



# RELIGION & POLITICS IN SWAZILAND

————— The contributions of Dr J.B. Mzizi —————

R. SIMANGALISO KUMALO  
*EDITOR*

*sb*

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*sb* **SUNBONANI  
SCHOLAR**

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# DEDICATION

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This book is dedicated to the memory of the late Joshua Bhekinkosi Mzizi who heeded the call to serve his country and people as a public intellectual and proponent of Liberation Theology. This call earned him friends and foes but he remained steadfast until his death. When he died, Swaziland lost one of her greatest intellectuals and Africa one of her greatest sons. It is also dedicated to all the freedom-loving people of Africa who dare to believe that a *new* and *democratic* Swaziland is indeed possible – a Swaziland where people will not be judged by the ethnic identity that history gave them, the political party they belong to and the gender orientation creation imposed on them, but by the content of their character and the depth of their love for freedom and human dignity.



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*Theologically speaking only God can bring about the spirit of freedom. I am talking about total and holistic freedom, not the kind that frees one's soul, which suddenly realises that the body is trapped in the endless human agony. God's freedom is absolute, complete – not relative. Relative freedom is the kind that overemphasises the salvation of souls at the expense of socio-economic and political freedom. Freedom cannot be relativised and God cannot be compartmentalised.*  
– J.B. Mzizi

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# DEFINITION OF SWAZI TERMS

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Emabandla	Denominations
Emabutfo	Regiments
Emadloti	Ancestors
Emalangeneni	Those who belong to the Dlamini dynasty, also refers to the currency
Imvunulo	Swazi traditional regalia
Indilinga	Coin
Incwala	The Swazi festival of first fruits and traditional prayer of the nation
Ingwenyama	The lion, symbolical name of the King
Indlovukazi	The she-elephant, symbolical title of the Queen Mother
Kubulawa	Royal appointment to a particular position
Kuncoma	To prenominate
Mkhulumnchanti	The First Being
Mvelinchanti	Supreme Being, the one who was there in the Beginning of things
Labadzala	The elders, refers to those who belong to the royal house and council
Libandla	Council
Liqoqo	The Swazi National Council
Tinkhundla	Regional centres comprising chiefdoms
Tinkhundlacracy	The Swazi-specific political system
Sibahle Sinje	A cultural and political movement in Swaziland
Sibaya	Kraal
Siswati	Language of the Swazi people
Somhlolo	The kingship name given to Mswati I
Somhloloism	The doctrine that the gospel came through Somhlolo's dream
Swazi	The people of Mswati
Umculu	Book
Umphakatsi	Chiefdom
Umhlanga	Reed Dance ceremony performed by teenage girls
Vusela	Review

# ACRONYMS

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AEC	Alliance Evangelical Church
ANC	African National Congress
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
BOLESWA	Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland
CANGO	Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission
CSC	Council of Swaziland Churches
DPM	Deputy Prime Minister
DPMF	Development Policy Management Forum
EISA	Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
ESRA	Economic Social Reform Agenda
INCOSCM	Inter-Collegiate Student Christian Movement
HIV/Aids	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HUMARAS	Human Rights Association of Swaziland
HURUDISWA	Human Rights and Democracy Institute of Swaziland
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LACS	League of African Churches in Swaziland
MCSA	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MP	Member of Parliament
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNLC	Ngwane National Liberatory Movement
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
PM	Prime Minister
PUDEMO	Peoples United Democratic Movement
RSP	Royal Swaziland Police
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordinating Conference
SCCO	Swaziland Concerned Civic Organisations,
SCCUC	Swazi Christian Churches United in Christ

SCC	Swaziland Conference of Churches
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SFTU	Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions
SNAT	Swaziland National Association of Teachers
SNCS	Swazi National Council Standing Committee
STR	Swazi Traditional Religion
SSN	Swaziland Solidarity Network
SWAGAA	Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse,
SWAYOCO	Swaziland Youth Congress
TRC	Tinkhundla Review Commission
UBLS	University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland
UCCA	United Christian Church of Africa
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNISWA	University of Swaziland
USDF	Umbutfo Swaziland Defence Force
WCC	World Council of Churches
WHO	World Health Organisation
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa

# PREFACE

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I am deeply humbled and honoured to present this volume of Joshua Mzizi's articles and short essays to the public. In preparing this book for publication, I am particularly grateful for the support I have received from the Mzizi family. Special thanks therefore go to his widow, Mavis, and the children. Their generosity in supplying information and general support has enriched this book beyond measure. Thanks also go to Martin Dlamini Managing Editor of *The Times of Swaziland*, Musa Ndlangamandla, editor of *The Swazi Observer* and Bheki Makhubu, editor of the *Nation*, who each willingly gave their permission for the use of articles that Mzizi had published in their respective newspapers and magazine. Comfort Mabuza, Mzizi's great friend and comrade, was most supportive. Nonhlanhla Vilakati, Mzizi's colleague and friend, made available Mzizi's personal papers, so that we could glean valuable data. Special mention should be made of Mzizi's colleagues at the Coalition of Non-governmental Organisations (CANGO), especially Thembinkosi Dlamini as well as Lungile Magongo formerly of the Council of Swaziland Churches, for not only establishing the J.B. Mzizi Memorial Lecture, but also for putting into motion the process that culminated in the writing of this book.

I am also grateful to my research assistants, Rogers Ndawula and Herbert Moyo, who scouted for data, reading thousands of pages and transcribing many of them for inclusion in the manuscript. I also want to extend a word of gratitude to my colleague and friend, Rosinah Gabaitse, for collecting data on Mzizi from the University of Botswana archives and BOLESWA journals. My grateful thanks also go to SUN MeDIA Bloemfontein for publishing this book. Last, but not least, to my wife Lovey and our four children (Lesego, Thembinkosi, Junior and Mfundo) for their devotion, support and understanding during the many months of research and writing.

By the end of this book, it should become clear that Mzizi was a phenomenon not only for Swaziland, but also for the entire continent of Africa. He was able to forge his way through to the academic world, and thereby ensure that his voice could be heard throughout the world, through his pen. It is an honour for me to contribute to the preservation of the ideas he espoused and the convictions he stood for. His dream was for a Swaziland where people would be judged not by the blood (royal) that runs through their veins, or the clan name that history imposed on them, but by the right they hold to their citizenship, the depth of their intellect, purity of their hearts, greatness of their minds and ability of their hands. As with Mzizi, I too share this vision and believe that a *new* Swaziland is indeed possible.

R. Simangaliso Kumalo  
27 April 2013 (Freedom Day)  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa



# SECTION ONE

# THE PALACE, THE PARISH AND THE POWER: POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES ON J.B. MZIZI'S WORKS

**J**oshua Bhekinkosi Mzizi or simply known as J.B. Mzizi; is best known as the public theologian who became the voice of the progressive movements in Swaziland for just over a decade. There had been a few other Swazi academic theologians since the country gained its independence in 1968. However, they are not more than ten in total. The question is what made him to stand out and to be deserving of a book as a collection of his writings? I contend that Mzizi is one of the best theologians in the rich and prolific Southern African tradition of liberation theologians, and he is one of the very few to have come out of Swaziland in the postcolonial era.<sup>1</sup> The main reason for publishing this book is to share, preserve and pass on to future generations his message and legacy. It is also to stimulate more research on Mzizi, his times, themes such as theological and social history, and the history of religion in Swaziland and the socio-economic dynamics of the country. Mzizi was viewed by some as a liberation theologian, patriot, activist-intellectual, prophet of democracy and protagonist of human rights in Swaziland, whilst others saw him as rabble-rouser, an enemy of His Majesty's government and the church. While young, educated Swazi women and men left the country in search of economic opportunities elsewhere, especially South Africa, Mzizi remained in Swaziland, and his presence there was very powerful. He represented a part of the population of Swaziland that searched for words to express their quest for freedom in a postcolonial country still trapped in

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1 Others include Dr Hebron Ndlovu and Ms Nonhlanhla Vilakati.



pre- and colonial systems of governance. The authorities in Swaziland did not like him or his message. Not only was he detained by the police, but an attempt was also made to deport him from the country of his birth.

## A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF MZIZI'S WORKS

For us to explore, understand and appreciate Mzizi's works, we need to establish a relevant theoretical approach. Most contemporary social sciences scholars see in postcolonial theoretical critique a development in the methodology that can be used to analyse the development of ideologies in postcolonial Africa. The question that may be asked is what do we mean by 'postcolonial theory'? One of the key thinkers of postcolonial theory is Gayatri Spivak. She defines postcolonial theory as "the problematising of repressive cultural and social relations in a colonising context" (Spivak, 1992:3). This enables us to unpack the colonising cultures and social relations amongst people especially the relationship between those in power and their subjects in order to see the power dynamics that are at play. Understanding the power dynamics may enable us to gain insights to liberating knowledge and activities. In other words, postcolonial theory can be understood as a theory that is used to critically engage imperialistic and hegemonic operations in different forms and levels of society. Jeremy Punt (2013:1) has asserted that:

*Postcolonial theory is a critical theoretical approach that is considered to engage the complex aftermath of colonialism, and to theorise without excluding the colonial itself. This theory has been largely shaped by histories of repression and repudiation, reclaiming and celebrating the indigenous in particular, but also and in complex ways by the attraction afforded by colonialist, imperialist endeavours, as well as relations with and reactions to them.<sup>2</sup>*

I embrace Punt's definition of postcolonial theory and I see the theory as important for the working of critically analysing the complex system of governance in Swaziland in a postcolonial era. Punt (2013:2) also notes that "Postcolonial theory tries to criticise both the colonial thinkers and the anti-colonial thinkers." Therefore, I understand postcolonial theory to mean a critical interpretive tool that can be used to engage the complex issues, systems and structures that were put in place during the colonial era and to do this by including the colonial itself, with the aim of reclaiming and celebrating incipient knowledge, and agency to define them, and shape their destiny. David Huddart (2008:4) noted that:

*Postcolonial theory, in displacing universalised subjectivities associated with Western thought, wants to emphasise how one universalisation of subjectivity has always excluded other modes of subjectivity. In other words, it wants to show how best other subjectivities are admitted to consideration in order to bolster sameness.*

In simple terms postcolonial theoretical critique refers to a theory that seeks to analyse social dynamics of power relationships between colonisers and the colonised by standing on the

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2 Jeremy Punt, *Possibilities and Prospects of Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation: A South African Perspective*. Paper read at the Summer school on Postcolonial Theology on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013 at Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany, 1.

postcolonial era, looking at conditions that have historical and contextual dimensions coming from the intellectual traditions of resistance to colonisation. Therefore, postcolonial theory tries to criticise both the colonial thinkers and the anti-colonial thinkers. They are trying to synthesise both the colonisers and the coloniser's strategies of response to oppression. However we must learn from Edward Said (1993:9-10) who makes a clear distinction between imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism was an imposition of a country's culture, tradition, language and ideology to another. Colonisation is a control of people's minds, way of life, tradition, ideology and resources. It does not need to be from an outside country or power; it can also be practiced by those in power over others within a nation. Postcolonial theory looks at the colonisers as they oppress and the colonised as they resist colonisation and see what is happening and give a new episteme (knowledge) which goes beyond the mimicry and resistance to a new solution, providing new foundations for the generation of knowledge that is contextually relevant. Postcolonial theory has to be critically applied to the lived experiences of people, so that it can help with analysing the situation for the development of new insights. Postcolonial theory scholarship is a self-critical exercise. It seeks to identify and remove the relics and remnants of imperialism by foreign powers and to decolonise people any powers that dominate them whether they are foreign or local.

Scholars of postcolonial thinking have often identified it with references to notions or concepts such as representation, identity, power, orientalism, ambivalence, de-essentialisation, hybridity, mimicry, dialogue and some other critical terms.<sup>3</sup> Of importance is to note that in this paper postcolonial is understood as a psychological and social term related to consciousness. Through the application of these characteristics, scholars synthesise both the colonisers' strategies to dominate and the colonised attempts either to survive within the domination or to resist it. I am going to discuss ten notions of postcolonial theory in the light of the situation in Swaziland to shed light on King Sobhuza's attempts to develop an ethno-religious identity and demonstrate how Mzizi responded to this through his writings. The immediate question that may be asked is what do we mean by postcolonial theoretical analysis in the context of Swaziland? And how does it manifest itself in the country's religio-political systems? What are the power dynamics at play in this system between the leaders and the rest of the citizens? Answers to such questions depend on who is asking them and the reason for their inquiry. In response to these questions, these are representation, power, identity, hybridity, conscientisation, etc.

First, one of the key characteristics of postcolonial critical analysis is that it takes special interest on the *representation* of the marginalised. It tends to ask the question of who is missing in this process, who is not included and why? This means that it tends to have interest on the excluded and marginalised. Michel Foucault refers to the powerless and marginalised as the subaltern. Discussing bio-power as he referred to power and its effects on people, Foucault (in Sinellart, 2004:1) argued that:

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3 *Ibid.*, 4.

*It is a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species.*

Writing from a biblical interpretation perspective Pui-lan (2005:37) observed that “a postcolonial approach deliberately forms a counter-hegemonic discourse, paying attention to hidden and neglected voices” as well as the voices of protest or opposition. Punt takes this argument further by observing that a postcolonial theoretical approach:

*Includes and gives voice to the voiceless, the muted voices colonised, the marginalised, and the oppressed. It addresses disproportionate power relationships at geo-political as well as subsidiary levels, at the level of the empire and the relationship between the imperial and the colonial, but also at social and personal levels of the powerful ruler and the subaltern, to the extent of investigating relationships and interaction between centre and periphery (Punt, 2013:7).*

For Foucault it matters how the knowledge and decisions we take impact upon those who have been excluded. This is because he believes in their agency, their ability to develop their own knowledge, envision their future and shape it to be consistent with their own aspiration. Foucault’s confidence on the epistemological agency from below is also held by Giyatri Spivak. She (1992:11) asserted that:

*We must keep alive the possibility of learning from below, if only moral dilemmas and questions such as the following, with the long-term pedagogic goal of making them responsibly accessible, accessible in order that responses may be practically made and unmade even as their theory and shifts with, the rhythms of history.*

The main argument here is that marginalised people have to be present or at best be fully represented in meetings that are deliberating on their situation. Leadership systems and process should allow for full participation of all affected in decision-making processes. As a liberation theologian, Mzizi believed in the same values. In his analysis of the situation in Swaziland, Mzizi argued that the majority of Swazi were voiceless. As a result, he titled his thesis, “Voice of the voiceless”.

Second, Foucault also reminded us that postcolonial analysis takes special interest in the “relationship between *power and domination* and their effects” (1983:208). It exposes how power dynamics between the powerful and the powerless in society were constructed. This it does, by going behind the ideas, power and language that was used to structure current systems thus enabling us to understanding how the power of the dominant or leaders was constructed and how it should be deconstructed. It also shows us how the colonised responded to the domination, so that we can critic this response with the aim of improving it. We are aware that every oppressive power triggers a power that comes from resistance. This has been demonstrated eloquently in the discussion of the Hidden Transcripts (Scott, 1990:18). This point means that by analysing how the powerful dominated the powerless, we can also understand how the powerless responded to this oppression. This theory encourages us to analyse the

power relations in society between the powerful and the powerless. It looks at how power has been acquired by those who have it over others, how the powerless lose their power. It also looks at the ideologies, systems and structures that are used to maintain the power relations. Its aim is to change the power relations for the better so that it is not used to disadvantage those who are from the underside. It is important to note that Michel Foucault noted that power on its own has no value judgement, meaning that it is neither good nor bad. What matters is how people use power? In a nutshell, power is a tool in the hands of people – especially the powerful. It can be used for the benefit of all people especially the disadvantaged, but it can also be used to their detriment. Foucault (2004:2) observed that:

*This analysis simply involves investigation where and how, between whom, between points, according to what process, and with what effects, power is applied. If we accept that power is not a substance, then this analysis could and would only be at most a beginning of theory, not of a theory of what power is, but simply of power terms of the set of mechanisms and procedures that have the role or function and theme, even when they are unsuccessful, of securing power.*

In the case of Swaziland this theory would help us to understand how the current form of government through its leaders, accumulated its power, how it developed its ideology of the absolute monarchy, and built its system and structures that maintain it. It will also help us to see what the reactions to the colonial power were.

In all situation of governance, the fact that those in government have power is not a bad idea by itself. Of primary importance here is to look at how power is attained and used. If it is used well that would lead to the benefit of all. The problem is when it is not being used well and it ends up working against some people. It is in this case that people have to use their agency, to resist *power*. However, for this to happen people need to be conscientised, this is when one approaches this from a Freiran approach. There is a need to awaken people to their situation of oppression so that they stand up and oppose the system that works against them. Freire refers to this as a process of *critical consciousness* which means “the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergences” (1996:109).

Third, postcolonial theory propagates a shift from *cultural exclusivism to cultural plurality*. This means that there must be an accommodation of indigenous, marginalised and colonised individuals into the main stream. Writing from a postcolonial theoretical perspective Gayatri Spivak noted that:

*As the varieties of nation-state-style unification programmes collapse all around us, what is emerging is the old multi-ethnic mix (2000:76).*

Fourth, the other important aspect of postcolonial theory is that it affirms the *agency* of the historically oppressed. It brings those in the margins into the centre of discussion and liberating activities. It encourages the voices of protest and redemptive participation of the marginalised as they seek to push the frontiers of their oppression. All people have agency, especially the poor and oppressed, can liberate themselves, and can work out their freedom and leadership.

Collective agency, e.g. the United Democratic Front in South Africa and CANGO in the context of Swaziland, means that when the people work together they can liberate themselves. This means that the poor have to form *solidarities* with other groups who are concerned about domination. Linked to the aspect of agency is the concept of *Performativity*. This means that dominated people can still act decisively to subvert the power that limits them. This is important if they are to get out of the situation of domination. The question is to whose agenda and benefit will they perform? However, they need to be critical of their performance, by asking question such as “On whose agenda am I performing?” “Is my performance not perpetuating my domination and oppression by the powers that be?” “Is it not benefitting the oppressor, is it helping me to get out of the oppression?” At the same time, the dominated cannot use the oppression as a reason for not performing. They need to apply their agency and make their contribution to the improvement of life for all. As a student of Liberation Theology Mzizi was an advocate of the agency of the ordinary citizens of Swaziland.

Fifth, another key notion of the postcolonial analysis is *identity and hybridity*. Postcolonial critic highlights the necessity of attaining a new or at least a different identity from the dominant one, which was acquired as a result of the colonial dynamics. Punt (2013:9) notes that:

*Postcolonial hermeneutics highlights the acquisition and propagating of new or different identity. Realising the importance of hybridity. Identity is understood as hyphenated, fractured, multiple and multiplying, as it exists within a complex web of negotiation and interaction, forged by imagination redeploying the local and the imported elements.*

Postcolonial theory takes into account a variety of factors; the experienced reality, the religions and the culture of the people; their history, political and systems of governance. However, its main aim is to analyse these in order to find out the liberative direction that it needs to take. Postcolonial theory emphasises that this is important where people are aware of all the factors that form their identities. The expectation is that people do not have to adopt the *essentialism* of any particular single identity to describe themselves. But rather to recognise the different identities that define them. It is also important that in the formation of identities we do not adopt the notion of *exclusivism*, where we see ourselves and reject others with different identities. It calls for being open to other identities. In the early nineteenth century when Swaziland was colonised by the British, Labotsibeni brought together the Swazi culture, traditional religion, English culture and Christianity to form what today is known as Swazi culture; or hybridity. Mzizi credits this to the wise leadership of King Sobhuza’s grandmother Queen Labotsibeni Mdluli and King Sobhuza II. Mzizi (2004:3) said that:

*Swazi kingship survived the hardship of colonialism thanks to the formidable and gallant attempts first of Queen Labotsibeni Mdluli and later Sobhuza II, her grandson. The Queen, while sensitive to the inevitable process of change, asserted strong regency that prepared the new King to fit into both the old and the new worlds with an agenda to either strike balance between the two or to employ elements of the old to dominate the new.*

The quotation demonstrates Labotsibeni’s ability to encourage hybridity in Swaziland and teaching this to her grandson, who needed to help Swaziland to adapt in a rapidly changing

world by bringing together the old and the new. This point is very important in the context of Swaziland, where as a response to colonisation by the British; the leadership adopted an ethno-religious identity which was Swazi, African traditional religion and Christian identity. For anyone to be accepted as a true Swazi, they had to adhere to these three closed characteristics, e.g. Swazi in a narrow sense because they should have been born in Swaziland, adhere to Swazi culture and Swazi traditional religion. Religious identity formed the foundation for the spirituality of the nation, which is also important for any new nation to be successful in sharing the national consciousness. By doing this, Sobhuza built a nation which deep in its soul has a spirituality of its own. Ernest Renan observed that:

*A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the rich legacy of memories; the other is the possession in common of a rich legacy of the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage has received in an undivided form. ... The national like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one basis a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more-these are the essential conditions for being a people (in Bhabha, 1990:13).*

Anyone outside this in terms of his or her identity felt excluded. Mzizi argued against the narrow ethnicisation of religious identity and called for a multi-pronged approach that is more inclusive of other people and faiths.

Of importance here, is the recognition that identity is not static, but rather dynamic. As the decades passed, what Sobhuza had established changed forms and in some instances even content, so that there is no pure Swazi culture. The one that the King developed was a response to the cultural invasion that had been faced by the Swazis from the British and Christianity. Freire (1996:133) explains this process as:

*Cultural invasion, which serves the ends of conquest and the preservation of oppression, always involves a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world, and the imposition of one worldview upon another. It implies the 'superiority' of the invader and the 'inferiority' of those who are invaded, as well as the imposition of values by the former, who possess the latter and are afraid of losing them.*

New influences have entered and mixed with the old to form new identities and this process cannot be stopped or controlled through rigidity; it has a life of its own. The problem is that usually those with power are afraid of allowing these changes because they fear that they would change the *status quo*. The powerless are usually involved in agency that seeks to change the *status quo*. In any way, they do not have a lot to lose but rather more to gain. However, the holders of power do their best to cling to it to an extent of using coercive majors.

Sixth, Homi Bhabha's notion of *hybridity* has reminded us that identities are a mixture of cultures, norms, values from different cultural practices and backgrounds (1994:173).<sup>4</sup> This is because in the contemporary era human beings do not live in isolation but rather in the cross section between countries, religions, and cultures which influences their identity. There is no single pure culture and identity, but all are products of mixing coming into context. Therefore, there is a need in the words of Surgitharajah to move "away from the positivist and essentialist notions of identity consciousness and origin" (1998:23).<sup>5</sup> This means that we are all a mixture of systems, ideas, norms, culture and values. Power holders can use these mixtures and harden them in order to create their own identity, which they then pass on to those under their command. A good example of this is what in his wisdom King Sobhuza II did during the formative years of the ethno-religious identities of Swaziland. He brought together traditional Swazi culture, which itself was a product of other cultures such as Tsonga, Zulu and Sotho. These cultures had come into contact through the invasion, conquering of smaller groups and this led to what they would later regard as Swazi culture. There must be diversity and no rigidity. There is no place for rigidity and non-flexibility of cultures in the twenty, first postcolonial societies. Instead there must be fluidity, where things move, mix and there is flexibility as opposed to fixed cultures and rules as a result of power. Berman (1994:110) observed that:

*Patronage ties crisscross the analytic boundaries of class categories. They also blur the state-society distinction. Clientelistic hierarchies, factions and clans form both within the state apparatus and on the local level, revealing divisions, competition, and power struggles that exist within the categories of rulers and ruled as well as patterns of alliance and conflict between them. I argue that hierarchies of power found in rural social institutions were harnessed to the task of extending state power and capacity regimes to promote the capitalist transformation of agricultural production.*

Hybridity is again the way to go for Swaziland. It needs to allow the fluidity and mixing of cultures and traditions. For Mzizi there was nothing wrong with the Swazi people curving their own identity as a people. In fact, he proudly identified himself as a Swazi and identified with most of the cultural practices that Swazis had to undertake. Writing about himself, he notes that identity is important and dynamic. His own identity was a result of hybridity. He had been shaped by being a rural Swazi boy, who had to adhere to Swazi culture, belonged to the Evangelical Church of his parents, would listen to his father leading the family in prayers every night, was also healed by the concoctions and sacrifices of the Zionist priests when he was sick, got educated, became a leader of the Swazi Christian Student's Movement, joined the teacher's union as an activist, co-founded the Swazi Human Rights Commission, and became a strong academic. All these characteristics came together to form J.B. Mzizi. Like most modern Swazis, he could not be described in a single word or notion, but all these were combined in him and formed his hybridised identity.

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4 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 173.

5 Surgitharajah, Rasiah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Post colonialism: Contesting interpretation* (Mary knoll: Orbis, 1998), 23.

Seventh, scholars of post colonialism have also reminded us that the cause for oppression is when the powerful *essentialise* their way of seeing things. This calls for *de-essentialisation*; every kind of definition that essentialise something is temporary, restricted and time-bound because it does not consider other possibly interpretations that are different. Thus, de-essentialisation means recognising the reservoir of other meaning. Cultural construct, must be open-ended, instead of being rigid about a particular idea. There is a need for openness. This concept is very important for Swazi identity, because it means that its formation and growth has the space to develop and include other notions, instead of being closed and rigid. Edward Said (1982:21) noted that African leaders in response to the colonial divide and rule strategy at the time found a way to adapt their rule. He said that:

*African political and social forces were fragmented, isolated and contained within the framework of local administrative units, which both protected the institutions of the colonial state from constant involvement in local issues and conflicts, and inhibited the coalescence of African opposition and resistance into colony-wide challenge to the colonial order.*

Eight, Homi Bhabha noted that another strategy used by these African leaders to subvert suppression was to *mimic* their rulers by exerting their own power to those under them. In agreement to Bhabha, Spivak (1992:21) in her book *Can the subaltern speak?* also argues that the powerless imitate or mimic the power holders in way that on the surface is like they are approving and fully embracing too it. Here they may even inflict pain to those under them or to themselves in the process. Spivak's observation is in agreement with Paulo Freire's where he argued that, the oppressed turn to imitate their oppressors by being oppressive to those under them. This continues the practices of oppression and dehumanisation of the powerless people in society. *Mimicry* refers to mimicking colonial power holders, in their expression and use of power. In the political situation in Swaziland, there is a need to see Spivak's observation of mimicry as a real problem. The people may be poor, struggling and not having any voice, but they are very loyal to the system. They participate in the *Tinkhundla* system when called upon in their numbers, they attend all the age-related and gendered rituals of the *Incwala* ceremony and they fill the national church and stadiums to participate in the Good Friday Service and Somhlolo Day of praise. However, this is not the same when they are called by the political organisations to critic *Incwala*, elections, etc. They do not respond to these calls. This is because they are at the stage of mimicking the dominant leaders, system and structures. What is needed is *conscientisation*. Conscientisation can come through re-interpreting and claiming of the ownership of some of these national practices that the dominant have claimed for themselves. These must be taken over by the people as theirs. A good example of this is Mzizi's understanding of the *Incwala ceremony*. He argued that it belongs to all Swazis the same way as it belongs to the King and the other key role players. What Mzizi is doing here is resistance. His strategy of resistance goes beyond mimicry, but rather to a re-interpretation of Swazi identity, citizenship and the privileges that goes with it. He is taking it over from the dominant class to give it to the people. By doing this through writing articles, he is conscientising the Swazi people to see things differently so that they can use their agency to reverse the *status quo*. Then he calls for process of transforming the situation to humanisation. Oppression



dehumanises people, it takes away their freedom to think, be subjects of their own destiny, by making them objects. Paulo Freire (1996:60) asserted that the solution to this problem is “conscientisation” of the powerless to see their situation of powerlessness and begin to work for their empowerment.

Ninth, postcolonial analysis is sensitive to issues around *gender equality*. It emphasises the equality of all people beyond gender orientation, which does not exclude other gender groups, but rather one that includes all gender orientations. In postcolonial theory, there is a preference to the use of gender than feminist approaches because of their tendency to exclude man. Gender is a concept that includes all people, both male and female, with freedom and equal rights for both. Gender sensitivity also means that other forms of gender orientations needs to be taken into account. In Swaziland, women’s situation still needs to be improved. Swaziland is a very patriarchal society where women have no rights of inheriting and owning land, their identity is always validated by a male figure as either a father, a husband, or son. Polygamy is practiced freely as part of the culture with the payment of the bride price *emalobolo* still being used to disempower women, as they are given from ownership of one man to another, from father to son-in-law. Men have used religion, especially Christianity, to justify the objectification of women. For this problem to be addressed there is a need to subject Christianity under the critic of postcolonial theories. Writing from a Biblical hermeneutics point of view Musa Dube (2000:12) observed that postcolonial theory has to position itself as a dialogue partner with gender and feminist studies. Dube argues that Christianity in Africa still supports the oppression of the subaltern especially women by those in power including traditional leaders. This is done through culture and indigenous religions. She called for the decolonising of religious practice with strategies of hybridity and the opening up of hybridised spaces.

Tenth, scholars of post colonialism have encouraged us of the need to embrace *diversity* in identity formation. The ethno-religious identity system in Swaziland is postcolonial, because it was a response to colonisation. In recent years, Swaziland has seen the arrival of people from other African countries wanting to settle permanently there, bringing with them their cultures, language and knowledge. It has also seen the infiltration of other forms of knowledge, technology and other norms and values, forms of government like multi-party democracy. These are diverse and to some degree can be a threat to Swazi culture. For Swaziland to move forward it needs to be open to these diverse influences rather than resisting them and pushing them aside simply because it wants to maintain its own. Postcolonial theory is opposed to nationalism, racism, sexism and ethnicity. When applied in Swaziland this theory will challenge these practices and free the country from these trappings. Thus, Mzizi’s work was about challenging all the above stated practices.

### ***Voice of the Voiceless***

Mzizi was a Swazi national who laboured hard as an organic intellectual and activist to awaken the Swazi people to work for the democratization and establishment of human rights in their

country. He did this by drawing from his faith and training as a Liberation Theologian. Liberation Theology is that branch of theology which seeks to reflect on socio-economic and political issues that affect people from a theological perspective, in the light of the scriptures, with the aim of enabling them to work toward achieving freedom and life in its fullness. He called the people of Swaziland to draw resources from their own religion and culture to shape their politics.

