaffirs) and still call them “Amalala” (apparently the name of one of the streams of migration into Natal). By the beginning of this century, however, it is clear that certain non-Zulu groups even in Natal were beginning to class themselves as “Zulu” perhaps partly in response to a European tendency to classify them this way. For some it was a more self-conscious assertion of nationalism, an attempt to overcome the tribal divisions which beset African society in Natal. Under pressure from white settlers and their government, even Africans in Natal looked back to the days of Shaka with nostalgia...²

As to why this student’s collective (Maseko Ngoni) emigrated northwards from Southern Afrika to Malawi, formerly Nyasaland or as Professor J.B. Webster labelled the area geographically and historically the “littoral region as an area of refuge”?

The answer to this question rests in Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka’s (c.1787-1828) reign in Southern Afrika which historians have branded as Mfecane (literary translated as shattering or crushing) set in motion a violent transformation of not only within the

² Robert I. Rotberg & Ali Mazrui (eds.), *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (1970: 213-215,n.1)

amaZulu, but also among the neighbouring Nguni and non-Nguni communities.³

Literature on Mfecane and its ramifications is immense (Sparks, 1997; Becker, 1964; Thompson, 1990). For example, a poem by Zibhebhu aptly captures the fury of this historical event which radically transformed Nguni society:

Shield of Shaka and Jama:
 He devoured Godide son of Ndlela
 Among the Zulu bodyguard;
 He ate up Sihayo son of Xhongo,
 He ate up Sekethwayo son of Nhlaka,
 Of the great men of Zululand;
 He destroyed Mtokwe son of Mdamba
 Amongst the Zulu bodyguard;
 He devoured Ntshingwayo son of Mahole
 He ate up Siquhoto son of Mkhanyile,
 He ate up Dilikana son of Hlakanyana,
 He devoured Mnqandi son of Mtshana,
 Among the Zulu bodyguard;
 He ate up Bulangethe son of Magidi,
 He devoured Vumandaba son of Ntethi,
 Among the Zulu bodyguard.
 He devoured So-and-so of So-and-So,
 I don't like to mention his name,
 If I named him there would be an outburst of wailing;
 [This triplet is repeated in total eight times]
 He who stalked forth in broad daylight,
 For he entered Ondini not when it was dark,
 But when it was clear and they saw him,
 He finished them off entirely,
 Destroyer of the enemy assembly.

In Jeff Guy's *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (1979: 203-204).

Our political stability crumbled. Societal norms disintegrated. Mafuko (clan systems) opposed to Shaka's regime fled northward, Baba (father) spoke of the Ngoni Bantu as

³ "There were and remain strong differences between Sotho and Nguni societies. The Nguni lived in widely scattered homesteads and lacked the sort of populous and centralized urban settlements that the Sotho and the Shona established. The Sotho were less exclusively concerned with cattle than the Nguni, for whom their beasts were the central focus of their existence. There was a cattle culture of maximized ritualistic intricacy, the foundation of their whole social structure, so intertwined throughout their lives and customs that no aspect of their existence remained without its direct influence (Mostert, 1992: 79)."

being one of the major trekkers of this northward migration (2003). Some fled eastward. Others fled further south.

Knowledge of all these sacred historical events is known to the Maseko through our sacred dreams, songs, poems, oral teachings, the hum of the drums, cave paintings, art sculptures, sacred animals, sacred places and all other Bantu forms of evidence which inform personal memory. Our sacred oral histories are functional because they provide and encompass the collective's common sacred history through traditional customs – rituals, laws, languages and spirituality – this creates an interconnectedness, which ensures our survival in a rapidly changing world. For the Maseko Ngoni, sacred oral histories embody our chronologies, our genealogies, our leaders, our peoples and our traditions. This sacred oral genre is a functional library one ignores at one's own peril.

Through William Chapman (1979: 46), we can still sense the intense stirrings of the collective's revitalized memory vis-à-vis, lessons to be drawn from historical experiences for the well being of the present homeland/landscape because “the past is at its best when it takes us to places that counsel and instruct, that show us who we are by showing us where we have been, that remind us of our connections to what happened Here (*italics in the original*).⁴ Why is the recognition of Chapman's observation very important to the writing of this thesis? Because mainly through revitalized personal memory “does the country of the past transform and supplant the country of the present (Basso 1996: 5).” With the aid of revitalized personal memory, Maseko Ngoni could nurture a viable Indigenous governance culture – politically, economically and socially.

⁴ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, 1996:4.

Revitalizing Memories of Maseko Ngoni

It is time for the Maseko Ngoni to jog their memories and remember who we are because until we remember how to live an informed Ubuntu life, we cannot leave the yoke of white slavery. The great Zulu high priest Mutwa reminds us that: “No man, when he is a visitor in another man's house, can dictate domestic terms to his host. He is certainly in no position to refuse to return what his host has lent him to help him establish himself (Mutwa, 1969: 218).” We do not wish to be masters of anything as we have learnt that this means that something or someone will be subservient to us. No, we want to live by the Bantu and Maseko philosophy, above all preserve all life as told to Baba Mukulo and Mutwa (1969). As Maseko Ngoni we can only preserve all life by revitalizing and regenerating “Inkatha” which loosely translates to unity, strength and arguably nationhood. “Paulina Dlamini tells us that the ‘inkatha yezwe yakwaZulu’ was a traditional supernatural coil that all the Nguni accepted as their symbol of identity, connection to the land, strength and unity,” in *Paulina Dlamini: Servant of Two Kings* (1986: 29). Mama Mukulo told this student that inkatha has its roots in a time when politic, medicine, economics, spirituality and all relationships were governed by a council of elder mothers (Mutwa, 1969). Mama Mukulo states that: *women were the leaders because it is they that brought life into this world and it is they that care for all life* (Personal Communication, 1981-82). Mutwa confirms this by the following statements:

The Mother of the People also knew that corporal punishment infuriates, challenges and hardens the average criminally inclined human being and encourages him to become more cunning. Thus they kept war and crime away from their land with the one medium that impresses the average human being – witchcraft. This was the first and the last instance in the whole record of the black people of African when pure witchcraft and black magic were used, not to terrorize people, but to keep peace in the land.

Tribal historians today still sigh for those times when there was only one race of man and the spirit of peace walk to the land-when every man, woman and child, and every beast, felt the soothing protection of the soft-eyed, infinitely wise mothers of the people (Mutwa, 1969: 20).

Revitalizing inkatha demands that we stop responding to neo-colonialism and neo-slavery, as these are the experience of being selfless in the sense of nothingness as developed by exclusion from meaningful participation. Further use of these neo-colonial structures implies that we have accepted the label of primitive savage, because in using these structures someone else has to think for us, which makes us helpless and dependent, as is the aim of colonization. Achebe (1964) echoes these points of colonial tactics in *Arrow of God* where the racist writing of George Allen entitled: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* are reflective of a small dose of evidence from one region only. For the most part even the liberal white settlers in Afrika still see the Bantu as not being equalled to them as evidenced in the quote:

But then, he had read enough about psychology to understand the sexual aspects of the colour barrier, one of whose foundation is jealousy of the white man for the superior sexual potency of the native; and he was surprised at one of the guarded, a white woman, so easily evading this barrier. Yet he had met a doctor on the boat coming out, with years of experience in a country district, who told him he would not be surprised to know the number of white women who had relations with black men. Tony felt at that time that he would be surprised; he felt it would be rather like having a relationship with an animal, in spite of his 'progressiveness' (Lessing, 1950: 197).

Colonial structures create a culture of superiority in the colonizers and a culture of inferiority in the Maseko Ngoni, as the colonizers' identities are reinforced through the use of their colonial governance in our territories and home (Alfred, 2005). In this contemporary era many Maseko Ngoni question their identity because our governance no longer reflects our identity. Deep in Maseko psyche, we challenge the colonial ways, as they do not resonate with us because we still have the memories of ourselves. It is like

an old song, in the back of our minds, once we hear it we recognise the tune and soon we are all singing aloud for freedom, care and love. To revive our memory is to bring dignity and honour back to the Maseko Ngoni. Our ancestral Maseko governance and institutions are a reflection of the road maps that inkatha used to determine our collectively shared direction (Mutwa, 1969). We Bantu must use Bantu governance, just as Europeans will use European governance and Asians will use Asian governance to direct themselves. To expect neo-colonialism to act in our best interest as Ngoni is to disregard all historical evidence and accept diversionary trickery and lies when the evidence of truth are before us (Chanock, 1985; Fraser, 1914; Hochschild, 2002; and Meredith, 1979).

Fortunately leaders like Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II provide us with the historical evidence which shows that we can determine our lives and our future using Maseko Ngoni ways if we choose to use Abantu values (Phiri, 1973; Read, 1956 and Pike, 1968). It is important that we make it clear that Bantuism and Masekoism are not determined by ethnicity, skin pigmentation or one specific language;⁵ it is determined by lived historical experience, using shared Bantu languages which create shared meanings. This shared meaning leads to respect and care for all that is Bantu and Maseko Ngoni (Basso, 2001; Waters, 2004 and Mutwa, 1969).

Let us point out that our actions have been advanced and well articulated by Professor Taiiaki Alfred, (2005) who in *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, reminds us that every individual action adds to the collective Indigenous revolution against neo-colonialism as long as these actions are motivated by truth,

⁵ However we should point out again that language is important as a tool of connecting people to a specific place as it is used to encode shared experience and meaning.

regeneration, restitution and resurgence. It is therefore important that we break down the meaning of our revolutionary words:

- Regeneration in the Maseko Ngoni context means we stop listening to the lies of the old colonial masters who insist we keep using their colonial institutions while quieting our opposition with tokenisms and symbolic gestures of Maseko governance. There can be no Maseko regeneration if our governance is not grounded in the foundation of Bantuism. All that is Maseko Ngoni is Bantu and all that is Bantu is Maseko Ngoni. Our full identity can only be reflected in our lands, our languages and our Indigenous governance.
- Restitution: "...peacemaking requires making amends for harm done before any of the other steps to restore the fabric of a relationship can be taken (Alfred, 2005: 151)." All those who benefited from Maseko slavery, Maseko exploitation and Maseko colonization, it is time to pay up. To each action there is a consequence, this is the law of natural justice. As the great Mutwa (1969) has pointed out, we Bantu do not forget the genocides committed against us. In one way or another these heinous and wicked crimes must be made right or we will surrender these evil deeds of violence back to them that brought them into our house. We know their evil is in our house because we are using their evil things to kill each other but we are starting to wake up to this fact. When we are fully aware we will send back your evil things with a forceful vengeance of a people who have been seriously hurt. Bantu colonization requires very serious restitution as a precondition for any meaningful peace to be established with the colonizers.
- Resurgence is courageous action against injustice, but, more importantly, it is action beyond resistance. "In rejecting the temptation to join the settlers and their states, seeking instead to confront settler society in a struggle to force an end to the Imperial reality and to lay down the preconditions for a peaceful coexistence, we would choose to use contention as a means of widespread enlightenment and societal change (Alfred, 2005: 151)."

Afrikans in the contemporary era have succeeded in the physical struggle over colonialism but we are still slaves of the mind and heart. While we were fighting the physical revolution, colonialism was invading the sacred terrain of our inner world. Thus, our Bantu political contention with colonialism must be all encompassing if we want to stop the insidious process of colonialism. Our proposal for achieving an informed Maseko life is simple in theory and action; we advocate for that which is

endemic and truthful for all Bantu. Let us be very clear, Maseko governance cannot be applied to the foundation of the contemporary neo-colonial state of Malawi because the present governance is foreign and therefore can only work towards the betterment of its creators – at the expense of the Maseko. This contemporary governance structure reflects the needs and wants of its makers. In their own writing they inform us that their central goal was wealth acquisition through colonial oppression and exploitation (Hochschild, 1998; Meredith, 1979 and Conrad, 1902). Sadly in our present times, the confirmation of colonial empire-building is reflected by Afrikan neo-colonial states where black citizens mimic white settlers with their aspirations for power, further demonstrating that colonialism is still very much alive. Do we need any additional evidence to remind us that “Wana wa njoka de njoka” (The child of a snake can only be a snake)?

Elders, Mothers and Fathers, Brothers and Sisters and those yet Unborn, let us take our lessons from colonialism and commit not to repeat this evil or be conned by it again. Let us abandon this system of colonialism, which yokes us into slavery, neo-slavery – servitude and whatever else may follow this insidious process. The most intelligent question we must ask of ourselves is how do we free ourselves as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Our answer to this question lies in acknowledging that our governance structures were not perfect but nonetheless they were our responsibility to fix and embrace. Our institutions were designed to determine our destiny based on inclusion and not exclusion of our people from political participation (Mutwa, 1969). The evidence of how well our institutions functioned to meet our needs while still leaving room for growth is outlined in the final chapter of this thesis. We never need to doubt ourselves because our memories and experience will guide us about where we have been

and thus, inform us about where we are going. The learned Professor Taiaiake Alfred in *Peace, Power, Righteousness: an indigenous manifesto* informs us that: “The context of life has changed, and Indigenous people today live in a materialistic world of consumerism and corporate globalisation – a world diametrically opposed to the social and political culture that sustained our communities in the past (1999: 22).” As a result, we must regenerate ourselves using informed Maseko Ngoni ways as this is the only way to create a sustainable future for all that is Bantu.

Teaching from elders will be used to explore governing institutional strengths and weaknesses of Indigenous governance and ways to fortify them. For example, our elder’s comments and analysis on spirituality will be valuable in assessing how effective Indigenous governance can co-exist with such an institution in times of crisis.

“Throughout the modern history of black Afrika, men alone and men in groups have refused to accept the ways in which their political, social, and economic parameters were defined by others (Rotberg & Mazrui, 1970: xvii).” To protect their independence, Maseko Ngoni resisted Shaka and other tyrannical rulers. Theirs was an attempt to protect Indigenous forms of governance, which cherished human life, a point this essay will incorporate as its main theme.

Why this particular community, why this region, why this question? Of primary importance is the direct link between this student and the Maseko Ngoni, his cradle community and society. Identity clings to the human mind like the tentacles of an octopus, questions of identity, its mysteries, its contradictions and our efforts to resolve all these issues if possible. For example, let us very briefly delve into questions of this collective’s origins. D.D. Phiri (1982: 62), a Malawian, arrives at the following

conclusion: The original home of the Maseko was in the valley of the Usutu River in Swaziland.” Nwankwo T. Nwaezeigwe (1997: 14), a Nigerian, names the “Pongolo River region, south of present-day Swaziland,” as their ancestral natal residence.⁶

Curiously one is tempted to ask what kind of governance did they have? Why did they trek further north? Why did they loose their language yet historical memories of their kith and kin, the amaZulu, Swazis and baSotho are fundamental to their identity? There is another burning question. Like all Afrikan communities, Maseko Ngoni are now part of the neo-colonial state riddled with decaying and collapsing institutions of governance, yet the old white colonial masters says, keep using the colonial institutions they will enable you as a society to replicate yourselves in ways that are orderly and efficiently.

The scant Maseko Ngoni literature available has severe limitations as it was and is mostly written by white colonials whose main audience is their kith and kin. Since that time we in “Dark Afrika” have been reduced to subhuman because we can never be the representation of white power while being black. We would argue that everything in the white system, when put in relation to us, justifies their original position, which was we are less human than them (Hochschild, 1998 and Conrad, 1902). In their writing they sanctify what is Maskeo Ngoni while disputing our memory about our connection to our past, present and future. The pervasiveness of their effects to whiten our sacred history become apparent when you learn that the gurus of our written history are white (Nwaezeigwe, 1997). Unfortunately, their co-optation efforts are overwhelming and they range along an extensive list from Christian missionaries, anthropologists, archaeologists,

⁶ Bridglal Pachai (1973: 36), a South African, makes the following remarks on Ngoni communities in Malawi: “These belong to the Maseko line of the Swazi chief Ngwana, whose son Mputa and Chidiaonga were responsible for setting up the Maseko Ngoni in Malawi.”

medical practitioners, lawyers, geologists, politicians and economists in addition to others.

Their interest in us highlights one point: we are the “other” which is not equal to their humanness. We have been “othered” from our own history in that if we want to engage in our history we have to conform to the rules of the foreigners because they are the embodiment of scholarship in the academic institutions. However, every time we conform to their lies we legitimize them while lulling ourselves deeper into identity loss and forgetfulness. No one expressed this more brilliantly than Gianni Guadalupi and Shugaar when they described it this way: “The history of the world has almost always been written from a point of view situated around forty-five degrees north latitude (2002, viii).” To date, this remains the status quo. Because sacred oral histories do not conform to the rigour and prestige associated with the high minds of Western academia, to many a Western scholar, they are anathema, an insult to modern scholarship. So pervasive was this indifference Gayatri Spivak had no option but to ask, “Can the subaltern speak?” To fully grasp the authentic memories and voices of the indigenes, the Ngoni languages become just as relevant as the personal sacred oral history. George Eliot was accurate when she wrote, “To reconstruct a past world, doubtless with a view to the highest purpose of truth, - what a work to be in any way present at, to assist in, though only as a lamp-holder!”⁷ “... *but the heart of Maseko Ngoni remembers everything,*” Baba Mukulo (Elder Father), an informant to this student, always reminded his listeners, young and old. Sacred oral histories which served his predecessors informed his oratory; he himself, a “lampholder.”

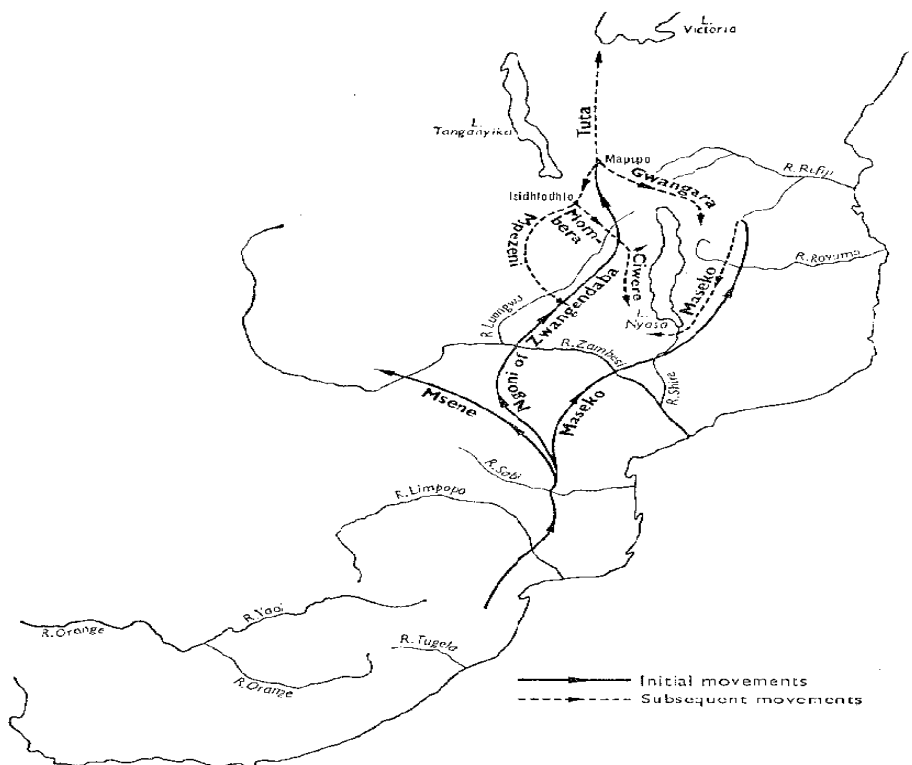
⁷ Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Mind 1830-1870* (1985: xiii).

As a child this student learn from Baba Mukulo that the Maseko Ngoni can delineate their roots back to the valley of the Usutu River in Swaziland. Consequently they were within reach of the lethal inkatha impetus of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka. To escape the turmoil and perhaps annihilation, according to Omer-Cooper, Maseko Ngoni “pursued a northward course” through Mozambique. “... keeping to the east of Lake Nyasa they crossed the Ruvuma River and entered the Songea District of modern Tanganyika (Roland, 1974: 116-117)” before they found their way into the littoral region of Malawi where they settled. Successive generations were never to forget this landmark of their history as demonstrated by this student’s writing. In light of sacred oral pfuko histories, Baba Mukulo’s narration summarized the Maseko Ngoni’s odyssey from Natal to Malawi with this overture:

Many moons past, an all-powerful Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka ruled over our land like an angry wounded innyathi (buffalo). Inkosi loved and hated, maintained grudges and sought revenge, formed alliances and fought wars. Our ancestors were angry. To punish Inkosi for the misery he had inflicted on the Nguni, they sent droughts by the gross. Many died. Others migrated north under the wise leadership of Zwangendaba Jere and Ngwane Maseko. Although they spoke the same language and shared their bloodlines, these two were jealous of each other’s talents in leadership and war. Each plotted the overthrow of the other. Arrogantly one day, Jere bellowed, “I’m the lion of the land admired by all.” Unimpressed Maseko retorted bitterly and dismissively, “Usima yedwa njengalanga, lona limi lodwa ezinzulwini.” [He who stands alone like the sun stands in the sky] His pride wounded, Jere threatened to kill Maseko and all males in his clan. Fearful of fighting his kin, Maseko fled. With the stealth of a lion, Jere gave chase. At Mbire area, Jere cornered Maseko and defeated his rag-tag army. Day and night, Maseko plotted revenge. Meanwhile, proudly and excessively, Jere celebrated his victory. Still nursing his humiliating defeat like a cock that had lost a battle to a rival, Maseko was joined by Nxaba, another runaway from Mfecane. Quickly they formed an alliance. Both hated and despised Jere. One day they attacked and defeated their archrival, Jere. Following this defeat, Jere and his disciples crossed the Zambezi River during the month of the eclipse, travelling on the sunset side of the Lake. A few years later, Maseko and his followers crossed the mighty Zambezi and travelled further north

on the sunrise side. They were determined to avoid any conflict (Baba Mukulo, Personal Communication, 1981-82).⁸

Figure 1



Northward migration routes of Zwangendaba's Ngoni, the Maseko Ngoni and the Msene

9

This was the story and history passed over to Baba Mukulo in our present-day natal and ancestral home, a place called Lizulu. From Baba Mukulo's narration, the student's family is an outcrop of battles and legendary leaders, of migrations and geographical displacement, of bloody pfuko feuds and pfuko formations.¹⁰ To date, this

⁸ Within and among the Maseko Ngoni, trek routes and migration experiences are a constant source of ferocious debates. This is not uncommon in oral histories; perhaps, this is one of its major trademarks. Very likely, they are fueled by passionate differences held by different mafuko seeking to dominate others. It is possible some mafuko may have used the westward route and re-joined their kith and kin in Malawi years later. However, Baba Mukulo's narration has striking similarities to D.D. Phiri's *From Nguni to Ngoni: A History of the Ngoni Exodus from Zululand and Swaziland to Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia* (1982: 62-66).

⁹ Reprinted from, *The Zulu Aftermath* by J.D. Omer-Cooper, (1966: 6)

¹⁰ A detailed analysis of this can be found in Bryant, *History of the Zulu* (1964: 12-15).

student's society in Lizulu remembers Zululand, Swaziland and Sotholand with nostalgia because they were "once part of the Nguni folks who were settled there." A pragmatic people, historical circumstances, which made them émigrés or refugees in Malawi, saw them call themselves Ngoni instead of Nguni, a hallmark of their immeasurable ability to adapt to changing historical realities. Nwaezeigwe concludes, they chose the name "Ngoni" instead of "Nguni" because the new name "was easier to pronounce for the peoples that the Ngoni met in the north (1977: 9)."

Relief from the ravages of Mfecane for the Maseko (in modern-day Malawi) and for the family of this student was brief. Political institutions had to be revitalized. Indigenous governance had to be re-established. Hardly had the septic wounds of mfecane healed fully when the rising European colonial order of the twentieth century brilliantly captured by Chinua Achebe (1958) in his seminal novel, *Things Fall Apart* descended on society with a vengeance. Communities fragmented further. Fragile institutions of governance changed dramatically. Painfully Afrikans suffered. Into this Afrikan dance with colonialism, in the District of Ntcheu (Malawi) the student's father was born, c.1921-1923 (the exact date is not known due to a lack of documentation around birthday).