Therefore, his theology was mainly practiced in the public sphere; it is a theology that originated from public issues and the experiences of ordinary people and then moves to theological reflection, action, evaluation and further reflection of the experiences of the people. His academic life was based on walking the fine path of the interface between religion, politics and Swazi culture that he embraced though not without criticality. Hence, the title of this book, *Religion and Politics in Swaziland: The Contributions of Joshua B. Mzizi*. My understanding of Liberation Theology is the theological reflection on the issues that affect people in their real situations as they seek to live life be it religious or political in their contexts. It is an activity of reflecting on the socio-economic and political dynamics of a particular context with the aim of bringing about holistic liberation and lasting change through religion. In this understanding doing Publication Theology one does not need to be only an academic; a commitment to reflecting on the lived experience of people on the continent in the light of scripture, is enough to make one a liberation theologian. It is with this broad definition in mind that Mzizi is deemed to have been a Liberation Theologian in Swaziland for he used his theological analytical tools to study public or social events in Swaziland and sought to interpret them in the light of the Bible and other sacred texts to reach some conclusion of where the country was and should be going. This is what Albert Nolan refers to as “reading the signs of the times” (Nolan, 1989:22).

Being the first and only person to complete a PhD in Liberation Theology in Swaziland, Mzizi responded to this situation by offering a theological critique. This book is an attempt to show how Swaziland’s only Liberation Theologian responded to a situation that is familiar to many people in the world. In the almost fifteen years that Mzizi worked as a theologian, his writings were changing dynamically. First starting as a researcher interested in the development of African Independent Churches and the interface between religion and Swazi culture, he moved towards a public theological approach. This is not surprising because as Gustavo Gutierrez has noted “doing theology or to speak of God can never be static, because it is practiced in a constantly changing historically reality” (in Kristenson, 2009:4). For Mzizi this emerged from his concern and experiences as an ordinary Swazi citizen who was on the receiving end of this system and of being a theologian in a highly religious country, where life revolved around, God, worship and rituals. In the chaotic situation of political unrest and discontent, Mzizi as a committed theologian saw a need for religion, Christianity to be specific to respond theologically to the political challenges of the population, and give them the reason to hope. This he did with buoyancy and commitment. The work of doing socio-political analysis of society from a theological perspective can be called “public theology”. This public theology is carried out in written essays and reflections both academic and popular.

Just like his colleague Gustavo Gutierrez in Peru when Mzizi started to contribute to the newspapers such as, *The Swazi Observer* and *The Times of Swaziland*, in 1990 with public theological essays and reflections, he became an important voice in the public debate. From his position as an academic, he carved a niche for himself as a leader of critical voices that had an impact on both the Christian community and on society in general. His main aim was to offer an alternative view on public issues that affected ordinary people as he interacted with them at his job at the university, church, market places and meetings of the progressive movements. Gradually he became an important *Voice*.

Mzizi served Swaziland as an academic and theologian-activist who played a key role in the demythologisation of the relationship between the monarchy, religion and Swazi culture. Emphasis is placed on his radical decision to be critical of the church and its subservient relationship with the Swazi monarchy and his attempts to expose the untruthful claims made of Christianity as the monarchy's foundation. His unprecedented critical analysis of the three forms of church organisation, namely the apolitical Evangelicals, the pro-monarchy Zionists and the ambiguous mainline churches, are consistently analysed and appraised throughout his articles. His ability to bring into dialogue human rights and Liberation Theology is examined together with his critical exposition of *Somhloloism*, which is the doctrine of how God influenced the bringing of Christianity to Swaziland through a dream that was seen by King Somhlolo.

Mzizi's most productive time of writing was between 1990 and 2005, and this was during the difficult times of political instability in Swaziland. In the 1990s Mozambique was charting a way forward to a new government and South Africa was going through its own transformation from apartheid to a democratic country. Swaziland was caught in the middle of a changing world and so its people were also standing up to express their quest for a new political dispensation. Therefore, most of what Mzizi wrote one way or another reflected the upheavals of this period. This situation shaped his theological reflection; therefore, it is imperative that his work is seen with a clear view of the interface between the socio-political context and his theological thinking which was informed by liberation theology. However, I am convinced that his work went beyond liberation theology whose main focus is to interpret the gospel's call for liberation in a context of oppression. Mzizi's theology went beyond a call for some form of liberation to picking up the daily issues that confronted the people, analysing them theologically, affirming what was good in Swazi culture and systems whilst at the same time calling for change where necessary with the aim of improving the system. His was not just a call for change, but also of appreciating the good in the people and their culture, thus remaining a proud Swazi national.

This book will focus on two things that have not been explored through research on Mzizi:

1. To locate Mzizi's theological reflection with specific political events in a critical time in Swaziland. The aim is to show the significance of the socio-political context of Mzizi's theology and prophetic response.
2. Emphasis is firstly placed on Mzizi as a public theologian. A number of theologians acknowledged him as a liberation theologian because of his discourse which was within the

discipline of liberation theology, but there is more to it than that. His concern with reflection on public issues in general makes him a public theologian. His theology went beyond liberation. It is also important to note that it came during the post-liberated Swaziland.

The central question is: How did Mzizi respond to the Swazi public and how did he express his theological concern with regard to the political developments in the country? In order to respond to this broad question, the following three guiding questions have been developed:

1. What explanations did Mzizi give to the religio-political dynamics in Swaziland?
2. What was his concrete message to specific groups and individuals in the Swazi society?
3. What motifs does Mzizi develop to give reason for hope to a people in despair?

From 1973 when King Sobhuza II repealed the constitution that had been agreed upon in London at the Lancaster House for a new democratic Swaziland, and began to rule by royal decree the ordinary people lived in a time of uncertainty. They had to adjust to live in a country without a formal constitution, where their human rights were not guaranteed but came as a favour and a gift from the monarchy. As the people gradually grew intolerant of the system, so did the repression by the state security agencies. There have always been voices from the margins, such as unions and other formations seeking to raise their discontent with the system. In this situation, Christian voices were those of royal prophets who praised the monarchy and assured it of God's blessings in their throne, these messages of blind loyalty were delivered during the Good Friday services, Somhlolo Day of praise, and other worship services that took place in the country. Mzizi was one of the theologians who took a brave decision to offer an informed and balanced critique of the political situation in Swaziland from a theological perspective. Like every organic Swazi he was concerned with the lack of constitutional framework that will protect people's rights in the country, the dominance of the monarchy, the pro-monarchy *Tinkhundla* system of governance, the economic downturn and the repression on political activism.<sup>6</sup> He had grown up in that system, and was teaching students who had experienced poverty and lived with no certainty of a better future.

The ideas and motivations influencing Mzizi's actions expressed in many of his works are reproduced in this volume. In letters, speeches, position papers, submissions to government, academic essays and articles that he published in newspapers and journals. There is a general belief that Western democracy collides with African traditional systems of governance, yet at the sometime, a broad understanding of African culture and realities, rural and urban is significant. Mzizi held a PhD from the US, was a master of both the written and spoken English language, lived at Ngwane Park suburb, had a good middle-class life, but he had grown up from the rural area of Hlathikhulu in the Shiselweni District, was a son of a retired labourer, interacted with poor students at the university, poor people in the church and a number of activists in the

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6 He was on the same level with his colleagues Hebron Ndlovu and Nonhlnhla Vilakati at UNISWA.

human rights movement. Therefore, he brought his experienced reality into synergy with his theology to develop his ideas, which are the subject of this volume.

If one is to understand the political dynamics in Swaziland, one has to look at how these are interfacing with religion. There is a need to search for the connection between the country's high religiosity, political indifference and richness in culture. These characteristics have been praised for contributing to the country's stability and peace. It is a fact that peace and stability are relative. The question of whether Swaziland is stable or peaceful is subjective. Those who are engaged in the study of religious movements in Africa have concluded that over 98 per cent of the population is religious, including Swaziland. Most Swazis are adherents of Christianity and African traditional religions. Atheism is so insignificant that it is almost none existent in the country. In spite of the rapid growth of religious consciousness, which is said to be the good news that brings about freedom, liberation and life in its abundance, Swaziland has more problems compared to others. It is the only country in the world that is run by an absolute monarchy that has executive powers and where the fundamentals of democracy such as multipartism, free and fair elections monitored by international standards and the existence of a government of the people do not exist. Close to 40 per cent of Swazis are infected with HIV. Unemployment is high in spite of the fact that the population is small. It is just over a million people. Even though the majority of Swazis live in absolute poverty, there is a tiny minority which consists of elites especially those with connections to the royal family who live in luxury through Swaziland's meagre resources. This is in spite of the fact that from its founding as a nation in the early eighteen hundreds, the Swazi nation was religious, committed to Swazi traditional religion and with the arrival of the first missionaries in 1844, it understood itself as a Christian nation.<sup>7</sup>

This makes one to wonder if there is a connection between the country's religiosity and the resilience of the undemocratic system of governance and lack of economic development. Mzizi saw the lack of a prophetic message from the church as undermining the fundamental message for its existence in society. He (1995:24) said that:

*When the church opts to be silent in the face of social injustice, what exactly is it doing? When the clergy and laity alike fear to speak, what message are they sending? It would appear that when the church forgets its prophetic ministry simply because 'it is too hot to handle'; it is messing up its Christology.*

He went on to condemn the church in Swaziland for preaching a gospel that did not speak to the issues that confronted the country and its people. He (1995:25) said that:

*Here, the Church is busy preaching a half-gospel of the salvation of souls. It tells its listeners that they do not belong to this world. Someday the roll will be called, they had better be sure that their names are registered. This other worldly spirituality is what Karl Marx described as an opiate of the masses.*

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7 Swaziland's first constitution declared Swaziland a Christian nation.

Is religion, or Christianity to be specific, an asset for Swaziland's political and economic development or a liability? Mzizi's works (papers and speeches) provide some insights to answer these complex questions.

In the history of the political development of Swaziland, there has been no other theologian like Mzizi who has consistently used the discipline of theology to confront the religious basis of the political system and expose the dangerous dependency of the monarchy on the religious institutions to maintain its dominance. It is no secret that the churches of Swaziland had a "love-hate" relationship with Mzizi, not only because his message was critical of the monarchy and Swazi Government, but because it also openly chastised them for their lack of commitment to the political relevance of the gospel, ecumenism and respect for other faith traditions. It is therefore important to preserve Mzizi's ideas so that religious communities may engage him even though he is no longer alive and, through their pilgrimage, listen to his call and embrace a more politically relevant approach to religion.

With Mzizi's untimely death in December 2005, Swaziland lost one of its most effective and prolific writers and progressive theologians. Africans across the continent and in the Diaspora lost one of the most articulate advocates for human rights, democracy and good governance. His articulate pronouncements mirrored a twenty-first century Swaziland and Africa that, having won its independence from its former colonial masters, had, in the process, sacrificed values such as freedom, *ubuntu* and equality at the altar of archaic forms of traditional leadership, ethnicity, capitalism, the neo-liberalist culture of greed and individualism, gender inequality and economic injustice.

He was the first person with no ecclesiastical aura or protection to call for social reform using theologically derived analytical tools. He followed in the footsteps of other great modern-day leaders such as Bishop Mandlenkhosi Zwane, the trade unionist leader Albert Heshane Shabangu, and the political leader Ambrose Zwane; yet he was in a class of his own. He was a political theologian free from the trappings and tutelage of the church, trade unions or partisan-politics.

This is a tradition that includes liberation theologians, human rights activists and a variety of social activists. Many people across the continent of Africa are indeed oblivious of how indebted they are to the stubborn tradition of liberation theology. It is the multitude of people who came from this tradition who not only fought colonisation, but also an oppressive African culture so that our communities and nations could be free from oppression. Their persistent opposition and tenacious determination to place freedom, democracy, righteousness and consciousness before political and economic expediency helped shape some of Africa's most fundamental values and institutions. This is the tradition that has been used by people like Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu (Swaziland), Desmond Tutu (South Africa), and Pius Ncube (Zimbabwe) Archbishop Janani Luwum (Uganda), Prince Dibeela (Botswana), Bishop Kameete (Namibia) and others to challenge the post-colonial governments in their countries to strengthen democracy.

With the help of the media, Mzizi unpacked the unjust systems of governance that had for so long been clothed in religion and Swazi culture, while underneath harboured a multitude of corrupt and oppressive practices against the ordinary people. The majority of the Swazi people did not understand Mzizi and thus unfairly dismissed him as an anarchist and one who was opposed to religion (especially Christianity) and Swazi culture *akabufuni bukhosi, ungenwe ngulomoya wemaparty* he does not appreciate the monarchy because he is influenced by the spirit of multipartism they said. As a result, he lost a number of friends and made himself a number of enemies, especially in the corridors of power. Nevertheless, a minority, most of whom came from the liberation movements and civil society, understood him and appreciated his contribution. Like his contemporaries of liberation theology such as Gustavo Gutierrez, James Cone, Helder Camara and others he castigated the human spirit for being willing to tolerate an evil social, economic, cultural and political system and even using sacred scriptures to justify it.

He called upon ordinary Swazi people to stop being complacent about their situation and do something about it. He bemoaned the fact that there were few prophets in African countries and even they were often ignored by the authorities. He (1995:26) wrote:

*The voicelessness of the masses and the silence of the Church are constitutive elements in defining the human condition in Africa. Individual prophets do emerge here and there, but they are easily ignored by the status quo because of lack of a united voice. The church as a community of believers must make a determined effort to speak if it is to be listened to.*

As a consequence many dismissed Mzizi as a lapsed evangelical Christian who had turned against the faith he had once cherished. This said, a number was moved by his pronouncements to work against the forces that undermined the true values of human freedom and dignity. He became their inspiration and advocate. As Martin Luther King Jr. was an advocate for the African-American people, so Mzizi became one for the Swazi people. Without his voice challenging the *status quo* many would not have been able to understand the use of religious propaganda in keeping the majority of Swazis subservient to their political principals and the absolute monarch in power. His supreme contribution was to liberate religion from the captivity of those in power even though the majority of religious people did not understand him.

The title of this book could easily have been Voice of the Voiceless, a heading which Mzizi liked to use in some of his writings. For example, it was the title of his doctoral dissertation, which he wrote at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee (1995).

*Whilst I understand the reasons for referring to the oppressed of Swaziland as those whose voices are not heard, I do not think this means they are necessarily without a voice. They do have voices; however, they are nearly always ignored and often silenced by those who hold political and ecclesiastical power (Mzizi, 1995:26).*

Those with political power silence the voices of the poor by ignoring them and not responding to their demands, or through censoring their papers and magazines so that they do not publish their demands. This was also observed by Spivak in India, in a conversation that she had with

academics who noted that it was difficult for them to be listened to.<sup>8</sup> When the poor organise marches to protest against any form of injustice those in power would set the police and other security apparatus on them to disrupt their gatherings, marches and even prayers in the name of restoring peace and order. Sometimes these leaders resort to arrest and brutal beatings of people. These are the ways of silencing the voices of the poor and oppressed. Ecclesiastical leaders have two methods of silencing the voices of the poor and most of the time this is done unintentionally and unconsciously. First, they teach them to respect all authorities, because these are ordained by God (Romans 13:1-10). They also teach them to be peacemakers and that the poor and persecuted are blessed because their rewards are waiting for them in heaven (Mathew 5:1-10). Second, they do this by taking over the struggle of the poor for themselves. They become representatives of the poor, speaking on their behalf, leading their marches, etc. Although this is done in the name of solidarity, which is commendable but it becomes a problem when those in the leadership of ecclesiastical organisations take over the role of replacing the poor in the tables of dialogue, by speaking on their behalf.<sup>9</sup> This also leads to the poor's voices not being heard and then we conclude that they are the voiceless and therefore you need others to be the voices of the voiceless. The ideal situation is for the poor to be enabled to speak for themselves, for their voices to be heard. So by referring to the poor and oppressed as the "voiceless", Mzizi fell in the trap of most intellectual-activists who are not critical of the power dynamics between the poor, the elite and the well-meaning ecclesiastical and NGO leaders who are in solidarity with them.

It has become a fact of life that for one's voice to be heard and taken seriously by the powerful, one needs to have some power to irritate them enough to listen; otherwise they continue to ignore it as if they have heard nothing. In Swaziland the people have voices and do want to speak; when they do speak, however, the forces that oppress them are often so powerful that their voices are suppressed, at worst crushed. Indeed they are intentionally silenced by the oppressive machinery of the Government. It is therefore appropriate to refer to them as voices that are silenced. This means that we recognise and hear their silenced voices and their struggle to free themselves, but also are aware of the forces that work to oppose them. These forces need to be confronted and defied, something which Mzizi worked hard to achieve.

Within Swaziland Mzizi was a marginal figure in many respects. Being on the margins of society was both the inspiration for his voice and the outcome of his dismissal by mainstream society. His marginalisation manifested itself in four areas, namely religion, politics, culture and civics.

In Swaziland, for pronouncements to be taken seriously in a religious community the person making them must occupy a position of influence within that community. If they do not, their message will be simply ignored or even rejected. Religious communities provide the space,

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8 See Spivak, *Can the subaltern speak?*, 2.

9 Some years ago I and some of my colleagues from the university participated in a march for the government to provide ARVS to poor people. Immediately when the organisers saw us they requested that we lead the march because of our positions as clergy. Although we were in solidarity with the marchers but we did not want to take their struggle and make it ours. We had to persuade them to be in the frontline, rather than us.



constituency and authority for people to make important pronouncements, which at times can be deemed prophetic. It is not only the truth and weight that validate a statement but also the community that gives authority to the voice. As far as religious authority was concerned, Mzizi was disadvantaged because he had no position of influence in his faith community to give authority to his voice. He had grown up a committed Evangelical Christian belonging to the Free Gospel Mission at Hlathikhulu, but had gradually lost the fire and eventually lapsed as a vigorously professing Evangelical Christian. By the time of his death he attended church, at the International Tabernacle Church in Manzini, whose founder and pastor was a cabinet minister and distant relative of his. The death of Mzizi's evangelical spirit can be attributed to his exposure to progressive theological studies in institutions such as McCormick Theological Seminary and Vanderbilt University, one of the most liberal institutions in the US. His newly found Liberation Theology contradicted all that he had been taught in the church of his parents and land, which tended to adopt a narrow, pietistic view of Christianity, which is opposed to political engagement and the social gospel. Hence, other than his PhD in Liberation Theology, Mzizi had nothing in his favour to endorse his theological pronouncements. He was thus found on the margins of the religious community. Liberation Theology gives one tools to do critical analysis of public issues from a theological perspective. Therefore, Mzizi was a Public Theologian. Public Theology can be understood as theology interpreted, lived and manifesting itself in public life and ultimately public policy.

Politically Mzizi did not have an organisation to validate him. Not being born into a chief's family, Mzizi was not part of any ruling structure. Neither was he a card-carrying member of any political organisation. In a society that uses political positions to validate authority, he came from a very difficult situation, which did not assist him in making his pronouncements heard. Even in his family no one had ever been appointed to any political position of influence. Instead, the Mzizi clan were, and still are, small, insignificant, ordinary citizens of Swaziland; they belong to those who are led and not a class of leaders. Another position that helps people gain a voice in Swaziland in particular is when they are deemed to possess spiritual powers or are seen as mediators between the living and the dead. If Mzizi had been a strong *Inyanga* or *Sangoma* (prophet or medium) his pronouncements would have been taken far more seriously. Instead, he was an ordinary Swazi national working as an academic at the University of Swaziland, in a country that has not learned to appreciate academic rigour and intellectual-activism amongst its educated citizens. Postcolonial Theory reminds us of the importance of history to every voice in society. It advocates inclusion rather than exclusion.

Who and where Swaziland is on the global map is an important question. Swaziland is a small country landlocked between South Africa and Mozambique with a population of just over one million inhabitants. It is without rich minerals that other countries would otherwise envy and therefore take notice of. Its situation is exacerbated by a political system known as *Tinkhundla* that is totally misunderstood and detested by many across the world. Poverty and oppression of women, manifested through polygamy and a high rate of women abuse, are its chief signifiers. Nothing good is seen to come out of this small country, which for many observers is nothing

more than an archaic museum of ancient culture and traditions. When the rest of the world killed, dethroned or exiled its monarchies, Swaziland remains the only one that has almost defied its monarchy in the contemporary world. The monarch's survival can be attributed to the genius of the late King Sobhuza II who ruled the country for sixty-years. Mzizi thus came from a nation that has very little, either politically or economically, to claim a place of significance on the world map. The University of Swaziland, where he taught, was by no means on the list of top institutions. Indeed, theology is taught in the Department of Religious Studies, which is not necessarily regarded as a centre of excellence in comparison to its contemporaries in the continent. These factors, and others mentioned above, make it abundantly clear that Mzizi was standing on a platform of disadvantage, no matter what angle you may look at his work.

Against all these odds, Mzizi was nevertheless a phenomenon in the historical and political discourse of Swaziland. He was one of those rare individuals who come only occasionally in history and who provide a relevant voice and generate insights that are desperately needed by people and communities. Indeed, it will take Swaziland many decades before it can produce another individual of Mzizi's calibre. The important thing to note is that Mzizi represents the location of most intellectual-activists in Africa. Usually they are in the margins of society and the more they make pronouncements, the more they are pushed to the margins and sometimes threatened with deportation or assassination. Amongst these are people like Ali Mazrui, Sam Njoya, Ngugi wa Thiong (Kenya), Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ken Saro-wiwa (Nigeria) and others. All these are postcolonial voices of Africa that needs to be taken seriously.

Mzizi's work as a liberation theologian and intellectual-activist did not emanate from the comfort of an armchair in an air-conditioned office; instead, it was public theology developed in the struggle for human rights at the coalface of injustice, where the rubber hits the road. It originated in the meetings of the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS) and in the midst of participating in strikes organised by the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT). It was also done in the engagement with representatives of the People's Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), in the meetings of the Open Society for Southern Africa (which he chaired for years) and in the reflections, he wrote for the Elections Institute for Southern Africa (EISA). Lastly, it was done in the observation of the 2004 march by church leaders on the royal palace to demand the reinstatement of the Christian Clause in the Constitution and in the many symposiums and seminars held at the University of Swaziland. His was a theology moulded through mingling with the mud of humanity, religion and politics (Sowazi, 1994:35). Postcolonial Theory also reminds us of the importance of knowledge that come from people's experience.

Swaziland's political, social and economic dynamics including its culture and religion revolves around the ruling monarchical system of government, under the absolute leadership of their majesties the King Mswati III and his mother the Queen mother "*Indlovukazi*" or She-Elephant.<sup>10</sup>

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10 *Indlovukazi* is the name for a female elephant, she-elephant.

The King is referred to as “*Ingwenyama*” – the lion.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the King of Lesotho, the Queen of England, Kings of Norway and the Netherlands who are ceremonial monarchs, the King of Swaziland is an Executive Monarch. He is the head of government and all the key institutions that hold the country together. To speak against the political system in Swaziland or to challenge the government is tantamount to challenging the King himself, who is also referred to as “*umlomo longacali manga*” – the mouth that tells no lies.<sup>12</sup> The consequences of speaking against His Majesties’ Government *hulumende wenkhosi* can be ostracisation, persecution, deportation and even imprisonment. This means there is a limit to dialogue about this system. As a result, very few people are able to express their ideas. Mzizi was one of the few who dared to speak out and for that he paid a heavy price. He lost the scholarship when he was doing his doctoral studies in Liberation Theology, he was detained for his teachings and an attempt to deport him to South Africa was made, though it failed and he was ostracised by most of the church leaders especially those from his faith tradition.<sup>13</sup>

The main reason that Mzizi’s work, both as a liberation theologian and intellectual-activist, became important for Swaziland and, I think, for the rest of the African continent, was that he reflected on issues emerging from the three pillars of most African societies i.e. religion, politics and culture. These became the foundation of Mzizi’s theological and political writings. These three pillars are also foundations upon which the Swazi and most political systems in Africa are built. People appreciated Mzizi’s writings because he did theology that had public meaning, which concerned itself with real “bread-and-butter” issues that confronted his nation.<sup>14</sup>

## **RATIONALE, TEXTUAL NOTES, SELECTION, SOURCES ARRANGEMENT AND STRUCTURE**

### ***The rationale for the collection of Mzizi’s writings***

Having gone through the above discussion some will wonder as to the reason for the collection of Mzizi’s documents. I developed my problem in relation to how Mzizi responded to the question of how to do theology or to speak about God in a specific situation within a small country ruled by an absolute monarchy, which ruled by royal decree. Working with Mzizi’s writings and those who knew him I have endeavoured to find a clear image of this very complex

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11 The King is represented by the figure of a lion – *Ingwenyama* that is why he is also referred to as a lion. The coat of arms of Swaziland is made out of a lion and an elephant, depicting the two centres of power.

12 This emanates from the understanding that the king has advisors, so whatever he says would be wise and correct, therefore he should not be expected to make mistakes.

13 J.B. Mzizi, Motivation for admission Vanderbilt University. Unpublished short paper on his life and quest for knowledge in liberation theology.

14 Importantly, these issues were connected with the political system of the continent, a country that was under the rule of the absolute monarch, King Mswati III, Zimbabwe, under the dictatorial leadership of Robert Mugabe, Uganda, under the unchanging leadership of Yoweri Museveni, Nigeria, which has seen the brutal killing of Chief Abiyola and Ken Sarowiwa, Liberia, which experienced the cruel leadership of Charles Taylor and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has not experienced good governance since the time of Mobutu Seseko. Underlying bad governance in Africa one finds religion and culture, which are used to perpetuate political agendas by the ruling class.

and dynamic man. The intention of this book is to use the particular in this case, which is Mzizi, to shed light on the bigger story, which is religion and politics in Africa. This is done by presenting and reflecting on the collection of Mzizi's works, which represent his contribution to religion, politics and culture of Swaziland. Ever since I undertook work on this important project, I have come across a number of important attributes and characteristics of this very Mzizi who tried to influence his country, which is the only absolute monarchy in the world and is probably one of the richest in culture and religion, but amongst the poorest economically and politically. The most important issues that have emerged for me have been to discover what informed his work, and the lessons we may gain for ourselves when it comes to these issues. Finally, what formed this great but enigmatic man, and why should we turn to his words to inspire us to work not only for Swaziland's liberation but also for the whole African continent?

His biggest contribution is possibly found in the popular media where he penned articles on a weekly basis, especially for the two national newspapers, *The Times of Swaziland* and *The Swazi Observer*. While these articles were written in a popular form they were nevertheless academically sound and profound, and were intended to educate the Swazi nation on issues such as religion, culture, the economy and politics (local and global). All his articles were written with profound theological underpinnings, an important feature for Swazis who are an incurably religious nation. Religion informs most aspects of their lives and the critical choices they make in life. Mzizi's writings are thus wells from which the Swazi people can drink and draw knowledge from the perspective of their cultural and religious experiences. I have no doubt that his writings and teachings will live with the Swazi people for generations to come. It is thus important to capture his writings so that current and future generations can learn from him strategies to participate in the building of democracy and ensure a good life for all of Swaziland's citizens.

It is my conviction that the general public, students at tertiary institutions, colleges, universities and even seminaries need a handy set of the published writings of Mzizi. When I embarked on research on Mzizi I discovered that Mzizi's writings were scattered all over in journals, papers and even as chapters in books. Most of these were not available in Swaziland but rather scattered all over the world. However, when one reads Mzizi's writings his primary audience were his people, who he hoped to educate and inspire to work for the transformation of their society. But his writings were not easily accessible to society, rather to media houses and publishers who were not the primary interlocutors or even beneficiaries of his ideas. He also wrote for those outside Swaziland hoping to conscientise them about the political situation in Swaziland so that they could assist the country in its development to a full democracy. This is important because a number of progressive people and groups who have been interested in assisting the country were hindered by the fact that they do not understand the Swazi system of governance. The documents in this anthology, however, were primarily written for the Swazi people by one of them and so my hope is that at last they can access Mzizi's ideas in this one volume. These published essays and short articles represent the stance that Mzizi as public and liberation theologian took. Just like Martin Luther King's writings to the American public, Mzizi's

are meant to remind us of what he meant to say, and what he wanted to say (Washington, 1991:xxii). We do hope that in future other scholars will come forward and offer a more detailed and nuanced revelation of Mzizi's writings. For now, this anthology seeks to offer a canonical presentation of the public witness of this outstanding organic liberation theologian.

A serious critique of Mzizi would need to pay attention to the fact that his writings do not say much about women and thus might be viewed as symptomatic of "heroic masculinity".<sup>15</sup> This is a major critique of Mzizi's works. He did not pay attention to the plight of women in Swaziland. Women are oppressed from all aspects including culture and religion. Even politics does not bring any relief to women in Swaziland.

### ***Textual notes***

Generally, I have maintained the original writing style, even when it is colloquial. As expected Mzizi's choice of language whether it was academic or colloquial depended on the audience for which he was writing. So when writing academic essays, he would use a high formal and academic language. However, for his articles in newspapers he used easy and popular language. I have decided to retain his original language for both types of writings. He also tended to use Swazi concepts in his writing. I have retained these concepts and have italicised them and sometimes explained them in brackets.

### ***Sources of Mzizi's works and theology***

Not much has been written on the life, work and legacy of Mzizi. Fortunately, there remains an abundance of his own writings in various academic journals, chapters in books, his own book, entitled *Man of Conscience*, on Albert H. Shabangu, the late Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, as well as numerous newspaper articles (1999). Two articles have been written posthumously by Bheki Makhubu (18 December 2007): "Tribute to Joshua Mzizi: A man of honour" and "He stood for pursuit of happiness". Another important resource is "The human side of Joshua Mzizi" by Nonhlanhla Vilakati, his former colleague at the University of Swaziland. His last academic article entitled "Is Somhlolo's dream a scandal for Swazi hegemony? The Christian clause debate re-examined in the context of prospects for religious accommodation" gives a brief glimpse into his character and religio-political convictions (Mzizi, 2005a). In *The Times of Swaziland* Mzizi contributed a regular column "Opinion" and "Dissection". Other articles were adapted from *The Swazi Observer* newspaper in which Mzizi had a column titled "Speaking in Different Tongues". Unfortunately, the articles from this paper are limited in number because the powers that be ordered the paper to close it down because of its subversive tone. Finally, there are a few on-line articles written by Mzizi as well as a small number of transcribed speeches.