Partly as a result of youthful zeal and partly as a result of the nostalgia to see his natal ancestral home, he migrated back to kwaZulu Natal. As patient as a donkey, he provided the much-needed cheap labour in the dark alleys of Durban. Like all Afrikans, he was a recipient of the indignities and humiliations of the colour-conscious, repressive South Afrikan government. Even the most humble have their boiling point. One day he packed his little bag and was off to Southern Rhodesia (modern-day Zimbabwe), another

colony with remnants of Mfecane. Marriage to Joyce Msipa, a local Shona woman led to the birth of the student in 1972 in the reserve, Chendambuya. Thus, this student exemplifies the chaotic history of southern Afrika - the inkatha histories of amaZulu, Swazis, baSotho and Shona, the migrations of the Maseko, the colonial experiences of Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Afrika, and the collectivity of all things Bantu and Nguni/Ngoni.

Overview of Literature

Things Afrikan are dominated by white writers. Most of it is highly questionable because of the biases and attitudes of the era in which it was written. Numerous written sources have modified and reinforced views encapsulated by writers like Joseph Conrad in his seminal novels, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1942). A book by Fraser entitled *Winning a Primitive People* (1914) is a classic example of this trend. Fraser's Maseko Ngoni were pitiful blank slates devoid of any sophisticated ideas or philosophy, let alone the intelligent use of personal memory for thoughtful progressive matters. Maseko Ngoni were regarded as being simply too primitive for any serious scholarship. In Elmslie, Fraser found a Siamese twin. A practicing Christian, Elmslie study unearthed the Maseko Ngoni as a "barbarous" lot, their religion, "satanic" and way of life "an awful oppression of the dominant heathen ." Definitely rare will be an author immune to biases, cultural indifference and rose-tinted perspectives. Although Maseko Ngoni are hampered by scant literature, examples of Fraser and Elmslie simply prove documented sources can be, at best woefully prejudiced, at worst, an outright insult to scholarship. Not all researchers subscribe to the above inclination, fortunately. An anthropologist, Margaret Read remains largely a rare gem with her highly informative

The Ngoni of Nyasaland (1970). Reflective of her era when Afrika was a minefield for anthropologists, a confession she makes in her “New Preface and Preface” respectively (pp. v & 7), her diligence on the subject of her book, deserves praise. No student of the Ngoni could ignore her main theme:

The Ngoni as a people showed a high degree of achievement in surviving their years of migration; in organising their kingdoms; in maintaining their political systems under the heavy hand of colonial rule; and in their adherence to their cultural values and social structure in spite of the economic changes due to external influences (Read, 1970: vi).

The Ngoni of Nyasaland (1970) promises to be fruitful in exploring the Maseko Ngoni of Malawi.¹¹ Equally useful will be Professor B. Pachai’s (1972) *The Early History of Malawi*. This text contains an extensive bibliographical guide, not to mention an array of writers, an important tool in any research. Obviously a variety of voices and sources enhance the quality of any text. Professor Pachai lives up to this expectation. Nwankwo T. Nwaezeigwe’s (1997) *Ngoni* among all others has its main focus on two major Ngoni groups in Malawi – Maseko and Jere. Ngoni political history, economic and religious beliefs form the prime themes of this discourse. Without a doubt, this is the foundation on which Indigenous memories are built. They are immortal. They never grow old. They never die.

Literature produced by Afrikan scholars themselves remains woefully scant (Nwaezeigwe, 1997; Pachai, 1972; Mutwa, 1969 and Phiri, 1982). Irrespective of this handicap, it has to be examined critically and thoughtfully. Because an author is an

¹¹ Unfortunately Margaret Read’s text arrived on the scene when anthropology was highly regarded by Afrikans as a discipline, which legitimized colonial rule. Margaret Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa*, a book which was “addressed above all to educators, affirming that the “civilized” world had something to learn from the “primitive,” heightened and confirmed this suspicion (note the binary “civilized” and “primitive.” <http://www.mead2001.org/Biography.htm> & http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2001_50_fri_04.shtml

Afrikan, it would be foolhardy for any reader to let their guard down. Kwame Anthony Appiah raises a very important subtle point on Afrikan scholars, which will guide this student in analyzing these “Indigenous” sources:

“... though trained in Europe or in schools and universities dominated by European culture, the African writers’ concern is not with the discovery of a self that is the object of an inner voyage of discovery. Their problem – though not, of course, their subject – is finding a public role, not a private self. If European intellectuals, though comfortable inside their culture and its traditions, have an image of themselves as outsiders, African intellectuals are uncomfortable outsiders, seeking to develop their cultures in directions that will give them a role (1992: 76).”

D.D. Phiri’s *From Nguni to Ngoni: A History of the Ngoni Exodus from Zululand to Swaziland to Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia* (1982) will serve as an important reference to this thesis. It is one of the rare books whose main focus is on the topic at hand. (Through its title, though, Appiah’s criticism cannot be missed) D.D. Phiri’s *Malawians to Remember: Inkosi Gomani II* (1973) will be equally important because, though a minor sixty-two pages, explores the quality of a very important Maseko Ngoni leader after their arrival in Malawi. Paulina Dlamini’s *Servant of Two Kings* (1986) provides any reader with a rare insight into the world of amaZulu through the eyes of a young woman (who converted to Christianity).

As a collective of mafuko, the amaZulu, Swazis and the baSotho were synonymous with political protests when norms of society were violated. Forms of protest included the readiness for war or simply migration to a distant land; this was designed to protect the values of society. Baba Mukulo informed this student: *Above all we tried to preserve all life as this enable all to reproduce peacefully and amicably* (Personal Communication, 1981-82). With Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka at the helm, in came what historian John Henrik Clarke recognized as “Stirrings of Patriotism” in the region:

He set about to forge to anew kind of Bantu nation: a nation whose warriors were replaced by a standing army drilled to fight in close formation; a nation in which the tribal chiefs gave way to generals chosen for their ability; a nation centrally organized and ruled by Chaka himself... A cruel nation, it was the product of a cruel time and of one man's extraordinary response to its challenge.¹²

Gone was the era in which the amaZulu chiefdoms “were organized into relatively small kingdoms ruled by chiefs, who were assisted by officials often called indunas, or military leaders.” Clarke raises and alludes to nationalism, identity configuration and state formation processes as synonymous with Shaka's regime. This cannot be ignored in the analysis of Maseko Ngoni. Very likely, Shaka's expansionist aims and processes further strengthened Maseko Ngoni sensitivities to their exclusivity as a distinct folk. As a protest towards Shaka's Mfecane, they felt the need to revitalize their “Bantu Values,” by establishing their own homeland further north. This was the impulse of Ngoni inkatha, which Westerners have termed as nationalism, thus, suppressing from written history the Bantu concept of Inkatha in favour of nation and nationalism.

Ngoni as Imagined Communities

Maseko Ngoni have been viewed through theories of nationalism, two schools of thought on nationalism are worthy of our attention in this chapter. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) defines nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” Here Anderson is in direct opposition to our Indigenous Bantu philosophy because our Maseko Ngoni governance is not based on imagined political communities. Let it be clear that our political cultures are based on Bantu lived

¹² Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Horizon History of Africa* (1971: 398).

experience within a set place while using set Bantu languages to encode meaning. So when Anderson says:

the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, they became ‘modular,’ capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations (p. 14).

We the Ngoni Bantu challenge his words using the force of Indigenous philosophy which was so eloquently captured by the elder Annie Peaches from the Cibecue of Western Apache, in *Wisdom Sits in Places*. She states, “The land is always stalking people. The land makes people live right. The land looks after us. The land looks after people (Basso, 1996: 38).”

Inkatha reflects the Bantu knowledge that has been gained through lived experience within the lands of the Bantu. Whereas the Euro-centric nationalisms of Anderson and Smith are created from imagined communities based on “a vision, a culture, a solidarity and a policy” Anthony D. Smith (1979: 4) adds to the hallmarks of this phenomenon the following remarks: “It answers to ideological, cultural, social and political aspirations and needs.” But are Euro-centric definitions and analysis on nationalism applicable to Afrika and Maseko Ngoni in particular? Almost always, nationalism in Afrika has been studied in the light of European colonialism. Ania Loomba (1998: 189-190) captures very powerfully the problem of borrowed Western theories of nationalism when she quotes Chatterjee’s central objection to Anderson’s argument in his book *The Nation and Its Fragment*. He argues thus:

If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americans, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of

modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistant and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized (1993: 5).

For Professor J. Bertin Webster who spent many years teaching in Afrikan universities, “nationalism existed in Africa in 1800, and that its development and growth can be considered one of the major themes of nineteenth-century African history.” This is an important critique of Euro-centric scholars who strongly believe Afrikan nationalism “infiltrated from Europe via those Africans who acquired an European-type education, was nurtured by conditions created by European overrule, and was therefore almost an exclusive development of the twentieth century (1969: 195).” For this student speaking about nationalism and nationhood is not appropriate as we, Maseko Ngoni have home developed ideologies about unity, culture, society and political aspirations which are expressed through the principles of inkatha (Kunene, 1979; Lugg, 1975 and Filter, 1986).¹³

However, let us be clear: Indigenous Bantu governance is not based on imagining anything. It is based on Bantu lived experience within a set place, using Bantu languages which of course lend support to the capacity of Afrikans such as Maseko Ngoni being able to regenerate and revive their political entities, governance notwithstanding. Being Bantu we also have intergenerational memories, knowledges and evidence, which extend beyond our Maseko Ngoni identity and centres us first and foremost in our Bantu identity. As Bantu our territories in Afrika are vast, our languages are many, thus, our knowledge is vast (Mutwa, 1969).

¹³ Paulina Dlamini tells us that the “inkatha yezwe yakwaZulu” was a traditional supernatural coil that all the Nguni accepted as their symbol of identity, connection to the land, strength and unity, in *Paulina Dlamini: Servant of Two Kings* (1986: 29).

Could Maseko Ngoni qualify as a diaspora? Gabriel Sheffer in *Diaspora Politics:*

At Home Abroad (2003: 9) informs us that:

Among those who are aware of the origin of the term, [“Diaspora”] it is widely believed that the term first appeared in the Greek translation of the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, with reference to the situation of the Jewish people –“ thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth” (Deut. 28, 25).

Sheffer in the same book identifies what he terms as “Problematics of Diaspora.”

Interestingly, he points out how Indigenous peoples do not fit in his diaspora. By his own admission, he states:

In this context it is essential to note that although the entities dealt with here are of ethnic origin, not all dispersed ethnic minorities and groups constitute diasporas in the sense proposed in this book. Thus, not discussed here are native nations and other indigenous ethnic tribes and the groups who, after their permanent settlement in the territory that they came to regard as their homeland, did not migrate to other territories (2003: 13).

Being Nguni it can be said that we left our homelands but in the larger context of being Bantu, we have never left our lands and territories. The ability of the Maseko Ngoni to integrate with other Bantu tribes while moving northward speaks loudly about the Bantu familial ties, which connect us from northern Afrika to southern Afrika. Baba proudly maintains, *when you are among the true Bantu, you are always at home* (Personal Communication, 2003). Thus, the label of diaspora cannot be applied to the Maseko Ngoni because as long as we are in Bantu lands and territories we can claim to be “at home away from home.”

Research Methodology

Of prime importance to this student’s approach in the writing of this thesis will be the value of personal historical memory, sacred oral histories and documented written sources. Each of these has its own critics, its own practitioners. Why is this approach so

essential? Not only do personal historical memories and sacred oral histories provide us with an insider's view, but as Professor Gary Y. Okihiro (1996) has noted, '... they are a means of enfranchising and empowering people whose lives have previously been shaped by 'colonized history' written from the standpoint of outsiders, not cultural insiders.'¹⁴ Therefore, denigrating oral histories at the expense of creating an aura of sanctity on Western literary sources belittles and undermines any subject under study. Written sources sanctified by the Western academia, viable though they are as tools of analysis, are not immune from criticism. Citing the work of Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. (1969), Okihiro (1996: 202) was not far from the mark when he warned of the dilemma which afflicts Western sources:

Besides these (biases and prejudices, selective perceptions and memories, incomplete and limited powers of observation, and fallible memories...) common human qualities which pervade historical documents, there is the question of audience to which the document is addressed. This assumes that the historical documents are purposeful and that those purposes may determine, in a deliberate and unconscious way, the final shape of the document in which facts may be altered, emphasis misplaced, or information suppressed.

A comprehensive study and analysis of the collective requires a thorough and meticulous scrutiny of oral and written sources, a necessary task for a fair and balanced exploration of the project undertaking: *Revitalizing Personal Memory in Honour of Traditional Maseko Ngoni Governance*.

Sacred oral histories are the bedrock of the collectivity's sense of identity and history; they are living archives not only of the society's intellectual life, but also of its philosophy and history. They are an important frame of reference which mitigate inter-relations between leaders and the led, political disputes and most important, land

¹⁴ David K. Dunaway & Willa K. Baum (eds.), *Oral Histories: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (1996: 199)

questions. Hence, using our languages to practice Maseko Ngoni spirituality, singing our songs, telling our stories, practicing our sacred ceremonial rituals and communicating through our art works are ways that we have used since time immemorial to transmit our sacred oral history and traditions to future generations. Deloria's *Red Earth, White Lies* (1997) upholds the fundamental importance of sacred oral histories in studying, analyzing and critiquing Indigenous communities. This position is supported by Bantu oral evidence as expressed by February (1988: 18), "the oral tradition is still very much alive." With admiration, he adds:

Africa is blessed with written and unwritten (oral) literary tradition. These two traditions exist side by side and influence each other. For a long time, scholars have only emphasized the written tradition which, by implication, stood for civilization, a highly developed technological society and progress. In terms of such an approach, Africa was easily classifiable as backward. The oral tradition meant a low standard of development and a less civilized people.

Being as oral evidence is the spine of Nguni tradition we will integrate it into the thesis as an essential component in revitalizing personal memory in honour of traditional Indigenous governance. There is no doubt regarding their value in a rapidly changing society. They will act as the conscience of Maseko Ngoni *Ubuntu* philosophy. Other important writers in the same breadth as February which will be included are Masizi Kunene, *Zulu Poems*, (1970), Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, *Indaba My Children: African Tribal History, Legends, Customs and Religious Beliefs*, (1987), - *My Africa, My People*, (1969) and for comparative purposes, Deloria's *Red Earth, White Lies* (1997). Lest we forget, personal historical memories drive this thesis because "the heart of the Ngoni remembers everything;" its ancestral natal home, its migrations, its traditions and its limitations.

Mama Mukulo told this student that: *Our ancestors breathe the life that connects us to the past which if we understand it will inform our present and our present will inform the future through our Ngoni ways. Remember we should always know who we are* (Personal Communication, 1981-2). A subtext to the sacred oral histories that inform this student's personal memories will be provided by Baba Mukulo (Ngoni Elder Father), Mama Mukulo (Ngoni Elder Mother), Ambuya (Maternal Grandmother), Baba (Father) and Amai (Mother). They are an extension of the oral sources available and their knowledge, experience and expertise in this field will be utilized to enhance the quality of this thesis. With the use of oral histories, written sources and informants, this student intends to probe the question of revitalizing Indigenous governance in Malawi much more thoroughly. Using a Xhosa proverb, February (1988: v) thoughtfully put it thus in 1986: "*Isiziba siviwa ngodondolo*, literally, the bottom of a pool is reached with a long stick; figuratively, we'll get there in the end."

Bantu Evidence

Deprived of serious documentation, so fundamental to Western scholarship, Maseko Ngoni, like most Afrikan communities, presents a major dilemma to any student.¹⁵ Where does one begin? Can something be carved out from what in the dominant scholarship domain can be considered a literary vacuum - Afrika? Of course, not all is bleak. For instance, etched in the memory of the collective is the 1835 eclipse

¹⁵ Gianni Guadalupi & Anthony Shugaar in *Latitude Zero: Tales of the Equator* (2001) make a poignant admission on the skewed nature of documentation when they make the following observation: "The history of the world has almost always been written from a point of view situated around forty-five degrees north latitude... Similarly, the band of territory between thirty and sixty degrees north latitude may not have had a monopoly on the world's history, but it has had a virtual monopoly on the world's history writing... Most of the Earth's publishers, broadcasters, universities, and libraries look on the world from this relatively narrow swath of territory. Latitude, then, is destiny (pp.vii-viii)."

of the sun.¹⁶ This became an important marker in dating historical and societal events.

Everything became defined through the eclipse. Mutwa (1969: 113) articulated this premise succinctly when he wrote:

The Bantu also have their history books in the form of cave-paintings – their archives. The Bantu have known all along about every single cave in Africa where there are paintings, and they know of many which the white man has still not yet discovered. Every painting is either a record of a particular historical event, usually in symbolic form, or it displays certain aspects of legendary stories, customs and rituals. In every case, the cave-paintings confirm the stories down to the last detail.

This too, applies to personal memory, poetry, songs, proverbs, and many other art forms.

In this research the lead medium will be the student's personal memory, aided by the other mediums as a way to try answering gaps in personal memory. This student will attempt to explore the complexities of the Maseko Ngoni collective – the potential of these traditions to shed light on politics, social life and economic structures at the core of inkathas. *A History of Swaziland*, by Matsebula (1972) where in the preface Mbabane states: "To know a people we must look into their origin. And to understand ourselves we must know the country in which we live and how it came into being (1997: vii)."

(An even better example, see the next poem by Herbert Dlomo).

<p>On your dear frame, proud of spring here I stand! Sweet names of the sweets strand!</p> <p>O charms of my dear fatherland! Blest spots! I long to see them all! Where men of yore, great Shaka's band, Sang wrought and fell! To me they call!</p> <p>Great scenes of old-like magic wand!- Of heroes wise and strange feats done,</p>	<p>For Shaka, now our Jove, more than Sung classic names achieved. His name more than vain demagogue boasts can, Or ever will, has brought us fame.</p> <p>And those whom we in pride adore, Moshoeshoe, Hintsa, Khama's stain... Hannibal, Aggrey-these and many more With gleaming names, deck Shaka's train.</p>
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¹⁶ On June 21, 2001, CNN's NASA correspondent in an article titled, "Total Solar Eclipse Awes Onlookers in Africa," acknowledges this eclipse as having taken place "around 1830." In a discussion on this eclipse, Phiri (1982: 67) pinpoints November 20 as the most likely date.

Where men of might, like ocean sand,
Mocked seas of life... and wrought
for fun!

Born sealed with immortality,
Hymned Shaka, god of war-writ fame,
Homeric feats attained, and we
Plumed Trojan Black Bulls, claim a
name!

Out of the living past they haunt me still!
And voices mute forever speak to me!
My eyes with tears, my thoughts with
visions, fill!

I see them all, but see not where they be!

These men and places call to me!
They speak out of Eternity!
I see, I feel, I live it all!
I rise! and yield before the call!
(In Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., 1971: 384)

Dlomo's poem has a dual function; to sanction ideal human behaviour and expose the shortcomings of a collective whose governance under the thumb of tyranny undermines the very philosophy so paramount to the revitalization of the collective. For example, in this poem, leaders identified evoke nostalgic powerful metaphors of political power, a sense of time in the history of the collectives in the region; yet the dysfunction and failures of governance as personified by these leaders can hardly be missed – “Where men of might, like ocean sand, mocked seas of life... and wrought for fun.” It is this kind of imagery which this essay will use to make a case for responsible form of Indigenous governance. As Harold Scheub (1995: 1) concisely expressed it, “The oral arts, containing this sensory residue of past cultural life and the wisdom so engendered, constitute a medium for organizing, examining, and interpreting an audience's experiences of the images of the present (Coplan, 1994: 30).”¹⁷

Defined and dominated by European scholarship, an “in-house” voice is necessary to counterbalance external biases so prevalent in sources and documentation.

¹⁷ Elsewhere, Coplan (1994: 37) makes the following observation on rhetorical arts among the Bantu: “Auriture, the art of word music in motion, was as indispensable as ordinary speech to the settlement of disputes, the creation of social consensus, the promulgation of law, the legitimation of both command and dissent, and the practice of power.”

Mutwa's *My People, My Africa* (1969), Phiri's *Malawians to Remember Inkosi Gomani II* (1973) and Nwaezeigwe's *Ngoni: The Heritage Library of African Peoples* (1979) will be used to weave the web of Indigenous traditions as analyzed by Afrikanists, their strengths, their weaknesses, their limitations and their successes. All these aspects combined and interconnected should make it possible to probe the research question in detail – can the personal historical memories of Indigenous Governance and responsibilities be an asset to the debilitating and crippling neo-colonial social-cultural and spiritual lives of the Maseko pfuko (clan) in Lizulu? To answer this thesis question this student will use Bantu evidence and where possible written sources will be compared, contrasted and cross-referenced as a way to critique the sources. In the wake of it all, this methodology should enable us to highlight what needs to be done in terms of further research and documentation of the Maseko Ngoni.

Moving forward

Not all is gloom and doom. Oral traditions have begun to find their way into the realm of publication, albeit slowly. Obviously this reflects their acceptance as viable sources of serious scholarship.¹⁸ In conjunction with available written documents in libraries and archives, personal and collective memories of Maseko Ngoni available can be analyzed and explored as a means towards the revitalization of Indigenous institutions. Nostalgia for the past must never blind us to the challenges of the present.

Oral sources may yield the grandeur of the past, modern literary sources may tell a different tale. “Oral and written sources are two quite different techniques and

¹⁸ The acknowledgment of oral traditions as serious scholarship helps all Indigenous peoples have a voice in academia but on the negative side it exposes Indigenous knowledge to cooptation.

designed for different ends.” However, personal and collective memories of Indigenous governance in oral and literary sources can point a way to the future if properly studied for the good of society; they can be used as a critique of the decaying state, as a stimulus towards change and as an antidote towards the excesses of the neo-colonial state. Our efforts of revitalizing Indigenous governance are motivated by above all else, care and concern for Abantu (Maseko Ngoni included), their land, and their traditions. These elements have historically enabled their survival and ability to regenerate themselves and their institutions. Personal memory is necessary for a community’s sense of historical identity. Nowhere could the revitalization of memories of Indigenous governance be so critical than in Lizulu because here for the Maseko Ngoni remembrance is a living organism.

Chapter 2 will focus on the history of the Ngoni people particularly events, personalities and traditions which have inspired and influenced memories of succeeding generations after the death of Shaka (1828). Chapter 3 will examine and analyze how Maseko Ngoni emerged from the legacy of Shaka's rule and were able to regenerate themselves into a "new people" as part of modern-day Malawi. The Maseko Ngoni history is important to this student because it creates a direct link between the old, the new and all that is personal to this student. Chapter 4 will propose the role of how historical personal and collective memories can be harnessed to regenerate responsible Indigenous forms of governance, which can be an asset to the socio-cultural and spiritual lives of Maseko Ngoni.

CHAPTER TWO – BANTU HISTORY OF MASEKO NGONI

To a white man, history is not history unless it is written down, be it on paper, papyrus, clay tablets or stone obelisks. He has forgotten that much of what he can read about today has been passed on by the word-of-mouth from father to son for centuries before it was written down. Homer wrote the story of Troy a thousand years after it happened and only thousands of years after that again did archaeologists uncover the actual scene of the desperate triangle involving Agamemnon, Helen, and Paris.

History has always been the foundation of every race's culture; but where a race's religion is based on ancestor-worship, its history is no longer merely a cultural foundation-it is sacred. For this reason, no Bantu will lie about the history of his people. To do so would be sacrilege. If asked, he would either tell the truth, or he will remain silent.

-Credo Vusa'mazulu Mutwa, 1969 in.

Speaking from personal memory is to reflect sacred oral history which is mainly informed by family as the primary source followed by extended family, pfuko (clan) and then inkatha.¹⁹ In these nesting units of Maseko Ngoni identity we find principles that unite us culturally while also allowing us to express our political aspirations (Kunene, 1979; Lugg, 1975 and Filter, 1986). Yet we all understand that the context and position of a family in the pfuko and inkatha will also affect its member's perspective on specific events (are they the leaders or the led, what position do they speak from, grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, brother or sister) as all this is reflected in their telling of oral historical facts. No two tellings of the same oral history are an exact duplicate of each other as each speaker's position and relation to the history is highlighted.²⁰ However, as Baba says:

¹⁹ Sacred oral history is shared collective memory which manifests itself in the collective's personal memory, functional art, cave paintings, hieroglyphics, poetry, songs, proverbs, folktales and fables, the hum of the drum and the cry of the horns and a host of other mannerisms to convey Bantu history.