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15 Limb, T. (ed.), 2012. *A.B. Xuma: Autobiography and selected works*. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society.

Over forty people were interviewed as part of the research done for this book in order to provide us with a glimpse of how each person understood Mzizi. The interviewees included his wife, Mavis Mzizi, and his child Jabu, as well as his friends Bheki Makhubu and Comfort Mabuza, his colleague Nonhlanhla Vilakati and his student Velaphi Mamba.

At the invitation of the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO) in Swaziland, on International Human Rights Day, 10 December 2007, I had the honour of delivering the Inaugural J.B. Mzizi Memorial Lecture at Ezulwini, Swaziland. The event was attended by various government officials, activists, clergy and academics. The purpose of the lecture was to reflect on Mzizi's legacy in order to inspire civil society in the country to continue his work of bringing about democracy in Swaziland. There were discussions before and after the lecture that gave me more data on this rather enigmatic, larger-than-life Swazi man. This was followed by another Dr J.B. Mzizi Lecture, which I delivered on 10 December 2009 as part of the Human Rights Day Celebrations under the auspices of the CSC and CANGO. This event was attended by people from the progressive movements such as Swaziland Youth Congress, PUDEMO, Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) and the church. This event also presented an opportunity for discussions on the life and work of J.B. Mzizi, which benefited this book tremendously.

### ***Arrangement, questions of style and textual analysis***

This book is a composite of my analysis and Mzizi's own work. The book comprises of five sections.

**Section One:** The introduction is intentionally broad because it covers issues such as the reasons, methodology and structure of the book. I have contributed by writing an extended introduction, to the book which gives a broad analysis of Mzizi's ideas and works as a liberation theologian. In order to appreciate Mzizi's pilgrimage, as well as his contribution and legacy, it is important to discuss his life story, including his birth, growth, education, religious orientation, political involvement and finally his academic career and this section does that in detail. In this chapter we can appreciate Mzizi sharing his life story, in his own "voice". Human beings are products of their immediate environment and so are their ideas. That makes this chapter critical if one is going to understand Mzizi's contributions.

**Section Two** covers one important theme, which is introducing the context that provided Mzizi's socio-economic, political, cultural and religious dynamics. The significance of this section is that it gives the context of Mzizi's writings and the dynamics that he was responding to.

**Section Three** draws on Mzizi's academic and topical shorter writings on monarchy, politics and religion. I have predicated each of Mzizi's writings with a short introduction that sets its context for the benefit of the reader. It addresses the contrasts between the Swazi monarchy and democracy; the role of African Independent Churches (AICs), being trapped in their history and also by their lack of interest in cooperating with the Western mainline churches in entrenching the

*status quo* and the failure of the church to promote democracy due to its fragmentation. It goes on to look at the captivity of the Christian church to Somhlolo's dream, resulting in the church lacking the courage to critique the monarchy because of its legitimisation of the church and its inability to support other forms of government because of their supposed lack of sanction by God. It covers issues such as ecumenism, education, culture, politics and governance and various social issues. While some of the articles included here originally appeared in *The Swazi Observer* and *The Nation*, the majority come from Mzizi's most important column in *The Times of Swaziland* known simply as "Dissection". Through them he addressed a range of political, religious and cultural issues and its audience included the King, princes, cabinet ministers, religious leaders and ordinary citizens. These articles are suitable for this book in the sense that they are each underpinned by a theological rationale in their critique and analysis.

**Section Four** is a collection of tributes paid to Mzizi by those who knew and were touched by his work. This section comprises of articles by Bheki Makhubu, editor of *The Nation* magazine, Nonhlanhla Joyce Vilakati, a colleague and friend of Mzizi from UNISWA and Comfort Mabuza, friend and colleague of Mzizi in the Human Rights Movement and Sikelela Dlamini and Velaphi Mamba who were Mzizi's students.

**Section Five** concludes the book by drawing lessons from Mzizi's legacy for those who will come after him. The comprehensive concluding chapter pulls together Mzizi's ideas and message to enable us to find lessons for the future.

The bibliography at the end of the book offers an introduction to further readings that deal with the debate around the interface between religion and politics in Swaziland.

# MZIZI'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

**M**zizi's life history helps us understand why his works are important. Mzizi's reflections on his life are in an essay that he wrote as a motivation for admission at Vanderbilt University in the US. Other than this essay, there is hardly any autobiographical information on him. To supplement this document, I conducted a number of formal and informal interviews with Mzizi's family and friends, who gave me deeper insights of his life, work and legacy. I have provided textual analysis and comparison in the introduction.

Joshua Bhekinkosi Mzizi was born to a humble Christian family on 2 November 1955 at ka Magele chiefdom near the small town of Hlathikhulu in the southern part of Swaziland. His parents were Olive (nee Mhlanga) and Ephraim Londumane Mzizi. He started his education at Sibetsamoya Primary School and then, from 1970-1972, moved to Hlathikhulu Central High School for his secondary education. He completed his matriculation at Mankayane High School in 1974. He joined the University of Botswana and Swaziland (UBS) in 1975. He was the product of a country where life and existence was firmly constructed on the three pillars of religion, politics and culture. These three pillars still determine, for the majority of the Swazi people, their place in society, their understanding and interpretation of their place and even their status in the country. In his doctoral dissertation, Mzizi wrote about his background and upbringing. Let us allow him to tell his story in his own words.



*I was born at the dawn of the political reawakening of the 1960s. My father, a simple grade one labourer at the local hospital, was an ardent supporter of the Congress Party which was fighting for a minimum wage of a pound (British Sterling) a day. I used to be fascinated by his talk even though my childish mind did not conceptualise the enormity of starving wages. When my father retired in 1979, his salary was forty-five Rand (about fifteen pounds Sterling).*

*My parents were deeply religious people who belonged to the Free Gospel Mission Church of Norwegian parentage. They were my first teachers of the Christian faith. I remember my father reading each evening from the Holy Book at our evening prayers. I remember how he roared in his thunder-like bass as he called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to protect his family.*

## **RAISED BY THE SWAZI-CHRISTIAN GOD**

*I was a sickly child during my pre-adolescent and adolescent years. My parents took me to the local hospital, to our traditional family doctor, and to Zionist prophets in the neighbourhood. My body carries scars of incisions I received from our traditional doctors. The pain of the hospital needle, the bites of Zionist prophets, and the humble prayers of a local pastor, all constituted healing. When I was doing the second standard (Form 2) in secondary school, I became so ill that I had to leave school and stay with my mother's sister about one hundred and sixty kilometres from home. She and her husband took me to various prophets in the Mahlanya-Lobamba-Zulwini belt. I was prayed for by a Zion Christian Church prophet; a Jericho Christian Church (or Red Gown) prophet; a Swazi Christian Church in Zion of South Africa prophetess. I cannot count them all. Meanwhile, I was treated at Mbabane Government Hospital, and by various traditional healers. I remember being interested in becoming a Jericho Christian. The Jericho's are militant and rough during worship. They carry traditional spears, sickles and dangerous sticks with which to fight evil spirits.*

*My initiation came when the Mahlanya congregation decided to take me back home where they would remove the deadly medicines that were killing me. My father had to provide a black male goat for the occasion. Before dawn, the animal was slaughtered. Its blood was collected for me to mix with warm water and drink. The animal had been vigorously prayed for during the all-night service. I drank the mixture and vomited as per the instructions of the prophet who stood next to me. I had to finish about five gallons (twenty-five litres) of this mixture. The next step was to return to Mahlanya whereupon the prophet would take me to dangerous waterfalls of the neighbouring rivers. This stage had to be postponed because there were examinations at school. The following year my mother, sensing that I was getting attached to the Jericho, took me to a traditional doctor at the Edwaleni next to Nhlangano. I stayed there intermittently for twelve months, going to school when I felt better and visiting home from time to time. It was these experiences that shaped my early theological life. Through them I learned of traditional philosophies as I watched and heard the wisdom of the practitioners. There were no tensions in*

*my mind between the God of Abraham and my ancestors, the blood of Jesus and the blood of the goats. All were meant for healing: all were meant to fight disease and its perpetrators.*

*My educational life would have ended at Junior Certificate (the last grade in Junior High School) had it not been for the generosity of a Canadian doctor at our local hospital. He was surprised to see that I had passed the tough Junior Certificate international examination, missing a first class by a few points. He signed a cheque, which paid for my high school education. We became very good friends, with him luring me into the medical profession, and me resisting because of a phobia about dead bodies. He left the country when I was doing my last year in high school promising to visit again the following year. But that was the last I saw of him. His helping spirit had taken him to Nigeria where there was an outbreak of a certain deadly epidemic. He forgot to vaccinate himself due to pressure of attending the dying population. I was later told that he died in a plane en route to Canada where he was being rushed for medical attention. I have never understood why good men and women die at the prime of their lives. Dr Kennedy's death has troubled me for many years; he was my second father.*

*At Mankayane High School, prayers were held every day accompanied by sermons. Half a year into my Form 4 (first year of High School), I had a conversion experience. I made a personal decision to follow Jesus, as our preachers always said. It was a wonderful life at the peak of my adolescent years. But then I was told that a true Christian does not consult traditional healers; does not consult Zionist prophets; does not have girlfriends; does not! Does not! I believed them. I wrote my parents a letter about this experience. My mother still remembers how I condemned them for taking me to traditional healers. I asked my father never to send me to the shop to buy his tobacco. I had been told to believe that the Lord hates tobacco for it contaminates the Lord's temple. This newfound ethic shaped my early life in many ways. Ancestors became demons; traditional healers became children of darkness, etc., etc., etc. The Gospel of John was my favourite.*

## **EARLY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION**

*In 1974, I went to the University of Swaziland, and then referred to as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (BOLESWA), to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in English and Theology. This I completed in 1979 concurrently with a diploma in Education (Mzizi, 1990a:1). As an educationalist, when I enrolled for the degree, BA (Humanities) at UNISWA I had a very innocent but naive view of the church and of political systems. Because of my commitment to the Christian faith and theology whilst at university I was elected chairperson of the Student Christian Movement in 1977 and in 1979 my friend, Mr Sam Mkhombe,<sup>16</sup> and I founded the Inter-Collegiate Student Christian Movement (dubbed INCOSCM) (Mzizi, 1990a:1). This innocence in a way formed the mega narrative around which my thinking was originally developed. When I began my theological education, I had an Evangelical orientation. Worshipping and attending school in Evangelical institutions and belonging to pietistic Evangelical churches formed the foundations*

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16 Sam M. Mkhombe was a great friend of Mzizi and is currently the political advisor to King Mswati III.

*of my Christian pilgrimage. In 1980, I went to McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago to read for a Masters of Arts in Theological Studies, which I completed in 1981. Upon my return, I was appointed Headmaster of Mankayane High School in 1982. My stay in Mankayane was short lived owing to the resentment I received from the Alliance of Evangelical Churches and its white missionaries who owned the school because of my criticism of their approach to mission which I felt was oppressive and patronising (Mabuza, 2007:2).*

*In 1984, I won another scholarship to read for a master's in Educational Administration at the University of South Carolina and came back at the end of 1985. When I came back, I was posted as Headmaster at New Heaven High School, an important mission station of the Evangelical Church in Swaziland, a post I held until the end of 1986. At the beginning of 1987, I was recruited by the University of Swaziland to teach Liberation Theology, Biblical Studies and New Religious Movements. In 1991, I won a Fulbright Scholarship to read for my PhD in Liberation Theology at Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt University, based in Nashville, Tennessee, is one of the most liberal universities in the United States of America. Liberation Theology is at the heart of the divinity school and was influenced by the civil rights movement.<sup>17</sup> I wrote my PhD titled *Voices of the voiceless: Towards a theology of liberation for post-colonial Swaziland* (Mzizi, 1995).*

*It was not until 1987 that I, then a lecturer at the University of Swaziland, decided to objectively revisit my Swazi heritage. I won a research grant to study 'The Zionist Prophet and the Traditional Healer'. I later integrated my findings in two of the courses I taught, Liberation Theology, and New Religious Movements. My former students will not be surprised to read some portions of this project, although I have shifted my paradigm from a Christ-centric to a traditional position. The research I did earned me invitations to international conferences, and most of all, an invitation from the General Secretary of the African Traditional Healer's Association to be a Researcher in the Association. It was because of this background that, during my research in 1994, the Council of Swaziland Churches asked me to organise a seminar-workshop on 'Swazi Culture, Christian and Development'. The historic workshop brought together for the first time Christian pastors of the mainline Churches, Zionist preachers, traditional healers, academics and traditional leaders, to talk about Swazi culture. The exchange of views was excellent.*

## **POLITICAL ACTIVISM**

*Lastly, I am a human rights activist. Two incidents stand out in my activism. First are the articles I published in our local daily newspapers in 1989-1990 defending the rights of traditional healers. Traditional healing is still illegal in my country due to the Witchcraft Act of 1889. But de facto traditional healing still goes on. The issue of legality of traditional practices loomed larger and larger. I felt I could be a neutral voice in the debate since I was neither a traditional doctor nor a Western medical practitioner. Obviously the Swazi Government did not like what I was saying,*

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<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that Vanderbilt is located in Nashville Tennessee, the vicinity of the riots of 1968. It is in this city that Dr Martin Luther King Jr., whom Mzizi regarded as his hero, was killed while leading the demonstrations. It was also in Nashville that King delivered his last major speech, "I have been to the mountain top" before he died.

more so because I was a university lecturer. The local newspaper gave me a columnist status. As my articles showed a defence of the underprivileged, and later defence of farm dwellers who were being forcibly removed and thrown into open veld, the Government applied pressure on The Swazi Observer to stop publishing my column. At that time my citizenship was questioned, and an attempt to deport me was foiled when the Permanent Secretary in the Home Affairs Ministry explained to the Minister and Chief Immigration Officer that I was a Swazi. To deport a citizen would open up a can of worms. The Minister and Chief Immigration Officer called me for a warning, asking me to retract my ideas. I agreed, but wrote something that was meaningless. I apologised for being misunderstood and proceeded to explain my position. The 'apology' was carried by The Times of Swaziland only.

The second incident took place in March 1990. In collaboration with my Liberation Theology class we called important Church leaders to discuss the topic 'A Relevant Theology for Swaziland'. It was a highly spirited discussion attended by over fifty practicing Christian leaders. The Bishop of the Anglicans, the President of the Swaziland Council of Churches and the Secretary General of the League of African Churches, gave speeches. The police special branch was taking notes. A couple of months later I was hauled into a police station where I was interrogated for eight long hours. The police wanted to link me with a political party, and I maintained my position 'that since political parties were banned in Swaziland, I could not break the law'. But there was no law that forbade me from calling upon Government to unban political parties. The humiliation, starvation and dehydration I suffered in that hot police cubicle continue to remind me of voicelessness in my country. Overall, my activism in the human rights struggle has earned me very few friends from the Christian fraternity. I have heard of a Christian Women's Movement that had me on their prayer list in one of their regional meetings. They were praying for my soul, for their leader told them that I had fallen from grace. If God has a sense of humour, I am sure he must have laughed his lungs out.

## **A PROPHET REJECTED IN HIS OWN BY HIS OWN PEOPLE**

It is painful to admit, yet very true, that I sense I am already rejected by my Christian fraternity – I mean the mainstream Evangelical-cum-Pentecostal groups. Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, and Lutherans accept me, and have asked me to address their annual conferences. In March 1994, the Council of Swaziland Churches (which affiliates to the World Council of Churches) asked me to speak on 'The Advocacy Role of the Church'. When my Pastor learned of what I had said, he simply said, 'Thank you for representing us'. I did not ask him what he meant by that. There was a grain of truth in the statement that all men and women have heroes. A hero to me is someone who holds on to a conviction, and is prepared to die for it if need be. Heroes are not necessarily stubborn and difficult characters. They are compassionate people, always ready to listen to the views of others, but mindful always to stand on the side of what they consider to be truth. My first hero was my mother who, although I was her last-born child, never pampered me during my childhood years. I remember the day Tommy, my father's bulldog, brought me down because I had poked his nose. I fainted. Mama used cold water to revive me. When I

came round, she whipped me like never before. She taught me to be strong, never to faint when the dangerous storms of life overwhelm me. Upon joining the teaching profession, I met my second hero, an astute leader of the teacher's organisation, Mr Albert Heshane Shabangu. Later, I honoured him by writing his biography, which was published by Webster's Publishing Company in 1990. He is now the current Deputy Prime Minister.

Theologically, James H. Cone takes centre stage. I learned from Cone that it is all right to be angry with your oppressor and still be a Christian. It is Cone who introduced me to Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. These heroes from North America take turns in speaking to me. I am never alone. The former teaches me that love is power; the latter teaches me that my African heritage is power. Similar to Dr Kennedy, my second father, both are dead, and like Jesus of Nazareth, they died in the course of duty. Martin has a contemporary voice in South Africa but Malcolm's voice in South Africa was silenced in 1977: I am referring to Steve Bantu Biko who was the champion of the Black Consciousness Movement.

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Mzizi was hated, vilified and rejected both by some in the church and the political hierarchy of Swaziland because of the theology he propounded. He later told of an incident that nearly stopped him from pursuing his PhD studies because the area of study he had chosen was Liberation Theology. Remembering the incident Mzizi states that:

*I found, to my surprise, that a leading member of my faculty in Swaziland hated the subject of my project. This member wanted the Department of Theology to distance itself from it so that I would be forced to change it. The pressure applied made me suspect that there was a scheme in this exercise. There I was, having gone through the gruelling experience of qualifying for a PhD candidacy, being told by some academic in power, though not qualified in the area, that my subject belonged to politics and not theology. It was such an emotionally draining experience that, had it not been for the support my Department gave me, I was ready to tender my resignation from our only University in Swaziland. Never before had I witnessed such attempts at scholarly sabotage. As I come to think of it now, I was being reminded that the theology I was about to write about would be considered subversive because it places the non-privileged, the voiceless, at the centre of its discourse. I had to struggle to defend it before a jury that had presumed me guilty before I could be proven innocent. Certain events happened in that institution which suggested that I was an undesired element. The last straw was to terminate my salary when I returned to Nashville to write this essay, even though I had taught in the University for a full year. This dissertation is, therefore, not merely about the struggle for voice, it is struggle itself. It wants to be heard (Mzizi, 1995:xiii).*

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to set the scene of the book. It has done this by discussing aspects such as preface, introduction, Postcolonial Theory and the personal journal of J.B. Mzizi. It has sought to introduce his ideas, which led him to making a fundamental contribution in the political life of Swaziland. The next chapter will be looking at the socio-political context that Mzizi worked in.



# SECTION TWO

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF THE SWAZI PEOPLE AND THE SWAZIASATION OF CHRISTIANITY

*Whenever men [sic] have suffered their consciences to be enslaved by their superiors, and taken their religion upon trust, the world has been over-run with superstition, and held in fetters by a tyrannising junction of civil and ecclesiastical plunderers. This inspired the Founders to produce one of the great paradigm shifts in the history of religious thought by breaking up that 'Junction' on the basis that the separation of church and state could be good for both religion and the state –  
William Livingston.*

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we are discussing the religion-political and cultural profile of Swaziland, which was the context of J.B. Mzizi's writings and theological reflections. For the purposes of this book it is imperative that background information of the country is given so that the discussion is located in its proper context.

Mzizi was produced and moulded by the context that he reflected upon and in which he read the signs of the times. He owed his being to the rivers known as Mkhondvo and Usuthu from where he drank water, the mountains of Mtsambama and Mavukutfu from which he found his geographical location, the sloping valleys of Emahlashaneni where he tended his father's livestock and the mighty hills of Hlatikhulu from which he found food and education.<sup>1</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> Mkhondvo and Lusutfu are the two big rivers and Mtsambama and Mavukutfu are the biggest mountains in Hlatikhulu which is Mzizi's birth place.

listened to the stories of tribulation under the British rule, which the elders of his clan shared with him and he observed elders of the kaMagele chieftaincy when they deliberated on the issues of community development and peace. This was the site of his theological reflection and a cradle of his struggle from which he derived experiences that formed the basis of his praxis. The main questions we are going to answer in this chapter are what forms life in Swaziland and what are the social, economic, religious, cultural and political dynamics of the country? How did these inspire and inform Mzizi's pilgrimage as a Christian, theologian, activist-intellectual and advocate for human rights?

The chapter starts with a profile of the country including the geography, demographics, political landscape, economy and lastly the history and culture of Swaziland. The demographics of Swaziland comprises of an overview of the population, language, religious landscape and health status of the country. Here an important focus is placed on HIV/Aids in order to recognise that Swaziland is not static but changing and that there are new challenges that Mzizi would want us to confront. This will be followed by an illustrated historical religio-political dynamics of the country and the key players.

As the main aim of this book is to explore Mzizi's form of Public Theology and we are privy to the fact that all theologies are contextual, we are going to look at the religio-political dynamics of the country. By contextual we mean that theologies are developed, practiced and articulated within a particular context as they are experienced by the people. Mzizi observed that theology has to be firmly rooted to the daily experiences of the people. Reflecting on his approach to theology, he wrote (1995:28):

*A contextual theology takes into account a number of factors; the experience of the communities, the traditional religions and the culture of the people; the history, faith economics; the joys and the cries of the people; shattered dreams and hopelessness of their situation. It is in the light of these realities that the gospel, a praxistic event promising a life of liberation is applied.*

Discussing the profile of Swaziland gives us a window to the religion-political dynamics of the country that shapes how political religion is experienced and practiced in the real situation by communities. Swaziland is no exception in that.

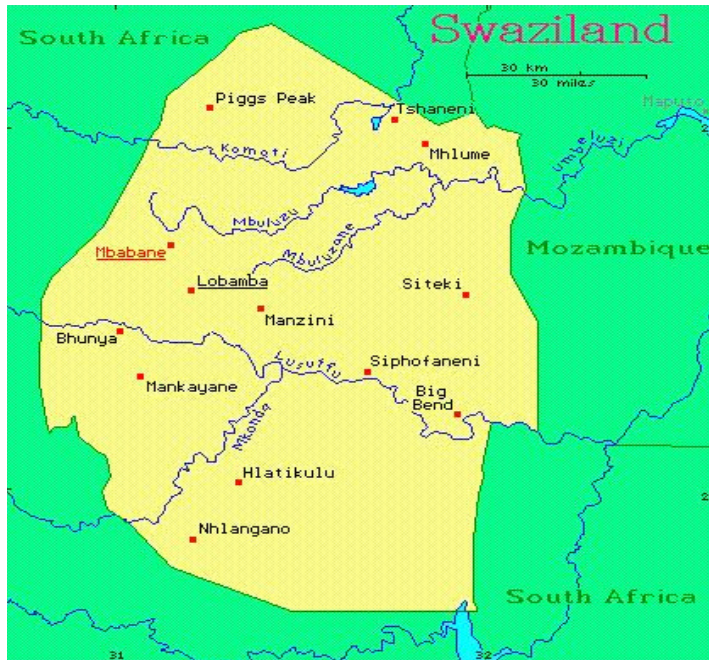
## **GENESIS OF SWAZILAND**

The Swazi people are part of the millions of Bantu-speaking people of Africa who migrated at different times from places further north and eventually arrived in the southeastern region between the Drakensberg Mountains and the Indian Ocean. The Swazi people specifically migrated from Mozambique through the Lebombo Mountains in the early nineteenth century, being led by the Nkhosi Dlamini clan under King Ngwane, and settled in the modern-day Swaziland. They are part of the small kingdoms that spread throughout southern Africa in fear of the Zulu attacks during the *defacane* wars of King Shaka of the Zulu nation. From their



homelands they brought cattle, seed for cultivation and hand-made products of iron, wood, skin and clay (Kuper, 1963:1). The country has a social structure that is both traditional and modern.

### **Geographical location**



THE MAP OF SWAZILAND

Swaziland is a landlocked country between South Africa and Mozambique, and is one of the developing countries in the sub-Saharan African region.

It is “one of the smallest African states on the African continent with an area of 6,704 square miles or (17,363 sq. km)” (Kuper, 1963:2). It offers the challenge of considerable regional variation. According to Hilda Kuper (1963:3),

*In the west are rugged highlands where grass is short and sour, trees growing mainly in deep ravines and the weather is cold and exhilarating. The mountains slope into the undulating plains of the more fertile and warmer midlands, which in turn gradually give place to bush country where cattle thrive throughout the year on green foliage. Between the lowlands and the eastern seaboard, the wind-swept Lebombo range forms the fourth topographical region.*

It is divided into four administrative regions, namely Manzini, Hhohho (Mbabane – the capital city), Lubombo and Shiselweni. The country has an estimated population of 1,386,914 (July 2012 estimate), which is divided into 78.6 per cent in the rural areas and 21.4 per cent in the urban and peri-urban areas (GeoHive, 2010:13). Over 80 per cent of the Swazi people are agriculturalists who live on subsistence farming. 97 per cent of these are African and 3 per cent European. SiSwati and English are the official languages of the nation although, as

more people migrate to Swaziland, Shitsonga (Mozambique) and IsiNdebele (Zimbabwe) are spoken, though not as official languages.

### ***Agriculture***

Swaziland shares a border with Mozambique on the eastern side, and the rest of the country is bound by the Republic of South Africa. The north-south and east-west tips are 120 miles (193 km) and 90 miles (145 km) long, respectively. Small as it is, Swaziland has three major climatic regions: the Highveld, Middleveld and Lowveld. Agricultural production, which includes such cash crops as cotton, tobacco and sugar cane, are grown as per the rainfall and temperature distribution of the climate. Cotton and sugar cane are grown in the Lowveld where the country's rivers pass en route to the Indian Ocean, thus providing water for irrigation before exiting to Mozambique. Maize is grown in the Highveld and parts of the irrigable Lowveld, such as Vuvulane, that produce maize, the staple food, almost throughout the year.

### ***Law in Swaziland***

On the legal scene, Swaziland has a dual system that runs parallel to one another. There is the common law side, which is based on the Roman-Dutch legal tradition; and customary law, which so far has not been codified. Due process under the common law is clear and definitive, from the magistrates' courts to the Court of Appeals. The independence of the judiciary is still much in question, since the magistrates, the prosecutors, and justices of the High Court are employed by the State, notwithstanding the input in respect of their appointment of the Judicial Service Commission. Customary law is administered by the Swazi courts. These courts are run by people who have to be approved by the Judicial Commissioner, who in turn is supposed to be an authority on customary law.

The traditional structure is very much community and family oriented. The major function of this traditional structure is to offer social protection towards the family and community members. The democratic one is the modern structure, which is characterised by modern dictates, that is to say, encompassing modern behaviour, a Western way of life, family life and values. This can be exemplified by looking at the lifestyle of the late King Sobhuza of Swaziland. According to Kuper (1978:4).

*Sobhuza was the head of the most conservative homestead in Swaziland, but he had bought two of the most modern houses in the country. He retained the heavy drapes and solid furniture of the original white owners in the front rooms, where he used to serve hard liquor and tea from bone china cups. He had rooms at the back, which had acquired a more traditional atmosphere, where one could sit on mats on the floor with Sobhuza's wives and drink beer from the common bowl. His clothing, like his housing, mirrored a conflict of cultures. Likewise, the current generation in Swaziland is doing a similar thing.*

This is also identifiable from the range of themes that Mzizi reflected upon, some of which included the interface between culture and modernity.

## ***Politics in Swaziland***

By politics, we mean a process of developing, implementation and monitoring of public policy. Politically, the country maintains a dual system of government with a modern government led by the Prime Minister on one hand, and on the other hand, the traditional systems of governance run by chiefs who report to the King. The people of Swaziland are united under a diarchy, i.e. a King and Queen, and have a general monoculture and one language, called siSwati. The Dlamini clan is the ruling dynasty, with supporting senior clans like the Mambas, who are the only other clan that call their patriarch a king. Swazi kingship is supported by a sophisticated network of chiefdoms, which, socio-politically speaking, are not independent from the Dlamini royal dynasty that supervises their affairs. National ceremonies, like the *Umhlanga* (Reed Dance) and *Incwala* (Feast of the First Fruits), are coordinated from chiefdoms. From the magnitude of chiefdom support one can assess the extent of national support for the kingship. Normally, traditional ceremonies are not used as instruments of coercion for respect of tradition and custom, but participants freely and dutifully engage in them for patriotic and religious reasons. Swazi people love the institution of kingship, albeit in different degrees and forms of such love and allegiance. Literature prior to 6 September 1968 (the Day of Independence) refers to Swaziland as a British Protectorate, or British Protected State, or even as one of the British High Commission Territories – a status which the country shared with Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and Basutoland (now Lesotho). Swaziland was the last of these territories to attain independence. This happened in 1968. The reasons for the delay have not been clearly articulated by historians and political scientists. However, the Swazi King's apprehension to receive Swazi independence on a multi-party basis seems to be an important consideration in this regard.<sup>2</sup> It is for this reason that the King abrogated the Constitution five years later and then assumed powers that truly made him an absolute monarch. This status of the King has remained virtually the same since 1973, and remained subject to debate in the new constitutional dispensation.

In these countries, traditional leaders remained custodians of the land and customs whose influence remained in the rural areas but was contested in the urban areas (Wallis, 2007:1). Swaziland is one of the few countries in the African continent where the monarchy system has prevailed over the Western form of democracy (Kuper, 1962:72).

The existence and powers of the monarchy has not been without contestation. Swazis themselves differ on its significance and their powers that must be given to it. For instance, a cultural group known as Sibahle Sinje which consists of elites and people who are close to the royal family have adopted an uncritical, pro-monarchy position which seeks to maintain the system as it is. They said that:

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2 Wanda (1990:151-53) says in part: "But despite Sobhuza's strong pleas and warning against the adoption of Western style of government, Swaziland did not escape its share of political factions. By the time the country received its first modern Constitution in 1963, there was no less than seven political parties in the country, all ready to contest the elections and aspiring to control the country's government. It was this factional confrontational politics, which Sobhuza had earnestly worked to avoid at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s."

*We believe that the nation, which has been founded on kingship, has a proud tradition that sees His Majesty both as a unifying symbol and source of good governance ... We at Sive Siyinqab do not even spire to either prescribe, limit and outline, monitor, or access and control Their Majesties' functions, roles and activities (The Swazi Observer, 24 June 1997:7).*

This view is held by the majority of Swazis and they believe that the King “has powers defined by tradition, and such powers should not be committed curtailed or even monitored” (*The Swazi Observer*, 24 June 1997:7). It is with this in mind that a number of Swazis accept the system of monarchy and view progressive movement with suspicion. It makes them not to accept democracy because it seeks to limit the powers of the monarchy and also keep it under checks and balances.

Progressives hold a counter view, which seeks to limit the powers of the King from governing the country. They would like the monarchy to be above politics. Mzizi puts it this way:

*Swazi metaphor says that a king is the “Sun” of the nation. This depicts of a king who is not only removed from the nitty-gritty procedural and mundane matters and issues, but one who not only sees but makes it all “seeable”. By virtue of this elevated position, a king is the final Court of Appeal and trusted arbiter in all matters troubling his people (The Times of Swaziland, 24 June 1997:1).*

Those who hold this view would like a king who is in a similar position to that of the British, Sotho and Zulu monarchies. During the Constitutional Review Commission, one Swazi presented a view that summarises the thinking of progressives:

*We all love and respect His Majesty the King Mswati III as our national leader. We want to continue loving and respecting the King and for us to do so, he should be above the dirty game of politics. We want the King to maintain a high position up there where we can all look forward to him. We want an ordinary man to be in the political field so that we can attack him from all angles if he messes up. It is not good to have the King answerable for the mess made by government (The Times of Swaziland, 24 June 1997:2).*

King Sobhuza II argued for the monarchy to remain in power as early as the days of negotiating the Constitution and the Flag. Speaking during the National Flag Day on 25 April 1967, he attested that:

*This is the day of rejoicing ... It is the tradition of all African Kingdoms that their kings are leaders as well as kings. It is also true for Swaziland. Now rightly or wrongly some people have mistaken this dual capacity as dictatorship. I would like to assure you here and now that the King both leads and is led by his people. I am my people's mouthpiece ... There can be no peaceful progress without cooperation and unity of the people (King Sobhuza II, in Kuper, 1978:29).*

As a result, in Swaziland the monarch is still the absolute ruler, he/she opens and dissolves Parliament, signs and repeals laws, appoints and dismissed the Prime Minister, is the Supreme holder of the land, the culture, customs and traditional religion of the country. All the subsidiary structures such as cabinet, African traditional religious leaders, the leaders of churches are guided and influenced deeply by the monarchy through its complex system of patronage. This

makes Swaziland a unique place in terms of the interface between African traditional systems of leadership, modern politics and religion.

While having its counterpart in ancient European monarchies, the Swazi kingship is absolute in the sense that it has constitutional powers that can overrule the Constitution even parliament. The King, who is also referred to as the “Lion”, *Ingwenyama*, rules with the help of *Indlovukati*, the She-elephant, his mother or, if she is deceased one of the senior wives. The King is the head and symbol of the nation *sive*. For one to be king one must first belong to the particular lineage and then they must be chosen by the King and endorsed by elders of the royal house (*bantfwabenkhosi* or *Emalangen*). The King and the Queen are by principle accountable to *Indlunkhulu yasebukhosini*, the royal household or family, a council made up of the princes and princesses, *bantfwabenkhosi*, also known as *Emalangen*. The royalty belongs to the *Nkhosi Dlamini* clan and they produce the King who is the absolute monarch, having power over all aspects of life in the country, controlling, for example, the economy, social rules, culture, religion and even education.<sup>3</sup> Politically, he controls Parliament, Cabinet and chooses the Prime Minister. Under the royal family or *Emalangen* there is the Swazi National Council (SNC), *liqoqo*, which includes princes, chiefs and commoners who are appointed by the King. The Council is led by a Traditional Prime Minister, *Indvuna Yase Ludzidzini* (Governor of the main palace, which is the seat of the King and the Queen). This Council advises the King on a number of issues, especially traditional ones, related to the governance of the country. Under this group there are *chiefs*, traditional leaders, *tikhulu*, who are overseers of the land on behalf of the King, who holds custody of the land on behalf of the nation *sive*. Equivalent to the SNC you have the cabinet, which runs the day-to-day operations of the Government under the leadership of the Prime Minister, *Ndvunakhulu*, who is appointed by the King through a process of nomination *kuncoma* by the inner council, *Indlunkhulu*. Some of the rules that have not been broken yet from the time of Independence in 1968 are that the Prime Minister must be a man, belong to the Dlamini clan, appointed and relieved of duties by the King and announced to the nation through the royal kraal instead of Parliament. The premier is in charge of a cabinet which is appointed by the King and his council from Members of Parliament who in turn are chosen from the *Tinkhundla*, regional centres which bring together a number of chiefdoms, *imiphakatsi*. Mzizi referred to Swaziland’s system of governance as *Tinkhundlacracy*, for which he had very little respect. He (Mzizi, 1995:xxix) wrote:

*I am uncomfortable to call the Swazi system Tinkhundlacracy because I do not know what it is. There is unquestionable royal manipulation of the masses ... and the silent declaration that only the King is right in political matters, social, economic, cultural, etc. This, for me, is a violation of the human right of self-determination of the masses.*

The King appoints at least 40 per cent of the Parliamentarians to add to the numbers elected from communities. The Parliament is led by the Speaker of the House, who is elected by the House

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3 The King is the chancellor of Swaziland’s only university, the University of Swaziland, and one of the senior princes is the Chairman of the Council of the University. This is the same University from which Mzizi obtained his theology degree.

but endorsed by the King. If the King is not happy with the Speaker he can overrule Parliament and call for his/her removal until they elect a person he approves of.<sup>4</sup> Once the King has made the decision about the Prime Minister or the Parliament, he calls the nation to the national cattle-byre, *sibaya*. It is believed that the ancestors dwell in the byre, and they are invoked here during important ceremonies such as marriages, rites of passage, etc. (Kasenene, 1993:39). Every time the King is to make an important announcement, for example announcing the new Prime Minister or even parliamentarians, he summons the nation to the byre where, sitting on the grass, he makes the announcement to the nation, *sive*.<sup>5</sup> Since the King is the absolute ruler of the Kingdom, no law or policy can be passed without his endorsement. After Parliament has decided and passed Bill it is still considered a proposal until the King signs it and makes it a law and if he refuses to endorse it there is no policy to compel him to sign and therefore it does not become law. Political parties do not exist in the Swazi system of Government; in effect they are illegal. Individuals are elected into Parliament through various constituencies or centres of chiefdoms known as the *Tinkhundla* (Parikh, 2006:5).

Mzizi rightly situates the political landscape of Swaziland within the history of the country, but specifically the history of the monarchy. According to Mzizi (2004:96), the Swazi monarchy tried, after colonialism, to forge a new system that would have a semblance of a democracy but at the same time consolidated the “power of the monarchy” (2004:98). This, according to Mzizi, was clear in the efforts of the monarchy to effect the constitution through the legislative root, which however lacked a broad-based participation.

Mzizi (2004:98) observed that the earliest threat to the monarchy was during the last days of British colonialism when colonial masters had given Sobhuza II charge over “all traditional institutions except for those that fell within the jurisdiction of the Resident Commissioner”. Sobhuza II would have wanted colonialism to end with this arrangement in place as it meant that he would naturally replace the colonial arrangement and offer a new government of the day. But since the British favoured a Western democracy after their withdrawal, Sobhuza II was forced to “establish a royal political party, the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM)” (Mzizi, 2004:98). Even though Sobhuza II convincingly won this political contest, he derided the whole exercise of power contest in 1967 when he suggested that it would threaten the “unity of the people” (Mzizi, 2004:98). Of course this speech was given within the background of growth of democratic independence in most African countries.

The Swazi people had no direct contribution to the making of the Constitution. A delegation from Swaziland, most of who were members of the Imbokodvo Party, with the exception of J.J. Nquku who represented the Ngwane Liberation Movement, which had received only

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4 Marwick Khumalo, a very bright and independent parliamentarian, was elected Speaker of the House of Assembly and the King refused to endorse him and called for his removal and subsequent election of another person as Speaker.

5 Sobhuza explained this by saying that when the people are called to the national byre, that is a national meeting *umhlangano sive*. This is one of the few opportunities still left in the world where ordinary people are summoned to hear for themselves when national decisions are taken.

one seat during the elections, attended this meeting at the Lancaster House in London.<sup>6</sup> For Sobhuza II, the greatest obstacle to the unity of the people was the existing “Westminster Model Constitution” of 1968. It was considered to be “the cause of growing unrest, insecurity and dissatisfaction” (Mzizi, 2004:99). The King blamed the Constitution by saying that:

*The Constitution has permitted the importation into our country of highly undesirable political practices alien to, and incompatible with the way of life in our society and designed to disrupt and destroy our own peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity; increasingly this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society (Maseko, 2007:4).*

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1973, Sobhuza suspended the Constitution and replaced it with the famous decree known as the “1973 Decree” in which he said:

*Now therefore I, Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland, hereby declare that, in collaboration with my cabinet ministers and supported by the whole nation, I have assumed supreme power in the Kingdom of Swaziland and that all legislative, executive and judicial power is now vested in myself and shall, for the meantime, be exercised in collaboration with my cabinet ministers. I further declare that to ensure the continued maintenance of peace, order and good government, my armed forces have been posted to all strategic places and have taken charge of all government places and public services. All political parties and similar bodies that cultivate and bring disturbances and ill feelings within the nation are hereby dissolved and prohibited (King Sobhuza II's Proclamation, 1973:2).*

Then the King “assumed all executive powers previously granted to the Prime Minister and Cabinet by the Constitution” (Mzizi, 2004:99) turning him from a ceremonial monarch to an executive one. He controlled the Judiciary, the Parliament and the Army. The Army, which had been trained and initiated through the traditional Swazi ceremonies, would belong to the King and not to the state as it had been “married to the King”, *bagan'inkhosi* (Mzizi, 2004:100). The Westminster System of Governance, together with a traditional system called *Tinkhundla*, where chiefdoms came together in a geographic area to elect a member of parliament, became the dualistic systems of governance of the Kingdom. This is how the Parliament is formed. Speaking about these changes in 1980 the King said that:

*There is a need to allow representation of people. People must be able to participate in decision-making processes over and above their representative. That is why we threw out the white men's book (Westminster Constitution), which emphasised representation by others. We chose our own way (kwakitsi) of electing leaders through the Tinkhundla constituencies, that is what we know is from the Swazi way of doing things. Over and above that, people are still allowed to come to the royal Kraal to listen for themselves and participate in decision-making processes (King Sobhuza II's Proclamation, 1973:2).*

A number of councils and commissions, meant to help the King effect political reform, were set up by Sobhuza II. These councils were meant to come up with a homegrown constitution

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6 Nquku was one of the founders of liberation politics in Swaziland outside the royal aristocracy. He came from Zululand and was educated both in South Africa and overseas. He was known as *lqhude elimzwezwe elakhala ngo 1924 amaSwazi esalele* (the early rooster that crowed in 1924 when Swazi's were still naïve). This refers to the fact that he was one of the early politicians in Swaziland.

that would take “due regard of the history, culture and way of life of the Swazi people” and would “harmonise these with the modern principles of constitutional and international law” (Mzizi, 2004:101). But, since the composition of the commissions was bent on legitimising the unquestionable hold on power for the monarchy, their task was impossible. Therefore, the commissions removed issues like multiparty politics as an option (Mzizi, 2004:102).

After the death of Sobhuza II in 1982, his son Mswati III was enthroned in 1986 amid loud calls for political reform. He also set up commissions, starting with an informal one in 1990, which was followed by the *Tinkhundla* Review Commission (TRC) of 1992 (Mzizi, 2004:103-4). This commission also “reported that Swazis had rejected the return to party politics” (Mzizi, 2004:104). Even though the TRC was broad-based, it operated within a mandate that did not allow representative positions from all stakeholders to be part of the outcome of the exercise, says Mzizi. After submitting its report the TRC was disbanded. In 1996 a new body was formed tasked with the responsibility of putting the constitution together. The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) of 1996, also known as the *Vusela*, was designed to take further the recommendations of the TRC to come up with a “Draft Constitution with a Bill of Rights”, but was equally castrated due to its composition, Mzizi argues. Mzizi sees most of the commissioners (apart from those who resigned) as nothing other than self-serving and bent on perpetuating the *status quo*. On the issue of party politics, the CRC recommended that the political parties remained banned and the law regarding this be reinforced (Mzizi, 2004:106).

In a nutshell, Mzizi was convinced that the CRC did not bring any change in the dominance of the monarchy system in Swaziland and enabling the broad-based democratic participation of the people in governance. For him it just entrenched the power of the monarchy and in doing so removed the institution of kingship from the people, who should be the rightful owners of the King and in return to be loyal subjects of the King. For Mzizi the institution of kingship belongs to the people so together with its rituals and ceremonies. It cannot just stand on its own.

### ***The interface between religion and politics***

Like many African countries, long before the missionaries started missionary work in Swaziland, Swazis had their own religion, built on African cosmology. J.M. Yinger defined religion as (Yinger 1957:8):

*A system of beliefs and practice by means of which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problems of life. It is the refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration, to allow hostility to tear apart one's human association.*

Although I like Yinger's definition of religion because it emphasises the purpose of religion which is “the struggle with the ultimate problems of life”. I disagree with his attempt to see it as an attempt to deal with death. That is too simplistic and a narrow understanding of religion. Peter Kasenene gives a much broader definition of religion when he defines it as:

*A complex phenomenon, made up of many components which include a variety of beliefs and practices such as devotion, ritual, morality, and magic (Kasenene, 1993:5).*



I also like Kasenene's definition of religion but think that it does not go far enough because it does not say something about how religion relates to humanity's quest for existence. Therefore for this study, I prefer to define religion as consciously organised beliefs, practices and philosophical values that are focused on the transcendent being, the comprehension of human existence, the need to deal with the challenges of life and the need for beliefs and practices such as worship, rituals, morality that are consistent to the aspirations of a particular society.

Swazis, like most African nations, are a religious people. In international ecumenical circles, it is constantly said that the centre of gravity of religion, or of Christianity, to be exact, has shifted to the African continent. This is because more people on this continent are religious or Christian than in Europe where Christianity originated. Religion permeates all aspects of life, be it social, economic, cultural or political. John Mbiti (1969:29) observed that the question of religion "for Africans is an ontological phenomenon; it pertains to the question of existence or being." John Pobee has put it well by saying that "The point is that *homo africanus* is *homo radicaliter religious*, i.e. an African is a radically religious being" (Pobee, 1991:11). Therefore, for one to understand life in Swaziland, one has to consider studying the religious dynamics of the country. In this brief section, I will be discussing the different religious groups that are found in Swaziland, e.g. African Traditional Religions, Swaziland Conference of Churches, League of African Churches in Swaziland and the Council of Swaziland Churches.

Over 52 per cent of the Swazi people belong to the Zionist Church which is a blend of Christian and indigenous beliefs. 6 per cent of the total population is Roman Catholic and 20 per cent are distributed amongst Protestant churches (Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Mormons and Evangelicals), 1 per cent is Baha'i, 1 per cent is Islamic, 10 per cent are Swazi Traditional Religions (STR), while the remaining 10 per cent are nominal (Froise, 1989:1). Unfortunately, religion has been a source of conflict and fragmentation in Swaziland.

Although Swaziland does not have an established policy on religious accommodation, the State has never forbidden the practice of any faith. Swazi Traditional Religion (STR) remains the main form of religious expression of the people, both at the homestead and on national level. It is in the STR that national customs and traditions are preserved. Kasenene makes the following revealing comments about the *Incwala* ceremony, which is the apex and axis of Swazi religion:

*Besides sacrificing to the ancestors and tasting of the first fruits of the nation, the King strengthens the nation and blesses the people. During this ritual, the King dedicates the nation to national ancestors who in turn bless it. This yearly ceremony binds the nation and renews its collective strength (Kasenene, 1993:25).*

The ritual does not only symbolise and promote the unity of the Swazi people it also links them with their dead. For a long time African leaders especially kings were accorded divine honours. Most African countries started with monarchies as their system of government. With the advent of colonisation they changed to the Western forms of democracies. In most countries the role of traditional systems of leadership such as monarchies, chiefs and queens was pushed to the margins whilst in others were incorporated into the Western form of democracies. John Pobee

has noted that this is “The point for political pseudo-religion of the divine ruler-cult” (Pobee, 1991:23). When the first missionaries arrived in Swaziland, we must note that, like most African communities, Swaziland had its own philosophy of life, within which were contained its religious practices and beliefs. The nation was organised around “gentile, tribal/family ties” (Vilakazi, 2013:8).<sup>7</sup> At this stage even the State itself was still in its early stages of development. Clan and family ties regulated relations and the structure of the state which was under the leadership of the Dlamini dynasty. The King was the political and religious head of the nation.

Writing about the formation of the state from a Zulu perspective Vilakazi has noted that:

*In religious terms, formation and crystallisation of the State in pre-industrial ages resulted in the deification of the Leader of the State. The Leader of the State is portrayed in super-human terms: ‘iZulu Eli Phezulu, ‘iSilo’, ‘umlomo ongathethi manga!’, ‘Indlovukazi’, etc. In historical times, anyone who was to be regarded and treated as higher than mere mortal, e.g. bishop, a pope, a king, a queen etc. ..., was treated/anoointed with magical herbal mixtures which were given magical powers to that person, to add powers of divine forces to that person. This is the process of deification, which magically transformed the person installed (2013:8).*

In the Swazi religio-political context the ceremony of *Incwala* is a continuation of the ritual of deification of the monarchy, so that he remains separated and almost magical. The majority of people in Swaziland still adhere to these rituals and their power to holding society together. As a result in ancient Israel and Egypt the King and the Pharaoh were understood as having “Divine Right”, they were referred to as “Holy”. Therefore, the –

*... deification of the Leader had tremendous impact on the psychology, minds, personalities, and moral compass of ordinary people and subjects. It also undoubtedly had a tremendous impact on the personality and spiritual powers of the installed/person (Vilakazi, 2013:9).*

Consequently, the King of Swaziland has always been understood to be in possession of magical powers and the Queen Mother is understood to be in possession of rainmaking powers. This belief is perpetuated by the sacred rituals of *Incwala* where the King has to be in seclusion for the whole of the month of December, where the blood of animals, and herbs are gathered, traditional national hymns are sung, prayers by priests of the Zionist churches are made, all this to appeal to the ancestors and the Supreme Being *Mvelinchanti* to endow him with magical powers and strength. There is even a song that is sung once a year during this ritual that people are not allowed to sing anywhere, anytime and anyhow known as *Inqaba kanqofula*. Discussion around this ceremony is forbidden. Mzizi once organised a seminar at the university on Swazi Traditional Religion and culture and when people raised questions around the issue of *Incwala* they were warned not to discuss this because he had not sought permission from the royal elders (*labadzala*). The warning came through the then Minister of Justice who also happened to be a chief himself. The question that may be asked is why the mystery surrounding the monarchy and some of the sacred ceremonies? The answer to that question is so that it can remain mysterious. It is this mysteriousness and superstition that has

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<sup>7</sup> Herbert Vilakazi. *Religion and Historical Change*. Paper presented at the Peter Storey Lecture in at Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary, Pietermaritzburg, 17 May 2013.), 8.

sustained the continuity of the kingship. This attitude towards the King is not only prevalent in Swaziland but in most African countries. Pobee observed that:

*It is clear that the traditional ruler derived his title to authority from the sanctity of customs which is located in the family to which he belonged, and which entitled him to authority. He is thus a 'double pivot', i.e. the political head of the tribe and the centre of the ritual expression (1989:25).*

Mzizi was opposed to keeping the whole institution of kingship with its accompanying rituals mysterious from people, because he believed that it belonged to the nation as a whole not just the King and the royal family. He argued that the institution of kingship was important for the nation because it enabled "national unity, aspirations and dreams" (1995:115). He (Mzizi, 1995:116) continued:

*The doctoring of the King during Incwala is in essence the doctoring of the nation. That is why everything happens in public, or even when he is in the sacred enclosure, the dancers are milling about knowing fully well what is taking place inside the sacred enclosure (inhlambelo). He is also conscious of their presence. The nation is one with him and he is one with the them. National ancestors are also there participating in all the activities. I have said the Incwala is the apex and axis of Swazi religion.*

Mzizi's belief was contrary to the popular view that *Incwala* is a kingship ceremony, one that legitimates kingship and must be kept secret from the people. For him this was a dangerous view because it was taking the ceremony and ultimately the institution of kingship away from the people, who are the nation.

He (1995:117) argued that:

*The view that Incwala is a kingship ceremony, a ritualisation of kingship is dangerous in my opinion. Kingship cannot legitimate itself nor perpetuate itself without the will and participation of the nation. It does not see itself as existing without the nation, nor does the nation find true existence, peace and hope without kingship ... The nation assembles as one, as equals and as equal beneficiaries of the blessing that may flow. The King plays a sacred role, but that does not mean the role played by others is less so. There is a complementarity here so profound and so live that any missing link may crumble the whole process.*

Mzizi applies a postcolonial theoretical approach to the understanding and interpretation of this ceremony. As a citizen of Swaziland he makes claim to the national rituals and the ensuing benefits thereafter. He demonstrates commitment to the institution of kingship because of the benefits that it had for nationhood, peace and stability. He was convinced that it belonged to the people not to an individual or a particular clan. As a result he was opposed to the idea of an absolute monarchy. For him the King as a ruler needed to be accountable to the people and they also needed to compliment him in his leadership. This is consistent with the Swazi saying that there is no king without the people. The King is a king through the people. However noble as this saying may be, when it comes to governance in Swaziland through the *Tinkhundla* system, it does not apply. This is where Mzizi differed with the system and became an advocate of change.

### ***Religious groups and their attitudes towards politics in Swaziland***

As already stated above Swaziland is a multi-religious country and all its religions have their own positions and attitudes that they hold towards the political system or the monarchy to be specific. It is imperative that we discuss the views that are held by the major religious groups towards politics in the country. We start with Swazi Traditional Religion, and then move to the Baha'i faith, the Evangelicals, the mainline church and the Zionists of African Initiated Churches.

#### *African Traditional Religions*

Swazi religion can be referred to as Swazi Traditional Religion (STR) but it is part of African Traditional Religions which is found in most African communities in the continent with some differences here and there. They believe that there was a God, whom they referred to as *Mvelinchanti*, the Supreme Being, translated as the one who was there from the beginning and who is the creator of heaven and earth and all that is in it. Under him was the world of the spirits *imimoya*. The spirits were divided into two: bad spirits, who are seen as *imimoya lemibi* or *emadimoni* and the good spirits, who were understood as *emadloti* or *ematfongo* and came from those who died in the families and became good ancestors. People on earth are connected with God or the Supreme Being through the ancestors. Since Swaziland is a very hierarchical society, they believed that access to God came through others. Two places are important in the home for Swazi religion. The first one is the central hut, also referred to as *kaGogo* (grandmother's hut). This hut is where family disputes are settled and it is believed that the ancestors dwell there. Linked to that is the family cattle byre, *sibaya*, which is also believed to be the dwelling place of the ancestors. So each home has a byre, the local chief's place, *umphakatsi*, has a byre and the royal palace has a national byre where national rituals such as the national prayer, also known as *Incwala*, are performed. The royal kraal is also significant for Swazi politics because that is the meeting place for the King and the nation. This is where the King addresses his nation especially when there are important pronouncements to be made like the appointment of a Prime Minister, changes in the constitution, etc. Swazi traditional religion is centred on the cattle byre and the hut. It is in the kraal where religion and politics mix, because like most African peoples including Swazis have never separated the two (Mbiti, 1969:1). The byre is sometimes used for mediations to ancestors and God through the diviners *Sangomas* who use bones and other instruments for passing messages between the living and the dead. There are also traditional doctors or *tinyanga*. These operate from the local level right up to the national level, where even the royal family has its own *inyangas* (traditional doctors). STR purports that the current political system and its structures have been given by God and the ancestors. Some major role players in STR are traditional healers, since they are the ones who have the skills of communicating with the ancestors and are also experts in the various rituals and ceremonies. The presence of the 1889 Witchcraft Act in Swaziland's statute books gives the impression that traditional healing is restricted in the country due to this archaic colonial legislation. The position is that traditional healers are free to practice their profession without undue limitation or hindrance.

### *Baha'is and the Moslems*

Other religions in Swaziland are the Baha'i faith and Islam. These two religions do not command a significant following, but due to the small size of the country and a population of less than two million they are nevertheless visible. While denominational tensions bedevil the small Kingdom as churches compete for the recognition and attention of the royalty, and for membership, the challenge of co-existing with the other religions is going to be the greatest singular preoccupation of the country in the new millennium. No forum on religious diversity, or the constitution, has as yet been put to the test to establish the depth of these religious hostilities. One has to contend that the one religion which will prove to be particularly problematic is Christianity. This is because it not only takes itself to be an older phenomenon, but also has a tendency of self-absolutisation, thus professing that it has a natural and worthy claim to be called a state religion. Swazi Christians are fully aware that STR is dominant in the traditional superstructure of the country, but once mention is made of the Baha'is and Moslems, the Christians, out of emotion, declare that Swaziland is a Christian country. This leads me to critically examine the basis of this claim. The argument is made that if one considers the fact that within Christendom itself denominational tensions are rife, why should Christians entertain the view that they have one belief structure in mind when they argue that Swaziland is a Christian country? Baha'is and Moslems remain conspicuously silent on the religio-political dynamics in the country. Both of them are happy that the King accepted their faiths to operate in the country and have not sought to push for any particular political position or system. It is only in recent years that the King shook the Christian groups when he started visiting Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Libya and others. In one of his visits he came back dressed in Moslem attire and that did not sit well with some Christian leaders who were afraid that the King may become a Moslem. But there is no reason for this fear.

### *Christian groups and politics*

The second most dominant religion is Christianity. The historical churches, e.g. the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches, have been around for a good number of years. The Methodists were the first to evangelise the Kingdom nearly 150 years ago. But when they clashed with traditional authority they had to flee, thus leaving Swaziland without missionary work for nearly a generation. A majority of Swazis belong to Zionist Churches, which are African versions of the received European Christian faith. Swazi Zionism, as explained hereafter, has very strong royal connections; so strong indeed, that one can perceive this Zionism in terms of an entrenched Christo-cultural faith, or loosely what others may call a form of civil religion. In addition to historical and independent churches there is an influx of new churches with doctrinal origins in the USA – the so-called prosperity gospel churches. Some of these newer forms of worship call themselves ministries or fellowships. Others use the name "Tabernacle". They tend to appeal to the elite and educated section of the community and hence their membership derives mostly from the industrialised areas of Mbabane and Manzini where most of the working population is concentrated.

### ***The Evangelicals and the doctrine of non-political engagement***

Most of the Evangelical churches belong to the Swaziland Conference of Churches (SCC). This body was formed in 1929 by missionaries. It is the oldest and the first religious body to be formed in the country. During that time the organisation was called the Swaziland Missionary Conference and derived its membership from missionary churches. The SCC is part of the Evangelicals Churches of Africa and the World Evangelical Fellowship. According to Froise (1994:31), the vision of SCC is "To uphold the person and principles of Jesus Christ" and the mission statement is "The conference exists to continuously empower member church organisations for effective witness for Christ."

Missionaries dominated the leadership of the SCC in the beginning. Dr David Hynd, from the Nazarene Church, was one of the founding leaders and continued for decades to influence the focus of the work of the SCC. He and other white evangelical missionaries, contributed a great deal to the work of the SCC in the country, but they never changed their approach which was missionalistic, denouncing Swazi culture and the monarchy, looking down upon Zionism but being in full and cooperative support with the colonial government. They also embraced a very conservative approach to salvation, which was about spirituality and nothing social. From the beginning this organisation was discriminatory, admitting whites only and was hostile to African churches. It was also hostile to Swazi culture and customs, seeing these as paganistic. Their negative attitude and teaching towards Swazi culture mitigated the factors that led to the King having a preferential option for the Zionists who acculturated the Christian message to Swazi culture and legitimated kingship. This also led to the King encouraging the Zionists to grow in Swaziland and facilitating the process that led to the formation of the League of African Churches in Swaziland (LACS) as an umbrella body for Zionists churches, thus becoming an alternative body from the SCC. At the moment, the full operation of the SCC is based at Manzini, where the administration of all the affiliated member-churches is co-ordinated. The membership of the SCC is increasing every year as Swazi pastors continue to found new churches and ministries. According to the information taken from the Annual Report of 2004/2005 there were 66 member churches and from the Annual Report of 2005/2006 it had increased to 69 member churches (SCC, 2006:4-5).