²⁰ David K. Dunaway & Willa K. Baum (eds.), *Oral Histories: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (1996) have done a good job of explaining how oral histories work.

We are also very united in believing that our ancestors have and will keep providing us with good governance if we only listen with Ngoni ears. They have always and will always offer spiritual guidance from the world beyond to those who are fortunate enough to hear them. We know when someone has heard our ancestors because what they say resonates with our inner understanding about how to preserve life. This is the basic foundation of all Bantu governance (Personal communication, 2003).

Mutwa makes the point that as Bantu, we are rendered mute when we lack knowledge about things Bantu. Sisters and Brothers we are mute on the question of Indigenous Bantu governance but this need not be a permanent state. For when we can search and acquire knowledge, it is our duty to do so and that is precisely what this student is trying to do. In *Wretched of The Earth*, Fanon reflectively states “The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a base for hope (1961: 232).” We therefore can wisely use our sacred history as an entrance point to understanding ourselves. Our sacred history reveals and reflects where we as a people have been, our status in the present and offers a guide to our future aspirations. In this way, instead of being rendered mute at the point where personal memory cannot answer the questions of sacred history, this student will look at the evidence in our languages, in the cave paintings, hieroglyphics, teaching from the elders, poetries, songs, proverbs, folktales, fables, the hum of the drum, the cry of the horns and a host of other Bantu sources to fill the gaps of missing information.

In this chapter the central argument will be to show that the first step of reclaiming our heritage as Indigenous peoples requires us to reclaim our sacred oral history as this act gives us voice and strength to build Maseko Ngoni communities using values that are motivated by intrinsically shared and understood Indigenous Bantu

philosophies. We will show using personal memory, documented sacred oral histories and written sources that the Bantu people have been moving and migrating within their territories from time immemorial. We will demonstrate how the Bantu are connected to the great civilizations of northern Afrika including Egypt by analyzing personal memory, recorded sacred oral history and written sources. Through the teachings of Maseko Ngoni elders we will learn about the Bantu blood ties, which connect us from northern to southern Afrika. We will also see how all southern Bantu are connected to our ancestral Bantu homelands (north of Nguniland) through shared values, religious rituals and the shared Bantu ability to see correlations between humans, animals and the elements (Deloria and Wildcat, 2001). Baba calls the correlational ties between humans, animals and the elements: *the responsibility of connecting through actions of shared behaviour as they lead to shared naming and relational care* (Baba, Personal Communication, 2003).

Our personal memories of history are important parts of making inkatha which to us is the process of building relationships and leadership within an environment of honouring our shared experience, values and philosophies (Mutwa, 1969). Sharing personal memory allows our memories to cascade into collectively shared knowledge (memories) after communal discourses. Therefore, personal memory can be harnessed to collectively awaken our people from the exploit of neo-colonialism, which in our contemporary era is cloaked in the diversionary trickery of the old master. They still control us through their institutional games of power. Their success at exploiting Indigenous peoples is based on their ability to create enough diversionary trickery as a way to make us abandon our own languages and memories in favour of the memories and languages that they give us. Thus, in using their systems we only know what they want

us to know. Sisters and brothers our freedom is consequently unattainable until the moment we start to fully share our memories and collectively use our ancestral knowledge as our guide to actions of regenerating and revitalizing our languages, traditional customs, rituals, laws and spirituality.

This student was informed by his Baba Mukulo, *fear no man for the blood of the great warriors of AmaZulu flows through your veins and no living mortal can change that, remember when you hear AmaZulu they are talking about you* (Personal Communication, 1981-82). As a child this student found these words comforting against the oppressive reality of white power in Zimbabwe; however he never took seriously the implication of having the name Komba until the start of this research thesis. Thus, conveying and affirming the feminist teaching that ‘the personal is political.’ Our written histories are almost always written from a point of view situated around forty-five degrees north latitude (Gianni Guadalupi and Shugaar, 2002). To date, this remains the status quo. The work of Bryant (1929) *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, which this student read with great reluctance as the book is created to inform Nguni of their history and preserve it from extinction, insinuating that our forms of history are inadequate at preserving and conveying true complex histories. Strangely, Bryant and his peers have built their careers and fame from sacred oral histories received from our ancestors. Yet, when our ancestors spoke about their knowledge it was regarded as useless myth but the narrow spoken or written interest of a white man (like Bryant) were held as factual scholastic achievements of great truth.

This whitewashing of our sacred oral histories demonstrates that our written histories are racialized to make us look like unintelligent dangerous beasts with highly

uncontrollable sexual impulses. Having reduced our histories to sinful behaviours the likes of Bryant began to identify for us what history was and they took it upon themselves to save this history. Could there be any clearer sign of domination and oppression? Yet we must engage their partial truth using the knowledge and wisdom that we have as a way to awaken our memories, for example an Afrikan brother noticed this student's name in the genealogy of the great leaders of amaZulu which is written by Bryant. Just like how the name Nguni has changed to Ngoni among our people, could the name Nkombane have changed to Komba? As this student has written this thesis while being away from home (living in Canada), it will be necessary for the Maseko Ngoni community to have a discourse around the writing of this work as a way to move forward while accurately engaging our history and future. This student having limited memory transmitted about the sacred history of the Maseko has been forced to rely on some foreign sources, especially as there are few Ngonis tackling the issue of Maseko Ngoni genealogies that this student can access from Canada.

Origins of Our Ancestors

One of the most difficult things to do these days is to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture. Somehow Africans are not expected to have any deep understanding of their own culture or even of themselves. Other people have become authorities on all aspects of the African life or to be more accurate on BANTU life.

-Steve Biko: *I Write What I Like*, 1978: 41.

About 15 years ago, this student left the haven of the orphanage he had resided in for most of his adolescence life, with the sole purpose of searching for his maternal family. The journey was very successful and he had the bittersweet experience of meeting his Ambuya (maternal grandmother). In the following exchange this student is

named Peter, which reflects that he was unnamed and was thus, addressed using his Baba's name.

Ambuya: *Peter do you know where your people are from?*

This student: *Baba says we came from South Afrika.*

Ambuya: *Yes, that is right but I mean before that?*

This student: *Ambuya I don't understand what you mean, I thought all Ngonis came from the South?*

Ambuya: *So there are things your people have not told you. I thought people with as much pride in history as the Ngonis would have taught their offsprings about their whole history. Our old ones informed us about a warring people who went through us heading towards the south. I suspect these were your great forefathers. It pains me to know that since then we have had no peace for here you are the brave one. In the olden times, you were armed with spear and shield but today you are armed with questions. It is good to see that you are what you are, true to your warrior nature. Maybe we can turn you loose on the white man (Personal Communication, 1989).*

Youthful pride can deprive us of a learning opportunity because where this student should have been acquiring more knowledge from his Ambuya about his ancestors migration he instead chose to defend Maseko Ngoni pride by stating: *Ambuya, I knew that, Mama Mukulo told me that we had come from the North before going to the south.* As true as this statement was, this student did not mention that the information given by Mama Mukulo had been offered over a short period of time and due to his age constrain she had not elaborated any further than:

The problem for us as Maseko is that we have different memories from different parts of Afrika and some of us have tried to impose our single inkatha memory as the Abantu blue print for Maseko Indigenous governance. But we know this cannot be as Bantu philosophy states, "we exist because you exist." Thus, the idea of a single inkatha dominating a region does not make sense because inkatha is how the people unite and make sense of themselves without dominating the land. The land dominates us and it cannot be any other way for us.

For an inkatha to exist there must be Bantu who are outsiders because their existence acknowledges what makes the inkatha different (Personal Communication, 1981-2).

Mama Mukulo makes us understand that more than one inkatha could exist in one geographical region. This point reminds us that the idea of having impassable boundaries is foreign to us as Bantu. Our ancestors have always shared the land with each other. Hence the importance of the Bantu statement “we exist because you exist.” In this statement we reflect our respect for our relational ties as a family with blood attachments. Mama Mukulo states that: *inkatha worked well because women created it. In the olden time women were the leaders because they created and nurtured life* (Personal Communication, 1981-82). The writing of the great Mutwa supports Mama Mukulo by clearly conveying that the Bantu of the “Old Land” were ruled by the Council of Elder Mothers (1969: 20). This means that both women and men were important for Bantu governance hence, both women and men will be important for the development of future governance.

Being young and unable to comprehend the importance of this historical knowledge, this student did not inquire further. Unfortunately when Ambuya was ready to share her knowledge, this student was still not mature enough to listen as he was too busy fighting the colonial efforts of rendering him mute and emasculated. To fight the systems of colonialism this student developed a strong fearsome inkatha pride in being Maseko Ngoni as a way to survive the oppression of colonialism. Yet this very act of inkathatism further removed this student from acquiring a fuller Bantu education from Ambuya. This is the sad reality of colonialism; it tricks us into division instead of unity, while we are at odds with each other it presents itself as the only reasonable way forward. As it plants its memories in us it creates gaps in our personal memories. Thus this student finds himself asking whom were our great ancestors, where did they come from

and not to mention when did they begin these southward migrations and why? To answer these questions beyond the limitations of personal memory, it would be wise to look at all mannerisms of sacred traditional Bantu oral histories and were appropriate written sources.

Sacred oral histories and written sources are in agreement that the Bantu people did migrate from a northern direction towards southern Afrika. However, the precise origin of the Bantu is still not clear to scholars and academics. Bryant, A.T. *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929) is respected as one of the great giants in Zulu history; however, he does not attempt to squarely identify the origins of the Bantu. He does acknowledge that the Bantu are connected to the great civilizations of North Afrika including Egypt. Donald R. Morris in *The Washing of the Spears*, accepts that the Bantu were in Egypt and other parts of North Afrika but has concluded thus:

No one knows from whence the Bantu came, and by the time modern man turned scientific scrutiny on the problem a century ago, the layer of evidence were irrevocably tangled. Halfway between settled farmers and nomadic herders, they probably entered Africa with their cattle from the Fertile Crescent something over 10,000 years ago, and because their civilization was based on cattle, they could go wherever their herds could graze. Their roots were never very deep, and if their few possessions could be packed and ready to move on an hour's notice, their crop might hold them back for a season or so (1965: 27).

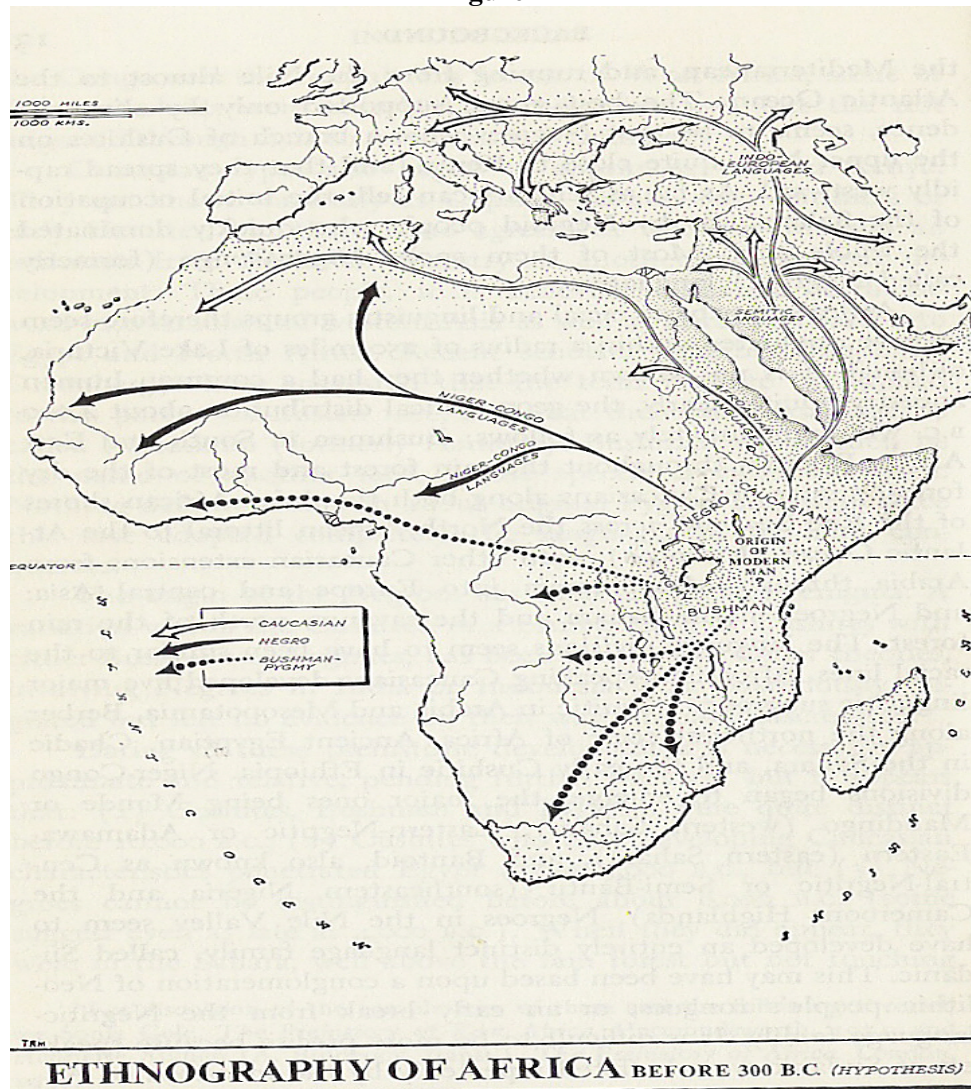
Donald Lawrence Wiedner in *A History of Africa South of the Sahara*, (1962: 12) uses the map on page 40 to best illustrate what he believes was the first movement in Afrika. On the question of the Bantu origin he makes the following point: “The origin of the Negroes has been the greatest enigma. The variation within the Cushites, or a combination of Cushites with either Bushmen or Pygmies²¹, has been considered.”

²¹ Bushmen is a derogative word which once again was invented by the white man. Our brothers and sisters that they call bushmen are know as San (called the BaTwa by Bantu) and Khoi-Khoi, while the pygmy are really the BaMbuti and Ik just to name a few.

Hence, the white powers have rendered us invisible by the usage of the term ‘Negroid.’

A Negro is homeless, languageless and culturally void (Malcolm X, 1967).²²

Figure 2



Baba has always proudly maintained: *When you are among the true Bantu, you are always at home because our blood is the same. Yet our ways of living maybe different because our lands may teach us different things* (Personal Communication, 2003). In *The Warrior People: Zulu Origins, Customs, and Witchcraft*, (1974) Binns

²² Map from Donald Lawrence Wiedner in *A History of Africa South of the Sahara* (1962: 12).

takes advantage of the new archaeological and anthropological discovery that prove that since time immemorial a Bantu ancestry people have inhabited the whole of Afrika.

Unfortunately, Binns does not take an Afrocentric approach toward the Bantu ancestry like the great Bantu philosopher Cheikh Anta Diop²³ but he rightly argues:

Thus the civilisation of Egypt can, with a fair degree of certainty, be estimated to go right back to about 5500 B.C.

Possibly the most remarkable feature about these records, in so far as our research is concerned, is the fact that King Menes subjected “an indigenous race” and ended by amalgamating with them so as to form one people thus indicating that *before the people known as Egyptians had arrived in Egypt there was an “indigenous race” already living in that land* (Binns, 1974: 20).

Again correctly, Binns uses the oral history from the Southern Bantu to show, similarities in cultural practices, spirituality, traditions and customs as evidence that the Bantu of southern Afrika were once in Egypt. But unfortunately, even though he has all the evidence he wrongly asserts that the Egyptian people and the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt at that time influenced the Bantu cultural development and does not give any credence that it was the other way as proposed by Joel A. Rogers (1972) and Cheikh Anta Diop (1974).

Having personal memories of Bantu oral teaching, as passed down from generation to generation, Sangoma (High Priest), philosopher and historian Credo Vusa'maZulu Mutwa has knowledge available only to the chosen few healers and spiritualist. Wisely, he sheds light on the origin of the Bantu using the intergeneration

²³ Diop in *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, (1974: x) has been accurately summed up by the translator of the book Mercer Cook, who states in the preface: “According to Diop’s theory, the ancient Egyptians, who were Negroes, are the ancestors of the Southerners.”

awareness²⁴ gained after being chosen as a sacred Bantu custodian. He states with authority that:

Now the common stock, the ancestral tribe from which all Negroid tribes of Africa sprang, was known as the Ba-Tu, or the Ba-Ntu. Legends say that the stock lived in the “Old Land”. This was far back in the bone and stone ages.

Where was this “Old Land”? It is where the “Old Tribes” are still found today—all the tribes of the land of the Bu-Kongo right up to the southern parts of the land of the Ibo and Oyo (Nigeria). These are the tribes who identify themselves with the prefix Ba. They are Ba-Mileke, Ba-Mbara, Ba-Kongo, Ba-Ganda, Ba-Hatu, Ba-Luba, Ba-Tonka, Ba-Saka, Ba-Tswana, Ba-Kgalaka, Ba-Venda, Ba-Pedi, Ba-Sutu and Ba-Chopi. The southern offshoot of the great- Ba-Pedi, Ba-Venda, Ba-Kgalaka and Ba-Tswana—are the oldest Bantu tribes south of the level of the Limpopo and their histories within these regions go back to a thousand years B.C.

All these tribes are direct offshoots of the great Ba-Ntu nations that lived in the “Old Land”, as a properly organised tribe, a full 4500 years ago, reckoned according to the genealogies (Mutwa, 1969:19)

The words of Mutwa are echoed emphatically by Baba who has always maintained “*our blood as Bantu is the same.*” The scientific scholarly work of Joseph Greenberg, Christopher Wrigley, Merrick Posnansky and George Peter Murdock (in *Problems in African History*, 1968 edited by Robert O. Collins) validates Baba, Mama Mukulo and Mutwa in that they show that all Bantu languages have some shared basic linguistic foundations. This proves that Baba was right when he stated “*our blood as Bantu is the same.*”

Baba also spoke about Bantu having relational ties through totems and “Isibongo” (eponymous). Baba told this student that: *relational ties through totems and isibongo connect all Bantu to all living things* (Personal Communication, 2003). The connection that Baba is speaking about is defined by Deloria as the principles of correlational responsibility in *Power And Place: Indian Education in America*, where he speaks about

²⁴ For information on intergenerational memory and knowledge see Vine Deloria JR in *For This Land*, 1999: Chapter, 14 and Mutwa, 1969.

how the bear is designated “as a medicine animal, owls as forecasting death or illness, and snakes as anticipating thunderstorms (2001: 27).” In the Indigenous context, including the Bantu, principles of correlation have been established in many context but for this thesis we will look at designating animal qualities to humans and human qualities to animals, for example, hare as having great wit, leopard demonstrating majestic powers and elephant as the great leader or queen mother. As a result, our mafuko (clan systems/governance) reflect in their naming the honouring of all living things, including animals and sacred places as they connect us to the web of life while also teaching us how to “live right” via experience (Mutwa, 1969 and Basso, 1996). In the Maseko Ngoni context, experience is the base of sacred history and sacred history is the base of governance, which makes the power of relational institution one of our guides to living right as Bantu. Thus, totems and “isibongos” connect us, in that they disregard the fact that we are now spread out from Northern Afrika to Southern Afrika.

As a child, after taking a cold bath this student remembers sitting at a fire, warming up while his Baba prepared the evening meal. Baba Mukulo, sitting down wind of the fire had the smoke blowing right into him but he stubbornly sat in his position. It seemed the smoke was playfully testing his endurance. This student remembers Baba suggesting to Baba Mukulo to consider moving but Baba Mukulo was not willing to be moved by anything. Baba Mukulo noticing the attention focused on him, looked at this student and while still struggling to breathe said:

The old ones told my father just like I am telling you. There once was a time when our people were at peace and they were not known as the brave ones. It is so long ago we cannot remember it but it is true. War is a new thing to us because in those olden times they did not live by the assegai (spear) they just defended themselves with the assegai.

So much has change, it changed for the old ones, it changed for us and it will change for you but the old ones will guide you just like they have guided us. We all have been raised by men, in a men's world but this was not always so. The old ones told me that at one time, they that provided life ruled over us but when wars came we started to move and everything began to change. The roles changed and he that welded the assegai began to give orders to the life maker, how sad, but this will change, you will see. The old will become new again. For we will tire of war soon and the maker of life will resume her place (Baba Mukulo, Personal Communication, 1982).

Listening to Baba Mukulo's teachings, we come to the understanding that our collective action of re-engaging our true knowledge (personal memory) requires us to honour the leadership of women as the first meaningful foundational step in regenerating true Bantu governance which if we have learned well is preserving all life above all else. Without meaningfully engaging women in leadership roles we keep reproducing the same diversionary trickery and insidious lies of colonialism when we live the evidence of colonialism in Afrika. Truth and change is achievable if we embrace Bantuism and reject colonialism with all of its diversionary trickery and lies.

Great Southward Migration

This student remembers Baba Mukulo offered the following explanation for the reasons the Maseko left their home land of South Afrika:

Preserving life has always been our foremost goal. When we were faced with the chance of saving life or taking life, we always chose to save life. This is the Bantu way. Everyone understood and respected this law until the arrival of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka, whose mission was to create total subjugation or total destruction. All that we knew and stood for was threatened, so we took the only sensible action to preserve our political institutions. I was told most of our people wanted to stay and fight for their land but our forefathers asked, "Why kill your brother when the land is so vast and can support all of us?" They also told us that staying would signal the end for our way of life but if we moved we could re-establish our power as a whole without compromise to another people (Baba Mukulo, personal communication, 1981-2).

Baba Mukulo's story speaks about the Bantu ethics as a guide to conflict resolution in our communities. Heinz Kimmerle in the *Journal of African Philosophy*, vol. 13, 2, August (2000: 189-197) reviews the book by Mogobe B. Ramose: *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*, (1999) and his quotes of Ramose, reflect Baba Mukulo's teaching about Bantu philosophy:

...[T]o be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them. ...[I]f and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life. ...[A] 'principle deeply embedded in traditional African political philosophy' says 'that the king owed his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him' (2000: 189).

The Bantu southward migrations are timeless responses to events precipitated by many intersectional realities of Indigenous disputes. For example: internal and external cultural expansions created value difference within an inkatha²⁵ (nation) and between neighbouring inkathas which created actions of resistance against both conquest and assimilation by the more dominate cultural forces. In light of Baba Mukulo's teachings the Bantu migrations are an act of the collective will of Bantu efforts to preserve life and preserve traditional ways of governance based on Bantu philosophy (Mutwa, 1969)²⁶. So when non-Bantu scholars speak about Bantu southward migration they tend to date it between 750 – 300 B.C. which is a time period established well after the first foreigners (Egyptian, Greeks and Jews) had entered Afrika (Schneider, 1981; Binns, 1974; Gann & Duignan, 1971; and Wiedner, 1962). The white excuse for this has been Bantu did not

²⁵ Ideology boundaries about unity, culture, society and political aspirations as determined by Bantu pfuko inkatha

²⁶ The concept of voluntary or forced migration within the Indigenous context is captured very succinctly by Zacharias Kunuk in the film *The Fast Runner (Atanarjuat)*, 2002.

keep a well-documented record of their history, making oral history, personal memory, songs, poems, cave paintings, art sculpture, and many other forms/mannerism of Bantu historical evidence redundant in the writing of the “Dark Continent.” Again, we see the reinforcement that meaningful writing can only come from a point of view situated around forty-five degrees north latitude (Gianni Guadalupi and Shugaar, 2002). The ancient historian Mary Lefkowitz in *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (1996) exemplifies present day efforts to still whitewash Afrikan history. Mary Lefkowitz and her anthropological friends would have us believe that history can take place in our home while we are present but somehow miraculously have no meaningful part in it. She accuses everyone else for not looking at facts but when we look for the Afrikan evidence that she has used, she is found wanting. Yet she would still try to lull our restless hearts as related by Malcolm X in *Malcolm X On Afro-American History*:

We’re unique, we’re different. They say that we are Negro, and they say that Negro means; yet they don’t call all black people Negroes. You see the contradiction? Mind you, they say that we are Negro, because Negro means black in Spanish, yet they don't call black people Negroes. Something there doesn't add up.