### ***The Zionists and court prophecy***

The Zionist churches belong to the body known as the League of African Churches in Swaziland (LACS) which was founded during the time of King Sobhuza and Queen Mother Lomawa Ndwandwe (Cazziol, 1986:117) by the King himself. The Zionists arrived in Swaziland from Wakkerstroom, South Africa through Johanna Kumalo (nee Nxumalo) who was a sister to the Queen Mother, Lomawa Ndwandwe. Johanna had grown up as a Methodist at Edendale Mission Station and had been educated as a teacher. It was whilst teaching in the Transvaal that she came to know the Rev. Daniel Nkonyane, the founder of the Zionists, and she then converted to his church in 1913 and became a healer herself. It was then that she visited her sick sister

who was King Sobhuza II's mother, who had also become blind. The Zionists prayed for her and she was healed and then she vowed, "Never shall I abandon a Church that has helped me thus" (in Sundkler, 1976:210). Mzizi (1991:8) notes that the success of the Zionists in Swaziland was that "Zionism was very tolerant of Swazi culture and customs, hence senior members of the royal family had no difficulty in embracing it." It also has to be noted that the arrival of the Zionists in Swaziland was as a result of the growth of Ethiopian movement, when black people were breaking away from Missionary churches to start their own in protest of racism and white domination in those church. Therefore, it is not surprising that the British government and the Missionary Council were worried with the growth of Zionism and its embrace by the royal family so they made attempts to completely outlaw it. Mzizi (1991:8) notes that:

*The reason was that the Zionists were distorting the true Christian faith by watering it down with lots of customs and traditions. In addition, since they worshipped mostly at night and beat drums during their singing, they were not different from traditional diviners (tangoma). The Zionists were thus labelled as a society of witches.*

It was King Sobhuza who told the British rulers represented by A.B. Marwick, the British Resident Commissioner and the Missionary churches to leave the Zionists to him (Cazziol, 1989:160). The King had realised the strength of Zionism in preserving Swazi culture and identity against the onslaught of Western Christianity and British colonialism. From there on the connection between Zionism and Swazi royalty began and it led to the formation of the LAC by King Sobhuza II assisted by J.J. Nquku in 1937. Its primary aim was to establish a "federation of all African churches, fellowship of such Churches in Jesus Christ, and brotherhood among African Churches" (Mzizi, 1994:104). It was in the same year 1937 that the Good Friday movement was started.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the LAC has a strong relationship with the royal family. As a result their offices are at Nkhanini, a stone's throw from Ludzidzini royal palace. Being close to the King has meant that they provide religious legitimation and pastoral care to the royal house. In return, the King has continued to provide them with protection from mainline denominations that turn to look down upon such religions. The Zionists hold the view that he is their protector, they belong to him and they were given to him by God. This view is summarised in the League's president Bishop Isaac Dlamini's words when he said that:

*We thank God as Zionists who entered Sobhuza II's heart; the King so loved and trusted us that we could be one of his own treasured regiments (libutfo lakhe), and a regiment of his faith in Christ. Because we were called to regimens as Christians' the time when we were openly rejected from the Christian fold, we saw that our royalty indeed loved us; in return we too show our gratitude with what we have, namely prayer, and our effort to draw ourselves closer to royalty by our close proximity to them (royalty), we want them to know about our Christian fifth faith (commitment); so that they may appreciate the fact that they should be our Kings (rulers), and Swazis; and that they should be Christians with us (Mzizi, 1995:307-14).*

In simple terms, they provide God's endorsement for the monarchy and are not at all different from the royal priests and prophets of the Old Testament. As a result of this close association between these two institutions, it can safely be concluded that Zionism is a *de facto* civil religion

of Swaziland. In fact, the then British Resident Commissioner to Swaziland through the influence of the missionaries made a presentation to King Sobhuza II asking him to clamp on the Zionists. The King, Sobhuza II, announced that the League (Zionists) belongs to him and so they must not bother with them. By taking this decision the King in his wisdom applied the divide and defuse as a more sensible policy than the unite and inflame in his dealing with the churches. The Zionists influence is even seen in their gospel as they are too compromised by the cultural practices around which their doctrine is built. They have used the same Bible that was used by the missionaries to demonise Swazi culture but they have used it to justify and embrace Swazi customs traditions and political system.

When the Zionist leaders received the invitation from King Sobhuza, inviting them to celebrate Easter at the royal residence, their response was positive. The Zionists held their services with the royal family until the King ordered them to move to the stadium as membership was increasing every year.

The LAC is a growing church body with churches found in almost all the communities in Swaziland. The reasons for their growing membership are varied, but I will mention a few that were brought up during the interviews. Firstly, their assimilation of the Christian faith to Swazi culture. For instance, they do not challenge polygamy like the Protestant churches and the evangelicals do. Secondly, they do not challenge issues like politics and social problems in the country but rather legitimate the *status quo* as something that has been allowed by God. Thirdly, their way of worship is more cultural and traditional.<sup>8</sup>

Like his father, the present King Mswati continued with the relationship with the Zionists and the League continues to “belong to the King” (Cazziol, 1986:117). The King participates and has an important role to play during the Easter services that are held at the National Church by the Zionist Christians. For instance, Sunday is reserved for him to deliver his sermon. The Zionists had a lot of influence to the institution of kingship in Swaziland and they continue to do so. Firstly, they provide religious theological legitimation to the institution. They do this with gratitude to the royal house for had it not been for the King’s swift action, they would have been closed down in Swaziland. So theirs is a relationship of convenience and mutual benefit, not one built on well-nuanced theological foundations.

### ***The mainline church and their attitudes towards the political system***

Mainline denominations such as, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist and Congregational belong to the Council of Swaziland Churches (CSC). This body was founded in

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8 In answer to the question of when the LAC was formed, Mr Mavimbela replied as follows: At that time churches were not registered in Swaziland. The time came when government requested all churches to be registered in Swaziland (he was not sure of the year), but the League did not respond to the order because King Sobhuza responded on their behalf and told the officer in charge not to trouble the Zionists as they “belonged” to him. This continued until the King told the leaders of the Zionists to register, and proposed the name used today, the League of African Churches in Swaziland. As a result, the LACS was provided with offices for their church administration at Nkhanini (Kumalo, 2008).



1976 as a result of a breakaway from the SCC. According to the records of the Annual Report of 2004, the CSC has 10 member churches. The differences of mission between the CSC and the SCC became clear in June 1973 when they realised that things were not going well within the ecumenical body (Sowazi, 1996:43). The challenge that the SCC faced was the arrival of political refugees from South Africa to Swaziland, as a result of apartheid. Being dominated by the apolitical evangelicals the SCC did not see the need for the member churches to minister to the political refugees from South Africa for that would be concerning themselves with political matters which are seen to be secular and are outside the mission imperatives of the church. However, some of the members of the SCC, those who come from the mainline stream of churches, whose denominations fell under the World Council of Churches (WCC) were adherents of the liberation theology and at an international level were participating in the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) held a contrary view from the one held by the evangelicals. For them the refugees were victims of apartheid, which was an unjust system and the church had an obligation to take sides with the poor and oppressed people of South Africa. At that time the SCC distanced itself from social and political issues as such involvement was “regarded as un-Christian, if not sinful” (Sowazi, 1996:32, 41). The reason for the varying attitudes was, according to Sowazi (1996:41), “SCC had a mixed bag of member churches that had varying levels of educational and theological attainment.” Through the leadership that came from the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Christian Church of Africa and the Mennonite Committee in Swaziland, the CSC was formed to respond to the need that was being ignored by the SCC (Sowazi, 1996:26). The official launching of the Council of Swaziland Churches was held at Thokoza Centre in Mbabane on 13 November 1976 (Sowazi, 1996:23). The CSC was pioneered by Bishop Mandlenkosi Zwane of the Roman Catholic Church, Reverend Hosea Mdziniso of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Bishop Bernard Mkhabela of the Anglican Church.

The CSC started their ecumenical movement at a very crucial time when neighbouring countries were in crisis – Mozambique was experiencing war and South Africa was faced with apartheid. The CSC did not fold its arms and watch the show, but instead became part of the struggle, which led to its leadership to be threatened with detentions (Sowazi, 1996:15).

The establishment of the CSC was meant to realise their vision and mission statements. Their mission is “to enable churches to develop themselves, their communities and the nation spiritually and physically in a just and sustainable way”. Furthermore, the mission is “to further the unity of God’s church as a body of Christ by developing a strategy that will enable us as Christians to be advocates of justice and peace in all circumstances and dealings” (Sowazi, 1996:26). At present, the offices of the CSC are in Manzini in the Mandlenkosi Ecumenical House.

The commitment of the CSC is to the social gospel and it is an affiliate of the WCC. To make their stand clear to other churches, on 23 November 1976 they issued a press statement indicating that their withdrawal from the ecumenical movement of the SCC was not intended to break the existing links (Sowazi, 1996:23). Even today the CSC still adopts a critical view of

government. This view is what in South Africa is referred to as Critical Solidarity. This means that the church supports the government when it serves the people well, but it maintains its critical distance from it in order to criticise it when necessary. Members of the CSC embrace this view and that is why they have been critical of government. They continue to organise workshops to train church leaders on the interface between religion and politics. They have also organised a number of marches and protests by the ecumenical movement against the government. Out of the three bodies, the CSC is the only one that has adopted a progressive and prophetic approach. This group found it easier to work with Mzizi, and as a result they were in the forefront of the establishment of the J.B. Mzizi Annual Memorial Lecture. The reason for this is because they are proponents of liberation theology just like Mzizi. They do see a clear link between religion, politics and culture. Even Mzizi commented about how he was welcomed by churches under the CSC, though he felt rejected by his own faith community which belongs to the SCC.

### ***The historical development of ethno-religious identity in Swaziland***

From the day of its arrival to Swaziland, the church was associated with the royal house. This should not be surprising because it was King Somhlolo who first had a dream of white people coming to the country. It was King Mswati II who sent emissaries to the Wesleyan Mission Station in Thaba 'Nchu to ask them to bring the gospel to Swaziland. When the first missionaries arrived under the leadership of the Rev. James Allison, they went straight to the royal house to pay homage and to receive the blessing of the King to start mission work. The King blessed them, slaughtered a cow for them and gave them land. This was the beginning of a cautious relationship of mutual benefit between the royal house and Christianity that has continued for over 160 years, though not without its own turbulences. This relationship was characterised by the royal family's rigorous attempts to acculturate Christianity into the royal perspective of Swazi culture and perspective of life. Mzizi called this the Swaziasation of Christianity (2005:445b). This brief section is looking at the key role players in the Swaziasation of Christianity which led to the Swazi brand of Christianity, which is apolitical or at most pro-royalist in its outlook.

Some of the key players in the political and religious history of Swaziland:



.....  
REV. JAMES ALLISON

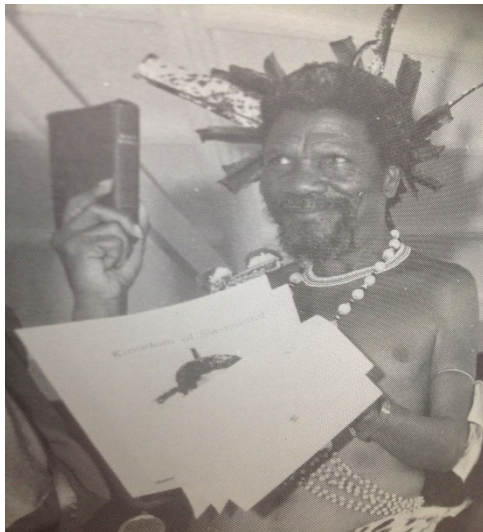
Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

The Rev. James Allison popularly known by the Swazis and the Zulus as *Mneli*, a Methodist Missionary was approached by the Swazi emissaries in 1834 in Thaba 'Nchu and requested to establish a mission station in Swaziland, which he did in 1844. The Methodists became the first missionaries in the country and they built a mission station at Mahamba. The mission station was attacked and burned down in 1846 when an *impi* attacked some members of the royal household who sought refuge in it. After that incident, Rev. Allison gathered his converts, who totalled over 1,000 members, and travelled to Zululand, Ladysmith and Indaleni and ended up in Pietermaritzburg where they developed the Edendale Mission Station.



.....  
REV. DANIEL MSIMANG

Rev. Daniel Msimang co-founder of the first mission station in Swaziland with Allison and Giddy. Msimang was a young boy when he arrived in Swaziland in 1844. He returned to Swaziland to rebuild the mission station thirty years later after its destruction. He also founded the Unzondelelo movement. He in the company of the Rev. James Allison and Rev. Richard Giddy, responded to King Mswati II's call for missionaries for his land. They came from Mpharane in Thaba 'Nchu. In 1846 Allison led the converts out of Swaziland to Natal after the station had been attacked by Mswati's warriors. When Allison settled in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg Msimang became his assistant at the mission station, got educated, married and later became a Methodist minister. He is one of the key founders of the Msimang dynasties that is still found in Edendale even today. Thirty-five years later Msimang returned to Swaziland to revive mission work there. He was respected by the royal family and set the tone for church-state relations in Swaziland as they are today.



.....  
**KING SOBHUZA II**

*"Ingwenyama"* 1898-1982

Using the Bible to take Oath of Office symbolizing the interface between Religion and Politics in Swaziland

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

King Sobhuza II was the architect of the world's last absolute monarchy, Swaziland. He ruled Swaziland from 1921 to 1982, a period of over sixty years. In 1963 he founded the *Imbokodvo* National Movement to contest the elections acting on the requirements of the British-developed Constitution at the time. His party won the elections with a whopping majority, losing only one seat to the Progressive Party under J.J. Nquku. He led his country to independence in 1968, where a Constitution, developed with the colonial rulers, was adopted. He suspended the Constitution in 1973 and took control of all the institutions of government including taking over the position of commander in chief of the armed forces. For over thirty years the country was ruled by Royal Decree. Key to the suspension of the Constitution was the banning of political parties, which he blamed for dividing people. Known for his deep but cunning wisdom, he was revered as the father of the nation, the Lion, *Ingwenyama*. During the 60 years celebration of

his leadership as king of the Swazi people he eluded his success to his commitment to peace, unity and dialogue. He said that:

*I always feel that I have no enemy. He who regards himself as my enemy cannot succeed because I will spare no effort in getting closer and closer to him until there is a conference. The alternative to talking is confrontation. Such attitudes among nations do not augur well for the future but (lead to) arms manufacture, arms stockpiling and eventually the destruction of the world human community. Our survival as nations of the world depends on interstate and on international understanding (King Sobhuza II, 2000:275).*

He led Swaziland by holding together old traditional systems of governance, built on basic principles of the monarchy such as heredity and patronage, with a modern civil government under the leadership of the prime minister, a cabinet, parliament and the judiciary, all of which are under the domination of the traditional system, with the Swazi National Council. He is the father of the current King Mswati III. He was the architect of the Swazi ethno-religious identity as we have it today.

King Sobhuza II lived an enigmatic life of simplicity on the one hand and on the other, owning a modern palatial palace which he named Lozitha. He would sometimes address the nation sitting on the grass outside the royal kraal only clad in a kanga also referred to as *lihiya*. Sometimes he would have a very light blanket, *litjalo*. His vehicles were never luxurious and he was devoted to a life of simplicity, a far cry from some of his ministers and his successor. He did not travel in and out of the country often, so he remained mysterious to the world but commanded lots of respect. He built the Swaziland National Church and founded the pro-monarchy Zionist movement, being The League of African Churches in Swaziland (LACS) hoping for a gospel that legitimates the kingship (Cazziol, 1989:304). Mzizi referred to Sobhuza's attempts to build a Swazi church as the Swazi-isation of Christianity. The Swazi Government, which happens to be built on a dual system of the Western form of government and the traditional system, under the King, his council and chiefs, views religion and culture from a functionalist perspective (Durkheim, in Schaffer & Lamm, 1992:13). Where religion and culture are seen as existing for the preservation of social group unity, and religious rites are the means by which a society reaffirms itself periodically. So, for him religion is there to enforce social norms (Kasenene, 1993:6). Swazi religiosity is expressed and punctuated by culture.

There is no clear demarcation between Swazi Traditional Religion, culture and politics. These are intertwined and are, most of the time, seen as one and the same thing. In the process of practicing Swazi culture, Swazi's are also worshipping God e.g. *Incwala*, which is about a man (*Emabutfo*) dressed in traditional regalia dancing in the royal kraal. That is also understood as Swazi religion and a sacred moment and at the same time people are paying homage and showing total loyalty to the King who is the absolute head of the Government. Like most ruling groups, the Dlamini's, when they were establishing their kingdom, used physical force in the early stages of their conquest and development, but later they used mind control (Kasenene, 1993:89). Through this they consolidated their power over all the other clans. Culture, which is simply a way of life in its totality, including the values such as respect for the elders and one's

seniors, was then used to promote respect for the royal household and not to question it, and not to do that was regarded as being un-Swazi.

Some key points about King Sobhuza II are:

- He was raised by his grandmother, Gwamile Labotsibeni Nxumalo, who was one of the few women who ever ruled Swaziland for a significant period of twenty years as the regent.
- He was educated at Lovedale and was crowned in 1921.
- He founded the Zionist movement in the 1930s for the *Swaziasation* of Christianity (Mzizi, 2005a).
- He started the *Imbokodvo* National Movement, the first political party in Swaziland.
- He led Swaziland to independence in 1968.
- He suspended the Lancaster House-developed constitution in 1973 and ruled Swaziland by Royal Decree taking control of all the key institutions of government including the armed forces.
- He died in 1982, at the age of eighty, after ruling Swaziland for over sixty years.
- He had over seventy wives and hundreds of children.



.....  
THE QUEEN MOTHER NTFOMBI TFWALA

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

The Queen Mother Ntfombi Tfwala is the mother of the King and is referred to as the She-Elephant, *Indlovukazi*. According to Swazi culture she rules with her son (the King) and has enormous power and influence. If she dies one of the King's senior wives takes over the position of Queen Mother and she is no longer regarded as the King's wife but as his mother. Her duties include preserving the Swazi culture, being a custodian of the rainmaking rituals, and running the royal household. She has equal powers to those of the King. In the history of the church in Swaziland, the Queen mother has played important roles in the promotion of its

work. For instance, the National Church (situated near the royal palace) was built as a wish of *Indlovukazi*, Lomawa Nxumalo (Sobhuza's mother), whose vision was for Christianity and Swazi Traditional Religion to be brought together and practiced by the Swazis. She made a request to be baptised and was the first member of the royal family whose baptism shook the foundations of church and state in the country. Queen Ntombi Tfwala also runs her own charity organisation known as *Philani Maswati*, which distributes parcels to the elderly at the end of the year. Her charity helps to give a picture of the royal family as caring and sympathetic to the needy.



.....  
DR AMBROSE PHESHEYA ZWANE

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

Dr Ambrose Phesheya Zwane was the founder and leader of the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) in the early sixties, whose aim was to contest the elections during the run-up to independence. Zwane had a number of run-ins with the King until he went into exile in Tanzania. He came back after being pardoned by the King. His party, the NNLC, is still alive though not effective. It is an example of what has happened all over Africa where ruling parties does their level best to squash opposition parties and make them ineffective and this has contributed to the domination of the people by the ruling liberating parties who claim sole right to rule.



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DR J.J. NQUKU

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

Dr J.J. Nquku (*iqude 'limzwezwe*), an academic and opposition politician who formed and led the Progressive Political Party in Swaziland which contested the national elections in 1968 and won a seat in Parliament. He constantly endured harassment by the traditionalists in Swaziland who neither understood nor appreciated the party political system but preferred absolute rule by their King. His party too did not survive and collapsed like most opposition parties on the continent.

**His Majesty, King Mswati III** of Swaziland. He is the absolute monarch ruling the last and only absolute monarchy in the globe. In the photo below, he is clad in traditional regalia participating in the *Incwala* ceremony, an annual Swazi national prayer which requires him to be in seclusion for a full month where he is doctored for kingship. The culmination of the ceremony is when the whole nation of men (*emabutfo*), women (*lutsango*), boys (*lusekwane*) and *tintfombi* come to participate in the singing of the sacred royal hymn, *Inqaba kaNqofula*. There is so much secrecy and sacredness surrounding this ritual that not a lot is known about it. Keeping it in a cloud of secrecy, even from the Swazi people, helps to mystify the system of monarchy, thus ensuring its survival.





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**KING MSWATI III**  
with his warriors *Emabutfo* dancing to the  
tune of *Inqaba kaNqofula* during the *Incwala*  
ceremony.

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives,  
Mbabane

*Incwala* ceremony is the festival of celebrating the first fruits. In siSwati it is known as *Umtandazo weSive*. It is meant as an event of giving gratitude to the ancestors and *Mvelinchanti* for a successful planting season. *Incwala* can only be held when there is a king who happens to be the main actor or central figure of the festival. There is no *Incwala* without a king. It is also important to note that *Incwala* is not only observed by Swaziland. It used to be observed by most African tribes with differences here and there. At the moment it is observed by the Swazis, Zulus and some chiefdoms in Zambia (Matsebula, 1988:337). Of significance is that it is during this ceremony where you see religion and politics coming together through the person of the King who plays a political role and a priestly one throughout the ceremony. This becomes a foundation for the religious legitimation of the King as a political head of the nation.

In the photo below, King Mswati III addresses Christians during the Easter services at the Somhlolo National Stadium, at the final service of the Easter celebrations. It is in these services that Christianity and politics, and the monarchy system, are synergised into a theology that entrenches the current system of government and draws resources from King Mswati III's religion. What is preached here is a pro-monarchy and pro-state theological message.



.....  
**KING MSWATI III**  
addressing Christians during the Easter  
services at the Somhlolo National Stadium,  
at the final service of the Easter celebrations.

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives,  
Mbabane

Swazi religion permeates all aspects of life and penetrates social institutions. As a result, it is impossible to separate religion from any other aspect of culture. Ultimately religious beliefs and practice help to sanction political power. As Kasenene puts it, it serves “to create people who abide by the norms of society and to militate against resistance to the ruling class” (Kasenene, 1993:92).



.....  
PRINCE MAGUGA

Photo: *The Times of Swaziland*, Mbabane

Prince Maguga, one of the senior princes in Swaziland, was imposed on an area known as KamKhweli and Macetjeni as chief by Royal Order. The two chiefs were deposed when they refused to vacate their positions. They were threatened and they ran away to exile in South Africa, together with their families, where they lived in abject poverty. Prince Maguga took over the area as his chieftom. After some time it was announced that he had converted to the Shembe religion. Mzizi wrote an article questioning the inconsistency on the Prince's part for oppressing the two chiefs, causing suffering and then joining the Shembe religion whose founder is known to have resisted oppression by whites in South Africa (Mzizi, 29-30 March 2003:5). Through this article, Mzizi raised the inconsistency between the religiousness of the royal family and the way they treat the ordinary subjects.

*Some cultural aspects of Swaziland*



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WOMEN'S REGIMENT (LUTSANGO  
LWAKANGWANE)

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

The above-mentioned photo depicts members of *Lutsango Lwabomake* (women's regiment) taking part in the *Incwala* ceremony. Their commander-in-chief is the Queen Mother *Indlovukazi*, to whom they pay homage by participating in such events. Groups like this one are good because they allow space for women to participate in national ceremonies that bind a nation. The problem is that they tend to entrench negative culture that entrenches the oppression of women such as polygamy and other forms of patriarchy.



.....  
TINGATJA

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

*Tingatja*, these are the young men, preparing for manhood and joining the warriors by taking part in the *Lusekwane* ceremony. This is the picking of shrubs of a sacred tree known as *Lusekwane*. It serves two purposes: to pay homage to the King and also to gather the branches to rebuild the traditional kraal, where the King will be doctored during the *Incwala* ceremony. Part of the ritual is the killing of a bull with bare hands to demonstrate the strength of the warriors and their coming of age. Boys who participated here are supposed not to have engaged in sexual activities with or impregnated any girl to encourage chastity.



.....  
GROUP OF GIRLS PARTICIPATING  
IN THE UMHLANGA CEREMONY

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

The above-mentioned photo depicts a group of girls participating in the *Umhlanga* ceremony. The roots of this ceremony are found in the myth of creation held by different African tribes who believe that life started from the sea of reeds after having been created by the Supreme Being in a perfect world and then led to this earth through a sea of reeds. Umhlanga is a fertility cult and celebration of virginity status. It is not part of Incwala. These women go to pick up reeds from a distant swamp and walk back kilometres with it to the palace where it is handed to the Queen Mother for the erection of *emaguma* or enclosures. The King may choose or may not choose a wife in this ceremony, although it is not the main aim. Girls who participate in this ritual must be virgins.

## ***The “Swaziasation of Christianity”***



.....  
**MAHAMBA METHODIST CHURCH**

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

Mahamba Methodist Church, the first church to be built in the Kingdom after the King had seen a vision of a coin and book and sent emissaries to invite missionaries to Swaziland. The King's dream laid the foundation for Swaziland to see itself as a Christian country. Mzizi argued against this thinking, especially when the Christian churches wanted the country to be biased towards Christianity at the expense of other religions. He wrote many articles on this issue.



.....  
**THE SWAZI NATIONAL CHURCH**

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

The Swazi National Church built by King Sobhuza II at Enkhanini at the request of his mother, Lomawa Ndwandwe, who had been converted to the Zionists. It is in this church that Easter services are celebrated by the pro-monarchy LACS member churches. The services begin on a Wednesday and end on the following Monday. The teaching and theology espoused here is one that legitimates the monarchy and sees it as God's gift to the nation. The King and the rest of the royal family attend the services and address the nation on church and state-related issues.



.....  
LEAGUE OF AFRICAN CHURCHES  
IN SWAZILAND (LACS)

Photo: Emsamo Swaziland National Archives, Mbabane

In this picture we can see the two groups that make up LACS, the red gowns and the Zionists (in green). These churches were indigenous and their formation was heavily supported by King Sobhuza II, whose aim was to build a Swazi church, built on Swazi culture, whose aim would be to unite Swazis who are Christian, taking into account Swaziland's unique political system and culture instead of challenging them. In this case Christianity would be used to give theological rationale for the Swazi way of doing things instead of questioning it. Mzizi referred to this as the "Swaziasation of Christianity".

It must be noted that Christianity during and after colonial times did not transform the entirety of Swazi culture; it did not manage to change the fundamental foundations of Swazi religion and culture. It just changed official Swazi culture meaning at the urban and surface levels, which only affected the institutional infrastructure and Swazi elites. The knowledge of democracy has always remained available to a few. The majority of Swazi people have remained untouched by it. The lives of the ordinary Swazi has remained at the level of Swazi traditional cosmology as shaped and governed by the traditional system under the father as head of the family, the chief as head of the area and King as head of the nation.

## ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The politics and socio-cultural realities of Swaziland are set against an economic background of increasing poverty and economic stagnation. Swaziland is classified as a lower middle-income country (Ginindza, 2006:19). In 2004, the per capita GDP was US\$1,660. However, Swaziland's economy is much akin to that of a developing country when taking into account that 70 per cent of her people are employed in agriculture and 69 per cent of the population are living below the poverty line of US\$22 per month (Ginindza, 2006:19).

From the early 1980s to the early 1990s Swaziland enjoyed the peak of her economic growth. At the time unemployment was low and foreign direct investment (FDI) was high. This was so because Swaziland was the most stable country in the region, as at the time apartheid still

existed in South Africa and there was also the civil war in Mozambique. Therefore, South African firms relocated to Swaziland in order to access world markets. This resulted in the growth of both the export-oriented manufacturing sector and FDI (Parikh, 2006:20). In the 1990s, South Africa started becoming democratised. This caused Swaziland to lose her regional advantage and thus her economy experienced a downturn. Currently, Swaziland is in an economic slump. In 2005 statistics indicated that her GDP had slowed down to 1.5 per cent (Parikh, 2006:20).

According to Alan Whiteside (2002:156), "Swaziland is one of the African states that are said to experience the *abnormal normality*." This simply means that Swaziland never experienced normality in terms of the standards of the rest of the world. This kind of economic situation has caused extreme poverty in the country. The finance minister of Swaziland, in his speech of 2005-2006, said, "High unemployment, food insecurity and HIV caused a 3 per cent increase in poverty in 2005, with 69 per cent of the population below the poverty line" (Whiteside, 2002:65). This high poverty rate in the country is contrasted by the financial advantage of the tiny minority of elites, made up of business people, politicians, the royal family and those connected to it, who live in complete abundance, sometimes through the taxes and parastatals such as *Tibiyo taka Ngwane*. For instance, the monarch who owns over twelve luxurious palaces, has shares in MTN, telecommunications and sugar companies and is said to be amongst the richest people in the world with his fortune amounting to over \$200 million. So, although Swaziland is a very poor country and most of its citizens depend on donor agencies such as the World Food Programme and others for survival, there are also people who are extremely rich because they are connected to the royal family, which controls who get access to what position and ultimately resources. The economic slump of the country came to its climax in 2010 when it ran into bankruptcy and the King through his emissaries had to go from one country to another asking for a loan amount of R10 billion just to keep the government going. South Africa was among the countries consulted but it imposed very stringent conditions including democratisation and the restructuring of the civil servants of the government. This was rejected by the Swazi Government (Sithole, 2011:2).



# SECTION THREE



# MZIZI'S REFLECTIONS ON THE RELIGION POLITICS AND THE MONARCHY

The following articles were published in newspapers such as *The Times of Swaziland* and *The Observer* which are the main daily newspapers in Swaziland. Mzizi started as a contributor in *The Swazi Observer* in the mid 1990s but his contract was revoked by the government when they realised the subversive nature of his articles. He was then engaged by *The Times of Swaziland*, for whom he wrote articles until his death. Most of the papers in this book come from these papers. Mzizi also published papers in academic journals, e.g. *BOLESWA*, *Missionalia* and others, where he shared his ideas with a wider community of academics and peers. Some of the papers in this book have been sourced from those journals. Through his journal and newspaper articles and other forms of media, he broke the silence on issues around the monarchy, religion and politics that had been treated similar to a holy cow that could not be touched. Standing from the Christian Liberation Theology tradition he analysed the political system of the country by addressing issues ranging from the monarchy, its link with culture, religion and politics. He traced the historical developments of the Swazi nation, its socio-economic and political structure. He reached the conclusion that the system has to be opened up for discussion. Although the monarchy is of significance for the unity of the nation, its uniqueness and even culture, it needs to be subjected to continuous scrutiny and discussion so that it can be adapted to a changing society. In the following articles, he focused on the royal family by writing about it, addressing issues such as the role of the King, religion, *incwala*, *umhlanga* and many others. His main concern was how these could be adapted to the changing

times so that they could be of benefit to the nation as it seeks to promote good governance, democracy and economic development. It is important to note that Mzizi's Liberation Theology was not the old classical one that is held by scholars from the West. His theology emerged from his context and experience. His was a Swazi brand of Liberation Theology and emerged from dealing with the issues that arose from being in the den of a lion which is the monarchy system of governance. He starts by being very radical and intolerant of both culture, and monarch, but as one follows his thinking one is able to see a change, a softening of the criticism and more nuanced analyses.

## PART 1 – ECUMENISM AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

### CHALLENGES OF PROSELYTISATION IN CONTEMPORARY SWAZILAND<sup>1</sup>

The Swazi people are deeply religious. In the traditional superstructure, religion plays a pivotal role from the nuclear family to kingship. The Swazi monarch plays a dual role as both a religious figurehead and the apex of the judicio-political hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> This status of the monarch provides a strong variable on the question of Swazi religiosity versus traditional patriotism. The Swazi king shares the position of being a religious figurehead with the Queen Mother. The *World Christian Encyclopaedia* (1982:644) observes that:

*In former days, the King exercised an even stronger religious function than today, and the prosperity of the nation was believed to be mystically dependent upon the strength, virility and general well-being of the ruler. His most important role was as rainmaker, a task shared by his mother, with the royal ancestors serving as intermediaries before the First Being, Umkhulumcanti.*

African scholarship on matters religious rightly views local religious phenomena, such as Swazi Traditional Religion, as being microcosms of the greater traditional religious system of belief in Africa. One might agree with these generalisations, but should note that African belief systems are varied and particularistic. Swazi Traditional Religion, for example, has its own peculiarities, which is a result of the social culture of the people of Swaziland, in most cases their response to non-Swazi cultures and religions. Statistics on religious affiliation in Africa always run into

1 J.B. Mzizi (2004), Challenges of proselytisation in contemporary Swaziland. *Emory International Law Review*, 14:909-36.

2 Kasenene (1993:37) observes that: "Religiously, Ngwenyama [the King] is the rainmaker of the Kingdom and through the *Incwala* he gives life to the nation. As he has divine elements and power in him, his power is both political and mystical. Consequently, he is not only the symbol of corporate unity of the Swazi people, but also its source and sustainer. Ngwenyama is mystically identified with the nation and because he combines both religious and political offices he is revered by the people." The Swazi king is also the highest court of appeal for cases tried under Swazi law and custom. The Independence Constitution entitled the King to immunity from suit and legal process in any civil case in respect of all things done or omitted to be done by him in his private capacity, to immunity from criminal proceedings in respect of all things done or omitted to be done by him either in his official capacity or in his private capacity and to immunity from being summoned to appear as a witness in any civil or criminal proceedings. Swazi Constitution (1968), The Constitution of Swaziland Statutory Instrument, 1968, Chap. IV, § 33 (repealed).

methodological problems on the question of adherents to traditional religions. This is because these religions are part of a people's culture. They are not the proselytising type; neither do they have a written text or "ordained" ministers or evangelists.

Christianity came to Swaziland in 1844 by way of royal invitation. Swazi hegemony would not frown upon this historical fact, yet questions have to be asked as to the freedom to choose and practice a religion in the milieu of monarchical embrace of that religion. The discussion below explores that problem. The matter of religious freedom shall be looked into in terms of the 1968-repealed Independence Constitution, and the somewhat mutually suspicious co-existence of Swaziland's three ecumenical church federations.

The Christian community has lately shown great intolerance of the presence of other religions in Swaziland. This intolerance is clearly based on the historical notion of the royal invitation of the first Christian missionaries, which led to the simplistic view that Swaziland is a Christian country. There has been open resistance to introducing a multi-faith component in the junior certificate Religious Knowledge Curriculum. The resistance is passionate and somewhat militant, not exactly congruent with Christian virtues of love and community.

Swaziland does not yet have a Bill of Rights. What is currently referred to as a Constitution is a series of scattered pieces of legislation that hardly pass the test of constitutionalism as known in the free world. Swaziland's Bill of Rights was removed in 1973 for the simple reason that the schedule of rights necessarily allowed for the freedom of association, which includes the formation of political parties, and the Swazi ruling elite reasoned that political formations would be inimical to traditional authority and the sovereignty of the King. A process of constitution making was put in place by the King on 22 August 1996 through Decree No. 2 of 1996. There is currently a visible national apprehension regarding the Constitutional Review Commission in regard to such fundamental matters as accountability, integrity, qualification and representation. The functions and terms of reference of the Commission are considered draconian by the progressive formations, including some church groupings, while die-hard supporters of royalty question the patriotism of those who dare to question the Commission's terms of reference.

In short, the citizens of Swaziland have not in a general sort of way come to grips with one another on what a fundamental right is, particularly if such a right is not in conformity with traditional or archaic views. For example, the right to assembly and association, so very popularly embraced by many human rights conventions and special protocols since 1948, including regional instruments, is grossly affronted by the provision applying to the Constitutional Review Commission that,

*... any member of the general public who desires to make a submission to the Commission may do so in person or in writing and may not represent any one or be represented in any capacity whilst making such submission to the Commission (CRC Decree, 1996:5).*

## HISTORICAL ROOTS OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IN SWAZILAND

The advent of Christianity and the colonial occupation of Swaziland occurred during the heyday of the consolidation of the Swazi state by King Mswati II. King Sobhuza I [Somhlolo], who died around 1840, was an astute strategist and statesman. Hilda Kuper (1978:19) describes him as a generous hearted King who sought to accommodate foreign elements rather than destroy them. J.S.M. Matsebula (1988:23) and Alan R. Booth (1983:9) depict King Sobhuza I as a traditional politician-diplomat, not given to war tendencies except when absolutely necessary.

It was this King's disposition that shaped Swazi policy on white occupation of the territory. A few months before his demise, King Somhlolo had a vision that was believed to have been shown to him by the national ancestors. A catastrophic clash between the Zulus and the Afrikaners at *Encome* (Blood River) had shocked the Nguni people to the extent that a repeat of 16 December 1838 incident had to be avoided at all costs.<sup>3</sup> Possibly, the King's vision might have been inspired by this incident.

Briefly, the vision was that there would come to Swaziland a people of a strange appearance, with hair that resembles the tail-end of cattle. They would bring to the Swazi people two elements: a book (*umculu*) and money (*indilinga*). Soon after the vision had been related to royal councillors, the King died. Interpreters of the vision held three positions:

*Firstly, it was believed that these people with strange hair and novel possessions should be unconditionally welcomed in Swaziland. Secondly, it was that not a drop of their blood was to be shed under any circumstances. Thirdly, when King Somhlolo's son assumed power at a tender age of sixteen years, he took it upon himself to 'hunt' for these people with a purpose of bringing them to the kingdom (Mzizi, 1995:281).*

King Mswati II followed up his father's vision and sent emissaries to Grahamstown in South Africa where the Methodists had established a base. In June 1844, a party comprising Rev. James Allison and Rev. J. Giddy, accompanied by Mnkonkoni Kunene and Majumba Mndzebele, arrived in Swaziland. Matsebula (1988:41) records that, on 24 June 1844 and at the command of the King, the missionaries were welcomed and shown a site for settlement. They were helped by the local community to build their initial shelters and plant vegetables and fruits. Christianity had thus come to Swaziland by royal invitation (Mzizi, 1988:282-83).<sup>4</sup>

3 Julian Kunnie (1994:19) describes the December 16, 1838 incident (the Battle of Blood River) as a: "Catastrophic day in the life of southern African peoples. Hundreds of black people were massacred on this day by the firepower of the Dutch settler colonialists in a fierce war to retain African ancestral land ... The Afrikaner ... erected the Voortrekker Monument to celebrate the day and to symbolise their gratitude to their God. Today, December 16 is a public holiday in South Africa (the Day of National Reconciliation), commemorated in the Afrikaner community, with a view to the Battle of Blood River, as the Day of the Vow. December 16 remained important in South Africa's history for another reason: it is also the day on which the African National Congress was founded in 1912."

4 A secular view of this history holds that King Somhlolo had not seen a vision at all. He had heard of the might and looks of the whites from others, especially because the Portuguese had already settled in Lourenço Marques (Mozambique). The Battle of *Encome* of 1838 had become known in the sub-region, and Swaziland was closest to the Zulu territory. Second, this history may be viewed as King Somhlolo's ambition who, after learning that *Belumbi* (whites—literally, workers of esoteric deeds, according to Kuper) were present in the region, with their might and military skill, at a time of desperate nation building, could provide unparalleled protection and further advance the career of his successor.

A royal dissension between King Mswati II and one of his senior brothers led to a clash, which caught the mission establishment in the middle. The King's "enemies" sought refuge at the Mahamba mission station, hoping that the King's warriors would respect the missionaries. In September 1845, a fierce battle was fought at the mission station, although there is no evidence that any of the new converts were killed, nor was any white person hurt. After the bloody encounter, the missionaries and some one thousand Swazi converts fled to Natal. Peter Kasenene (1993:46) argues that the new culture brought on by the new Christian civilisation was the cause of the initial royal rejection of Christianity:

*Those converts who accepted Christianity changed their ways of life, something that estranged them from the rest of the community. They changed their way of dressing, those who had been polygamous chased away all their wives except one, they did not take part in beer parties or other traditional gatherings, and they boycotted Swazi national ceremonies and rituals. The Swazi leaders got worried as a new nation seemed to grow within another. So when Allison voluntarily left Swaziland, Swazi leaders were happy about it. Consequently, they were not willing to have missionaries back into the country.<sup>5</sup>*

## ELEMENTS OF CIVIL RELIGION

The whites who settled in Swaziland after the Methodists had fled were concerned only with land and mineral rights. They were not missionaries by any stretch of the imagination. The Methodists returned in 1880, probably after the leadership that had been hostile to the missionaries of the 1840s had died. King Mswati II, for example, had chased away Merensky and Grutzner, two German missionaries who wanted to do mission work in 1860. The King had been suspicious that the missionaries were going to propagate an ideology of another King. When the two missionaries explained that their King hated wars and killings, Mswati II asked them if it was not true that whites were killing blacks in the region (Matsebula, 1988:54-5). Again in 1871, an Anglican missionary by the name of Rev. Robertson asked for permission from the royal household to evangelise Swaziland. The reception was negative. However, the Anglicans returned in 1881 and were warmly received. The Lutherans returned in 1887 to find a kind reception. This was during the reign of King Mbandzeni.

A superficial reading of Swazi Christian history, especially by the evangelical right, conveniently ignores the reason for the apprehensions the Swazi ruling aristocracy had about this new religion. Some people were thus quick to label Swaziland as a Christian country and glorify the Somhlolo vision as justification for this view. The Rev. A.B. Gamedze, an evangelical theologian, claims that the dream of Somhlolo was the Lord's command that Swazis should build their world and philosophy of life upon The Bible. Somhlolo had warned that the nation

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5 However, there is historical evidence that the King's *impi* (soldier) was assisted by Afrikaner personnel. The theory then of nationalistic reasons for the hatred of the new religion by the *status quo* seems to stand on shaky ground. There were four Afrikaner army generals who assisted the King's *impi*. Furthermore, in September 1860, King Mswati II granted the first land concession to a white, Coenraad Vermaak. To be sure, Jack Halpern observes that white settlement of Swaziland steadily increased during King Mswati II's reign, which lasted from 1840-1868 (Halpern, 1965:94-5).

should accept the book (*umculu*) and reject the coin (*indilinga*). Gamedze argues that the coin symbolised materialism, which finds its fullest manifestation in Marxist-Leninist communism or atheistic socialism:

*It has been public knowledge that Communism and apartheid have been the two forefront ideologies which have been responsible for turmoil and suffering in the world in this century. The day of their funeral, will be a day of ultimate victory and jubilation, not only for Somhloloism but also for the whole world. It will be victory for the church and state, to the glory of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Head of the church (Gamedze, 1990:31).*

Rev. Nicholas Nyawo, current President of the Swaziland Conference of Churches, maintains that Somhloloism was not King Somhlolo's idea. Somhlolo only served as an instrument of God:

*The Bible therefore is the base upon which we have constructed the country's socio-economic and political philosophy. It is acceptability of this foundation that has established an appreciable and mutual understanding between the state and the church; hence Swaziland is a Christian country (Nyawo, 1994:30).*

Scholars on civil religion, from Rousseau to Bellah, agree that civil religion is the self-obligation and religious justification of a people's culture and history. Civil religion embodies a regime of ideas, values, rituals, and symbols shared communally by a particular people who understand existence in religious terms. Kasenene (1988:44) has rightly observed:

*That system establishes or maintains social cohesion and unites the people in that society. It is both civil and religious. It is civil in so far as it deals with the basic public institutions exercising power in a society, nation or other political units and religious in so far as it evolves commitment and, within an overall world-view, expresses a people's ultimate sense of worth, and destiny.*

The emerging civil religion in Swaziland contains dangerous and anti-community elements. Kasenene drew very positive conclusions about Swazi civil religion. These conclusions ignore the exclusive and intolerant nature of a culture that justifies itself on religious grounds. The American founding fathers, and the Dutch trekkers from the Cape of Good Hope to the inland of South Africa, justified their exploits by reading the Exodus story. If it was all right for the Israelites to claim the Promised Land, a land whose vineyards they had not planted, then it was all right for the Americans to occupy the continent while at the same time displacing the native occupants. Apartheid was built on similar religious foundations. I argue that it is not an ethical expectation of a religion to promote a spirit of national purity and bigotry at the expense of the community spirit and the African world-view of *ubuntu* – the African perception of caring for others. Kasenene (1988:49) is not to be taken seriously when he observes:

*For a country faced with challenges to nationhood by very powerful external and internal forces, tolerance and caution are important particularly to avoid war with more powerful neighbours but more importantly to preserve the status quo. As a core tenet of Swazi civil religion, tolerance has generated secondary values such as good neighbourliness, generosity, hospitality, politeness, caution, forgiveness and patience. These are virtues in Swazi civil religion.*

The kind of civil religion advocated by the evangelical right is divisive and intolerant of other faiths. Could this be a distortion of Somhlolo's vision? The evangelical right use the vision to argue for the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Rev. N.T. Nyawo (1994:28) expressed this point forcefully when he said:

*Although Swaziland respects the freedom of conscience, she does not for one moment wish to vacillate on the theistic foundation upon which the nation was founded some 150 years ago. History has taught us that different and opposing religions, offered at the same time, to the same people, become divisive elements in the society. Swaziland does not want to engage herself in bloody religious wars. This is not scepticism, but it is a simple affirmation to the basic philosophy of the nation.*

Nyawo is emphasising the notion of national identity and spiritual preservation based on Christian moral grounds. Such a view, for example, does not accept other religions as Kasenene assumes.

Faced with a similar question, Manas Buthelezi argued that any nationalism that has no regard for the wellbeing of others is immoral. Wrote Buthelezi (1975:121):

*A nationalism that limits the possibilities of attaining that which constitutes the wholeness of life is destructive. In other words, if your nationalism so narrows your horizon in life as to exclude you from other spheres of human existence which may serve to enrich your life, that nationalism is a moral liability.*

## SWAZI ZIONISM AND CIVIL RELIGION

The turn of the twentieth century witnessed the impressive spread of the Zionist and Ethiopian movements.<sup>6</sup> Like all the other Christian denominations that had already made in-roads into the country, the Zionist faith was introduced in Swaziland by way of the royal family (Sundkler, 1976:208-23) This outgrowth of South African Zionism was very tolerant of African culture and customs, hence the senior members of the royal family had no difficulty in embracing it. Sundkler (1976:56) tells the story of the healing of the Queen Mother from some eye problem. When her sight was restored, she vowed as follows: "Never shall I abandon a church that has helped me thus." Whatever the meaning of this remark, the royal family was to learn later that it should be above denominational Christianity. This refers especially to the Queen and King.

In the 1920s and the 1930s, the colonial British Government, together with the white Missionary Council, made attempts to completely outlaw the Zionist faith in Swaziland. The reason was that the Zionists were distorting the true Christian faith by watering it down with lots of customs and traditions. In addition, since they worshipped mostly at night and beat drums during their

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6 Sundkler uses the terms "Ethiopian" and "Zionist" to distinguish between what he calls independent Bantu churches. Ethiopians are those churches that seceded from missionary churches, mainly on racial grounds. They also include some African churches that broke away due to reasons of power and prestige. Ethiopian churches are generally nationalistic. Zionist churches, on the other hand, while historically claiming a connection with Zion City, Illinois in the USA, are syncretistic according to Sunkler. They emphasise healing, speaking in tongues, purification rites, and various other taboos. For an in-depth distinction and discussion, also see B. Sundkler (1961), *Bantu prophets in South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 38-64.

singing, they were not different from traditional diviners (*tangoma*). The Zionists were thus labelled as a society of witches.

Sobhuza II, who had a polity agreement with the colonial government to leave matters of tradition to himself, succeeded in removing the matters of Zionism away from the purview of the British colonialists and their supporting Christian missions. Swazi Christian Zionism became a major pillar in preserving Swazi identity against the onslaught of the so-called Christian culture of the West. Sundkler (1976:243) expresses this point convincingly:

*[I]t was not so much Swazi culture, as the unity of Swazi culture, that was the real concern and it is on this point that missions seemed to be at fault while Zionists, possibly, might provide a solution. Not only had the missions failed to identify with Swazi national ceremonies, but also – and this was the real danger – by their own divisions they seemed to undermine the national unity. The Zionists on the other hand, through their programmatic identification with kingship, seemed to strengthen this unity – at least to a point.*

The connection between Swazi royalty and Zionism culminated in the formation of the League of African Churches in Swaziland (LACS). The initial members of this federation included both types mentioned in Sundkler's classification, and one is inclined to deduce that the Ethiopian spirit had a tremendous part to play in the early conception of the role of the federation in the struggle against colonialism.<sup>7</sup> Mr J.J. Nquku, a Zulu by origin who had come to work in Swaziland as an inspector of schools in 1930, was instrumental in conscientising Swazis against colonial subjugation. Although originally an Anglican Church member, he became instrumental in founding the United Christian Church of Africa with the involvement of the Swazi king. The doctrinal position of this church was composed by Nquku. It had features of Ethiopianism.<sup>8</sup> Nquku later found Swaziland's first political party, the Swaziland Progress Party.

The LACS was thus established as a protest federation to the Christian marginalisation of African worship by missionary churches. It served to consolidate the nationalistic spirit at a delicate time of the onslaught of Christian civilisation and Westernisation. Elsewhere I have observed:

*The Zionist-Royalty relationship is of a give-and-take type. Historically, the Zionists see the Royalty as the reason for their continued existence; otherwise A.G. Marwick would have banned them. Culturally, the Royalty sees Zionism as an important partner in cultural preservation. In this respect, Zionist churches, because of their tolerance of cultural elements,*

7 Sundkler (1976:228) observes that after the League had been formed in 1937, the Good Friday Movement – a function of nascent Swazi nationalism – was organised by “two men from an Ethiopian camp: AME Church and Zion. The AME were relatively educated elite with men such as Rev. Pepete and Rev. Sibiya. These two men joined forces with Stephen Mavimbela, who represented Zion, and the group were in close contact with the King.”

8 The United Christian Church of Africa (UCCA) was itself an invention of Sobhuza II with the assistance of Mr J.J. Nquku, who had witnessed the proliferation of Ethiopian churches in South Africa since the eve of the twentieth century. The Constitution of the UCCA stipulated that the church was founded on indigenous principles. It tolerates all national customs so long as they do not clash with Christian principles. The UCCA aims to Christianise the customs that appear not to conform to Christian doctrine. Lastly, and more importantly, “[t]he policy of our church in its doctrine means to grant full liberty to all men to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences” (Sundkler, 1976:227).



*are closer to the heart of the Swazi central socio-political institution, namely, the Royal Family (Mzizi, 1994:55, 62).*

The LACS is up to this day administratively and ecclesiastically controlled by the King and Queen Mother. Even though not all Zionist churches belong to the League, the number of its affiliates is remarkable. It is during the Good Friday season that one can witness the large number of Zionists coming to pay homage to Swazi royalty. The occasion resembles two other colourful events: The *Umhlanga* or Reed Dance, a fertility cult associated with young maidens and the Queen Mother which takes place in early spring; and the *Incwala* Dance, a feast of the first fruit that occurs in mid-summer and whose focus of attention is the King. The Good Friday ritual has come to be seen as the *Incwala* of the Christians.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to mention that Zionist priests are major players at the mid-summer *Incwala*. By their own admission, they are expected to pray for the success of *Incwala*, and for this they spend lengthy times at the main royal kraal where all the major rituals and dances of the event take place. Needless to say, this kind of involvement does not go down well with the other Christian denominations that view *Incwala* as an ancestral cult, not at all in conformity with Christian doctrine. The traditional missionary view to discard African customs and practices is today carried out by African Christians. In the Swazi scene, Zionists are viewed as a challenge for the Church because of their close affinity to Swazi traditions and heritage. The current President of the LACS attests to the strong Zionist royalty connection, thus:

*Our involvement with the royal family is not a thing of today. Our fathers and forefathers worked many great works of faith in the royal family. The Zionist presence at the Incwala ceremony every year does not mean Zionists do that work only. Zionists start praying for Incwala from the day it starts until the end ... . [T]he Incwala and Good-Friday events are essential in that the whole nation and the royalty, together with Zionists, come together in unity ... . [T]he King so loved and trusted us that we could be one of his own treasured regiments (libutho lakhe), a regiment of his in faith in Christ (Mzizi, 1994:308).*

One can conclude that there is a desire by the ruling elite and the LACS to make Swazi Zionism something of a state religion. If this observation holds any truth, it should be construed to mean that such a desire is tantamount to making Swaziland a Christian country. Swazi Zionism has gained itself some favour at the royal house by being tolerant and supportive of Swazi national customs and traditions, using the very scriptures some missionary-oriented churches quote to demonise some aspects of Swazi culture. Yet, it has to be recognised that not all Zionists embrace national traditions in the same manner. The Constitution of the LACS does not contain elements of tradition that are to be supported. This is an old Constitution that probably needs drastic revision. There is no vernacular version of it. The English version is hardly a matter of public knowledge, even to members of the League themselves.

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9 Ndlovu has observed, for example, that the Good Friday Movement depicts the Queen and King as chief patrons of Christianity in Swaziland. It sacralises Swazi kingship through Christian idiom: "Like the 'Water Priests' of the *Incwala* who help strengthen kingship, the Zionist clergy and their followers fortify the monarch through prayer and divination" (Mzizi, 1994:310).

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN SWAZILAND

Christian diversity in Swaziland bears testimony to the fact that the laws of the country are not prohibitive on matters of freedom of conscience and religion. The general impact such diversity has on the national ethos, especially of a small ethnically homogenous country like Swaziland, is beyond the scope of this discussion to assess. It will suffice to mention that any proliferation of Christian denominations everywhere, ever since the Reformation, normally resulted in divisions. It is not, however, the extent and nature of doctrinal diversity that should matter, but whether ecumenical efforts are made toward cooperation and co-existence. Swazi Christians may attempt to unite around the vision of King Somhlolo I, as explained earlier. Yet, such unity would soon lead to trouble when issues of culture and gospel are debated by the evangelical right, and indeed the Zionist right.

Christian diversity in Swaziland has given rise to the formation of three church federations. The first was the Swaziland Conference of Churches, which comprised the missionary churches of the first three decades or so of the twentieth century. The Conference emanated from the Missionary Council, whose existence was closely akin to the colonial government. It was discriminatory at first, admitting only whites within its ranks, and very hostile to African churches. The Council adopted this attitude directly from South Africa and some other African countries that had been colonised by the British. The Swaziland Conference of Churches is largely composed of conservative member churches whose doctrine emphasises the salvation of the human soul. Member Churches of the Conference hold a conservative view as to the Church's responsibility in a political community.

The LACS was formed in 1937 as a consequence of the clash between colonial Christianity and Swazi cultural understanding of Zionism. A.B. Marwick, the British Resident Commissioner, while adhering to British policy elsewhere in Africa, left all traditional matters to the jurisdiction of the monarch, except for those matters that had been legislated into law. Customary law was thus allowed to operate alongside civil law. It was the Resident Commissioner's enforcement of this policy that saved Swazi Zionism from being legally banished. The missionaries and the white settler community were uncomfortable with the rapid proliferation and growth of Zionist churches, both in Swaziland and in neighbouring South Africa. Zionist churches in Swaziland originated by and large in South Africa. Marwick approached the then Swazi King, Sobuza II, with the intention of raising concern about Zionism. The charges were, as we already noted, that Zionists were a society of witches because they worshipped at night and were beating drums like the so-called witchdoctors; and secondly, that they distorted true Christianity by bringing in pagan elements founded in the traditional culture of Africans. Sobuza II observed that the matter was indeed a cultural problem and that it consequently was something for him to handle. It also provided a great window of opportunity for the King, who was at that time working hard to consolidate Swazi hegemony and cultural unity as a strong weapon against colonial domination. In 1937, he called a meeting of Zionists at the Lobamba Royal Residence to discuss the Marwick threat.

Thus was born the League of African Churches with the express aim of establishing a “federation of all African Churches, fellowship of such Churches in Jesus Christ, and brotherhood among African Christians”. The League comprised Ethiopian churches as well, although the decline of the Ethiopian Movement in South Africa has caused the Ethiopians to be less significant in the operations of the League in Swaziland.

In 1976, another federation was started as a break away from the Conference of Churches. As a result of the influx of refugees from both neighbouring states of Swaziland, the Conference had to address the issue of its involvement in that predicament. There was a sharp difference of opinion, as the most conservative of the group felt refugee issues were the business of the government. The Catholics, Lutherans, and Anglicans disagreed. Thus, there was established the Council of Swaziland Churches in 1976.

Briefly then, Swaziland has: The Swaziland Conference of Churches, which is critical of Swazi culture and the traditional religion, and also critical of Zionists and any “unsaved Christian”; the League of African Churches, which is tolerant of Swazi culture and enjoys a remarkable royal proximity; and the Council of Swaziland Churches, which espouses a holistic gospel influenced by and large by the basic positions of Liberation Theology and the praxis theology of the World Council of Churches. In between these, there are a number of unaffiliated churches, e.g. the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the new charismatic churches whose doctrine of pneumatology and evangelicalism are not of the conventional Barthian type that influenced Christian expansionism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Swaziland does not yet have a national Council of Churches which could serve to unite these three formations. The Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for the registration of all churches and other religious organisations.

Swaziland has two other visible religious communities: Moslems and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i faith. The latter was introduced in the mid 1950s by an American couple, John and Valera Allen. They were part of a ten-year global campaign to spread the Baha'i faith to all corners of the globe. Kasenene (1988:104) tells the story of the royal encounter of the Baha'i faith:

*The King graciously told them that anyone coming with the word of God was welcome in Swaziland. This was in accordance with Somhlolo's vision ... . This meeting was providential because when later some Christian missionaries asked him to ban the Baha'i faith, alleging that the faith was false religion and would cause confusion among the people, the King refused and told the missionaries that he had met the pioneers himself and had found nothing wrong with their teaching.*

The Baha'i had not attempted to introduce their religion to the royal family. But it is remarkable that a number of members of the royal family are recorded as among the initial converts to the new faith. Examples are Prince Mazini and Princess Gcinaphi. The attractive fundamental teachings of the Baha'i faith were the oneness of humankind, the unity of all religions, and the equality of all races and classes, including those distinguished by gender.

Islam, having made its initial contacts in 1963, was fully operational by 1972. In 1972, the leaders made an attempt to meet the King so as to introduce the new faith.

*After hearing about the teaching and practices of Islam and the Islamic way of life, the King accepted that Islam could be propagated in Swaziland. He even promised the delegation a plot of land near Lobamba, if they failed to find a plot elsewhere, to establish their centre (Kasenene, 1988:71).*

It is possible, therefore, that the royal family understood Somhlolo's vision in broader and more tolerant terms. And this is Kasenene's methodology in his phenomenological analysis of religion in Swaziland. A kind of tolerance of other religions and of other brands of Christianity can be found only in the institution of kingship, much to the disappointment of other competing and more pietistic Christian formations. Christian denominationalism in Swaziland is as diverse as it is divisive. The persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Swaziland and the attitude of nonchalance demonstrated by other Christian denominations bear testimony of the divisive nature of Christianity in Swaziland.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are the most marginalised Christian group in Swaziland. By 1960, the group consisted of close to 400 Witnesses in the country. Efforts were made in 1960 to witness to the white settler community, and soon thereafter a cosmopolitan congregation was established.

This was a time of great political ferment in Swaziland in particular, and in Africa at large. Since Jehovah's Witnesses practice what they call the doctrine of Christian neutrality in matters of politics and state, they soon distinguished themselves from the rest of the population. Their refusal to vote earned them reprimands and ridicule from the chiefs and other village authorities. But King Sobhuza II advised that they be left alone because: "... they did not belong to any political party and were peaceful, neutral people" (Jehovah's Witnesses, 1976:219).<sup>10</sup>

King Sobhuza II's attitude to Witnesses was favourable and accommodative. However, the Christian clergy from the three ecumenical formations in Swaziland are either openly critical of Jehovah's Witnesses' literary approach to The Bible or are silently uncomfortable with their doctrine. Witnesses are carefully taught the major doctrines which they have to defend by the use of Scripture. That means, therefore, that when they refuse to participate in national ceremonies, and refuse to mourn the dead, they have scriptural foundations to justify their positions. They staunchly hold onto those foundations, regardless of the magnitude of the consequences.

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10 The Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses (1976) also records the refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses to participate in the 1969-1971 *Umcwasho*. The Witnesses interpreted the event as being centred on the honouring of an individual, in this case Princess Sidzandza. "Since it was a form of creature worship and condoned fornication at a price, Jehovah's Witnesses refused to observe the *umcwasho* period and to wear the *umcwasho* around their necks." Id. Persecution of Witnesses is not based on any known state policy. But it is on matters of some imaginary customs and practices that local chiefdoms, as well as schools, have isolated and persecuted Jehovah's Witnesses. Customary and common law do not provide sanctions against people who are conscientious objectors.

A meeting of the Christian clergy under the banner of the League of African Churches attempted as early as 1975 to accuse the Witnesses before the Swazi king. The allegations were focussed on the mourning of the dead. Unfortunately, together with the accusation that the Witnesses did not mourn, there was a litany of false accusations to the effect that they kick a corpse and treat it with great contempt because the dead person had been defeated by the devil. The meeting at the King's palace was emotional, lasting eight hours. Some Witnesses were present at that meeting. They tried to explain their position to a rather deaf audience. The accusations intensified as the clergy raised the Witnesses' refusal to sing the national anthem and their refusal to salute the flag. The spirit of the clergy in that 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1975 meeting was to persuade the King to ban the sect in Swaziland. But he did not. The King viewed the controversies as part of religious life where the search for the truth never reaches a dead-end.

The most visible persecution of Witnesses now takes place in chiefdoms. In all of the cases that have reached the courts, the Witnesses have been victorious. One chief in the Hhohho region, who had evicted some Watchtower families from his area, was instructed in Court that he had no right to evict people on account of their religious beliefs.