And then to get around it they say mankind is divided up into three categories - Mongoloid, Caucasoid, and Negroid. Now pick up on that. And all black people had Negroid - they've got some jet black ones that they classified as Caucasoid. But if you will study very closely, all of the black ones that they classify as Caucasoid are those that still have great civilizations, or still have the remains of what was once a great civilization. The only ones that they classify as Negroid are those that they find with no evidence that they were ever civilized; then they called them Negroid (1967: 28).

The Nguni

Once on the move the Bantu developed strong military tactics for defensive engagements and acquisition of life sustaining resources while on the journey south. We

therefore can deduce from the evidence thus far presented that the Nguni migration was an effort to secure the peaceful practice of Nguni Bantu ways of living as prescribed by Bantu philosophy. Of these Bantu migrations, the Nguni²⁷ were among the last to migrate, hence, they were more militarily advanced as they had to contend with other more established Bantu inkathas on their eastern path down toward Southern Afrika.²⁸

The Nguni were among the earliest Bantu to cross the Zambezi River according to Baba, evidence of this point is supported by the writings of Mutwa, (1969); Phiri, (1973); Nwaezeigwe, (1997); Bryant, (1929); Morris, (1965); Read, (1968); Stirnimann, (1963); Thomas, (2000); and Wiedner, (1962). Oral traditions tell us that there were older Bantu tribes that migrated south well before the Nguni. The verification of this evidence can be seen in the old inkatha of the “Ba-Pedi, Ba-Venda, Ba-Kgalaka and Ba-Tswana – [which] are the oldest Bantu tribes south of the level of Limpopo and their history within these regions go back to a thousand years B.C. (Mutwa, 1969: 19).” Most historians state that the Nguni, “claim descent from a legendary man called Nguni (Phiri, 1982: 11),” this point is not disputable but, it is not the whole truth.

Mutwa using intergenerational historical oral knowledge adds more to this point when he reports what was passed down to him from the older ones as the keeper of Bantu sacred knowledge. On the issue of who the Nguni are he states:

In those days, too, was formed the great nation called the Nguni, whose name means “people who have no land”. The Nguni was formed out of myriads of different tribes, and even today their language contains hundreds of words, which were taken over from these tribes. My children, a tribe rises naked from the

²⁷ Other names that have been used to identify the Nguni are Mnguni, abaNguni, abe-Nguni, vaNgoni (Tsonga) and baKoni (Sotho).

²⁸ The eastern routes were chosen primarily because they avoided the lowlands because of dense forest in certain areas but more importantly because high grounds in high altitudes were free of “tsete-fly (*Glossina morsitans* and *G. brevipalpis*), the vectors of Trypanosomiasis or sleeping sickness,” and diseases like malaria, hook-worm, and bilharzias (Pike, 1968: 21).

ground, which rises from the charred remains of the destroyed people: this tribe has nothing whatever to lose, and is the fiercest and cruelest tribe of all. Revenge is the meaning of its existence (Mutwa, 1969: 47-48).

Baba supports this position when he states: *We are the product of aggression in defense, they (non-Ngunis) know of our fury, for we were wounded innnyath (buffaloes)* (Personal communication, 2003). This evidence shows that the Nguni military developments and movements were born from efforts of trying to preserve life. We know the Nguni survived the onslaught of foreign invaders, Ma-Iti (Greek) and Egyptian just to name a few.²⁹ The Nguni are legendary as warriors, but their goals of migration as reflectively stated earlier were motivated by the search for a peaceful existence, desire to preserve Bantu values and most importantly preserve life above all. These truths in most white writings were and are omitted altogether in favour of the barbarous, bloodthirsty, and brutal warrior savage (Elmslie, 1899; Fraser, 1914 and Joseph Conrad, 1902).

In South Afrika the Nguni split into four distinct groups that occupied new territories. Notably, the Swazis were the earliest Nguni to settle south of the Limpopo River. Swazi oral history speak about the Emakhandzambili (those found ahead) whom they report as being Lawu also known as the Khoi-Khoi/Hottentots, the BaTwa/San also known as the Bushmen and of the Bantu stork there was the Sotho tribes also known as Sutu, baSutu, besutfu, baSotho, and baSuto make up the earliest known settlers (Mamba, 1995; Kuper, 1952; Bonner, 1982; Matsebula, 1972 and Omer-Cooper, 1987). The Nguni settled more or less in the following order: Swazi occupied the northeast, then Zulu, Pondo, Tembu and Xosa all settling along the eastern coast towards the Cape of Good Hope, South Afrika (Bryant, 1929 and Mutwa, 1969). This is not to say the Bantu

²⁹ See Mutwa (1969: 33-67) for a clear understanding on how the Bantu were invaded by the earlier foreign colonizers.

claimed the lands south of the Limpopo River based on assertions of the concept of “terra nullius.” No, the oral tradition of the Lawu/Khoi-Khoi (the Hottentots), the BaTwa/San (the Bushmen) and our own Nguni also speak about a shameful time of turbulence where violence was used to integrate those who settled before the Nguni arrived (Omer-Cooper, 1987; Mutwa, 1969; Bryant, 1929; Morris, 1965; Wilson & Thomas, 1969; and Wiedner, 1962). It would seem after generations upon generations of defending the philosophical ideology of preserving life, our Bantu ancestors had developed a taste for using violence as a form of dispute resolution.³⁰ Evidence of this tumultuous period of Bantu history is reflected very poignantly by the BaTwa’s and the Lawu’s rock paintings, which this student has seen in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Afrika.

Figure 3



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The rock painting in Figure 3 above shows a history of conflict between the Bantu and the BaTwa. Baba reports that *these conflicts centered on cattle as our ancestors protected their cattle fearlessly* (Personal communication, 2003).

³⁰ In *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, (2005) Taiaiake Alfred meticulously and reflectively addresses the issue of how the means used to acquire Indigenous freedoms are inevitably the means required to maintain it. This point is accurately reflected in the settlement of the Bantus south of the Limpopo river.

³¹ Omer-Cooper’s book entitled *History of Southern Africa* (1987: 3).

Within the southern Bantu mafuko (clan systems) there was further distinction under the small sikhulus (chiefs) but these are too numerous to mention, however, Baba speaks about the coming of hard times in Nguniland but was never willing to give specific details. Yet, he makes it clear that these hard times led to the creation of confederations among the Nguni and non-Nguni mafuko. Ngoni governance is Bantu governance because it is inclusive of all Bantu. To be Ngoni is to be born of the Bantu hybrid, which takes us back to the foundational philosophy “we exist because you exist,” thus, it only makes sense to above all preserve all life.

Afrikan scholars and historians have attributed the militarization of Nguni and non-Nguni mafuko to the population growth of the 1800, which was followed by chronic drought spells, diseases, and plagues. It is believed these phenomena created scarcity in resources which in turn led to the desire to maintain dominance over trade routes and resources which resulted in the area having increased conflict (Nwaezegwe, 1997; Barnes, 1967 and Pike, 1968). However, Mama Mukulo put it this way, “*Man's desire to do evil has had us wondering since time immemorial and nothing has changed.*” In order to survive the military conquest that followed smaller mafuko were forced in mergers with larger mafuko for protection against invasion. Baba told this student that the most important and most powerful confederations were under the inkathas that amalgamated into the Ndwandwe beneath the leadership of Zwide, and the second were underneath the umbrella of the Mthethwa which was led by Dingiswayo. Beneath the leadership of the Inkosi ya Makosi Zwide (Paramount chief or King of Kings) were “two small inkathas that later became Ngoni: the Jere of Inkosi Zwangendada, who lived across the Hluhluwe River west of Lake St. Lucia; and the Maseko pfuko, who lived in the Pongolo River

regions, south of present-day Swaziland (Nwaezegwe, 1997: 14).” Yet D.D. Phiri (1982: 62), a Malawian, arrives at the following conclusion: The original home of the Maseko was in the valley of the Usutu River in Swaziland.” This inconsistency could possibly reflect that the community of the Maseko was united under one inkatha but developed offshoots as a way to amiably resolve conflicts. This topic requires further discussion but this will occur in the next chapter, in this chapter we are just laying the groundwork for general establishment of the Maseko and their natal homeland.

Other important communities and figures in the history of the Maseko are under Inkosi ya Makosi Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa and within this inkatha was the small Zulu pfuko of Inkosi Senzangakona, who was the father of the great military leader Shaka. The despotic rule of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka and his immense impetus for inkathaism is what created the Mfecane (literary translated as shattering or crushing) which set into motion a violent transformation of not only the amaZulu, but also among the neighbouring Nguni and non-Nguni communities (Phiri, 1973; Nwaezeigwe, 1997; Bryant, 1929; Morris, 1965; Read, 1968; Stirnimann, 1963; Thomas, 2000; and Wiedner, 1962). It is this forced northern migration that led to the creation of the Maseko Ngoni away from their natal homeland of South Afrika (Phiri, 1973; Nwaezeigwe, 1997; Bryant, 1929). Baba always said, *We are the product of aggression in defence, they (non-Ngunis) know of our fury, for we were wounded buffaloes but I am not sure what we are in these times* (Baba, personal communication, 2003). But let us not get ahead of ourselves as these issues and more will be revealed in Chapter 3.

Initial conclusions

Kings, blacksmiths, and slaves can forget, but the heart of the Ngoni remembers everything.

-Soninke Bard (Courlander, 1982)

An important point remembered by this student from the teaching of Mama Mukulo as also reflected in the work by Mutwa, clearly convey that the Bantu of the “Old Land” were ruled by the Council of Elder Mothers (1969: 20). This importance point speaks to the historical role of women, their stature within our inkatha's, and reflects the unfortunate distortion and erosion of their rightful place within our society. Both women and men are important for the effective running of Bantu governance.

Baba Mukulo taught this student that Bantu migrations were acts of the will of the Bantu to preserve life and traditional ways of living. While the white powers have worked tirelessly to keep us in the yokes of slavery or as near to this state as possible we (Maseko Ngoni) have also fallen victim to trickery methods that white society has employed to convince us that we had no significant history in the world because:

“It made us feel inferior; it made us feel inadequate; made us feel helpless. And when we fell victim to the feelings of inadequacy or inferiority or helplessness, we turned to somebody else to show us the way. We didn't have confidence in another black man to show us the way (Malcolm X, 1967: 94).

Oral traditions tell us that we have old roots in both the north and south of Afrika as we have been living in Afrika since time immemorial. It needs to be noted that the Nguni migration patterns were different from the preceding Bantu movements because the Nguni migrations were precipitated by foreign invasions (Omer-Cooper, 1987; Mutwa, 1969; Bryant, 1929; Morris, 1965; Wilson & Thomas, 1969; and Wiedner, 1962). Yet, with the arrival of the colonizers, the Bantu efforts to preserve life became loss of

land and resources as the foreigners erected impenetrable boundaries and pushed the Bantu further south in the effort to acquire more resources while asserting their dominance over the land and the Bantu. Faced with white colonizers, the same Bantu philosophy that had allowed Bantu to preserve life, resolve conflicts and amiably achieve reconciliation became unknowingly and unwittingly the philosophy of our demise. To the worldview of the new foreigners anything acquired during conquest (including people) could be marked and henceforth be claimed as spoils of war. The ideology that reflects and supports the concept of having spoils of war is demonstrated in the Euro-America idea about personal property and “foreign national property” which are defended by life and limb. In this new foreign approach there is no room left for rectifying past deeds, sharing, or restoring balance again (see, for example, Canada’s Indian Act, South Afrika’s Group Area Act and Bantu Authorities Act).

The “Ba-Pedi, Ba-Venda, Ba-Kgalaka and Ba-Tswana – are the oldest Bantu tribes south of the level of Limpopo and their history within these regions go back to a thousand years B.C. (Mutwa, 1969: 19).” The Nguni were among the last of the Bantu family to enter South Afrika. The Nguni, whose name means “people who have no land” clearly speaks and reflects the Bantu’s experience with the invading foreigners in North Afrika. Notably, the Swazis were the earliest Nguni to settle south of the Limpopo River. The settlement process of the Bantu reflects the need for autonomy and democratic rule; hence the rise of smaller Inkosis based on shared and agreed upon Bantu principles. This invariably led to the demise of the Nguni inkatha. However, the seed for violence as the most viable tool for conflict resolution was a response to foreign invasions. As Baba always said, *we are the product of aggression in defense, they (non-Ngunis) know of our*

fury, for we were wounded innyath (buffaloes) (Informant, Baba, personal communication, 2003).

CHAPTER THREE – FROM NGUNI TO NGONI

We exist because you exist.

-Dr. Leroy Little Bear, 2005

The child I was has been left behind.

Those who first love me have gone on without me.

Where they were a door has been left open upon a solitude.

-Robert Duncan, Ground Work (in *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* by Bell Hooks, 1996)

This chapter will examine and analyze how Maseko Ngoni emerged from the legacy of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka's rule and were able to regenerate themselves into a “new people” as part of modern-day Malawi. The people known as Maseko Ngoni reflect the uniting of some scattered Nguni Bantu under Maseko as an effort to preserve life. This act of uniting under Maseko sets a precedence that shows that the actions of a single individual can affect a whole community (Mutwa, 1969; Mzala, 1988 and Mamba, 1995) hence, Nguni leaders are legendary to the heart of Ngoni. These Nguni leaders live in our personal memories through teachings of songs, poems, stories and all other mannerism that help to convey as well as preserve Bantu experience for future generations. Baba Mukulo always said to this student: *I know this because the elders told me, I know this because it was told to me when my ancestors approached me from the other realms in my dream and I know this because we sing about it* (Baba Mukulo, Personal Communication, 1981-2).

The whole community especially elders, act as conduits for expressing Maseko Ngoni experience. As a result the sacred history of the Maseko Ngoni is encoded within the personal memory of each member as a blue print for teaching the present generation using the experience of the past generations. In these historical accounts great leaders in

life and death become the total manifestation of a people while the people become an indication of a leader (Mzala, 1988 and Mamba, 1995). Baba explained the role of our

Inkosi ya Makosi as:

They are more than political leaders, they are spiritual leaders because they are the living representation of our ancestors. Yet, they do not impose their will upon the people. In fact it would be wiser to call them the mediators because they mediate our needs to the ancestors and convey the wishes of the ancestors to the people. Politically a good inkosi only expresses the will of the people, in a way he ensures that the will of the people is law (Baba, Personal Communication, 2003).

Lopati Nzunga offers the following prayer to the Amadlozi (ancestor spirits)

when Bambo Manga a Maseko fell very ill. This prayer powerfully conveys our connection to leaders in both life and death:

O thou Gumede!
 O thou Mputa!
 Here is your beast.
 That your child may be healed,
 Look on what is yours.
 May you remain well
 And your child recover.
 We do not know,
 We do not know.
 If you say that she will die,
 She is yours, this child of yours.
 It is your affair.
 As for us, we long that your child may recover.
 If she dies, this child of yours,
 We can only speak your names.
 We cry to you for her.
 (Translation and recorded by Read, 1956: 198)

As a continuation of the themes discussed in Chapter two, this chapter will examine sacred oral voices of history that reflect those who started the first migration. Namely, it will focus on those oral histories found in mid migration, those absorbed in the late stages of the migration and those whose territory that the migrants settled in. Invariably all these people cannot tell the same history about the Ngoni migration

because oral reciters are limited by their context as determined by cultural experience and position. The orator's position is determined by his/her location in the family, in the clan and in the inkatha, which loosely translates to Zulu unity and nationhood as symbolized by the "inkatha yezwe yakwaZulu."³² Values and philosophies of inkatha are formed from secured bonds of places, languages, politics, medicines, economics, spirituality and above all relationships gained through interdependence according to Bantu teachings (Mutwa, 1969). The point that must be clear is that our sacred history, when viewed from a linear colonial perspective, may appear as contradictory. However, when it is viewed from the Maseko Ngoni perspective, we see it as being contextual to the multiple identities that make up Maseko Ngoni (this point was repeatedly conveyed by Baba to this student).

Looming over the creation of the Maseko Ngoni is Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka's (c.1787-1828) reign which historians have branded as Mfecane³³ (literary translated as

³² From the work compiled by H. Filter and edited and translated by S. Bourquin in the book of oral recording, *Paulina Dlamini: Servant of Two Kings* (1986: 29). Paulina Dlamini tells us that the "inkatha yezwe yakwaZulu" was a traditional supernatural coil that all the people saw a symbol of strength and unity.

³³ J. D. Omer-Cooper, "Has the Mfecane a Future? A Response to the Cobbing Critique," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993). Outlines the major appraisal of Mfecane, he states:

Julian Cobbing has advanced a wide-ranging critique of the concept of the Mfecane in southern, central and east African history. The Mfecane, he has maintained, was in origin a colonial myth to conceal white wrong-doing and justify land expropriation. Revived by well-intentioned 'Africanist' historians in the 1960s the concept has subsequently been exploited to justify aspects of apartheid. Rather than being the accompaniments of institutional change in African societies, he maintains that the wars and upheavals of the period must be attributed to the effects of increased white demand for African labour expressed in the massive expansion of the Delagoa Bay slave trade and slave raiding for the Cape labour market by Griquas with missionary and official involved in the Trans Orange, white traders in Natal and the British military force in the Transkei. Examination of the evidence, however, shows that the expansion of the slave trade in Delagoa Bay came after the area had been affected by the spread of the upheavals from the south and could not have been their cause. Evidence for large-scale slave raiding and trading by Griquas, missionaries, Natal traders and British military commanders likewise proves unsubstantiated. The bold new paradigms cannot be sustained. The debate has, however, raised important new questions, enlivened research in the area and ensured that the Mfecane will continue to occupy a prominent place in the developing historiography of southern Africa (p. 2).

shattering or crushing) and Difaqane in Sotho, (the scattering or forced migration) which set in motion a violent transformation of not only the amaZulu, but also among the neighbouring Nguni and non-Nguni communities. Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka as a leader merits special attention as his history reflects the rise of the amaZulu which ushers in a new era unknown to the Nguni. Yet, the reverberation of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka's mfecane was felt all the way up into central Afrika as it created the northward migration of both Nguni and non-Nguni. More importantly, we remember that the mfecane led to the creation of the Maseko Ngoni as a distinct Bantu. Our Maseko ancestors were collectively unwilling to give up their values and beliefs and in order to preserve Bantu life they chose to migrate away from the amaZulu expansion endeavours as conveyed by Baba Mukulo (see page 45).

Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka

*Great events do not occur every day,
Therefore we sing of them for generations.*

- The song by Bard, Segu (Courlander, 1982).

We know that: "In those days the little tribe of the Ifenilenja [later to become the Zulu Inkatha] was ruled by Senzangakona (Mofolo, 1949: 2)" who was the husband of the beautiful Nandi (pleasant one), their first-born was the great Shaka.³⁴ White people and some lost Afrikans have written that Shaka was the illegitimate son of Senzangakona, born out of wedlock, yes, but illegitimate no.

Though conceived during a premarital relationship between two members of aristocratic families (an act considered a heinous crime in Zulu society but tolerated in the aristocracy), Shaka was not born illegitimately, as some have claimed. His father, King Senzangakona, married his mother, Princess Nandi. It was not, therefore, the stigma of the illegitimacy that caused the bitterness of

³⁴ The name Shaka has been presented as Tshaka, and Chaka

Shaka's youth, but rather the violent conflict between his father and mother (Kunene , 1979: xvi).

It is well documented that Nandi possessed a sense of authority, accompanied by a strong will which was driven by a low tolerance for incompetence. The book by Mazisi Kunene entitled *Emperor Shaka the Great: A Zulu Epic*, reports that:

She was far from being an obedient, domestic and subservient woman. She regarded herself as a representative of her family and entitled to respect and political authority as any male member of society. She not only attended the Zulu national assembly, but the court historian tells us that she was in constant confrontation with the men of this assembly (one would think with the sense of contempt for the often meaningless rhetoric of the assembly). These qualities did not endear her to Senzangakhona (1979: xvii).

The Inkosikazi (queen) had no problems expressing her displeasure (often in public) about the Inkosi's behaviour. This created "discord between Senzangakhona and Nandi [and] eventually forced her to embark on a long period of wandering from relative to relative (Kunene , 1979: xvii)."³⁵ After a long period of wandering they settle down among the Qwabes were most historians are in agreement that Nandi married Prince

³⁵ Phiri (1982: 23) writes about the events that lead to Nandi and Shaka to leave in the following manner:

one day his father was in the kraal bathing, surrounded by his elders. It was in the forenoon so that Senzangakhona's back through a sharp shadow on the opposite side of the sun. Shaka was amused to see his father's shadow. To test his own ability as a sportsman he leapt over the shadow. The grown-ups were furious. A person's shadow was held so sacred by the Nguni; it was regarded as he soul. For anybody to leap your shadow it implied he wished death for you.

It was misconduct of this sort that deprived Shaka of fatherly love. What is worse, whenever Senzangakhona tried to correct his son's manners and behaviours he found Nandi taking Shaka's side, defending anything the boy did. So over Shaka, Senzangakhona and Nandi would exchange bitter words.

The climax in the conflict between Senzangakhona and Nandi came one day when Shaka went out to herd sheep with a dog behind him. The dog attacked one of the sheep and killed it. Back home Senzangakhona scolded Shaka for being so negligent of duty as to let the dog killed the sheep. "Where were you?" thus asked the father who had had enough of Shaka's shortcomings. [Barbara Tyrrell (1968) also writes about this dog and sheep incidence but she does not give us the full context of this oral report like Phiri].

Before Shaka could offer self defence, Nandi his mother and advocate once more spoke strongly in his favour. She questioned the father's sense of judgment. How could he blame Shaka for what a dog had done?

Senzangakhona now felt he could no longer stand this alliance between mother and son against him. He ordered them to clear out of Esiklebeni, his village.

Ngendeyana but Shaka was restless and could find no peace among the Qwabes (Kunene, 1979; Ritter, 1955; Mofolo, 1949 and Bryant, 1929).

Baba Mukulo reports that:

The young Shaka heard about the confederation of the multi-tribal Mthethewa which had the famous impi (army) regiments. The hardship of wandering at a young age made him develop the aspiration to be a great military leader. In the confederation of the Mthethwa a man could determine his own fate without being undermined by the history of identity. He therefore understood the opportunity presented to him and fortunately his mother was a perceptive politician and therefore had no hesitation in lending her support towards his endeavour. Being a warrior who possessed bravery, intelligence and a calmness to devise the deadliest strategies known to the Nguni, he easily won favour with Inkosi ya Makosi Dingiswayo. His stature alone, inspired men, so when he added poetic eloquence to speech, men were willing to lay down their lives for him (Baba Mukulo, personal communication, 1981-2).

Shaka's rise to commander in the multi-tribal Mthethwa (also known as Mtetwa and Mtsetfwa which means the Respected One) confederation was the clearest sign of evidence that Inkosi ya Makosi Dingiswayo was building an inclusive inkatha empire where merit won positions of authority and war was the final resort to subjugation. Even Bryant (1929) reports that traditional warfare in southern Afrika before Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka was conveyed in sacred oral histories as thus:

Most clan conflicts were settled in a frequently prearranged battle. The two clans met at a convenient location, often facing each other over the banks of a small stream, and the women and children assembled on a nearby hillock to shout encouragement and watch the fun. A long preliminary period was devoted to shouted boasts and taunts, and individual Warriors ran forward to *giya* – howling self-praises and dealing death to imaginary foes. The two mobs then edged towards each other, hurling assegais as the range closed. Eventually one side or the other would sense a moral ascendancy and hazard a charge, which usually sufficed to send the enemy bolting. The defeated clan lost cattle and land, and captives had to be ransomed, but crippling damage was rare and extermination unheard of (in *The Washing of the Spears* by Donald R. Morris, 1965: 42).

From the same Nguni witnesses, Bryant (1929) learned that “Over the slain, mutual condolence would be exchanged (p. 79).” Baba Mukulo taught this student that the Ngoni heart remembers everything when he stated:

Preserving life has always been our foremost goal. When we were faced with the chance of saving life or taking life, we always chose to save life. This is the Bantu way. Everyone understood and respected this law until the arrival of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka, whose mission was to create total subjugation or total destruction. All that we knew and stood for was threatened, so we took the only sensible action to preserve our political institutions. I was told most of our people wanted to stay and fight for their land but our forefathers asked, “Why kill your brother when the land is so vast and can support all of us?” They also told us that staying would signal the end for our way of life but if we moved we could re-establish our power as a whole without compromise to another people (Informant, Baba Mukulo, personal communication, 1981-2).

The great Ndlovu (elephant) Shaka had a different vision to Inkosi ya Makosi Dingiswayo because:

Shaka asserted that the policies of persuasion and forgiveness did not produce lasting peace in Nguniland, but rather provided an opportunity for the enemy to regroup and build up a new alliances. He put forward the idea that the enemy must not only be totally defeated, but also incorporated into a common nationhood. In this way he would cease to be a source of constant danger. Dingiswayo never accepted these arguments. He contended that such methods would only lead to fiercer and more costly conflicts... It was fortunate for Shaka that Dingiswayo, despite a difference on these issues, had absolute faith in him. He promptly gave him the position of commander in which he could demonstrate the superiority of his tactics (Kunene, 1979: xviii).

Shaka's development of ready standing regiments can be defined defensively and offensively. In that it was defensive as well as offensive during the Great Famine of 1800, commonly known as indlala kaMadlantuli meaning “eat what you can and say nothing” (in *African Kingdoms of the Past: Monomotapa, Zulu, Basuto – Southern Africa* by Kenny Mann, 1996: 65). Shaka was popular among the impi regiments and common citizens of Mthethwa because his tactics were the only effective interventions against the hungry roaming, mafuko (clans) like the Ntulis, the Matiwanes, and the Phephethas

(Kunene, 1979). Among the other mafuko, Shaka was known as a fierce disciplinarian but he still attracted men and women from many mafuko because he was perceived as being a socially conscious leader. Kunene (1979: xviii) reports that:

One of the most revolutionary concepts he put forward was the equal distribution of wealth and national affiliation. In the past the aristocracy, in alliance with the military, had appropriated all the loot; it was not uncommon for the ruler to grow fat while the rest of the population starved. The national poets of Senzagakhona's time said of him: *His body was beautiful. Even at the time of the Great famine!*

Senzangakona, Chief of the amaZulu³⁶ died in 1816 and at the request of Shaka, Dingiswayo loaned him a regiment of impi to seize what was rightfully his, the amaZulu crown (Nwaezeigwe, 1997).

Shaka had to commandeer the Zulu throne because his claim as heir was stained by the fact that his mother (Nandi) was not principle wife to the King. Yet, Shaka was the King's first male child but having left the pfuko [clan], there was room for an alternative heir which seemed very normal and plausible to the senior wives and their supporters (Baba, personal communication, 2003).

In 1818 Inkosi ya Makosi Zwide (also known as Ziwide, Zidze and Zwidi) of the Ndwandwe (known as well as Nwandwe and meaning Heron People) killed the Mthethewa Inkosi ya Makosi Dingiswayo in an invasion battle,³⁷ as “[t]wo bulls cannot do well in the same kraal without fighting, neither can cocks (Phiri, 1982: 18).”

³⁶ This Nguni group has also been known as the Zooloo, the Zoolu, the Zoola, and the Zoolah. The meaning of Zulu was fluently analysed in an interview for The Spectrum Newspaper by Rick Martin in 1999, September 30, entitled *Great Zulu Shaman and Elder Credo Mutwa: On Alien Abduction & Reptilians*. Mutwa tells us that:

The Zulu people, who are famous as a warrior people, the people to whom King Shaka Zulu, of the last century, belonged. When you ask a South African White anthropologist what the name of Zulu means, he will say it means “the sky” (*laughter*), and therefore the Zulu call themselves “people of the sky”. That, sir, is non-sense. In the Zulu language, our name for the sky, the blue sky, is *sibakabaka*. Our name for inter-planetary space, however, is *izulu* and the *weduzulu*, which means “inter-planetary space, the dark sky that you see with stars in it every night”, also has to do with traveling, sir. The Zulu word for traveling at random, like a nomad or a gypsy, is *izula*.

³⁷ Dingiswayo's demise at the hands of an enemy (Zwide) that he had earlier showed mercy when he could have killed him prove Shaka's point. An enemy must be eliminated right away or it will return and eliminate you. If Shaka had followed his own advice, his own brothers would not have been able to assassinate him (the movie *Shaka Zulu*, (1986) impart this point brilliantly).

The only threat left for Inkosi ya Makosi Zwide was Shaka, the new heir to the amaZulu while also being the newly elected Inkosi ya Makosi of the Mthethewa as Shaka's military genius and tactics were perceived as the only successful defence against the Ndwandwe. *The Fables of Aesop* (edited by Spriggs) captures this Nguni drama with the following fable:

The Kite and the Pigeons

Some Pigeons, terrified by the appearance of a Kite, called upon the Hawk to defend them. He agreed at once. When they had admitted the Hawk into their coop, they found that he killed a large number of them in one day than the Kite would have injured in a whole year.

Avoid solutions that are worse than the problem (1995: 2).

With both Inkosis believing they were the true supreme leader of the Nguni it was inevitable that the two great elephants would lock heads and one would emerge the victor because as the Ngoni say, "there can only be one Inkosi ya Makosi." In 1819, at the battle of Umhlathuzi, Inkosi ya Makosi Zwide was defeated by Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka. *Shaka encouraged his men in battle by yelling very boastful ngadla (I have eaten) while killing the enemy swiftly on the battle field* (Baba, personal communication, 2003). Phiri reports that Zwide died in exile among the Sotho pfuko (clan) of baBelu (Phiri, 1982: 42). With no major rival in kwaZulu Natal, the Zulu inkatha extended its reach farther a field and impose total subjugation to Nguni and non-Nguni inkathas.

At first the common man loved Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka and the aristocrats both resented and feared him as illustrated by Kunene:

Consequently to be a Zulu no longer signified merely clan membership or family position, but a political grouping whose composition was inter-family and international. It was this factor more than any other that demonstrated Shaka's outstanding political genius. Not only did he become part of the army; but he also undermined the basis of privilege by making both commander and soldier, aristocrat and commoner, take similar risks in the front line. It was this approach which later prompted his assassination by his brothers, who resented their lack of

aristocratic privilege. It must be mentioned here that despite Dingiswayo's benevolent rule, positions of leadership in the Mthethwa state remained firmly in the hands of the aristocracy. So important was Shaka's reform that many years later the Zulu generals who establish kingdoms in various parts of eastern and central Africa commanded armies only about 10 per cent of whose warriors were 'true' Zulu. The rest were local recruits, who were able to rise to various positions of command and political authority (1979: xxi).

Being the ultimate voice of authority Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka became the victim of unchecked power. It can be said, Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka used to inquire about the restless hearts of his country men but when he became the definitive power inquiry was replaced by self-described wisdom and in this self-described wisdom Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka told his country men about their restless hearts, unquestionable alleviation is what he is said to have prescribed. All knowingly he dismissed all other forms of Bantu knowledge and guiding philosophy. "He ignored the customary council of Elders and ruled by absolute despotism. In his presence a man might meet instant death for no other reason than possessing a face that annoyed the despot (In the introduction for *Tribal Peoples of Southern Africa* by Barbara Tyrrell, 1968)." Yet, Kunene (1979: 259) gives us the following chronicle which allows us to see another side to Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka:

The Queen Mother had begun to regain her health.
Constantly she took long pleasure walks in her garden.
The King himself now participated in wedding feasts.
It was in this same year he softened the army and laws,
Making all commanders answerable to their own regiments.
He enlarged the regimental towns,
Giving to each a vast number of chosen beasts for their feasting.
This way he silenced even the violent tongues
Who had condemned the stern life of the young recruits.
Shaka knew of these rumours but had ignored them.
In all Zulu people bustled with new life and new hopes.
Only the illness of Queen Mtaniya disturbed the festivals.
She was Shaka's grandmother and widow of Jama.
Often he would wash her feet, tending to her like a child.

Often he would say: ‘You make me balance the old and the new.’

The evidence in this paragraph reveals to us that we all have multiple identities and Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka was no exception to this rule. Fearing the unpredictability of absolute power, fearing the loss of all that is Bantu, fearing the loss of meaning as guided by time immemorial Bantu principles and above all fearing disturbance to the continuum of life past, present and future: our ancestors scattered from the unknowns of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka as an effort to regenerate Bantu life.

Movement of the People

The scattering of the Nguni from the Natal homelands is well documented in the Nguni heart and memories as demonstrated by the oratory Paulina Dlamini, who reports hearing this song from the Khandempemvu regiment:

Wena weNdlovu enamandla,
 Akusiphe impi!
 Izizwe zonke zishona enhla,
 Ziya kwaMshelekwane
 Izizwe zonke, Mshweshwe, ziyakwala.
 AmaBhunu ayabaleka;
 Akusiphe impi.
 Izizwe zonke zishona enhla!
 Ayabaleka amaBhunu,
 Ashona lenhla kwaMshelekwane.

You mighty elephant,
 Give us war!
 All nations disappear to the north,
 They go to Mshelekwane.
 All nations hate you, Mshweshwe, [Getshwayo]
 The Boers take to fight:
 Give us war.
 All nations disappear to the north.
 The Boers are running,
 They flee northward to Mshelekwane.
 (Filter, 1986: 39-40)

Nxaba leader of the Msane all went in a northward direction as an effort to avoid the expansionist efforts of the amaZulu (Phiri, 1982; Tyrrell, 1968 and Omer-Cooper, 1987). Among the first people to be scattered by the mfecane were the Ngwane, (descendants of the eMbo-Nguni) whom were led by Sobhuza I, a blood relative of Shaka through the Elangeni people, who were Shaka's maternal family. As we are writing about the Maseko Ngoni we will only discuss the other southern Bantu in comparative terms of relating to the Maseko Ngoni. Evidence of the Maseko history is predominately found in Swaziland, thus we will look to the history of the Swazis as a way to shed light on the Maseko.³⁹

Baba asserts: "*We are from Swaziland.*" However, historians cannot conclusively agree on the natal homeland of the Maseko, the majority of historians place them in south Swaziland or Central Swaziland. Alan R. Booth (1983) in *Swaziland: Tradition and Change in a Southern African Nation*, argues that the Maseko pfuko was one of the many mafuko that occupied Western-Central Swaziland and was known by the true Swazis as Emakhandzambili, "those found ahead." Nwankwo T. Nwaezeigwe (1997) in *Ngoni* emphasises that the original home of the Maseko Ngoni was the Pongolo River region. This is wrong, however this mistake is understandable because from oral Swazi tradition we learn that the Ngwane people (ancestors of Swazis) including Dlamini royals settled in the Pongolo area which was inhabited by Vilakati, Nkambule, Sukati, Nsibanze, Mkhonta, Hlophe and Nkonyane who were Sotho mafuko but not Maseko. The Ngwane and the Emakhandzambili (those found ahead) "Together, they made up an embryonic

³⁹ Bridglal Pachai, (1973: 36) reports that: "These belong to the Maseko line of the Swazi chief Ngwana, whose sons Mputa and Chidiaonga were responsible for setting up the Maseko Ngoni in Malawi."

kingdom,” which later became the great umphakatsi⁴⁰ of Swaziland (Westcott & Hamilton, 1992: 60). The Ngwane/Swazis encountered the Maseko tribes in the Lusutfu River⁴¹ valley near “Nqabaneni (the little shelter), so named because of its natural rocks, and caves which provide shelter from the enemy (Matsebula, 1976: 16).” They (Maseko) were led by “Cece, son of Khubonye, son of Magadlele (Matsebula, 1976: 16) and N. J. van Warmelo in *The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa* as edited by I. Schapera reports:

But the case of the Maseko at least there is no shadow of a doubt, for one of the three branches of the Pulana Sotho is named baxaMasexo. As previously stated, there is reason to believe that the Pulana are the modern representatives of the old Sotho population of Swaziland, and Maseko is undoubtedly the Swazi version of Masexo (1966: 52).

Maseko never accepted foreign rule, hence they were a constant danger for the Swazis. To thaw out this danger Sobhuza’s father developed familial ties to bind the Maseko to the Swazis:

A daughter of his grandfather, Ngwane, had married a Maseko chief. In addition, Sobhuza’s mother, Lojiba Simelane, was also related to the Maseko. So, because they were cousins, the Maseko welcomed Sobhuza when he arrived and offered him shelter. At this time Sobhuza and his followers were weak, and the Maseko, under their leader, Mgazi (also known as Cece), were strong. In fact, the Maseko were amongst the most powerful people in central Swaziland at the time. Mgazi agreed to allow Sobhuza’s people to stay at Nqabaneni, but he did not want to antagonise the Ndwandwe by doing this. So when the Ndwandwe army threatened to attack Nqabaneni, Mgazi asked Sobhuza and his people to leave. Knowing that Sobhuza was a stranger in this land, Mgazi supplied the Ngwane king with a guide who was instructed to show him another fortress. This guide's

⁴⁰ Matsebula, informs us in his writing that:

Umphakatsi is derived from the stem ekhatsi (inside, or the core). The umphakatsi therefore symbolises the spiritual unity of the nation.

The reason for having two imiphakatsi is based on the fact that Swazi society has a dual monarchy. This means that the king rules and reigns with his mother. The king is regarded as the ‘father’ while the queen mother is referred to as the ‘mother’ of the nation (1976: 9).

⁴¹ Lusutfu River gets its name from “(the Sutu people, the Dark-brown-river People),” and it is also important to point out that some of these people are baKoni (Z. abaNguni) and therefore are direct relatives of the Zulus (Bryant, 1929:308-309).

name was Lanqabane Mnisi. He took Sobhuza north of Nqabane, to the Mdzimba Mountains (oral report in Westcott & Hamilton, 1992: 75-76).

The Mdzimba (also known as Mdimba) Mountain areas were inhabited by the Mnesi (Mnisi) and Mncina⁴² mafuko (clan systems) who were known for large stone-built munzis (villages) which dotted the landscape.⁴³ “These were pure Sutus, members of the larger baPebi tribe (Bryant, 1929: 311),” and they were uncompromising about maintaining their collectively determined self-governance: “The Mncina resisted and were forced to flee, but for the most part the chiefdoms of the area took note of the fate of those who opposed Sobhuza’s forces and accepted Ngwane rule without putting up a fight (oral report in *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires* by Bonner, 1983: 31).” The name, Mucina connects this student to Swaziland, using shared meaning/symbols which identify him as belonging to this community via a continuum of shared Sotho experiences that extend all dimensions of past, present, and lead to the future through a shared name.

Nothing holds the human mind like questions of identity as illustrated in the autobiography *In The Shadow of A Saint*, by Ken Wiwa (2000). Wiwa begins chapter 5 of his book by quoting the title of James Baldwin’s book: *Nobody knows my name*. Wiwa then goes on to enquire about personal symbolic representation by stating: “I would love to know what my father was thinking when he named me. My full name is Kenule Bornale Saro-Wiwa. It means ‘In troubled times, I am fearless - the first son of Wiwa’ (2000: 70).” Baba Nelson Mandela’s autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* also

⁴² Mncina has also been presented as Masina, Macina and Mucina. The latter is how the student of this paper depicts his pfuko (clan) name, which he also uses as his surname.

⁴³ Matsebula (1976) reports that: “Between the Black Mbuluzi and Komati Rivers lived the Mucina (p. 17).”

confronts identity as conferred by name and place of birth. Baba Nelson Mandela declares:

Apart from life, a strong constitution and an abiding connection to the Thembu royal house, the only thing my father bestowed upon me at birth was a name, Rolihlahla. In Xhosa, Rolihlahla literally means ‘pulling the branch of the tree’, but its colloquial meaning more accurately would be ‘troublemaker’ (1995: 3).

It is evident from the data outlined that Bantu individuals make sense of themselves in relation to both land and community. Bantu voice comes from the relationship established within the boundaries of community. Experience gained from the homeland leads to the development of symbols that convey meaning within the boundaries of place. This triangular relationship of voice, place and symbols creates the individual (Bantu) identity as succinctly defined by Waters (2004) in her work, *American Indian Thought*. Without community one would have nothing to confirm one's identity, and existence would be meaningless and unexplainable.

Fear no man for the blood of the great warriors of AmaZulu flows through your veins and no living mortal can change that, remember when you hear AmaZulu they are talking about you (Baba Mukulo, personal communication, 1981-2). These words for many years had acted as a shield against the oppressive reality of white colonialism in Zimbabwe. Just like how the name Nguni has changed to Ngoni among our people, could the name Nkombane have changed to Komba?⁴⁴ Yet the story is more complex as Baba has conveyed to this student that our totem, Komba means a Lemur (Bushbaby).

Webster's Online Dictionary: The Rosetta Edition, (2005) defines Lemur:

Lemurs are part of a class of primates known as prosimians. These animals are the evolutionary predecessors of monkeys (simians). The term "lemur" is generically

⁴⁴ It must also be noted that many Maseko Ngoni in Lizulu have no problems with connecting their names to kwaZulu Natal or Swaziland as their pfuko and family names have not changed.

used for several families of prosimians: Cheirogaleidae, Megaladapidae, Lemuridae, Indridae, and Daubentoniidae. It is derived from the Latin word *lemures*, which means "spirits of the night." This likely refers to many lemurs' nocturnal behaviour and their large, reflective eyes.

Meaning of Komba in Zulu does not have any relevance to the totem meaning of this student's name. A fellow sister from South Afrika has this to say about the Zulu meaning: "*Inkomba Nkombane*" *figuratively means pointing fingers at one another. So yes, it is very much related to the word "Khomba" meaning point* (Personal Communication, 2006). The English and Zulu Dictionary by Doke (1958: 355-356) states that "point (*indicate*) p. out: khomba, khombisa, phakula, tshengisa." Whatever the association, the evidence connecting this student to amaZulu through name is questionable and not clear. We are therefore left to wonder if the Zulu connection is through marriage or leadership association? This line of questioning will be followed up later in this chapter but for now we will follow the names of this student as a way to try and unearth the truth.

Baba informed this student that our pfuko (clan) names had been used just like our seano (totem) names to create surnames because surnames are a colonial imposition. However, as this was a requirement to survive the colonial oppressive system, our people made sure that our surnames formed a religious tie between our living bearer and our original ancestors (Lugg, 1975). *Naming for the Maseko Ngoni goes beyond identifying the individuals to honouring their deeds through the naming ceremony* (Baba, personal communication, 2003). As a result the names of Maseko Ngoni need not remain constant and are in fact expected to change with the passing of time and the gaining of new knowledge. For example this student as a child was called Devi while his piercing stare gained him the title of staring bull. As a teen this student was honoured by being called

Dee, a paternal name from his grandfather while in young adulthood was called Mucina, a maternal name from his paternal grandmother. As a full adult this student is addressed by his seano of Komba until fatherhood where he will gain the title of father of so and so.

This student's surname, Mucina we know from earlier evidence (see page 70) is a Sotho pfuko name. Yet, among the Sotho Mucina, his kith and kin, this student cannot find his seano (totem) of Komba as this is a foreign word amongst the Sotho. Bryant however sees the issue differently and he states:

We have noticed in recent years a regrettable tendency on the part of some ethnological writers to import into the Bantu social system and element termed 'Totemism', an institution which, we are convinced, is absolutely unknown to those Africans (if, indeed, it is known anywhere!). This erroneous practice should be checked betimes, before it comes to invade our own Nguni fields (1964: 444).

First and foremost we will not listen to any white settler who claims our territories and our peoples like we are play things that belong to them. Like we say "wana wa njoka de njoka" (the child of a snake can only be a snake). Those who study Bantu oral teachings and truly listen to our elders report the following about the Sotho:

"All regard themselves as intimately bound up, in some mystical way, with certain species of animal or natural object, known as their *seano* (object of reverence), *sereto* (honour), *seila* (taboo), or *seboko* (praise-name) (informed by Sotho orators in *The Bantu – Speaking Tribes of South Africa* edited by Schapera, 1966: 91)."⁴⁵

We will therefore unquestionably disregard Bryant's ill informed advice. After a long futile search, a South Afrikan zoologist with extensive knowledge on animals found in Sotho areas, informed this student that Komba/Lemur/bushbaby is known among the Sotho as letakataka or matakataka. This is a known seano among the Sotho. We can therefore conclude that this student also has roots in the place where

⁴⁵ Barbara Tyrrell & Peter Jurgens (1983: 15) add that: "The hallmark of the Sotho/Tswana, who account for just over one third of the Bantu-speaking Southern Africans, is totemism. Each clan has its specific totem, the animal or, more rarely, a plant or mineral."

Lemur/bushbaby/ letakataka or matakataka is known as Komba. We will return later to this issue of seano because for this student the question of identity is one that:

Pulls,
 Pushes,
 Jabs,
 Pokes,
 Stabs,
 And goes too close to the centre for comfort,
 But forward we must persist.
 Truth is ours to find,
 For if not us then who?⁴⁶

Let us return to the creation of the Maseko Ngoni as a distinct Abantu, after the collapse of the Ndwandwe, Sobhuza returned to central Swaziland with a much bigger and stronger army, yet the Maseko pfuko proved to be a hard nut to crack. The Swazis oral historians reported that:

In 1820 Sobhuza tried to bring them under his ‘armpits’ by offering one of his daughters, LaMbombotsi, to be Mgazi’s main wife. This plan failed when Mgazi chose another woman, LaNdzimandze, to be his main wife. Mgazi had thought ahead. He did not want Sobhuza’s daughter to be the mother of his successor. He knew that this would have paved the way for the extension of Ngwane rule over the Maseko (Westcott & Hamilton, 1992: 81).

We are also informed by the elders that the Ngwane were not able to subject the Maseko through direct conquest hence they could not impose their will on the Maseko mafuko, so:

Sobhuza and his advisers hatched a plan: they invited the Maseko to join them on a friendly hunt, but their intentions were sinister. It was the Maseko rather than the impala and elephant, who would be hunted. The hunt took place in the Maseko chiefdom. The participants moved on to Mawelawela island, where animals are abundant. There the Ngwane hunters fell on their unsuspecting human prey.

⁴⁶ This poem is inspired by the poem *The Stranglehold of English Lit.* by Felix Mnthali (<http://www.greatpicbooks.com/review/april99.html>).

It was a terrible day for the Maseko. Many, including Mgazi, died. Others fled, some as far away as present-day Lesotho, where their descendants live today. One section of the Maseko remained at Mawelawela and joined the Ngwane, fighting against their own people. Maseko power had been broken at last (Westcott & Hamilton, 1992: 81).

Scattered and displaced were the ancestors of this student. Dejected and disappointed they wandered aimlessly. Matsebula reflected this by reprinting the following media headline:

On 27th of April, 1963, the *Elethu Mirror*, a Johannesburg newspaper, published an article which revealed that some of the Maseko wanted to install a man called Dumakude Maseko as their king. This Dumakude was stated to be the grandson of Mgazi, who fled the country and settled in Basutoland (Lesotho) at the time when many of his clansmen were destroyed by Sobhuza (1972: 11).

The evidence shows that the Maseko were Sotho before the great scattering created by the amaZulu. Baba has let this student know that he has a memory which was given to him in youth by his elders and according to those teachings, in the past the Maseko were Sotho. To this student Baba reported that:

The Maseko were scattered by the Swazis then the Nwdandwe and finally the Zulus. In each attack the invaders absorbed those of us that were caught, this explains why you can find the Maseko among the amaZulu, Swazis and other tribes. This is how we have lived on, yet we are distinct from the others because our names connect us to our lands and their names connect them to their lands (Personal Communication, 2003).

Evidence of what Baba teaches about the power and connection of our names, Maseko and Mncina is well articulated by Basso when he states:

[t]he people's sense of place, their sense of their tribal past, and their vibrant sense of themselves are inseparably intertwined. Their identity as persisted. Their ancestors saw to this, and in the country of the past, where the ancestors came alive in resonating place-worlds, they still do so today. Their voices are strong and firm-and at times it is unclear who is quoting whom (Basso, 1996: 35).