The Swazi state has not come up with a firm policy on religious freedom, even after the rulings of the courts. One would expect that the traditional authorities should have by now adopted a common policy in order to solve once and for all the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in chiefdoms. This leads me to conclude this survey by discussing the legal scenario in matters of religion in Swaziland.

## **FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND THE LAW**

Swaziland does not as yet have a constitution, let alone a Bill of Rights. Although, it should be pointed out that as member of the United Nations, Swaziland recognises the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and as a member of the Organisation of African Unity, Swaziland has ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Whereas it is understood at the United Nations and OAU level that ratifying a convention, protocol or charter signals an undertaking to give effect to the rights specified in the concerned document, a State Party – at least in the case of Swaziland – has to incorporate the provisions of the ratified convention or charter into its domestic law. There is no uniform procedure as to how this may be carried out. But many countries entrench the provisions, as appropriate, in a Bill of Rights modelled on the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the charter or convention. Where a constitution is absent, one would expect the legislature to pass appropriate laws that seek to give effect to the provisions of a ratified instrument in order to entrench these provisions into the regime of law of that particular country. After all, no one would expect a constitution, where it does exist, to record all the finer details of every right or freedom protected and guaranteed under the constitution.

The Kings Proclamation to the Nation of 12 April 1973 in effect meant that the Independence Constitution was being replaced by the Proclamation and the ensuing decrees.<sup>11</sup> The 1968 Constitution was problematic to the Swazi ruling aristocracy because of Chapter II, which guaranteed the “Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual”. This Bill of Rights enshrined such rights as freedoms of expression and association, which in effect legitimised the formation of political parties. The Swazi Monarch, as stated above, in conjunction with the Swazi National Council, had vigorously opposed the existence of political parties since the negotiations for independence in the early 1960s.

Chapter II, Section 11 of the Constitution contained the “Protection of Freedom of Conscience”. Sub-section 1 of this section provides:

*Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom, and for the purposes of this section freedom of conscience includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.*

Sub-section 5 allows the State to promulgate laws that are required for defence, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, even if they are seen to infringe on religious rights. This means that freedom of religion did not supersede the public ethos and interest. Furthermore, the state could legislate to protect the “rights and freedoms of other persons, including the right to observe and practise any religion or belief without unsolicited intervention of members of any other religion or belief”. This is an important provision, because it gave the state the leeway to legislate laws that protect the existence of particular religious formations, sects, denominations, etc. If this provision were entrenched in the Kingdom’s system of law, the clergy who have shown open animosity toward Jehovah’s Witnesses and other religions in the Kingdom would be acting *ultra vires*.

The absence of a law that guarantees religious freedom exposes the religious community to all kinds of abuse. In April 1996, at a similar meeting as the 1975 Lozitha Palace meeting, the Christian clergy spoke disparagingly against the Baha’i faith and Islam. They purported to persuade the King to banish these faiths from the Kingdom. The King refused, asking them instead to pray for members of the other faiths. However, there was much consternation and tension in the religious sector as a result of the pronouncements that had been made.

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11 Nkonzo Hlatshwayo, in his quest of whether the Swazi legislature is above any other powers of legislating, concludes that based on the King’s Proclamation to the Nation of 1973, it is the King of Swaziland who can make, amend or repeal any law by decree. Writes Hlatshwayo (1997:13) writes, “At least two decrees set out the proclamation as the supreme law of the land with the result that any piece of legislation emanating from parliament, which has a tendency to conflict with the proclamation must be viewed as a nullity, at least to the extent of its consistency with the proclamation.” Hlatshwayo (1997:13) refers specifically to the King’s Decree No. 1 of 1987, which amends both paragraph 14 of the Proclamation and Section 60 of the Establishment of the Parliament of Swaziland Order 1978.

## **PART 2 – MONARCHY: THE DOMINANCE OF THE SWAZI MONARCHY AND THE MORAL DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRATISATION OF THE SWAZI STATE**

The struggle for independence in Swaziland contended with two important dynamics: (i) the emerging new ideology of party politics in Africa largely patterned after the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy; and (ii) the ideology of traditionalism that centred all contestation of political power on the monarchy. I observe that over the years the dominant philosophical framework in Swaziland has been that all constitutional initiatives should take due regard of the history, culture, traditions and way of life of the Swazi people. While the need to harmonise traditional sensibilities with modern principles of constitutional and international law is underscored, there is no political will to forge such harmony. In the light of the historical processes that have taken place since the 1960s I argue that the ideology of traditionalism is under threat. Kingship as an institution is also threatened as calls for genuine democratisation of the Swazi state are made both from within and from without, in the latter case by the community of nations. I conclude by suggesting that unless adjustments are made to both the traditional and the modern political structures, Swaziland will continue to be a security risk in the southern Africa region. It is imperative, therefore, to shift tradition from being an ideology of domination to one of a shared value system in a transitory state guided by the realities of a modern democratic society.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The notion of absolute monarchism can be traced to early European thought that held that the universe was a grand empire founded upon principles of divine Logos. (Harding, 1997:31). Judeo-Christian beliefs underscored the centrality of royal authority and the notion of the divine appointment and nature of kings. Royal absolutism, therefore, implied that kings were God's representatives amongst nations. They commanded unsurpassed authority and respect for them was demanded, not earned. Such demand was for the purpose of ensuring the celestial fiat of kings as the cornerstone of universal (and national) harmony. In Europe today notions of the divine authority and appointment of kings are no longer tenable, thanks to the tedious weaving in of democratic ideals over the centuries. On the other hand, it should be recalled that when European powers colonised Africa one of their priorities was to weaken traditional forms of governance by locating the locus of power and social control somewhere in Europe. Traditional forms of governance were thus secondary, only deriving their legitimacy from the consolidation of societies around age-old customs and traditions. The location of real political and economic power in Europe was not subject to local questioning or negotiation.

The eventual "death" of African traditional authority suited the colonial masters for as long as colonialism lasted. When, towards the middle of the twentieth century, calls were made for democracy, the primary question was what should replace colonial governance. The idea of

reverting to the glorious past of African kingdoms and chiefdoms as edifices of power was not an option, ostensibly because the colonial master still wanted to perpetuate his interests in Africa. British Africa was thus channelled to adopt the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy while French Africa voted in 1958 for the so-called Fifth Republic of France, which was essentially a continuation of the French colonisation process. Did these replacement models work? Suggesting that they did not, Ali Mazrui (2001:18-27) argues that it was Africa's fault for borrowing:

*... Western tastes without Western skills, Western consumption patterns without Western production techniques, urbanisation without industrialisation, secularisation (erosion of religion) without scientification.*

Mazrui feels Africa would have thrived had it gone back to its "own tastes ... retaining its own lower levels of skills ... [retaining] African consumption patterns". The Western models were thus unsuitable for Africa and plunged it into an abyss of anarchy and tyranny. "Anarchy was too little control; tyranny was too much" (Mazrui, 2001). Mazrui does not, however, indicate what Africa should have done to respond to the complex web of problems inherited from the colonial past. For example, the new African nationalist leader, having successfully won leadership through the ballot box, found a ready-made infrastructure with all its colonial trappings. Contrary to inherited forms of leadership in the traditional superstructure, Africa's fighters for independence were charismatic individuals who were not voted into their roles, but filled them as part of the historic process of the Promethean quest for freedom. After winning independence, the nationalist leaders were thus the new celebrated heroes who had suffered callously under colonial regimes.

Invariably most of them were Western educated. They spoke English or French. They inevitably used some of the value systems they learned from the West as their tools in the liberation struggle. The political liberation ethic and democratic ideals they cherished were imported from the West and there was little time for indigenising these concepts in an Africa faced with the challenges of modernity and development. But it soon emerged that the nationalists could not practise at home what they had learnt from the West. The exigencies of development in the process of decolonisation took priority over matters of democracy and human rights. Dissenting voices and calls for periodic elections were considered disruptive and counterproductive. Most independence constitutions were shelved and laws that had been used to sustain the colonial state were retrieved and applied with impunity. The end result was not development but rampant corruption, the looting of state resources by the powerful elite and the creation of the ruthless African dictator.

In differentiating between the ultimate goals of democracy and the steps necessary to achieve them Mazrui draws a distinction between fundamental rights and human rights, seeing the latter as instruments for achieving the former. This leads him also to distinguish between democracy as a means and democracy as a goal:



*Firstly, to make the rulers accountable and answerable for their actions and policies. Secondly, to make the citizens effective participants in choosing those rulers and in regulating their actions. Thirdly, to make the society as open and the economy as transparent as possible; and, fourthly, to make the social order fundamentally just and equitable to the greatest number possible. Accountable rulers, actively participating citizens, open society and social justice – those are the four fundamental ends of democracy (Mazrui, 2001:18).*

Lintz and Stepan (2002:10) identify five conditions necessary for consolidating democracy:

1. Conditions must exist for the development of a free and lively civil society.
2. Political society must be relatively autonomous.
3. All (leaders and followers) must be subject to the rule of law.
4. There must be a state bureaucracy that is usable by the government of the day.
5. Economic society must be institutionalised.

Conditions of democracy necessarily imply that a transition process that sought to bring about a new social order must have taken place. It is only after the old social order has been removed that it is possible to establish and consolidate democracy (Lintz & Stepan, 1997; 2002).

This study will indicate the problems of democratisation Swaziland has faced since 1968 in the context of a monarchical political regime. Swazi kingship is not absolute in the Western sense but has a rigid structure of checks and balances, all meant to consolidate power in the monarchy. It is this concept of the centrality of the monarch that explains the nature and fundamental function of security.

## **TRIUMPH OF TRADITION**

Swaziland's dominant cultural text is characterised by an ideology of traditionalism (Mzizi, 2002), which is the cornerstone of the attempts to consolidate the modern superstructure. This ideology, according to Macmillan (1985), started to emerge in the 1920s and 1930s as Swazis tried to come to terms with the social dislocation created by colonialism. Traditionalism as an ideology seeks to preserve symbols of the past in the economy of legitimating modern systems in the socio-cultural and political community. While agreeing with Macmillan that, like culture, traditionalism – which is culture's functional expression – is dynamic in both form and content, Mzizi (2002:168) argues that:

*This [dynamism] is a natural phenomenon true of all social facts, but the uniqueness of the Swazi scenario lies in the fact that the Swazi cultural reality falls into the trap of being used by the dominant group to legitimate the status quo. The most dangerous scenario is when the gullible masses are unaware that what they have always held to be culture and tradition is being used to subjugate them in whatever form. In this scenario, traditionalism falls into the trap of social class, serving the whims of the dominant class in their agenda of power wielding and self-preservation.*

Swazi kingship survived the hardships of colonialism thanks to the formidable and gallant attempts first of Queen Regent Labotsibeni Mdluli and later of Sobhuza II, her grandson. The Queen, while sensitive to the inevitable processes of change, asserted strong regency that prepared the new King to fit into both the old and the new worlds with an agenda to either strike a balance between the two or to employ elements of the old to dominate the new. In a 1933 memorandum (Macmillan, 1985:651) Sobhuza expressed his reasons for detesting missionary education.

- [It] causes the Swazi scholar to despise Swazi institutions and his indigenous culture.
- [It] causes him to be ill fitted to his environment.
- [It] releases him from the wholesome restraints, which the Swazi indigenous method of education inculcated, and does not set up any effective substitutes for them.

The colonial government had recognised Swaziland as a chiefdom under a paramount chief, as was common throughout British Africa. Sobhuza II was thus allowed by British colonial practice to be in charge of all traditional institutions except for those that fell within the jurisdiction of the Resident Commissioner, the Crown's Representative. Sobhuza II used this leverage to consolidate his power base, fighting off all colonial tendencies that threatened traditional institutions. This was to be the case from the time he began to tackle the land question to the period of the "winds of change" in the 1950s and 1960s. The struggle for political independence in Swaziland had to contend, on the one hand, with the new emerging ideology of party politics favoured by the British and, on the other, with the traditional ideology that centres all power in the monarchy (Mzizi, 1995:172). Sobhuza II had warned in 1959 that if the British championed a constitutional dispensation that would undermine traditional authority a constitutional crisis would result (Van Wyk, 1965:16).

The greatest threat to traditional authority, Sobhuza II believed, was the universal franchise. However, his attempts to win independence based on a purely monarchical system failed and in 1964 he was pushed to establish a royal political party, the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM).

The power base of this movement was the monarchy and its institutions, represented by the charismatic personality of Sobhuza II himself, who commanded unquestionable allegiance from the entire population. Thus, traditional sensibilities were used successfully to counter the threatening foreign ideology that maintained that power should be contested. Sobhuza II did indeed contest power and emerged with a sweeping victory as if to prove to the colonial detractors that kings in Africa had inherent powers. On National Flag Day on 25 April 1967 (Kuper, 1978:29) Sobhuza II derided party politics in Africa in the following terms:

*This is a day of rejoicing ... . It is the tradition of all African Kingdoms that their Kings are leaders as well as Kings. It is also true for Swaziland. Now, rightly or wrongly, some people have mistaken this dual capacity as dictatorship. I would like to assure you here and now that the King both leads and is led by his people. I am my people's mouthpiece ... . There can be no peaceful progress without cooperation and unity of the people.*

The socio-political dynamics that made Sobhuza II address so vehemently the issue of the leadership of kings are obvious. He was constrained by the swelling tides of Pan-Africanism on the external front, and the impatience and restlessness of the educated elite on the home front who were exploiting the issues of labour to advance reasons for a representative grassroots political democracy. The Pan-African forces within Swaziland, although waning as the race to independence matured, did not attempt to reject kingship but, as the British had willed, kingship was to be constitutionally entrenched and not politically contested. The true value of kingship in national identity could only be properly celebrated if it remained within the confines of the traditional superstructure, the heart and soul of Swazi hegemony. Sobhuza II and his Swazi National Council felt otherwise. To them kingdoms could not be half republics and half kingdoms. The authority of the King could in no way be compromised. This view was to have far-reaching consequences.

Political parties, especially the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) led by a Swazi Medical Doctor, Ambrose Zwane, espoused a Pan-African ideology. Its appeal to the working class threatened the dominance of the King's Party in the 1972 elections. The eventual winning of a meagre three parliamentary seats by the NNLC signalled the end of multipartyism in Swaziland and the beginning of a long drawn out process of constitution making that has been ongoing ever since. Believing that the political pluralism provided for in the Independence Constitution could, in the long run, jeopardise the dominance of the monarchy, Sobhuza II banned political parties on 12 April 1973. He thus succeeded, by using extralegal traditional powers, in asserting himself as political as well as traditional leader (Wanda, 1990). In a well-prepared proclamation, he argued that:

- The Constitution had failed to provide for the machinery of good governance and the maintenance of peace and order;
- The Constitution was the cause of growing unrest, insecurity and dissatisfaction and was an impediment to free and progressive development in all spheres of life;
- The Constitution had permitted the importation into the country of highly undesirable political practices alien to, and incompatible with, the way of life in Swazi society and designed to disrupt and destroy its peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity; and
- Increasingly this element engendered hostility, bitterness and unrest in a hitherto peaceful society.

(The King's Proclamation to the Nation, 12 April, 1973 s 2(a), (b) and (c).)

The constitutional crisis that Sobhuza II had predicted in 1959 had indeed come to pass. To him, full freedom and independence would only be achieved when a homegrown Constitution, that would guarantee peace, order, good governance, happiness and the welfare of the Swazi nation, was crafted. The assertion was a clear rejection of the Westminster model Constitution promulgated under Act 50 of 1968.

It is important to note that when Sobhuza II repealed the 1968 Constitution, he assumed all executive powers previously granted to the Prime Minister and Cabinet by the Constitution. He could now act at his own discretion, consulting whomsoever he wished without being bound by law. He gave himself the power to detain without charge for a renewable sixty days any person he deemed a threat to the peace, and the courts had no jurisdiction to hear cases of detention. Meetings of a political nature, including processions and demonstrations, were to be censored by the Commissioner of Police. Thus, traditional sentiments had triumphed over modern political initiatives (Mzizi, 1995:176). B.P. Wanda (1990) comments as follows with regard to the King's action:

*The legality of the King's action in repealing the Constitution, prompted and fuelled by a resolution of Parliament, is questionable. The resolution of Parliament advising the King to repeal the Constitution was neither necessary nor adequate in itself; at best the resolution was only evidence of the subordinate status of the legislature in relation to the position of the King, and affirmative of the King's underlying claims that his powers and authority proceeded not from the Constitution, but outside it.*

Sobhuza II recreated himself as an absolute monarch who, between 1973 and 1978, ruled the country with a Council of Ministers which, according to the Legislative Procedure Order of 13 April 1973, had no say on any legal Bill except to draft it and hand it to the King to pass as a Kings-Order-in-Council (Mzizi, 1995:177). Baloro (1991) noted that the net effect of the April 1973 events was to enable the King to complete the full circle of transforming himself from a formal constitutional monarch with relatively broad executive powers to an absolute executive monarch unbridled by the limitations of any constitutional provisions.

The *Umbutfo* Swaziland Defence Force (USDF) was formed during the turbulent 1973 crisis with the sole mandate of defending the institution of kingship from internal challenges. *Umbutfo* is a siSwati word for "regiment" and, according to tradition regiments are established and named by a king for the purpose of protecting kingship. Regiments in the traditional sense must undergo a period of royal training that involves painstaking discipline, a ritual from which they graduate with an insignia of special beads called *simohlwana*. While undergoing the initiation process they must demonstrate unflinching love for and loyalty to king and country. The expression they use after graduation is: *tsine sigane iNkhosi* (we are married to the King). Thus, it was that the first 600 recruits into the USDF were drawn from strong, able-bodied young and middle-aged men who had passed the traditional initiation at different times. They were now ready to defend the King, not with the traditional shield and battleaxe, but with the barrel of a gun.

It has been argued that Sobhuza II had the best of intentions in 1973. Hilda Kuper (1978:336-7), the late King's official biographer, sees the 1973 events as a turn from –

*... nominal political independence into a full sovereignty under a leader who had proven his wisdom and moral courage over the years, a man ready to listen to all sides before making a decision, a king who was not a tyrant, a king inspired by ideals of the best in a traditional African monarchy in which there was the interplay of councils and the King the mouthpiece of the people.*

Kuper's hallowing remarks are based on the traditional role of Swazi kings that had no concept of absolute authority (Booth, 1983; Hlatshwayo, 1994) since various councils (*emabandla*) were put in place to check and balance the powers and decisions of the monarch.

These councils were established on the principle that they were representative. Hence, selection to their membership was not arbitrary. But the King's position in 1973 was that henceforth he would rule with his Cabinet and he assumed supreme powers and placed himself at the centre of the entire political machinery. Clearly, he had taken charge of every facet of Swaziland's political life, both in the traditional domain and in the modern governance sector.

## IMAGES OF KINGSHIP: SOMHLOLO'S VISION

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*Around 1834 King Mswati I (also known as Somhlolo), founder of the Swazi nation, is said to have had a vision where he saw white people coming out of the sea to his land. In their hands they had two symbols. On the right, they had a book and on the left, they had a round object. Then his aunt appeared and advised him not to harm the white people and not to take the round object but only the black book. From there this vision was interpreted as a vision from God to invite Christian missionaries to Swaziland. His son Mswati II sent emissaries to invite missionaries and so the first missionaries arrived in the country in 1844. They were Methodists and built the first ever mission station. From then on Swazis have held the belief that the vision came from God and because of that Swaziland is supposed to be a Christian country. Mzizi was very critical of the idea of Swaziland being an exclusively Christian country and also of the use of religion to legitimate the monarchy using the story of the dream. In the following essays, he is engaging this idea and also addresses the issue of the monarchy and its role in a modern day Swaziland.*

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It was a strange coincidence last Sunday that both this column and Dr Ben Dlamini's just across the page treated the subject of kingship. I do not know whether Swazis appreciate an objective discussion about kingship or they feel the institution is too holy and divine for public debate. I remember in 1994 when a group of curious Christians from all the ecumenical formations in the country gathered at the Mountain Inn to talk about Christianity and Swazi culture. One of the subjects on the agenda was *Incwala*. It was supposed to be addressed by two knowledgeable gentlemen from the royal kraal. Both of them made last minute apologies. But it was chief Maweni who surprised me. He was standing for Prince Sobandla, who had been invited to open the seminar-workshop. After going frantically through his prepared speech, he said something like this,

*... before I conclude, Mr Chairman, let me ... I mean there is something in your programme that worries me: Item so and so, on day such and such. In Swaziland it is taboo to discuss Incwala. I just want to warn you ladies and gentlemen. In fact this could ruin your workshop if Labadzala (elders of the nation) were to know. I therefore suggest that you drop the topic right now.*

Chief Maweni's advice sent shock waves to all participants. Senator Mary Mdziniso's presentation would have touched on the positive aspects of *Incwala* and some cultural activities on the upbringing of responsible boys had to be revised haphazardly. The senator never submitted a written version of her insightful presentation for publication in the workshop proceedings report. It does occur to me that it is odd that in these days of enlightenment and education, days of democracy and transparency, we would still feel that some significant national customs and practices should be left shrouded in secrecy. Why should the younger generation be left to second-guess what these very central institutions really mean? Dr Dlamini attempted a clear exposé of the meaning of seeking royal intervention (*kwembula ingubo*) in a moment of crisis. He stressed that such a practice cannot be open to abuse because when a king so grants his clemency, he is by no means setting a precedent. He cannot be called to account for having intervened in a case.

Commenting about the intended meeting between teachers and the King, I had raised the point that there should be a measure of restraint in expecting that every industrial dispute would not have gone well if it didn't end at the doorstep of His Majesty. The King had acted like a true father when he addressed teachers last July. Swaziland was engulfed in educational crisis. While the wisdom of the teachers to go to the King instead of exercising their right to vote on the strike sounded premature and misdirected at the time, there was no way the King would have turned them away. He had to rise to the occasion and solve the crisis. Indeed he did, only to be let down by an un-calculating government which still felt that the no-work no-pay rule would teach the teachers a lesson or two.

In the last edition of "Dissection", I was primarily concerned about our fundamental symbols. That we are a nation of symbols is not in dispute. That our most powerful symbols are drawn from natural objects like the animals of the wild and the birds of the air is a well-known fact to all Swazis. I identified our two primary symbols as the lion and she-elephant. These symbols are utilised because of the power they evoke and the tremendous and overwhelming feeling they emit. If you stand in front of a live lion or an elephant, even if there is no cause for fear, your knees would knock each other and you would tumble like a drunk. I am not talking about a charging lion. The essence of argument is that these two powerful symbols need to be revised in a Swaziland that is undergoing change. That we need the lion and the elephant is not in question. But how should we perceive these symbols in the light of the envisaged democratic Swaziland, a Swaziland that has debunked all feudalistic elements and has cast aside all aristocratic practice of governance. We suggested the multicoloured lion and elephant. In other words, these symbols, in order to be meaningful, should be representative of all reality, reflective of the positive aspects of the nation and the religious unity and diversity found in the broad spectrum of our society.

There are two symbols we are going to be hearing about during the Easter season. Around 1836 King Somhlolo is said to have seen a vision. White skinned people with hair like the end of an ox tail came with a book and a coin. The King warned that the book should be received

and welcomed, but the coin should be rejected. In the Christian fraternity, the book represents the Christian Bible and coin represents money or materialism. King Mswati II is said to have sent envoys to the Transvaal where he had heard that the book had come. The young king wanted to realise his late father's dream, hence it is said that Christianity came into Swaziland by royal invitation. History has it that it was in 1844 that the Bible came into the Kingdom. Rev. Dr A.B. Gamedze coined an interesting term that describes the Christianisation of Swaziland, an aspect that was occurring in other ethnic groups in the region and beyond. For Gamedze this new revelation was championed by God himself who chose to speak through kings and other influential people. He called this pattern "Somhloloism".

Interestingly, Europe by the late 1840s was grappling with the ideas of a young philosopher, Karl Marx, whose ideas rejected all religions as opiates of the masses. Gamedze would thus contrast the spirit of Marx materialism in the north and the religious pietism in the south. These are interesting views, and I miss Dr Gamedze's erudite exploration of these views and reinterpretation of our religious history. But what does Somhloloism mean? I quote Dr Gamedze:

*Somhloloism may be parochial in history and name, but as a philosophy it is universal ... . Our Lord commanded that Swaziland should build her world and life view on the Bible and not on the coin or currency, which, as a philosophy, symbolises materialism which finds its fullest manifestation in Marxist-Leninist communism or atheistic socialism ... . Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost signal victory bells for Somhloloism because it means that all Marxist-oriented states throughout the world will now adopt the Somhloloistic philosophy.*

The ideas of Gamedze are important in that he takes the vision of Somhlolo before the borders of this kingdom. King Somhlolo was thus not just a historical figure for the Swazis, but a gift to the world. Not himself as flesh and blood, but himself as a visionary for a world filled with the peace of Christ, which passes all understanding. Very revealing is the fact that Gamedze saw Somhloloism as triumphing against communism and apartheid.

Gorbachev and De Klerk respectively were mere agents in history who finally brought these two powerful ideologies to their knees, but the fact that they would finally yield was long predetermined. It is unfortunate that Somhloloism, to many Swazis of the Christian faith, means exclusionism. It is against Somhlolo's vision to castigate people of other faiths, people who are different in creed, political opinion and in skin colour.

Somhlolo did not see black people holding a black Bible and preaching a black Jesus. But he saw white people, with the Bible, preaching the universal Christ. The invitation of these white people was an affirmation that questions of race were inferior to the gospel, that in Swaziland whites and blacks could live together as integrated beings under God. That Somhlolo's vision was not particular to the Methodist Church but, after the teething problems that resulted in the running away of the early missionaries at Mahamba, and after 1880, there was a proliferation of different denominations in Swaziland. Today, Swaziland is a multi-denominational country, indeed in the spirit of the vision of Somhlolo. Somhloloism to me means integration and coexistence. There is no other way in which I see the gospel of Christ except in these images.

I trust that this year Swazi Christians will not gather at Lozitha on Saturday 29 March to utter irresponsible anathemas about other faiths.

True Christianity means love, it means affirming the humanness of all humanity knowing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Word-become-flesh, who lived among human beings, even among people society hated and castigated. Jesus the Nazarene loved Mary Magdalene in the same manner as he loved the Samaritan woman; he loved poor Lazarus with the same love as the tax swindler Zachaeus. Why should Swazi Christians be different or better than Jesus Christ? Is a follower better than a leader?

## UNEASY LIES THE HEAD THAT HOLDS THE CROWN

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*In this article, Mzizi looks at the challenges facing the king of Africa's last absolute monarchy with regard to issues around social, economic and political developments that face the country. He bemoans the lack of advisors who speak truth to the King and advise him well.*

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William Shakespeare, that timeless literary legend, summed up the unfathomable duties and responsibilities of a king in a few memorable words: "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown" (Henry IV). Shakespeare was talking about the endless problems and worries that attended the office of the King, especially that at the end of the day, all blame is heaped on one person. The welfare of the state stands or falls on the King. The unfolding events in Swaziland indicate that while those in leadership circles may be stressed out by the embarrassing failure to resolve what looked like a simple problem someone is far more stressed than they are.

It is the one on whose head rests the crown. I am tempted to suggest that King Mswati III's crown is probably the most troubled crown in Africa, caught up in the tricky web of tradition and modernisation. King Sobhuza II contended with these forces in the context of British colonialism. Right up to 6 September 1968, the Swazi monarch was not convinced that it was acceptable in Africa to marry the institution of monarchy with multi-party politics. On 12 April 1973 the King mollified this marriage. Since then Swaziland has never been the same. It is clearly not in the interest of any king to decree laws that may suggest anything to do with sharing the crown yet it is a well-known fact that within the royal household there will always be tensions and disputes over the crown. Some princes may see themselves as pretenders and contenders to the crown. The supporters of the King within the house of Emalangeneni may as well be the ones who are out to frustrate the King's rule. In the recent past, Prince Mfanasibili of Embeblebeni surprised many observers when he said the Constitutional Review Commission will not succeed until he is given the right platform to spill his beans. Whether or not his beans are of any interest to anyone, Mfanasibili is convinced that if it was not for him and his *Liqoqo* cohorts, crown-Prince Makhosetive would not have seen the crown. The irony of his assertions is that Mfanasibili, like Bhekimpi and others, are high treason convicts. They tampered with the crown in 1983 when they staged a royal coup upon Queen Dzeliwe.



Prince Mangaliso's father was the authorised person during the *Liqoqo* reign of terror. But at the time of demise, Prince Sozisa was not anywhere near the royal household. It is his son, Mangaliso, who returned from South Africa's homeland universities with a professional title on his forehead, with whom UNISWA had problems. Nevertheless, possibly his new academic title and his blue-blood status saw him snatching three high profile responsibilities at Tibiyo, CRC and Civil service Board. Had UNISWA accepted him, he probably would have been vice-chancellor and professor of law. If his performance at the CRC is anything to go by, your guess is as good as mine as to how many enemies he would have created with pomposity at the university by now. Back to the beans, Prince Mfanasibili's supporters claim that they have information that one prince who occupies a lucrative job in the *Tinkhundla* superstructure had clubbed with Queen Dzeliwe in a bid to alienate the crown further away from the crown-Prince Makhosetive. The names Prince Mfanasibili and Gabheni have been foremost in this controversy. Prince Mangaliso suggested to Mfanasibili to take the matter to the royal family because "*Lena ngeyasendlunkhulu*" (this one belongs to the royal household). The nation was disturbed to hear of violence and brutality near the airport in the afternoon of Tuesday 28 October 1997. Nearly three weeks after the event the police force has not come up with a clear and convincing reason on what sparked off the violence.

There have been wild speculations on the matter. The most recent is that there were assassins who had collaborated with the police to cause a commotion at the moment the King's convoy drove past the crowd. One source disclosed to this column that a police officer very well known to him had forewarned him of the plan. He had cautiously told the source to get away from the crowd. Everything took place exactly as it had been related by the police officer. That then brings in the element of a possible attempt on the life of the King. If the police commissioner is not doing anything about the matter, especially even after the SNAT president mentioned it to teachers on 5 November 1997, I think the safety of the King cannot be guaranteed. The police force should get to the very bottom of this saga for, indeed, if the King is not safe who can boast of safety in this kingdom? The Shakespearean literary tradition of conspiracies against kings was being orchestrated by trusted friends and a general by the name of Macbeth. Mysterious shady beings had appeared to Banquo and Macbeth as they returned from fighting the Norwegians and the Thane of Cowdor. The unearthly beings pronounced some predictions, amongst which was that Macbeth would be king of Scotland. Ambition on his part soon conquered loyalty to Duncan, and the cunning tongue of his wicked and shrewd wife caused Macbeth to murder the King right in the former's castle after the generous and trusting king had paid him a courtesy call.