Politics in a Changing Society by J. A. Barnes, (1967: 17) takes the safe road and does not even attempt to identify the original home of the Maseko and claims that no one

in the written scholarly world seems to know for certain were the Maseko Ngoni originated from but what he did not mention was that “Kings, blacksmiths, and slaves can forget, but the heart of the Ngoni remembers everything (Soninke Bard).” The same quandary does not befall the Ngoni of Jere because their leader was the famous military commander Zwangendaba who led a large army. Being one of Shaka’s great adversaries in battle, historians have found it easy to track a large military regiment.⁴⁷ Chroniclers are in agreement that Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba belonged to the Mfekane who were a pfuko of the Ndwandwe with roots in St. Lucia Bay kwaZulu. Sadly many historians lump the Maseko together with the Jere because they share the name Ngoni and thus believe these two Bantu groups are one but the Swazi and the Maseko Ngoni orators remind us of the fact that the Maseko in Swaziland are part of the same people who are reflected in Lizulu, modern-day Malawi, obviously not exclusively.

Maseko: Malawi and Beyond

My children, a tribe rises naked from the ground, which rises from the charred remains of the destroyed people: this tribe has nothing whatever to lose, and is the fiercest and cruelest tribe of all. Revenge is the meaning of its existence.

-Mutwa, 1969: 47-48.

The Ngoni⁴⁸ left Nguniland under two distinct leaderships of Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba Jere and Inkosi ya Makosi Ngwana Maseko. These two leaders, with other fleeing Ngoni leaders, worked together and at times united forces, but this was short-

⁴⁷ Bryant (1929) in 1823, Capt. Owen, reported that the Tonga had encountered upwards of 5000 adherents of Zwangendaba.

⁴⁸ The Ngoni scattering has led the Maseko Ngoni to many territories, hence they are known by many names (Chingoni, Kingoni, Wangoni, Angoni, Amapundi, Kisutu, Sutu, Bangoni, Bututa, Zowa, Bazowa, Landeens, Landims, Machendi, Mafiti, Mafitte, Mavitu, Magwagwara, Makwangara, Mangone, Mangwanwara, Manitu, Maviti, Mazite, Mazitu, Mbunga, Mchecherere, Rugaruga, Sinyama, Waangwe, Wajoja, Wamachonde, Wamachote, Wapoma, Watuta, Zulu and Zulu Kaffirs). Barnes speaking about the Ngoni reports: “Some of these names they shared with other tribes and bands of brigands (1967: 9).”

lived because of different ideologies and values. Cibambo illuminates this point in his translation of the *Praises of Ngwana, son of Goqweni* into English for Read (1956: 77):

You will cut the trees and will cut the months,
 You the locust, the grasshopper who fixed in your hair the feathers of
 the locust,
 Who went below and climbed up, and went to bring the morning Star of
 the dawn,
 You go, since you are rejected; you call and bring armlets of wild
 animals; those of cattle will be much disputed.
 You will remember the fault of long ago.
 In descending, we descend together into the mountains.
 You would drink the blood of cattle,
 You who were separated from the people of Shaka, Shaka of Mbelebele kraal,
 You who separated from the people of Nyathi the son Mashobane; it
 thundered, it was cloudy.
 Thou resemblest cattle which were finished by wolves.
 You who originated with the people of Mzilikazi,
 You who originated with the people of Mpakana son of Lidonga,
 You who originated with the people of Ndwandwe.

The above praise song recognizes that the Maseko were a small pfuko and therefore in the early years of the migration were forced to alliance with the larger mafuko but always broke away to maintain Maseko identity and values. The most notable Maseko leader is Inkosi ya Makosi Ngwana Maseko who was a leading sikhulu (headman/chief) in Swaziland. He is credited with consolidating the scattered people who were south of the Zambezi by incorporating them under the identity of Maseko Ngoni (Phiri, 1982; Read, 1956; Rangeley, 1966; Reinhard Klein-Arendt , 2003 and Nurse, 1973).

Many historians get preoccupied by the question of, ‘are the Maseko a breakaway from Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba?’ Barnes very loudly echoes the dilemma of many historians as thus:

The first and allegedly dissident group is that sometimes known as the Maseko Ngoni, now dwelling in the region around Mount Domwe, on both sides of the

border between southern Nyasaland and Portuguese East African. Murray, Young, Hatchell, Poole, and Bruwer stated that after crossing the River Zambezi together, the Ngoni of southern Nyasaland, broke off from Zwangendaba while he was in Nsenga country. Laws, Johnson, Soga, Lancaster, and Rangeley stated that these Ngoni crossed the Zambezi separately from Zwangendaba. Elmslie says that they were not an offshoot of Zwangendaba's party, while Read, Chibambo and Winterbottom stated that they broke away from Mzilikazi, not from Zwangendaba. Fraser mentions of a group that remained behind when Zwangendaba cross the river and says that it went on to the east of Lake Nyasa, but does not say that it later returned to southern Nyasaland (1967: 17).

The issue of who broke away from whom is best answered by the Maseko oral praise poem (see page 76) while Baba Mukulo further clarifies the positions and relationships between the Maseko and the Jere of Zwangendaba with the oral sacred history (see pages 15-16).

Baba Mukulo's orature is one of many expressions within and among the Maseko Ngoni as routes of migration are a constant source of ferocious debates. This is not uncommon in oral histories; perhaps, this is one of its major trademarks. Very likely, they are fuelled by passionate differences held by different mafuko seeking to dominate others. It is possible some mafuko may have used the westward route and re-joined their kith and kin in Malawi years later. However, Baba Mukulo's narration has striking similarities to D.D. Phiri's *From Nguni to Ngoni: A History of the Ngoni Exodus from Zululand and Swaziland to Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia* (1982: 62-66).

Oral and written sources echo to us that the Maseko got their revenge by joining forces with the Nxaba of the Msane to defeat Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba at Mbire (Liesegang, 1970). Following this defeat, Zwangendaba Jere and his followers crossed the Zambezi River during the month of the eclipse, which was in November 1835. This day is remembered by both the Jere and Maseko in their oral history (Nwaezeigwe, 1997; Phiri, 1982; Linden, 1971 and Read, 1956). Ngwana Maseko died before the crossing of

the Zambezi River. Historians have written the year of the Maseko crossing as being in 1839.⁴⁹ Ngwana was succeeded by his brother Magadlela until his heir; Mputa was ready to assume the throne. Margaret Read (1956), who spoke to Ishmael Mwale, treasurer to Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II, between 1935-1939 in her writing she reports that Mputa assumed the throne in Mozambique which was after the Zambezi crossing (Phiri, 1982). To avoid a bloody confrontation Inkosi ya Makosi Mputa Maseko traveled eastward of Lake Malawi so that the lake became a natural separator from Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba Jere. The Maseko were guided on this route by Sosala a Chewa chief, who promised to show them a land with cattle that the Maseko could raid. Sosala was true to his word, so he was rewarded handsomely with cattle for his help. Hence this history is very well remembered in both Chewa and Maseko traditions (Phiri, 1982; Linden, 1971 and Read, 1956). Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba Jere absorbed many local tribes while heading into the territory of the Fipa people who were between Lake Malawi and Tanzania (the best approximate time frame for this migration settlement is 1842 according to Nwaezeigwe). Here, Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba, built his capital city “Maphupho,” meaning “dreams,” before dying between 1845-1848⁵⁰. When the heir of

⁴⁹ The Maseko crossing of the Zambezi river is determined by two clues given by Ngoni and white colonial people. Linden states:

There are two clues to dating their crossing as 1839; firstly a statement by Nyathei recorded by Manser-Bartlett, that the Maseko were only a few months behind Jere when they finally moved North. It is also known that the Jere stayed in Nsenga country on the north bank of the Zambezi for about four years, so their [Maseko] departure date would be later than 1839. Secondly they are Portuguese records which mention “landeens” crossing the Zambezi in 1839 (1971: 70).

Linden conveys an understanding that “landeens” are Maseko. He draws this conclusion from Portuguese records which were supplied to him by Dr. G. Liesegang of Koln University. These records we could not access. However, we were able to access a journal article by Gerhard Liesegang, "Nguni Migration between Delagoa Bay and Zambezi, 1821-1839," *African Historical Studies* 3, no. 2 (1970) which supports Linden's position.

⁵⁰ Nwaezeigwe dates the death of Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba to be around 1845 and Phiri dates it to be 1848. This shows that these dates are approximations based on contact with white people.

Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba came of age, there were huge succession fights, which led to separation and formation of new Jere inkathas as conveyed by all historians.

After gaining much wealth from raiding and conquering the Matengo of Mozambique they moved into Songea (in present-day Tanzania) where the Ndendeuli and Pangwa were also raided and absorbed into Maseko inkatha. In Songea Inkosi ya Makosi Mputa established a capital city called Ngongoma (Read, 1956; Linden, 1971; Phiri, 1982 and Nwaezeigwe, 1997). Linden makes the following insightful observation about Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba which we believe aptly applies to Inkosi ya Makosi Mputa: “Until he crossed the Zambezi River, Zwangendaba was moving away from the other people of the stabbing spear. Now the urge to move was the urge to find cattle and cattle country, where “they could rear calves” in more ways than one and the young men could “wash their Spears” in blood (1971: 77).” As Alfred (2005) reminds us, inevitably whatever means and methods we use to achieve informed ways of living a Bantu life, we must be ready to use these means and methods to maintain it because as we have seen from our history, established precedents repeats itself over and over again, especially in times of stress and conflicts.

Life was splendid for the descendants of Maseko in their new inkatha of Ngongoma until the death of Inkosi ya Makosi Zwangendaba. The Jere dispute was divided along warring princes and izinduna. No consensus could be reached among the warring factions and Zulu-Gama of Jere moved into the Songea district. Being no match for the Maseko, the Gama Ngoni proposed a submission to the Maseko but later assassinated Inkosi ya Makosi Mputa. Mputa’s heir was not old enough to assume his position as leader so Mputa’s brother Chidyaonga (eater of gunpowder) led the Maseko

faithful into Mozambique, where they wandered without a permanent home. Baba states that: *The Maseko maintained themselves through this struggling time of nomadic life by remembering who they were, their history, their traditions, their beliefs and their songs* (Personal communication. June, 2003).

Come let us go to Swaziland
 [Land of milk and honey - *Line added by Baba when singing.*]
 Where the people die fat

Ubaba uyangibiza	My father is calling me.
Hamba ekaya	Go home.
Indaba zikuyandela	Things have turned against you,
Hamba ekaya	Go home.

(Told to Read by Ngoni informants, 1956: 182)

After the long wandering in Mozambique, the Maseko Ngoni returned to Domwe and permanently settled down in about 1870. Phiri reports that: “In 1870 or about this date Chidyaonga died. The electors were confronted with the problem of whether his son should succeed to the throne. It was decided that Mputa’s son Chikuse should instead be Paramount chief, while Chidyaonga’s son Chifisi be the next in command (1982: 101).” As always the hunger for power created internal division within the leadership of the Maseko Ngoni. This division would lead to civil war under the leaderships of Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani (son of Chikuse) whose people have now settled in Ntcheu in the Munzi of Lizulu and Inkosi Kachindamoto (son of Chifisi) whose people are now settled in Dedza and Mtakataka (Phiri, 1982). Yet, in this hour of misery when the Inkosis of Maseko Ngoni began to turn their *iklwa* (stabbing assegai) on each other, it was the people who suffered the most, like we say, “when elephants fight, it is the grass that

suffers.” Historians reported that for three years the supremacy war raged on and we are told that:

It was largely to ensure an adequate Labour supply to the farms in the Shire Highlands that Sir Harry Johnson sent his emissary to a range of reconciliation between the warring cousins. This emissary, Major Edwards, fulfilled his mission when on 12 November 1894, he managed to bring Gomani and Kachindamoto to shake hands in front of their people on top of Mount Dedza (Phiri, 1973: 2).

Unfortunately, the white peacemakers began to use the peace process to further impose domination over all Bantu in Malawi. Foreigners exploited the Maseko hospitality as they robbed in the name of trade, as missionaries of rival denominations demanded loyalty through lies, as bloodthirsty white killers hunted animals into extinction and as imperialists created domestic slaves through taxation. The authority of all Bantu chiefs was undermined and to reclaim his authority Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani challenged the white power (Phiri, 1973). Invariably war ensued, Gomani's impi fought very bravely but were no match for the British Protectorate force's guns. W. Graham a Missionary in charge of the Zambezi industrial mission at Dombolo recorded the following in his diary:

On the morning of October 27th I received a summons to attend a court in Dombolo House that date to give evidence as to what I knew about Gomani. I answered the questions that were asked; then Gomani was brought into my room (now the court). He was bound and guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets. My statement was read to him and he was asked if he had anything to say to it, but he kept silent. I was then dismissed. Mr Rayment was called in to collaborate my statement. The court closed, and the prisoner and white officers and native soldiers left for Blantyre, but between Dombolo and Chiole Gomani was tied to a tree and shot where we found his grave (Phiri, 1973: 6).

Out of the ashes of war, colonialism, suffering and loss would emerge the Maseko Ngoni Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II, who was the son of Chikusi (respectfully known as Gomani) (Phiri, 1973). Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II inherited the colonial problem from

his father but he was determined to unite his people against this common white enemy. To address this new common enemy Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II knew that he had to unite all the peoples who were in his territory by appointing subchiefs that reflected the will of all the people. This meant that Maseko and non-Maseko people had equal representation and equal rights.

Being a just man, Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II, openly opposed British taxation and exploitation of all Bantu, especially when the whites acted to create a federation of Southern Rhodesia (modern-day Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (modern-day Zambia) and Nyasaland (modern-day Malawi), which benefited their wallets. When white settlers saw his intelligent defiance against British rule Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II was imprisoned and exiled as an effort to subdue and undermine the united spirit of resistance growing in Malawi but the people had been awakened to the truth and they took on the fight as Malawians. The acts of Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II were respected by all because they embody the ethics and philosophy of Bantu teaching which are expressed by Maseko unity as “above all things preserve life,” (Baba Mukulo). After death the Nyasaland African Congress wrote:

In the picture below you see the late Inkosi Gomani of Ncheu District, who died in exile as a result of his determination not to yield to any retreat on the question of Federation. Today, Chief Gomani is regarded as the hero of the Nyasaland people and is remembered and loved by all Nyasalanders wherever they may be.

In his suffering he shared the sorrows of exile with Mai-Kosi Gomani and his children. To the Nyasaland people, the name of Inkosi Gomani arouses feelings of admiration and inspires them to greater achievements and more determination to reach their self-government. His name will forever be enshrined in the hearts of all the people of Nyasaland (in Phiri, 1973: 58).

Interestingly in Songea of present-day Tanzania this student finds a reflection of his seano (totem) Komba. Linguistically komba is the Swahili word for Lemur/bushbaby/ letakataka or matakataka showing that the author has roots as well in the place called Songea. This name, Komba has been preserved among the Maseko Ngoni of Lizulu as reflected in this student. Why a Swahili name (Komba)? Professor James Webster gives a very satisfactory answer which captures Baba Mukulo's teachings:

Maseko Ngoni returned to the area of Lake Malawi, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria because these were Bantu areas of refuge. It is very probable that in the crisis of the scattering Ngoni people were guided by ancestral memories back to the natal homelands. It is also probable that the people had travelled on this very same route while migrating south into kwaZulu-Natal so it is only natural that when the people were escaping the Mfecane they travelled back up on the same route. The Maseko honoured the people in these areas who had helped them during the scattering by incorporating their totems into the Maseko Ngoni nation. Thus, evidence of these good deeds was encoded and imprinted upon the Maseko forever (Personal communication. August, 2005).

The evidence has shown that through name, language, history, and place, this student is connected to South Afrika, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, all Bantu languages, especially Chingoni (the official language of the Ngoni). Present-day Maseko Ngoni are a beautiful hybrid born of the migrations against the violence of mfecane/difaqane. These migrations were efforts to preserve Maseko Ngoni life. This goal has been achieved as we are the evidence of Maseko Ngoni efforts to preserve life. Baba says: *To be Maseko is to intentionally undermine tribal separatism based on purity because the purity of Maseko Ngoni is based on the Bantu ideology of preserving life above all things (Personal communication, 2003).*

Closing Thoughts

Our research of Maseko Ngoni movement reveals that these inkathas are based on scattered peoples uniting under Maseko as an effort to preserve life. The Bantu Maseko being extremely heterogeneous in composition and arguably still being in their ancestral territories as they have moved and settled in Bantu lands. Thus, the Maseko Ngoni cannot be addressed as a diaspora. Among the Bantu, there is an understanding that we are all related but are also limited by our historical context which shows that place determines cultural experience. If there is no disagreement then there is no history to discuss. Each pfuko within the inkatha has its own story and this creates points of conversion and diversion.

Looming over the creation of the Maseko Ngoni is Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka's (c.1787-1828) reign which historians have branded as Mfecane in Zulu (literary translated as shattering or crushing) and Difaqane in Sotho, (the scattering or forced migration) set in motion a violent transformation of not only within the amaZulu, but also among the neighbouring Nguni and non-Nguni communities. Baba Mukulo reports that: *Everyone understood and respected the law until the arrival of Inkosi ya Makosi Shaka, whose mission was to create total subjugation or total destruction* (Personal Communication, 1981-2).

The most well know Nguni leaders heading northward were Soshangane leader of the amShangana, Mzilikazi leader of the Ndebele, Zwangendaba of the Mfekane tribe (leader of the Jere Ngoni) and Nxaba leader of the Msane (Phiri, 1982; Tyrrell, 1968 and Omer-Cooper, 1987). Professor James Webster informed this student that:

The strongest memory that comes out of Africa is primarily political because these are the things that are important to Africans. African historians tend to

focus on the interest of the people rather than finding obscure pieces of knowledge which are not necessarily relevant to the everyday African person. Therefore the strength of memory speaks to the interests of the people. There are cases of having the truth embellished but these cases are rare and can be found almost exclusively among the Western educated African because they have lost their sense of respect for ancestral religious values (Personal Communication, August 2005).

Hence among the Maseko Ngoni leaders are legendary and they embody the inkatha. Although historians cannot conclusively agree on the natal homeland of the Maseko, Baba informed this student that: *The main leaders of the Maseko were from Zulu and Swazi families but we are from Swaziland* (Informant, Baba, Personal Communication, 2005). This position is supported by this student's name as it connects him to Swaziland but there are also important connections to South Afrika, Lesotho, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The most notable Maseko Inkosi ya Makosi is Ngwana followed by Mputa as they are credited with consolidating the scattered people who were south of the Zambezi and incorporating them under the identity of Maseko Ngoni. Chikusi and Gomani are responsible for building the munzi (village) of Lizulu in Malawi (Phiri, 1982; Read, 1956; Rangeley, 1966; Reinhard Klein-Arendt, 2003 and Nurse, 1973). Unfortunately, as Linden observed, the Maseko ideology of preserving life became undermined by the effects of using war as a way to create an inkatha, thus, the Maseko became associated with war, the very thing they were fleeing (Linden, 1971). Three factors allowed the Maseko Ngoni to go back to practicing the ideology of preserving life. The first and foremost is that the Maseko Ngoni gained a high level of cultural integration with surrounding tribes, this is evident in the fact that by "1930's the Ngoni Language had almost disappeared as a home language" and had been replaced by Nyanja (Read, 1956:

22). The second factor was the forced labour of Bantu, which was created through the white's imposed hut tax, and the third factor was the white's proposed confederation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. It was these racialized actions that were aimed at generating cheap labour for white business enterprisers that sparked the resistance against white domination. With a common enemy the Malawian chiefs and people united in a common action of removing the white invaders. One of the leaders credited with orchestrating this Bantu unity was Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II of Maseko Ngoni (Phiri, 1973).

CHAPTER FOUR – MOVING FROM NEO-COLONIALISM TO TRADITIONAL MASEKO GOVERNANCE.

Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience. Look at them today swinging between atomic and spiritual disintegration.

-Fanon, 1963: 311.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight how Maseko Ngoni can use shared knowledge from our collective past to find solutions to our mutual contemporary present. Thus, we aspire to provide some strategies for beginning this process of regenerating Maseko inkatha. Maseko Ngoni can revive and regenerate our traditional customs of unity and strength, which is represented by the inkatha. Maseko inkatha comes from sharing our memories (knowledge) about how to live an informed Ngoni life which is nested within the larger Bantu context. Reviving our memories shows us a rich oral tradition of sacred history which is motivated by acts of betterment toward the Maseko Ngoni society as a whole; these structures are chingoni (endemic, inclusive and are based on care for land and people). In this contemporary era the Maseko Ngoni destiny can only be determined by the Abantu of Maseko Ngoni using our common sacred history (revitalized memory) as a guide for the regeneration of our traditional customs, rituals, laws, languages and spirituality. This sharing of sacred historical knowledge will foster understanding for how our traditional ways are relevant for addressing our future. In this final chapter we will share some ideas that will allow us to start reviving our own personal memory, through sharing collective family memories, pfuko memories and finally inkatha memories as they connect us to our Bantu past. Our Bantu past must

inform our present just like our present will inform future generations. It is therefore in the interest of protecting our Bantu traditional ways that we must take action now because we understand that the truth that we seek can only be found in our shared collective memories. We can only access our shared collective memories as Maseko Ngoni using our teachings and our own Bantu languages.

Let it be known we have been forced to abandon our knowledge of interacting with our environment and ourselves by the imposition of colonialism (Mutwa, 1969 and Alfred, 2005). We must therefore understand colonialism very well so that we do not perpetuate its insidious diversionary lies and trickery against our own Abantu anymore. Colonialism can never serve or save us because it already has its own masters, whom long ago established that their objective was to destroy all that is Bantu (Conrad, 1902; Hochschild, 1998 and Gourevitch, 1998). To this day colonialism and its institutions are still about conquest and exploitation. We can only be saved and served by our own informed traditional actions of empowerment and governance. Thus, for us revitalizing and regenerating all that is respectful and caring for all that is Maseko Ngoni without undermining or disempowering all that is Abantu is only working towards giving voice for reviving actions of truth. We value that other Bantus may not share our approaches when trying to attain the Abantu philosophy of preserving life hence we do not impose our approaches on other Bantus. We only hope to inspire them, as we ourselves have been inspired to stand for that which is true to us as Bantu. Invariably our actions as well as the actions of other Bantus will affect all of us as we are all connected to all that is Abantu. Even the Land has a way of reminding us as Bantu that we are connected. For example in times of crisis and hardship the diverse family of Bantus converges around

the great Afrikan lakes in an effort to preserve life and acquire relief. Lake Malawi, Lake Tanganyika, and Lake Victoria are the umbilical cords that connect all Abantu while providing the nectar of life (water). *Bantu know these littoral regions as areas of refuge and sanctuary for all* (Professor James Webster. Personal communication, August 2005).

We propose that these fresh bodies of water unify all Bantu including Maseko Ngoni, as all must share their substance. This Bantu knowledge comes from collectively shared memories of this unity but a lack of usage over a long period has led us to forget this knowledge (Mutwa, 1969; Webster, 2005 and teachings from Baba Mukulo). Our writing efforts are an exercise in ‘remembering’ what is shared common Bantu knowledge for an informed Maseko governance within the Bantu worldview. Dear Maseko relatives, have we not learned that by its very nature colonialism inevitably marginalizes us from our existence because “Wana wa njoka de njoka” (The child of a snake can only be a snake). Mothers and Fathers, Brothers and Sisters it is time to be Maseko Ngoni in both belief and practice.

Our Rituals

In Salisbury [present-day Harare] I have heard, at a prayer meeting held by Christian MaShonas, prayers for the Kariba the dam to collapse – prayers addressed both to Christ and to Mulimbu together, prayers that the men building the dam might be killed. I have attended a curse ceremony at which a High Curse was put on the dam for all eternity - on the dam, and on the white man too!

And if you think this proves that the Africans are a primitive, superstitious, subhuman rabble, try holding a dead pig into a mosque in Dar-es-Salaam, or into a synagogue in Jerusalem, and see what happens. Or try disfiguring a statue of the Virgin Mary in the presence of a group of Sicilians on their own island, and see what they do to you.

No one would be so foolhardy. Yet we, the Bantu people of Africa, have had to endure sacrileges against our religion again and yet again. This has been the cause of much bloodshed in Africa in recent years.

-Mutwa, 1969: 130-131.

Bantu life would not be life without the guidance of our amadlozi (ancestral spirits) they guide every facet of our life from politics, religious ceremonies, social interaction, economic activities and the practice of medicine. Nothing can be done without first communing with our amadlozi. One can commune with one's amadlozi at any time and at any place and this is common practice but out of respect and honouring reverence for our amadlozi we make it a point to commune with them over inkatha and other major issues using the chiwaya (cattle kraal). Our most prized possessions are our cattle, thus, it makes sense for us to put the cattle in the care of our amadlozi; this explains why the chiwaya is so central to the life of the Maseko Ngoni. This is evident in the physical position held by the cattle chiwaya in our living arrangements. It is always built in the centre of the family dwelling. The chiwaya is the place where court disputes are managed and settled, important meetings are held, where we mourn our dead⁵¹ and commune with our ancestral spirits, and it was in the chiwaya that inkatha issues were addressed and settled in the past (Phiri, 1973; Read, 1956 and Nwaezeigwe, 1997). Before the “Brave Ones” went to war they were invited into the chiwaya to receive ancestral guidance about how to overcome the enemy and to invigorate their faith and courage. This was done through poetry and traditional songs that recite the deeds of great past warriors. Upon returning from battle: “After killing an enemy, a man must go through a process of purification and fortification, an important element in which is, that he must reside in an old woman's hut and wear strips of skin round head and wrists

⁵¹ In the past the Inkosi ya Makosi of the Maseko was cremated on a riverbank with his personal objects, this practice was stopped by Christian missionary and has not been revived to our knowledge (Bryant, 1949; Schapera, 1966; Phiri, 1973; Read, 1956; Wilson & Thompson, 1969 and Nwaezeigwe, 1997). Hilda Kuper in *The Swazi* explains that “chiefs of the Maseko and Simelane were buried on stones near rivers and the sacred bird of the clan was believed to rise from the ashes (1952: 51).

(Z. amaMbata); all in complete accordance with Zulu custom (as reported by Bryant in *The Zulu People*, 1949: 54).” Upon completion of the purification and fortification against the spirits of the killed people the brave ones are welcomed into the chiwaya and the heroic deeds of each warrior are recited for encoding as a record through song and dance. The warriors who showed cowardly behaviour in battle were not allowed to enter the chiwaya until the honouring of the heroic warriors was complete.

The contemporary changes of Ngoni life and rituals are reflected in a memorandum written by Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II to the anthropologists Margaret Read in which he states:

The foods are finished because the present day generation does not take care of these things, and this is the reason. Formerly there was no other work than taking care of their own affairs. They were thinking about war, and hoeing, and building their houses, and drinking beer and judging cases. When the Europeans came they came with other work, adding to the work of the people, such as the tax and work to receive cloth. When they were busy with such things they forgot the cultivation of their ancestors. It would be better if the people were made to remember teachings of their ancestors (1968: 86).

Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II is in very clear terms conveying the importance of our spiritual practice and Bantu rituals for our survival because the Maseko Ngoni ways are being eradicated through Christianity and colonialism. Baba puts it in the following words: *Without war there are no warriors, and without warriors there is no Ngoni. So why pierce our ears, dress like Ngoni warriors, or speak the Ngoni language if we are white in all other mannerisms* (Personal communication. June, 2003). Baba’s sentiments are important examples of the dialogue that needs to take place within the Maseko Ngoni community. Baba identifies the Maseko Ngoni with war and therefore without the elements (war) that create Maseko Ngoni warriors, he is unwilling to commit himself to regeneration efforts. Wanting clarification, this student engages his baba in the following

dialogue and the results are illustrative of the small shifts that take place between father and son.

Baba: *We have lost the fighting spirit, no one wants war, we only want to make money and hear the word of God.*

Student: *I thought we only waged war as an effort to preserve life and that when these ideals were not honoured by our kith and kin then we migrated as a last resort?*

Baba: *You have spoken well and there is truth in what you say, our ways of life extend much more beyond the wars.*

Student: *I hear Christians lump your work of nyanga yemithi (medicine man or herbalist) as evil witchcraft practice. Does this mean you have stopped your work?*

Baba: *Hear me well, I am not a nyanga yemithi, I help where I can, using the knowledge of our ancestors and I have never asked to know what I know. Sometimes I dream of a plant, I am told where the plant is, what time to approach it, how to use it and before or after I get it someone arrives needing its services. I never question it because this is our ancestors at work but I believe God guides this work as well. All Bantu Christians understand this.*

Student: *I have stopped being a Christian and only pray to our ancestors.*

Baba: *I understand that but I will still pray for you to find your way back.*

Student: *Could it be possible you are lost in this one area.*

Baba: *Remember your place, I am your father (Personal Communication, June 2003).*

For this student the above dialogue highlights that even Baba who lives a highly informed Maseko Ngoni life has been colonized, meaning in our own family we all need to do some major decolonization. We must resist foreign forms of spirituality because they undermine our own forms of spirituality. Christianity will always undermine Bantu spirituality because it has been presented as the only viable civilized way forward (Chanock, 1985; Fraser, 1914 and Elmslie, 1899). Thus, Bantu cannot be Christians without being co-opted and colonized. Colonialism is all encompassing, hence, our resistance must be all encompassing. Yet it is also important to acknowledge that for the most part Baba's actions reflect real Maseko Ngoni knowledge, which he uses to the benefit of all Bantu. His wisdom is vast, he speaks, Zulu, Nyanja, Shona,

Afrikaans, English and other vernacular Bantu languages, yet, he has never walked into a school and is illiterate. His knowledge of ancestral Bantu history and world contemporary issues is impressive to say the least. His competence with Bantu cultures always leads people to assume that he was born in their community. This is the kind of knowledge we want to propagate and not some strange foreign ideas that divide us using competition, which in its nature is hierarchical and thus dehumanized you from us (Clark, 2002).

Understanding Why We must Leave Colonialism

The newspaper did not say much. People all over the country must have glanced at the paragraphed with its sensational heading and felt a little spurt of anger mingled with what was almost satisfaction, as if some belief had been confirmed, as if something had happened which could only have been expected. When natives steal, murder, or rape, that is the feeling white people have.

-The Grass is Singing by Doris Lessing (1950: 9).

If we possess murderous intention, they should credit themselves because had we possessed murderous intentions before their arrival, would we not have killed them during first contact? Yet many of us have been lulled into a false sense of security through the trickery of forgetfulness by the oppressive agenda of Western colonialism, which turns us into perfect beasts of burden by claiming that:

The customs of the colonized people, their traditions, their myths - above all, their myths - are the very sign of that poverty of spirit and of their constitutional depravity.... The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen (p. 42)... During the period of decolonization, the native's reason is appealed to. He is offered definite values, he is told frequently that decolonization need not mean regression, and that he must put his trust in qualities which are well tried, solid, and highly esteemed (Fanon, 1963: 43).

Frantz Fanon (1963) defined colonialism as a foreign people or government, which imposes its will on the original inhabitants. One might ask why, fortunately we do not have to guess why because the colonizers themselves inform us in their own words. At the top of their reasoning is greed, power, and the adventure of conquest (Conrad, 1995; Chanock, 1985; Fraser, 1914; Hochschild, 2002; and Meredith, 1979) just to name a few. These texts openly describe how the colonizers established their business of colonization: at first through force (the gun) and later through the bible which created spiritual fear but let it be known very clearly that both served to enslave the Maseko Ngoni physically and mentally, the Bible and the gun were simply different methods (Malcolm X, 1967).⁵²

Further, how can we forget that the priests were the brothers of the gun carrier – after all, they came on the same ships. It was following the teachings of the priest that saved us from his brother with the gun. One could say they divided and conquered our Bantu ancestors, the evidence shows that they both wanted the same things resources, lands, spiritual control and dominance using what they termed European ‘development’ and ‘civilization’ (Achebe, 1971). Yet, we have seen that “when a white man in Afrika by accident looks into the eyes of the native and sees the human being (which is his chief preoccupation to avoid), his sense of guilt, which he denies, fumes up in resentment and he brings down the whip (Lessing, 1950: 152).”

If we understand the true nature of colonialism and neo-colonialism, then we acknowledge its very serious and insidious effort to destroy all that is Maseko Ngoni by taking our historical memories away. This, an ongoing effort to create as near as possible

⁵² In *Malcolm X on Afro-American History* as edited by Betty Shabazz (1967) Malcolm X addresses the issue of white washing our Afrikanness so that our identity becomes dependent on whiteness.

the perfect inferior slave because Bantu without sense of self (history, traditions, customs, laws, and spirituality) is a Negro with no sense of self and to stop it⁵³ questioning they have given it their white version of God (Malcolm X, 1967; Fanon, 1963; Achebe, 1971 and Alfred, 2005).⁵⁴ After they have created the perfect Negro they say very nonchalantly: “You shouldn't expect too much. They are nothing but savages after all (Lessing, 1950: 82).” This is white thinking in southern Afrikan aptly captured by Doris Lessing who also adds:

‘Class’ is not a South African word; and its equivalent, ‘race,’ meant to her the office boy in the firm where she worked, other women’s servants, and the amorphous mass of natives in the streets, whom she hardly noticed. She knew (the phrase was in the air) that the natives were getting ‘cheeky’. But she had nothing to do with them really. They were outside her orbit (1950: 37).

Unfortunately, the Malawian and Afrikan effort to correct this injustice was called the fight for independence. In present times we call it the fight for democratic reform yet all this fighting is done within the old colonial structures. To paraphrase Audre Lorde, using the masters tools can only lead to the creation of the master’s house. Similarly using colonial structures will only lead to the creation of neo-colonialism, where petty Afrikans only want to replace the white bourgeoisies of yesteryears (Fanon, 1963). This means in Maseko Ngoni territories where British power structures remain intact, we are allowing Western colonial masters to exercise indirect rule through the greed of the Afrikan elite, who are perfect Negroes as they cannot think beyond colonial structures as

⁵³ It is used to identify that, which adopts white culture but is not white and is rejected by white culture. Yet Bantu culture always welcomes you back home but you deny Bantu culture so we fight to educate you.

⁵⁴ In this neo-colonial era, the white God in Afrika comes with resources. We need only look at World Vision International, Habitat for Humanity, Christian Afrikan Education Services, Christian Connection for International Health, The Love of Christ Brigade, The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development and Christian Aid as evidence of the riches that the white God has bestowed upon his messengers. In the so-called Crusade for Jesus or was it take a Country for Jesus, the sentiment are the same, “What have your demigods and done for you? Nothing, only Jesus can save you from abomination, diseases and poverty, you need only turn to him (at the Harare Showgrounds in 1988).” They therefore, brag that their God in Afrika saves lives both substantively and spiritually.

reflected in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* by Ania Loomba (1998). On our land: “The biggest grievance of the white farmer is that he is not allowed to strike his natives, and that if he does, they may - but seldom do - complain to the police. It made her furious to think that this black animal had the right to complain against her, against the behaviour of a white woman (Lessing, 1950: 126).” It is important that we remember, never before have so many been annihilated, oppressed, subjugated, and humiliated by so few. This is white colonialism at its best in Afrika. They created the game, the rules and so we say ‘the present governance structures of neo-colonialism are a white power game.’ As they say: “A white person may look at a native, who is no better than a dog (Lessing, 1950: 51)” and so we ask? How long will we allow ourselves to be killed and humiliated? And why do we offer to do this to ourselves on behalf of the white master? Elders, parents, sisters and brothers let us not be Maseko through name alone, let us be Maseko through our deeds as well.

To agree to Western colonialism through following its prescribed self-governance models is to internalize our oppression which leaves us emasculated/efeminated. Any Maseko leader or for that matter Afrikan leader who presents colonial statehood as a viable option is lost from his/her roots or is a sell-out who wishes to assimilate us into the very bottom pit of neo-slavery as slaves in the competitive hierarchy⁵⁵ of Western capitalism (Fanon, 1963; Mutwa, 1969; Malcolm X, 1967 and Alfred, 2005). If someone or some-people are at the top, surely someone or some-people must be at the bottom. We need to watch out for such leaders for they have been co-opted and are puppet leaders

⁵⁵ The hierarchy of Western functioning is eloquently captured by Mary Clark in her book entitled *In Search of Human Nature* (2002)

who will lie, bribe, and promote Western capitalist values if we legitimize them as our leaders (Alfred, 2005).

Our Language

It is also important to understand that Maseko philosophy occurs within Bantu culture. Therefore, Maseko perception-shaping experience must be understood within the context it was created using the Bantu languages and symbols that first encoded meaning of experience. Linguistic evidence shows that some crucial concepts do not translate from one language to another without losing meaning (Waters, 2004). This does not even begin to account for cultural difference between religion, values, geographical location and sacred historical senses (Waters, 2004). Even when a non-Bantu learns Bantu languages they may still not understand the Maseko philosophy because they lack experience within the Maseko cultural context, which in its fullest expression is Bantu. The Maseko individual therefore makes sense of herself in relation to land and community. Voice comes from the shared experience of relationship as established within the boundaries of community. This Bantu interaction leads to the development of shared symbols as a way to convey meaning within the boundaries of place. This triangular relationship of voice, place and symbols creates individual identity, which is interpreted and understood from within community (Waters, 2004). Without shared community to confirm our identity, existence would be meaningless and unexplainable, thus, the diversity and commonality of Bantu languages is essential for Maseko identity and survival.

To respond to this in 1998 the Revival Association was established and its objectives were as follows:

1. to revive the language which is not being passed on from their forefathers to younger generations;
2. to bring unity to the Ngoni from both central and northern regions;
3. to foster Ngoni identity (Kishindo, 2002: 10).

The Ngoni Revival Association's efforts to save Ngoni identity and language has not been very successful as the Maseko Ngoni situation is complex and when we add the issue of a mother tongue this already complicated situation is further conflicted because historical evidence shows that at best the mothers of most if not all (with the exception of the Royal family) Maseko Ngoni children were from different tribes and spoke little to nothing of the Chingoni languages. Professor B. Pachai in *The Early History of Malawi* states: "The Chewa collaboration of this theme is the often heard statement 'we defeated them with our women' (1972: 247)." Here we see the dilemma that the Ngoni Revival Association faces in that we as Ngoni have multiple identities. Thus, can we highlight one identity without sacrificing our other identities but even bigger than this is the fear of our other Bantu sisters and brothers. They surely must be questioning what it means when the Ngoni brave ones choose to stand distinctly on their own. Do we wish to threaten the Bantu unity that exists within Malawi? The title of Pascal J. Kishindo (2002) *Flogging the Dead Cow: The Revival of Malawian Chingoni* speaks volumes about his position but arguably it also serves to reassure the other Bantu that there is no chance that the Ngoni will again change the social fabric of our Malawian Bantu family.

So in response to these concerns and others we state: Yes, we are continuing on from where Ngoni Revival Association left off. Yet, we should make it clear that the revival of Chingoni need not be seen as a threat to replace other Indigenous languages. On the contrary, the efforts to revive Chingoni, tell us that all Indigenous languages are

important to the specific acquisition of specific Indigenous knowledge as created in those languages. This knowledge is important for the regeneration of Bantu ways. Let our brothers and sisters fear us no more, for we are one in many Bantu ways (Mutwa, 1969). Our familial bonds are illustrated by the following quote in *No Longer at Ease*: “You see this thing called blood. There is nothing like it. That is why when you plant a yam it produces another yam, and if you plant an orange it bears oranges. I have seen many things in my life, but I have never yet seen a banana tree yield a coco yam (Achebe, 1960: 159).” In other words, we have nothing to fear from each other as we come from the same Bantu womb.

The Chingoni language is the only tool that has the ability to adequately express our most ancestral knowledge of our cultural traditions and practices. If it is true that language carries the symbols to express meaning, then without our languages we have lost some meanings of our world (Avruch and Black, 1993). Our goal is to help our community reacquire our ancestral language through self-education, which for us means using the Ngoni language as the primary language of early schooling (grade 1 to 7). In order to generate interest and regularity it will be necessary to schedule a day of the week like every Friday afternoon as story telling time, this must be done by an elder who tells the story in Chingoni. All Ngoni ceremonies must also be performed in Chingoni. We are aware that ‘Zigwe pano nzatonse’ (Whatever happens here will effect us all) and we are sure that goodness will arise from this exercise for all. The ongoing efforts by our Chewa relatives to regenerate and revive their traditional ways as illustrated by *The Malawi Nation*’s headline “Uniting Force Behind Gawa Undi,” is a source of inspiration to our efforts (news article by Felix Malamula, 25 November 2005).

Our Customs and Traditions

It is our custom to honour our fathers and mothers. Every adult in the pfuko treated every child as if they were their own, and every child responded to every adult as if they were their parents. Once a man and a woman are married in the Maseko they are no longer addressed by their given names. They are called “husband of so-and-so” or “wife of so-and-so,” until they have a child. At that point, they are called “mother of so-and-so” or “father of so-and-so.”

-Baba. Personal communication. June, 2003.

These titles are important to Maseko Ngoni because they reflect achievement and status within the community. Being a parent is very highly respected within the Ngoni society. To not call a parent as father of so-and-so or a mother as parent of so-and-so is to devalue their achievement as a human being and a productive member of their community. The elders in the mafuko (clan systems) were afforded a certain level of respect for the wisdom that comes with experience and age. However, their ability to give council within the pfuko was an indication of their deeds. An elder who spoke wisely and had deeds that represented this ability was easily noticeable because of the kind of people that would seek his/her advice.

At one point all Maseko Ngoni boys went through the steps of herding cattle, then when strong enough to endure long treks they became an udibi (carrier) for a relative warrior, then the rite of passage from amajaba (young men) into adulthood, followed circumcision,⁵⁶ (Baba. Personal communication. June, 2003; also supported by the writing of Phiri, 1973; Read, 1956 and Nwaezeigwe, 1997) Although the inkakazana’s (younger girls before puberty) development was mostly supervised by their Gogo, between the ages of ten and twelve the girls slept in a dormitory under the supervision of older women. The izintombi (young women after puberty) were taught what

⁵⁶ This custom of circumcision has traceable roots in the amaZulu of kwaZulu Natal and to the baKoni of northern Sotho (Bryant, 1949; Wilson & Thompson, 1969 and Schapera, 1966).

responsibilities to expect as women with the onset of menstruation. At reaching this milestone the appropriate Elders were informed in the following manner: “This child has now matured” (as was reported to Read, 1968: 62). Baba told this student that:

The rituals for both amajaba and izintombi, though done separately, include washing in the river during early morning. This act is essential for awakening the encoding of memory, developing discipline to deal with the demands of life and it also teaches the importance of good habits of cleanliness (Personal communication. June, 2003).

The izintombi’s rituals included strong leadership as women are the heads of the family, strong debating skills as advisers to their husbands, and practical house building skills (Baba, 2003; Read, 1956 and Nwaezeigwe, 1997). Unfortunately most of our people are no longer using these rituals and practices. This point is exemplified by this student who has not gone through age set ceremonial rituals as a means of developing Ngoni values as well as Ngoni ways of living. The memories of Baba show how important our ways are to our Ngoni identity development:

I remember the circumcision ritual it was not a pleasant experience, yet I feel a sense of pride for having overcome it. There was something good in knowing that all the boys and girls in my age set shared this experience with me. To this day, I cannot explain the ways we are all connected. Besides I cannot tell you the secrets of our experience, you just have to live it. When you recognise a face that shared this fate with you, there is no need for words, just laughter will do (Baba, Personal Communication, June 2003).

Baba conveys a sense of community based on a bond of shared age set experiences as the common denominator for building strong unity among the Maseko Ngoni. The circumcision itself seems unimportant and arguably can be seen as the tool for encoding unity based on shared experience.

Historians (Bryant, 1949; Schapera, 1966; Phiri, 1973; Read, 1956; Wilson & Thompson, 1969 and Nwaezeigwe, 1997) have argued that the Maseko children are

named using paternal surnames. However, when this student inquired about his surname, Baba responded in the following way: *About your questions, yes, Mucina is your Gogo's (grandmother) name but I do not know if this means that a matriarchal system is being used. It certainly is a Ngoni tradition to use either mother or father's name* (Baba. Personal Communication. November, 2005). Margaret Read in *Children of Their Fathers* describes a practice among the Maseko Ngoni which could possibly explain this naming phenomena:

In the central kingdom daughters of leading men in the village often stayed in their fathers village at marriage. Hence the father's sisters were often present at the birth, and the wife's mother and her sisters might be living in the village. If the wife belonged to a higher-ranking Ngoni clan than her husband, her relatives shared the responsibility with those of the husband's family (1968: 29).

Being as this is a sensitive topic with baba, this student will only speculate, until he can return to the homeland and all will be revealed. Is it possible that among the Maseko Ngoni marriage is not always determined by title? Could there be love stories among these people that were condemned by the whites as primitive and savagery? Could this be an exception or is this our ability to regenerate our institutions to better serve our needs within a changing diverse Bantu society? As Baba says:

If you want to know then go there and find out, it is not as if I am trying to stop you, on the contrary, I wish when you were younger I had sent you, those rituals would have given you a better sense of self. The problem was you did not have a birth certificate and I had no money (Personal Communication. June 2003).

Our Spirituality and Relationship With Nature and homeland

It is true that we worship our ancestors, and that many birds and animals are sacred to us, and perhaps we are superstitious too; but it is not true that we are heathens...

In fact, the Bantu religion pervades daily life much more than Christianity, as we do not separate politics, medicine, and economic affairs from our spiritual beliefs, and it is perhaps for this reason that until very recently atheism was almost

unknown among the Bantu. As well as the Most Ultimate God, the Bantu have a number lesser gods and goddesses, nearly all of whom, with the exception of mother goddess Ma and the Tree of Life, are evil. These lesser deities have distinct personalities and functions, and appearances which can easily be carved or painted, but the Most Ultimate God is much more abstract. He is everything in everything. Each tree, each blade of grass, each stone, is part of God, just as is every man and every beast.

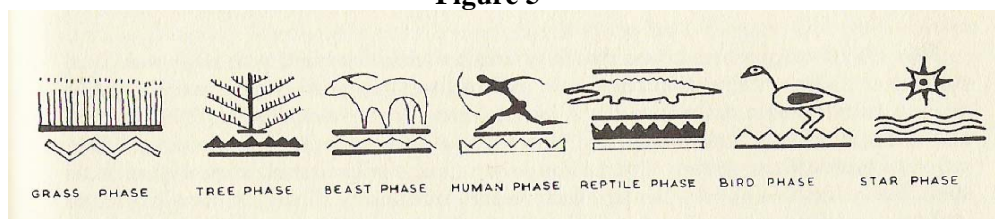
-Mutwa, 1969: 132.

Maseko Ngoni spirituality encompasses the knowledge of Umkulumqango (The Great Deviser or The Great Spirit), Unkulunkulu (The Greatest of All) or Umnikazi we Zinto Zonke (The Owner of All Things) (Mutwa, 1969; Nwaezeigwe, 1997; Lugg, 1975 and Read, 1970). Maseko Ngoni do not believe that human beings can commune with Unkulunkulu because we believe that individuals cannot understand or comprehend Unkulunkulu (Mutwa, 1969). We believe that the great Maseko Ngoni that died long ago, but are still remembered by us, are the ones that commune with Unkulunkulu. We therefore pray to the amadlozi (the spirits of our ancestral Inkosi ya Makosi who are beyond the living realm as we understand it) to act as go-betweens with Unkulunkulu, the source of power, health, rains, victory, and protection against plagues. The oldest remembered amadlozi is the closest to Unkulunkulu but all amadlozi are seen as guardians who can assist in times of epidemic natural disasters and during great warfare (Nwaezeigwe, 1997). Baba reports that:

For personal or family related crisis, one consults a family or pfuko amadlozi to get the relief needed from Unkulunkulu to restore balance and harmony again. These efforts to restore balance and relieve can be aided by gaining consultation on how best to proceed from an Isanusi (diviner). The Isanusi would help shed light on how to perform rituals and sacrifices so that the Bantu would not offend the amadlozi. Special significance in the religious practice was paid to the preparation, presentation, and consumption of meat, beer and snuff. Any negligence or clumsiness in this religious affair would offend the ancestors as well as the elders in the community (Personal communication, 1989).

As illustrated in Figure 5 below, the Maseko Ngoni believe that each creature has a soul of its own and is in fact in the process of reincarnation. Does not the rock evolve into sand and sand into soil and soil into lower life forms that make way for grasses and small shrubs?

Figure 5



The above depictions are the first stages where souls of future human beings and animals germinate as illustrating by the diagram of Nguni phases of life (from *My People My Africa* by Credo Vusa' mazulu Mutwa, 1969: 139). Bantu also personify nature and bestow upon it intelligence. *Winning a Primitive People* is evidence of our ancestor's knowledge as they communicated it to the colonizer whom we known as Frazer:

Beside these great sub-gods, many of the mighty natural objects were worshipped, such as conspicuous hills, wild waterfalls, great trees, deep pools. They were not revered as the dwelling-place of some deity or spirits, but as themselves animate and divine. Thus two hills in the Rukuru gorge are often worshipped (1970: 122).

Bantu including Maseko Ngoni do not kill a creature without first asking the animal and forest spirits for permission. Upon killing a creature, the Maseko immediately begins to explain his actions in order to thank the gracious animal that has made itself available as food. From a very early age Baba impressed upon this student: *Bambo, meaning father, (when a father address his own son as father, he has conferred upon him great respect) never take life lightly and remember no matter the circumstance, killing is and should always be a very regrettable act* (Baba, Personal Communication, 1982).

Mutwa in an interview with Rick Martin concurs this point in the following statement:

That a hunter would go out into the bush and call out for animals to come, and the animals would select one of their number which was old and tired, and this animal would offer itself to the hunter so that he may kill it quickly and take it as meat to his cave. There was no violence against animals. There was no violence against Nature by human beings at that time. Man used to ask for food from Nature. He used to come to a tree and think about fruit, and the tree would allow some of its fruit to fall to the ground, and man would take it (September, 1999).

Certain creatures for certain Bantu cannot be killed as these creatures represent the *amadlozi* of our ancestors and as we say ‘a person cannot kill a creature or natural object that is his/her totem or namesake’ as this is like killing your own relatives. Baba always said to this student: *If a creature or natural object is your namesake than it is your duty to protect it, just as the amadlozi protect us. Because we believe that we're in a cycle of reincarnation, the way we treat other creatures may revisit us in one of our other life form stages* (Baba. Personal Communication, 2003). Thus, the Maseko Ngoni can state with great confidence that our relationships are based on respecting nature’s intelligence as this helps maintain the balance of our interdependence for a sustainable future.

Ngoni Forms of Governance

A close reading of Maseko Ngoni history shows that during war and migration we used patriarchal leadership but on the whole Bantu governance has and will always be guided by both women and men. The evidence for this conclusion can be found in the fact that more established Bantu tribes in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi are governed by both men and women. Patriarchy as the ultimate form of leadership is a new foreign idea to the Maseko Ngoni as Baba Mukulo has pointed out:

The old ones told us that at one time, they that provided life, ruled over us but when wars came we started to move and everything began to change. The roles changed and he that welded the assegai began to give orders to the life maker, how sad, but this will change, you will see. The old will become new again. For we will tire of war soon and the maker of life will resume her place (Baba Mukulo, personal communication, 1981-2).

Bantu stories of creation, glorify women as great leaders because they are the creators of life. The first immortal created by Unkulunkulu (the Eternal Great Spirit) was the goddess Ma and she created the world into existence (Mutwa, 1969). All Bantu mythology centre round the importance of the female to all our existence. The great Mutwa on the subject of the oldest Bantu law informs us:

Man, know that of your two parents your mother ranks higher than your father. In a quarrel between your parents you must come to the aid of your mother, be she right or wrong. You may strike your father, but never draw his blood. You may never strike your mother and even if you do so accidentally you must lose your right hand (1969: 157).

Thus, getting over this hurdle of patriarchy should be something we Maseko Ngoni need not waste too much time with because our history shows that we are an evolving people who when we know better, we do better (Mutwa, 1969; Linden, 1971 and Read, 1956). Addressing the gender imbalance in our present leadership is one more opportunity to claim our destiny. All historical evidence shows that Ngoni institutions started to reflect male dominance with the southward migration of the Ngoni Bantu (Wiedner, 1962). Unfortunately, colonialism enforced patriarchy as the only viable form of leadership for our people but we can regenerate our traditional institutions to address contemporary society and issues.

Since colonization the Inkosi ya Makosi's (Paramount Chief) most trusted advisers are his retired military commanders, who in old age are given state official positions for life. There were also other elders who were chosen as state officials because

they merited such favour. Among all the state officials, there is one who had the title of Chief Induna (Commander). All the other Izinduna were under his command. Nwankwo Nwaezeigwe in the book *Ngoni* argues that: “The chief induna was often appointed from among the common people. This occurred because members of the Royal family, if appointed to such an important position, might revolt against the inkosi.” Nwaezeigwe supports his positioned by stating “Every inkosi of the pre-Mfecane (migration) period, from Dingiswayo and Zwide to minor chiefs like Zwangendaba, had a similar pattern of government (1997: 30).” It is customary that should anything happen to the Inkosi ya Makosi the Izinduna were responsible for running the inkatha until an heir was ready to assume the throne (oral teaching recorded by Read, 1956). These Izinduna could also exercise a vote of “no confidence” in which case the heir to the throne was overlooked. The three closest advisers to the Inkosi ya Makosi are the Indlovukati (Great Queen Mother) of the Inkosi ya Makosi, his wife who is called inkosikazi (the mother of the nation), and his sister. In the old days the Inkosi ya Makosi’s older sister was known by the name of Dadakazi (female father) this acknowledged that had she been a male she would be the Inkosi ya Makosi. During any important decision-making, her council was seen as vital for maintaining the inkatha (oral teaching recorded by Read, 1956 and Nwaezeigwe, 1997).

Figure 6
Outline of Maseko Government Structure



From Ngoni elders: Cibambo and Ishmael Mwale (Read, 1956: 99)

Non-Maseko Ngoni have always been invited to serve in the Inkosi ya Makosi's office as a way to ensure that the diverse voices of the community were heard. Women served in the Inkosi ya Makosi's office as political advisers, doctors, and as diviners, but could not serve in the army or assume the title of chief Induna as it was only reserved for a male candidate in those days. Like all evolving societies, we Maseko Ngonis are evaluating our gender roles, positions and other practices against our philosophy and values to better serve all Maseko Ngonis in this contemporary era and we see “government as the collective power of the individual members of the nation; there is no separation between society and state. Leadership is exercised by persuading individuals to pull their self-power in the interest of the collective good (Alfred, 1999: 25).”

Evidence of Maseko Ngoni efforts to regenerate women to their rightful positions within our society has awakened in the Ntakataka community of Kachindamoto as the forefront community. Inkosikazi ya Makosikazi (Paramount Queen Chief) Thereza was enthroned as Kachindamoto VII in February 2003, after it had taken “more than 2 years for the Ngoni Kingdom of Kachindamoto to come to an agreement to support a woman as a paramount (in article entitled *Introduction to The Ngoni Spiritual World* from KuNgoni: Chamare Museum in Mtakataka, Malawi: p. 7).”⁵⁷ However, among the Maseko Ngoni of Gomani in Lizulu the male dominance has not yet been overcome. Rose, the daughter of Inkosi ya Makosi Willard Gomani III has shown great “aspiration to take the

⁵⁷ Rolleiv Solholm’s article entitled *Crown Princess Mette-Marit named Zulu Princess* reports for The Norway Post that “Queen Kachindomoto is the first woman Zulu chief in Malawi (December 9, 2005).” Frank Phiri writes the following about Gertrude Mkandawire a Ngoni woman: “a new opposition member of parliament (MP) for Mzimba Solola, a constituency in the far north of Malawi, winning the May 20 election was a triumph over customs that militate against women (June 26, 2005 in Inter Press Service News Agency).

paramouncy despite the fact that the Maseko of her kingdom refuse to allow the throne of Gomani IV to be a woman (KuNgoni: Chamare Museum: p. 6). The effort of the above-mentioned Maseko Ngoni women leaders is substantive evidence of the actions already emerging as efforts to regenerate the Maseko Ngoni in the contemporary era. The governance institutions of our Maseko Ngoni pre-colonialism offer a starting position, which invariably needs to be worked so that they reflect the contemporary realities of the present, gender inequality being a top contending issue.

Maseko Ngoni Justice and Law

The tribal law which God gave us is being destroyed completely.... Those who have been chosen and salaried are happy, thus they despise their unfortunate friends in the same ranks. In the old days when there was no money, there was no killing each other, no jealousy or falsehoods; while in these present days all these have happened simply because the new customs have upset the old ones.

-Iliffe in (Chanock, 1985: 235)

Maseko laws are the collective will of the people, thus, no Ngoni is above the law and no Ngoni can claim ignorance of the law as justified defence against the law. Even the Inkosi ya Makosi is governed by the laws, traditions and beliefs of the people that he serves (Read, 1956). Baba states: *The Inkosi ya Makosi could not be perceived as generating an unnecessary war as this had the potential to end his rule and in extreme conditions the Inkosi ya Makosi could be executed for what was seen as unjust wars especially if many brave ones died* (Personal Communication, 1989). The Law of the Maseko required that all disputants first engage the dispute resolution process, which was mediated by respected Elders. In the olden times, disputes were mediated under the sanctuary of a baobab, which is a descendent of the Tree of Life (Mutwa, 1969). The resolution process had to be satisfactory to both parties and if it did not achieve this goal

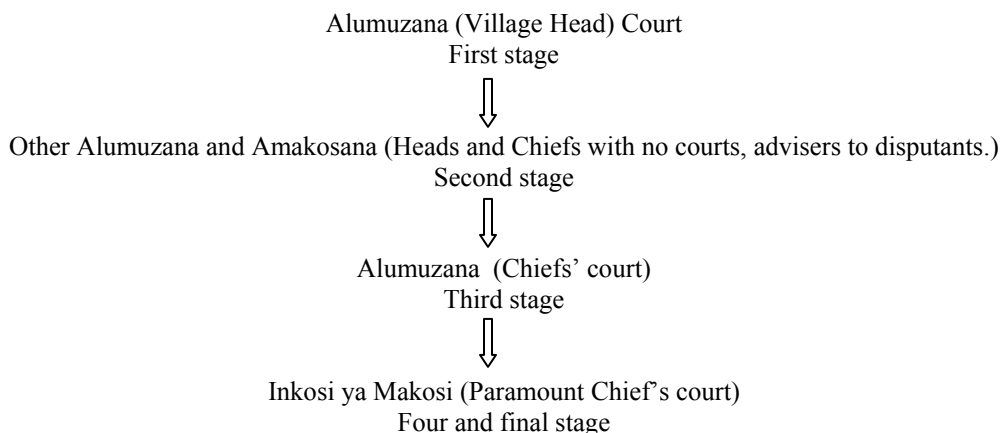
than either of the party members or both parties could seek restitution within the court system. The first court was that of the village amakanda (head) then there was that of the amakosana (lesser chief) and in all these courts, appeal could be made to the higher court if the ruling was perceived as unjust or still presented a problem for the parties. The highest court of the Ngoni was the court of the Inkosi ya Makosi. This was the ultimate Maseko Ngoni court. Its decisions were binding for both parties and in this court law precedence was honoured and respected (Reported to Read, 1956 by *Cibambo and Ishmael Mwale*). To ensure the integrity of the High Court was maintained a panel of izinduna or Bobaba (war leaders, inkatha officials and diviners) was used to guide the Inkosi ya Makosi's evidential verdict.

In the olden times, the diviner was an essential member of the advisory team for the Inkosi ya Makosi because under Maseko Ngoni law, the act of being 'bewitched' was recognized as a legitimate experience that occurred between two people or was a result of offending the ancestors and at times was attributed to acts of disrespecting the natural world as understood by Bantu (Chanock, 1985; Mutwa, 1969 and Read, 1956). This exemplifies how Maseko Ngoni law and spirituality coexist in the same paradigm. "Bantu consider it utterly ridiculous for a judge or a state executioner to punish a person who had done him no wrong. Bantu execution is not merely punishment; it is a sacrifice to appease the ancestral spirits of the family, who cry for revenge, (Mutwa, 1969: 184)." Hence, the victims of the crime can exercise the penalty of the law against the offender/s or grant pardons as they see fit.

Outline of Maseko Court System

After mediation has failed





From Ngoni informants Cibambo and Ishmael Mwale (Read, 1970: 99)

It is every Maseko Ngoni's responsibility to seek the balance that connects politics, laws, medicine, spirituality and economic life within Lizulu. To the Maseko Ngoni life is Unkulunkulu (Eternal Great Spirit) because Unkulunkulu is reflected in everything, each tree, each blade of grass, each stone, is part of Unkulunkulu, just as is every man and every beast.

Other representations of God show him as bi-sexual, with two heads, one growing out of the top of the other, facing in opposite directions, which again symbolises that God is all things in all time. In the old days figures of this type were carved at the top of long poles, which were then erected in the centre of the village clearing, to be used to measure the time of day from the shadow they cast (Mutwa, 1969: 133).

Thus, Bantu institutions are designed for gaining authentic Indigenous empowerment because they are endemic to all that is truly Bantu. Bantu philosophy works for Maseko Ngoni because it is shared knowledge and being shared knowledge it creates the greatest amount of participation within all Bantu communities as its aim is inclusion.

How Maseko Governance Address Contemporary Life

I am advocating a self-conscious traditionalism, an intellectual, social, and political movement that will reinvigorate those values, principals and other cultural elements that are best suited to the larger contemporary political and economic reality.

-Alfred, 1999: xviii.

Maseko Ngoni governance is the only avenue that gives Maseko Ngoni authentic participation. Authentic participation gives us the drive to institute good governance for future generations. *We believe that our ancestors provided a living legacy of good governance. We believe that they offer spiritual guidance from the world beyond about how to create institutions that will serve us best* (Baba. Personal communication, 2003).

The Maseko Ngoni struggle for traditional governance is dependent on embracing our past, and understanding our present as a guide for the future. Our ancestors governed with us in mind and in death they guide us if we only listen to them. We are the next generation's amadlozi in the same way our ancestors are our amadlozi. The way we govern now is the legacy we leave for our future generation and if we can't create a traditional legacy in life than we will not be able to offer it in death. To ensure these traditional ways are carried forward, we need to educate the Maseko Ngoni regarding how our traditional governance can serve us while honouring all our relations. Maseko Ngoni governance satisfied the needs of the people through six principles, which are based on collective power:

- It depends on the active participation of individuals;
- It balances many layers of equal power;
- It is dispersed;
- It is situational;
- It respects diversity (Alfred, 1999: 26-27).

In the Ngoni context the practice of collective power is exercised by individuals who identify as being Maseko while also actively participating in Maseko Ngoni governance. An important part of this is honouring all living things, and respecting all

Bantu spiritual ways as the beliefs and practice of other Abantu allows us to understand that power resides in many places and things. We therefore acknowledged that power could manifest itself in many ways and through many things. For example when trying to grow crops the arrival of the rains is not within our power, nor are natural disasters. These events and other happenings inform us that there are different forms of powers all functioning in different contextual settings. Hence, we as Maseko Ngoni believe that power is situational. We have also learned that place teaches different people different things. Baba puts it this way, *all Nguni are related but we do some things differently in our lands*” (Personal communication, 2003). The words of Baba remind us to be respectful of the diversity within the Abantu philosophy because it reflects the elements that connect us all as Bantu while also validating our unique identity as Maseko (Mutwa, 1969). It is therefore evident that Maseko Indigenous governance is the only form of leadership that will give us authentic power to determine our Ngoni destiny in this contemporary era. “Is it possible to accomplish good in a system designed to promote harm? Yes, on the margins. But eventually the grinding engine of discord and deprivation will obliterate the marginal good. The real goal should be to stop that engine (Alfred, 1999: 57).”

When the British instituted these governments, they did not intend for Maseko Ngoni to benefit from them. The British intended for these institutions to benefit their own kith and kin (International Defence & Aid Fund, 1977). However, due to two world wars, the British Empire was left bankrupt and ill-equipped to fight the rise of nationalism in the commonwealth including Afrika (Meredith, 2002). Consequently, the British devised another way to control the Bantu but this time they wanted it to be less

expensive, less overt but still as insidious as in the past. All knowingly they said, “Nigger use this colonial system and you will be as white as snow in all mannerism. Now listen good Nigger, if you need help come to the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and we will fix your problems for you.” They call this Afrikan aid, we call it indirect rule (Ayittey, 1998).

Invariably the use of these colonial structures perpetuates the fragmentation of our Bantu languages, our Bantu identities and our Bantu customs as colonialism reduces us to beasts of burden, neo-slaves, whose only use is being instruments of labour. ‘They’ begin our oppression but ‘we’ have to a large degree perpetuated it by blindly believing their lies and foolishly participating in their diversionary trickery (Alfred, 1999). It is no surprise that most Afrikan countries gained independence through negotiated settlements instead of independence by revolutions. The old colonizers were always thinking about how to maintain control and they found their answer in negotiated power transfers. This was the perfect tool for establishing indirect rule as they the colonizers could dictate the terms and forms of government to the Afrikans while still maintaining power (Meredith, 2002: 6-8). Thus, we validated our own oppression and colonization by maintaining colonial governance. Let us abandon these colonial institutions and embrace our responsibility to regenerate informed traditional Maseko governance, as this is the only meaningful way to build up our future. Inkosi ya Makosi Gomani II illustrates the importance of traditional education for the future of Maseko Ngoni through his exchange with two Ngoni teachers.

“How is your school?”

“The classes are full and the children are learning well, Inkosi”.

“How do they behave?”

“Like Ngoni children, Inkosi.”

“What do they learn?”

“They learn reading, writing, arithmetic, scripture, geography and drill, Inkosi.”

“Is that education?”

“It is education, Inkosi.”

“No! No! No! Education is very broad, very deep. It is not only books, it is learning how to live. I am an old man now. When I was a boy I went with the Ngoni Army to the war against the Bemba. Then the mission came and I went to school. I became a teacher. Then I was chief. Then the government came. I have seen our country change, and now there are many schools and many young men go away to work to find money. I tell you that Ngoni children must learn how to live and how to build up our land, not only how to work and earn money. Do you hear?”

“Yebo, Inkosi.” (Yes, O Chief) (Recorded by Read, 1968: 2-3)

Conclusion

Using traditional philosophy as the foundation of the new movement for Indigenous governance will help us restore the lost harmony between the Indigenous people’s social and political cultures. If political legitimacy flows from harmony between a community’s cultural values and the values imbedded within its political institutions, than this deep traditionalism is the key to overcoming the divisions and fractionalization that characterizes Native politics today.

-Alfred, 1999: 44.

To authentically engage in Ngoni inkatha we must first eradicate the neo-colonial forms of governance and replace them with our own forms of Indigenous governance. The neo-colonial and Euro-centric forms of governance are based on exclusion of the majority, while our own forms of Indigenous governance are based on inclusion of the majority. This is because the values that motivate Maseko governance are intrinsically shared and are understood by all. Part of reclaiming our heritage as Abantu is dependent upon adopting our own Indigenous languages for running our institutions, and discarding the oppressors’ languages and institutions. The Maseko Ngoni of amaZulu, Swazis and baSotho were synonymous with political protests when norms of society were violated. Forms of protest included the readiness for war or simple migration to a distant land; this

was designed to protect the values of society and to enable the collective to reproduce itself peacefully and amicably. This is evident from Ian Linden's reflective summary on the history of the Maseko Ngoni in his article entitled *Some Oral Traditions From the Maseko Ngoni* where he states, "Almost all of the movements of the Maseko can be correlated with external threats. From 1825 onwards it is possible to give a list of threats with their consequences (1971: 72)." Succinctly he sketches the Maseko relocation and their reasons:

1. Fear of Shaka's Army – move northeast into the Delagoa Bay area;
2. Presence of powerful bands under Zwangendaba and Shoshangane – form an alliance with Nxaba and trek northwards;
3. Make contact with Zwangendaba's rearguard – flee northeast to Manica and form a second alliance with Nxabe;
4. Successful battle against Zwangendaba c. 1834 – return to the Barwe area and continue raiding, possibly from a settlement on the Mvira River;
5. Shoshangane's raiding party defeats Nxabe – cross the Zambezi in 1839;
6. Finding the Ncheu area already devastated by Zwangendaba and the route north blocked. Promise of rich cattle country to the north – form an alliance with the Maravi and move round to the east side of the lake and proceed north;
7. Settlement at Songea threatened – attack Zulu and Mbonani and win;
8. Attacked by subject tribes under leadership of Hawaii – flee south again;
9. Settlements in the Shire Highlands but Yao presence gets stronger – move to Matope;

10. Yao chieftains still a threat – move and settle at Domwe, at the extremity of Mpezeni’s raiding territory and in good cattle country (1971: 72).

Our efforts are new in strategic implementation, as we must address contemporary issues like development, international boundaries and technology. Substantively our endeavours reflect time-immemorial Bantu attempts at revitalizing and regenerating inkatha. Always remembering that politics, medicine, economics, all relationships, and spirituality are interconnected according to Maseko Bantu values and philosophies (Mutwa, 1969). Thus, our personal and collective memories are important ways to maintain oral tradition and combat forgetfulness. Our stories of creation and Ngoni practices help us understand how to address gender roles in our contemporary society. Our truth is in our history and we can only access it through sharing our Bantu teachings. Baba Mukulo defines Bantu philosophy as the act of preserving and respecting all life as supported by the wise Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who conveys Bantuism as: “My humanities caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours... A person is a person though other persons... I am a human because I belong. I participate, I share (Clark, 2002: 343).” Yet when our ability to practise this Bantu humanity is undermined and forcibly stifled through exclusion based on race as created by the white colonial powers then we are forced to create black power in opposition to that which tries to annihilate us. This point is well illustrated by Steve Biko in an exchange with a white nationalist sympathiser during an adjournment of his trial in South Afrika:

Questioner: Why do you seek confrontation?

Biko: There is nothing wrong with confrontation as such.

Questioner: Confrontation leads to violence. Do you approve of violence?

Biko: No, confrontation does not necessary lead to violence. You and I are now in confrontation and there is no violence implied.

Questioner: Why do you emphasize Black Consciousness? You people are not really black-more a dark brown.

Biko: Why do you call yourself white? I would describe you as rather pink (Woods, 1978: 112).

The message that Steve Biko is conveying very clearly is that “respect my humanity and I will respect your humanity, dishonour my humanity and in my fight to reclaim my humanity I will inevitably dishonour yours.” It is absolutely ridiculous to believe that the apparatus of hate could serve us with peace and love. No, they can only change us from peace and love towards hate and greed. As we have said before never have so few caused so much suffering for so many as the white race (Malcolm X, 1967). The legacy of institutional and colonial oppression is aptly captured by Leonard Pitts Jr. in his online, Herald newspaper article which is entitled *Toxic Word Has Made It All the Way to Africa*. In it Leonard shares the experience of David Sylvester, a brother from Philadelphia who on a cycling trip through Afrika came across a clothing shop in Lilongwe, Malawi, which was called Niggers. When David inquired about the name the “proprietor who thumped his chest with pride in explaining why he had chosen that name for his ‘hip-hop’ clothing store. ‘P. Diddy!’ he shouted. ‘New York City! We are the niggers!’ (Mon, Sep. 19, 2005).”⁵⁸ The proprietor in this exchange is only reflecting in a very small way the larger neo-colonial institution, the Malawian government, which in turn reflects the real masters Euro-America.

We state in the strongest terms that it is time to revive our shared collective memory of action. If the Maseko Ngoni heart knows the truth, can we afford to ignore it, and if we do what does that say about us as a people? All that needs to be said has been said, but all that needs to be done has yet to bear fruit.

⁵⁸ The full article written by David Sylvester can be viewed online at: <http://www.contribute2.org/>

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