Julius Caesar, who had become a national hero as a great soldier and leader, was murdered by close friends who feared that he was becoming too ambitious for the throne. These friends apparently thought they were saving the Roman Empire from a potential dictator; but they themselves had different motives for the murder. Cassius, who led the conspiracy, said to the noble Brutus who was to deliver the last blow on the falling Caesar, "I was born as free as Caesar; so were you. We both have fed as well, and we can both endure the winter's cold as well as he. But this man has now become a god, and Cassius is a wretched creature who must

bend his body if Caesar carelessly looks at him.” The friends of Caesar killed him at the state Capitol. Brutus, who took the charge of pacifying the frightened masses, honestly confessed:

*Would you rather have Caesar living and die as slaves or Caesar dead and live as free men?  
As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was brave, I  
honour him; but as he was ambitious, I killed him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune;  
honour for his bravely; and death for his ambition ... .*

Swaziland has a king who by now should have intervened for the sake of peace and tranquillity. But each passing day is like the horror of a long starless night. The late Okot p'Bitek once lamented “And the fame of his homestead; that once blazed like a wild fire; in a moonless night; is now like the last breaths of a dying old man!” This poet was mourning the death of Africa as the continent’s best were prostituting themselves with the glib and treacherous representatives of Western civilisation. The fame of Swaziland, the potential of this beautiful kingdom to lure investors through her peaceful and stable political climate, is indeed giving up. Rev. M.P. Dlamini may have sounded like a Cassandra at the farewell of Mrs Eunice Sowazi last weekend. The reality is that it is in times like these when we need the voice of hope. Prophets of God risked life and limb for the sake of telling the rulers of old to mind justice in matters of socio-economic concerns. God’s deserved justice in all corners of life. If the rumour is true that His Majesty’s words on matters of solution are ignored by the government I am both angry and frustrated. There is certainly no element of truth in the rumour that teachers want to overthrow the state. Only a panicky government can go as far as rewarding the security forces of the country. Let the King pose a question to God: who are the pretenders and contenders to the throne? The King might discover that they are not too far from where the crown is. They see them everyday. And their tongues are ambitiously salivating for the glory and Majesty therein represented. But let us all remember that the head that wears the crown is forever in trouble. King Mswati III warned his Mosotho counterpart in like manner only recently.

## THE KING SHOULD BE ABOVE POLITICS

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*In Swaziland the King is involved in the running of government and his signature is absolute in Parliament – if he does not sign a piece of legislation from Parliament it is not law. When government blunders then the King is blamed. In this article, Mzizi is calling for the King to be above politics.*

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It is a great virtue to rise above malicious criticisms and never to allow one to discuss trivialities and irrelevancies. Our first reaction to provocation and attack is to hit back, but hardly do we realise that our attackers, most of the time, miss the target, which makes hitting back a fruitless exercise. One of my students advised that life is full of ups and downs. In fact, life would be boring if it was always a bed of roses. We need those thorns and rough surfaces, those mountains and valleys, those well-wishers and enemies, otherwise, without such a variety, ours would be a dishonest struggle of life. But how can we teach our younger generation to please concentrate on issues and not personalities, and more so to criticise for the sake of building

up? Indeed, if our youth will not forego sadistic traits which in journalism are promoted through tabloid type of reporting, then one wonders what our future will be when political pluralism is finally permissible. The era of multi-partyism may dawn in Swaziland sooner than we realise. But of course it would find us caught up in political dwarfism to which we were subjected into and cursed for on 12 April 1973.

Instead of working on our positive political programmes, we would make a career of stabbing in the back those who do not agree with us. That is political immaturity, an infantile approach to dissenting opinions, in fact a law of the jungle mentality we saw in recent times in places like Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia, Somalia, etc. Swaziland, being the last southern African state to consider the option of multi-partyism, stands a good advantage of learning from the mistakes of other countries. Fortunately, we are a homogenous group who speak one language, practice more or less one culture, and pay our allegiance to one king. Recently there were statements that our institution of kingship was in danger if the on-going national misunderstanding continued. In fact, a deadline of 3 March was pronounced. Ordinarily, as Swazis, such a threat should not trouble us. We have a king because we love to, and we are the ones who see the benefits of keeping and protecting the institution. Foreigners would therefore find it a tall order indeed to destroy our kingship, unless of course if they want to take over the reins of governance and colonise us. That would be setting the clock of history back to the nineteenth century. Yet we must agree that kingship should justify its existence in times of crises and difficulties.

It is in such times that all citizens can say that even though they walk in the valley of death and despair, their king is there to shepherd them through hard times. If kingship does not rise to the occasion, the confidence level of the citizens drops to dangerous levels. Once the citizens say that it makes no difference whether there is a king or not, then the institution of kingship would fall and never rise again. That would be lamentable indeed.

That our kingship is going through hard times is obvious even to small children. Why, for example, should it take the King to be the final arbiter in industrial issues concerned with bread and butter issues? Even though at the time of writing this edition I am not sure what the King said to the teachers yesterday, I am asking why such a meeting is necessary. I am further confused by the fact that the cabinet holds regular sessions with the King every Wednesday. This implies that the King is always fully apprised by the government about all critical issues the cabinet had examined the day before. When the cabinet implemented the no-work, no-pay rule last August, surely the King must have approved it. If he turned around to reverse the decision, how would the Cabinet feel? Betrayed! Sold out! I really think so. A cabinet with character would simply resign en masse. While it is good for Swazis to have a king, there should be limits as to when a king intervenes in matters of government. The law that establishes trade unions from 1980 to 1996 does not mention the head of state as the final arbiter.

Matters of industrial dispute should be dealt with as per the laid down procedures, according to law. If a king allows himself to flout any law that he assented to, then he surely makes a mockery

of the entire legislative and judicial system of his country. It worries me therefore that we are into the culture of looking forward to kingly solution for problems created by government. In the process, matters of culture and tradition land to ridicule, like we saw the practice of “*kwembula Ingubo*” being a subject for debate in the latter half of last year. I should not sound as if I am saying that Swazis should not go to their king for any problem. But I am saying that the King has a duty to respect the laws of this country. If he approves of bad laws, then it means that he wants his people to suffer under a tyrannical regime. He takes final responsibility for the entire legal system. Yet the highest judicial court is actually the Appeal Court if the High Court’s ruling is further challenged. It goes to show just how urgently we need a constitution in this country.

The threat of a trade embargo is real and cannot be wished away. I can tell that the days of honeymoon between King Mswati III and President Mandela are running out. It is the time when President Chissano and President Mugabe must show the world what international democratic conventions are. It is indeed the time when Swaziland should learn that good neighbourliness does not mean tolerance of evil in your neighbour’s closet. What I am glad about is that King Mswati III took it upon himself to invite Mandela, Mugabe, Masire and Chissano to witness the proposed changes last year. The three leaders were invited into the Kraal where they were introduced to the nation. It was difficult to decipher whether or not they liked what they saw, or were briefed about later, since their visit was short, actually meant to be cosmetic, if not symbolic. These leaders were invited in order to legitimise the processes of Swazi democracy, Swazi-kraal democracy that neither adopts motions nor votes, but leaves all final decisions to the windows and whims of the elders. The interventions of these giant neighbours into Swazi politics is thus by invitation. When they start objectively to assess the situation, and actually advise the Swazi state to take a particular political direction in the interest of the region, only a myopic mind would call such, interference. The bottom line is that we should correct our lot.

What Swazis desire is well known by all and sundry. Swazis want to have a voice. They want a direct say on who their leaders in government ought to be. They want their right to choose political philosophies and economic policies. These are matters that are non-negotiable in the realm of human rights, especially the right to form or disband a government. The threat of the embargo so far appears to fall on deaf ears. I do not know why Swazi leaders want to go down in history as killers of the Kingdom of Swaziland. I do not know who exactly is so stupidly stubborn to refuse the unconditional release of the SFTU leaders who are held on flimsy charges under a questionable piece of legislation. Should this country be rendered crippled before we realise that government and the judiciary were fighting a losing war?

## **KING MSWATI, A POLITICAL NOVICE**

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*In this article, Mzizi laments the tendency of the King to be emotional when addressing the nation. For Mzizi this demonstrates political immaturity on the side of the King. Then he raises issues with the King’s advisors and those in the cabinet who are not giving good advice to the King but lie to retain his favour and protect their interests.*

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So it was that there was once a crippling mass stay-away, from January 22 to 28, arranged by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions and called off by His Majesty the King at Engabezeni. It is note-worthy that the King seized the opportunity to address the issue of the strike at a time when he had to disperse the regiments at the close of the *incwala*, Swaziland's most colourful ritual aimed at cementing the nation's unity under the King. The Lion roared in visible anger, clutching his battle-axe, which he occasionally swayed when emphasising a point. It was an angry address by the concerned king: a king who wanted to assert his authority amidst rumours of a coup, which he understood to be threatening kingship. He cannot allow that to happen in his lifetime, and thus he appealed to the regiments to get ready for war if it comes to that. It was a moving address in many respects. I concluded, as I always have since his coronation in April 1986, that King Mswati III is a great orator, a purposeful speaker who does not play hide and seek with his audience. There are very few people who, while in their twenties, can carry such charisma and sustain an argument for nearly fifty minutes without stop. What seemed to come naturally to the King can take years of rigorous training in public speaking for others. On this score, "Dissection" wishes to congratulate the Swazi nation on having a king of his standing. As we are all aware, the mass stay-away was initiated by SFTU, which must now take stock of what happened. Has the stay-away achieved the intended objectives, or are we still back to square one? This to me is the critical question. If we are indeed back to square one as it appears at the moment, then why was the stay-away called in the first place?

I sincerely believe that strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, stay-aways, etc. are devices that workers can use to force a stubborn and intransigent regime to come to the negotiations table and talk sense. Workers may go to the courts for legal arbitration, but their strongest weapon always remains, and that is to withdraw their labour. Both workers and employers know that once matters come to that, all available avenues for conflict resolution should have been exhausted. It would appear that SFTU had come to that painful conclusion. I do not believe that workers can engage in mass action solely for its own sake. I do not believe that people's tempers can burst without genuine provocation, unless of course we have reverted to our primitive or jungle mentality. It is important to carefully calculate the cost of the strike well before hand. It is essential to weigh its success value against the pain to be borne during the process. A disgusting feature about the stay-away was that it did not have a clear and definable programme. The communication network between the strike leaders and the striking workers had not been pre-planned. Hence people did what they liked, and such a state of affairs can easily lead to chaos and anarchy.

Secondly, the stay-away lacked a credible duration. Surely such mass actions cannot be allowed to go on indefinitely because they end up severely punishing the very people who must be liberated. It is in the course of such punishment that the masses can easily turn against their leaders. I recall the story of Moses and the liberated Hebrews in the wilderness. The road to Canaan proved difficult and testing, when such essential services as water and food ran out. The former slaves were quick to remember the pots of meat of Egypt. They were not foolish enough to go against Moses on many issues, but they were only being human. But let us not

forget that the mass stay-away was called by the employees' federation and called off by the King of the land.

"Dissection" wonders if this is the best method of industrial conflict resolution. When the King intervened in the simmering University issue early last year in which he overruled a University Senate resolution to discipline some students, he triggered a host of bitterness from some concerned academics who genuinely argued that the autonomy of the University had been seriously shaken resulting in the inevitable despising of local authority at the University. Many people felt that the King's intervention should have gone by way of the University authorities so that in the final analysis only the latter should have rescinded their decision and called back the severely disciplined students. That indeed should have been the case, and I totally agree with that sentiment. It is only after the University's authorities had shown total defiance of the King's advice would it have been administratively or politically justified to order the royal reinstatement of some students and, even then, not before the said authorities were subjected to answer why they defied the word of the mouth that tells no lie. In the same vein, I honestly believe that if Government and the Trade Unions had reached a deadlock, and the country was at the brink of disaster, His Majesty should have summoned the union leaders to get their side of the story and then told them his wish about letting life go on in his kingdom while he as King actively breaks the deadlock between the government and the unions. As I dissect the situation, the return to industrial normality is neither His Majesty's victory nor the Government's military style high-handedness success.

The country may be back to normal, but surely for how long? Has the Lion's roaring solved the core of the problem, or have we just witnessed a dangerous postponement of the problem? That is indeed the worrying question. I sincerely believe that there ought to be checks and balances in the manner in which our King can address his nation. When a king is visibly incensed to the extent that he insinuates a violent solution to a problem, then we who are distant observers wonder if he had been exposed to the real problem worrying his nation. Naturally our blames are placed right at the shoulders of those who advise the King; for sure it is downright unkind for a king to declare war on his very subjects. We wonder who exactly the enemies of the Kingship are. If the advisors fail to do a perfect job by telling the King that there are conspirators who want to derail kingship and turn Swaziland into a republic, then we ask ourselves if they should be allowed to be close to the King.

Let us remember a line, a very important one, in our national anthem. We always pray that God Almighty should give us wisdom without ulterior motives, corruption and selfishness. "*Sinike Kuhlakanipha Lokungenabo Bucili*" – wisdom is a virtue, but wisdom with bad intentions and selfish ends is vice. That is why the office of the King should always be watchful of adverse wisdom, which is vice. At the end of the day, it is the nation that drinks the bitter cup of misguided and selfish motives hiding under the cloak of virtuous advice. It is this tendency "Dissection" addressed in the last edition. Watching the regiments who were being dispersed at Engabezweni last weekend was interesting indeed. The whistles, the nonchalant dispositions,

the occasional smiles of make *laMbikiza*, the pensive mood of the elder statemen like Mbhedze Hlophe, etc. made me ask the question "what are *Emabutfo* composed of?"

In truly Swazi patriotism, *Emabutfo* comprise a cross section of male Swazi patriots who forget for a moment their political differences but emphasise their loyalty to the King and the Swazi state, all in the prayerful mood of the *Incwala* ritual I described as an epitome of Swazi religiosity at the start of this season last year. Amongst the regiments may have been SFTU's affairs, PUDEMO members, SWANAFRO's sympathisers, Imbokodvo's diehards; literally all the formations of political voices in Swaziland. The King must have wrongfully thought that only people of strong royal politics were in the audience, a thinking, which, in essence, draws a wedge amongst his own subjects. I found it bizarre, therefore, to call these people of diverse interests and political persuasions to be in the ready for war to elect kingship.

In essence, the King was calling for a civil war, that his own subjects must kill themselves and each other in a desperate bid to protect kingship. Then who would he rule at the aftermath of this bloody call? What the King must understand is that Swazis love kingship for its intrinsic function for national unity. Then should Swazis assassinate themselves as they compete who amongst them is the real lover of kingship? I think not. That is why *I have said, and will say it even if it costs me death, that there must be limitations on the mood the King adopts to speak to his own nation.* He is the Lion, the mouth that speaks no lie, and the father of all. He cannot abdicate this role for cheap selfish politics that throws his own nation into the wild about their safety. I conclude this edition of "Dissection" by asking what exactly is wrong with multiparty politics under the direct supervision of the King? Why the call for political parties here is interpreted as a royal coup where the King's authority would be threatened, if not quashed? Those who call for this dispensation are not first-class enemies of kingship. They are the ones who read the signs of the times, and thus desire to see this small Swazi state march on with the rest of Africa and the world for the sake of this kingdoms' political and economical survival. But sadly those who make counter calls are individuals who, because they benefit from the status quo, understanding, of course, that the King's position is too far from nothing, that their purses are being filled up, come to tell the King green lies that parties will undermine his authority. I wish the King would take time to listen to the counsel of such great statesmen as George Potgieter and Senator Obed Dlamini. These people love their king and are not fooling in their political judgments. They can only be ignored or sidelined at the peril of this precious kingdom.

In His Majesty's government there are former political party stalwarts. The Prime Minister, Prince Mbilini, is cited by many as a former supporter of the Congress Party of the 1960s. He suffered greatly for such support and had to be out of work until the pain of suffering made him change his mind to support Sobhuza II's *Imbokodvo* National Movement. Foreign Minister Arthur Khoza was a brilliant executive leader of the Congress Party. He and my mentor, Albert Shabangu, even spent episodes of training at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute in Ghana in the 1960s. Now, are they using that training to advise his Majesty? If not, I really wonder why not. Mr Shabangu's illustrious record as leader of SNAT should certainly help in advising that any

unhealthy relationship between workers and government is the deadly spice for a country's collapse. Is Shabangu rising to the occasion? Dr Sishayi Nxumalo was actively involved with the Democratic Party in the 1960s. What exactly happened, I believe, is that the devil is in the details. Now how can all these great minds fail to prevail? The politically virgin mind of His Majesty must be helped to understand that when people want change, they mean change, nothing less, nothing more. Being won over by the local political process to me suggests an air of grave dishonesty on their part. That is what the King should be worried about.

At least Senator Obed Dlamini has spoken his mind, and I greatly admired his honest stand. He may suffer adverse political consequences under the present wishy-washy stomach democracy, but if he "dies", all will know that he spoke his heart. In short, "Dissection" wishes to urge all concerned to heed the national anthem's prayer: "*Sinike Kuhlakanipha lokungenabucili*", and honestly advise His Majesty to rise beyond politics. We love you your Majesty! Lastly, I urge those who had the audacity to see His Majesty the King during the mass stay-away never to give up. But may their advice aim to heal this land and never to incense the King against his own nation. "Dissection" wishes to make this honest appeal. We love Swaziland and we love our King.

## **THERE IS MORE THAN WHAT MEETS THE EYE IN THE REMOVAL OF THE SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT BY THE KING**

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*Mzizi reflects on the King's action of removing the elected speaker, Mr Marwick Khumalo, from his position. He discusses issues around the autonomy of Parliament by discussing the merits and demerits of such practice. Then he calls for the Parliament to be autonomous from the monarchy.*

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The so-called Marwick saga has been so over-played in Swazi politics that one was tempted to think that it was the only important piece of news in the media. The dominant view was to characterise Marwick as a victim of King Mswati III's rough-tackling tactics in socio-cultural politics. In this case, Marwick had emerged the winner for, indeed, if an ant gets into an elephant's trunk and causes the huge animal to run haywire, it is the ant that wins the day. On the other hand, those who have been careful not to get too close to the arena of personal affairs have read politics through and through as the main source of the misfortunes of Marwick Khumalo. This school of thought puts the blame squarely at Mswati III's doorstep, arguing that he intends to get even with Parliament right at the very genesis of the first session of the Eighth Parliament of Swaziland. Members of Parliament have to know just who calls the shots and what consequences there are for a Parliament that does not comply. In the Mgabhi Dlamini cow-dung issue of 2000, the former speaker was coerced into resigning because the life of that Parliament was hanging by a thin thread. This Parliament did not have to be reminded of those sad tales fit for a children's folklore. A related view collapses the one of Mswati III's assertiveness of his authority with the fact that he is still perpetuating Sobhuza II's 1973 illegal rule by decree.



Sobhuza II staged a coup on Parliament on April 12, 1973. He was not challenged in a court of law because all mechanisms to intimidate possible insurgents were put in place to discourage anyone aggrieved by that infamous political move.

Detention without charge and trial was decreed into law; and also the Umbutfo Defense Force was set up to remind those who would dare that the bullet is mightier than the pen. King Mswati III knows that as an Executive Monarch, a legacy he inherited from his father, no one can challenge him in any court of law. His word is final in all matters. Indeed his word is law. Mswati III has proved his own spokesmen wrong. He is not a benevolent monarch, nor a King-in-Council. His men always argue that he cannot be an absolute monarch. After the Marwick much publicised matter, the chickens must have come home to roost. But after all is said and done, who is the hero? Marwick grew up close to the royal family. He is not in any way related by blood to the Dlamini ruling class except that he was close to Princess Gcinaphi, one of Sobhuza II's favourite daughters, who was married to his father, Nkom'nophondo. We can safely say that Marwick grew up a royalist in the true sense of the word. When he was a broadcaster, his careful words of description of royalty indicated that he had grown up right in the swing and centre of things. We are aware as well that once upon a time Marwick was a close friend of the present King. They jogged and trained together. I am sure that in sport they must have bonded in more ways than meets the eye. Marwick, therefore, knows Mswati III the person. I mean that side of him always mysterious to the nation.

The kings are people just like all of us. They need friendship, companionship, warmth and all because they are emotional beings after all. It is not far-fetched to assume that during their friendship days, the King must have shared some of his deepest secrets with Marwick, and vice-versa. As much as the friendship must have been mutual, it certainly benefited Khumalo more because, as Ndumiso Mamba once said to *Pace Magazine*: "I happened to be at the right place at the right time", referring to his early exposure to big money and a high paying career.

Unfortunately the stars for Khumalo must have turned against him. The once promising proximity with the Lion has developed into a gaping deep chasm, a bottomless pit only John at the isle of Patmos can describe. But let me confess here. I have dear friends at *Sibahle Sinje* and have cherished the political paradigm shift this cultural organisation has taken over the years. To be sure, I have great respect for Marwick himself as a person. We may differ in terms of political ideology, but he is a man who will always refuse to let personal relations be hurt by political positions. That being the case, I have never felt more *Sibahle Sinje* than Marwick on the day he resigned from being Speaker of Parliament. It was on 10 March 2004. Who is he, I thought, to disgrace my King in this fashion? Mind you, as the events were unfolding, I had taken a firm position that Marwick should just do all of us a favour and resign in honour. I had taken this position because of the sensitive nature of the alleged sins he is said to have committed against royalty. However, as the momentum picked up, Marwick's resilience was not to be doubted. It was clearly a mismatch, a duel between a fox and a lion. Marwick must have smelled the political points he would score, but at whose expense? That he was forced

to resign for a childish act he committed at the age of fourteen is neither here nor there. We cannot be taken for a ride here in the twenty-first century. I have said above that he was once close to the King. To be sure, if the 25-year old scandal was an immoral sin, how could he have twice won an election at the *Lobamba Inkhundla*, the “main” *Inkhundla* of the royals, i.e. Mswati III’s brothers, mothers, sisters, cousins, etc.? There is more to the matter than that old scandal. Marwick, I dare say, knows in his heart of hearts just where his relationship with the King fell out.

It was clearly politically immature and “un-*Sibahle Sinje*” to tell Parliament, indeed the whole world, that it was the Head of State that engineered his deposition from the position of Speaker in Parliament. The King of the Swazis represents an institution, which we all want to hold sacred and pure. Our hope and survival hinges on how we protect kingship. And this has been Marwick’s song since 1996 when *Sibanhle Sinje* was formed. Let me dare say that when Marwick quoted the King as cause of his fall, he immediately set the nation against the King. That, I argue, was uncalled for and pretty infantile, to say the least. To subject the King to a public trial is something the *Sibahle Sinje* of yesteryears would have condemned to the core. But the core leadership has come to Marwick’s defence, thus fuelling the “whisky in a cola” container theory of Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini. There is yet another painful dimension to this story. Was Marwick better off as Speaker than a mere backbencher? Judging from his sterling performance in the last Parliament, Marwick and a few others redefined the role of Parliament in ways we thought had gone with the likes of Msunduzeni Dlamini, O.Z. Dlamini, P.D. Dlamini and Potgieter. These minds will go in the annals of our Parliament as some of the few who were very sincerely objective, honest and brisk back-benchers. They gave life to Parliament and kept the executive accountable to the electorate, albeit in limited ways. No doubt, Marwick is going back to the House a wounded politician. Will he strike swiftly and hard in the manner of a wounded Mamba snake? As Marwick and all of us worry about this, let me pray him never to harbour a bitter heart against anybody. Grudges and bad blood are not traits of a good politician. But more importantly, there is need to make up that broken relationship with the Head of State. Things cannot go well with you, Khumalo, if you left matters as they are.

## **WE NEED CHANGE VERY SOON, YOUR MAJESTY!**

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*In 1996, Swaziland was faced with a mass stay-away by the workers and progressive movements, calling for improved conditions of employment and changes in the political processes. The Prime Minister and his deputy did not succeed in quelling this fire of rebellion by the people. Every time he spoke it was as though he made it worse. It was only when the King addressed the nation and negotiations began between government and the progressives that the strike was suspended. In this article, Mzizi raises issues about the abilities of the leaders of government to lead and the credibility of some leaders who seem to have emerged and are leading the negotiations even though they are without any credible constituency. He calls for the King to allow real change in the governance of the country.*

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His Majesty King Mswati III has made two very important speeches since the end of the last *Incwala* season. The first one delivered at Engabezweni on 27 January 1996 had been much awaited, as the nation was held in painful and compromising suspense by the mass stay-away. The Prime Minister (PM) had virtually failed to control the situation and it seemed each time he spoke he would merely be adding fuel to the fire. In fact, if this was a truly democratic country, that poor showing of the PM would have cost him his job. What is the point of having a head of government that commands no respect? Voices have been heard from every nook and cranny calling for a major shakeup of the present cabinet, and I am very sure that the King has heard all these cries. Whereas it is the King's prerogative to study an issue and take his position on it. "Dissection" feels that if the national agenda contained in the King's speech of 16 February 1996 at the occasion of the opening of the current session of parliament is to be efficiently and expeditiously attended to, then the PM and his deputy ought to be released from the present cabinet. These two men have failed in their leadership in that, instead of attending to crucial issues that affect national policy, they simply fold their arms and await His Majesty to say something, or do something they should be doing. A good example is the issue of the constitution.

His Majesty first talked about the Constitution last year during his state visit to South Africa. Sishayi then emerged with his endless promises about a Constitution with a Bill of Rights. I am sure the King must have waited to make submissions concerning the modus operandi so that Constitutional talks would commence in earnest. But unfortunately nothing happened and by October last year it seemed no one had ever talked about a Constitution here. Parliament was all too busy with the industrial Relations Bill, while the SFTU felt there was a yawning need to address the political issues of Swaziland. It has unfortunately taken an industrial stay-away to again prick the conscience of the state to address socio-economic and political problems. By all standards, this has been a costly road. While our tongues are wagging blame, guilt, or innocence, at least history will record that it took the SFTU to join the political voices for the process towards a more democratic Swaziland to be set in motion. It was therefore a speech that should not have been made at Engabezweni, had the appointed officers done their job. There would have been no reason for the November 1995 Convention Centre meeting, no reason for the breakdown of talks between Government and SFTU, no reason for the stay-away, no reason for the anger of His Majesty of Engabezweni. I do not believe that the SFTU or any other formation in the Kingdom can harbour a dirty agenda to topple the state. I do not believe that in our political maturation we have reached that level of sophistication. Swazis are demanding basic human rights and fundamental freedom necessary for reasonable human existence in the work place and the larger body politic At least that is how I read the 27 popular demands.

They are demands because every modern society that is concerned about the dignity of its citizens ought to have laws that clearly enshrine these demands for the good of working relations in private and public sectors. At the end of the day, such demands will help even those people who may appear to be fighting them today. They will build a good culture in the work place for the sake of future generations. Come to think of it, I wonder how the relations

are now between the Government negotiating team and SFTU. Should we take the presence of Dr Jeremiah Gule as a sign of the fact that these leaders still cannot manage their affairs, and bury their hatchets, for the sake of peace? Others of-course are asking how Gule ended up convening this team. We know Gule as the General Secretary of IDEAL. He has issued a number of statements on behalf of IDEAL, but it is not easy today to locate IDEAL. Gule alone cannot be IDEAL and we understand Dr Alvit Lamina, who was chairman of IDEAL, resigned following a squabble at the executive level. But surely, where is IDEAL? Dr Gule must worry about that before people label him as yet another opportunist. Swazis are tired of people who climb the political ladder using questionable rungs.

An organisation of the calibre of IDEAL must be aboveboard in all matters of internal administration. It is exactly on this score that we expect Mr Simon Noge of HUMARAS to revive the organisation instead of lamenting about its failures. We expect to see statements that legitimately come from the organisations, not individuals who are not sure of who they are representing. So, it is "Dissection's" view that His Majesty needs to reshuffle the Cabinet. If wishes were horses, I would give the PM's position to current Minister for Economic Planning, Mr Themba Masuku, while Albert Shabangu takes over the DPM's position. Both of these men may have faulted here and there, but they represent truly what a politician should be made of. They speak with a sense of conviction and less emotion. I do feel that in the present team, I can trust them for managing the national agenda announced by the King in Parliament.

When Parliament gets serious with business, it must attend to the issue of the 1973 Decree. Top on the agenda are the implications of reviving the 1968 Constitution in toto, which the King has talked about, and the pursuant unbanning of political parties. We need a Parliament and Cabinet that will rise above the fear of political parties planted in the 1960s. We need a government and legislature that will not see parties as enemies of kingship, but as necessary elements in the efficient running of government. We need the royal family to grow in confidence that Swazis like institutions of kingship; but matters of royalty must also pass public tests in matters of transparency, efficiency, and the absence of abuse of state funds and royal powers. But above all this, we need political parties with a well thought out agenda and programme. Such a programme should take into account our hold to national traditions, and the changing world climate in socio-political thinking. We do not need parties that will rejoice only in upsetting the status quo in their demand for change if change is not managed well. If parties will emerge with respectable programmes, I imagine that His Majesty will indeed be the happiest king around. But another question boggles my mind; it has to do with the confusion created by the multiplicity of political parties. Whereas we know from history that weaker parties end up eliminating themselves, it is important for parties that talk the same language to emerge, unless of course there are irreconcilable ideological differences. When parties are unbanned, "Dissection" wonders which road will, Lamgabhi M.P. Ntuthuko Dlamini travel. We shall wait and see.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE KING'S BIRTHDAY

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*In this article, Mzizi reflects on the annual event of celebrating the King's birthday. He throws praises to the organisers for a job well done. He views the celebration in a positive light because it replaces the old tradition where Swazis used to celebrate the birthday of the Queen of England instead of their king. This for him is a demonstration of independence and autonomy. He then goes further to raise concerns on the role of traditional leadership in an era of democracy where leaders are elected. He proposes that the role of unelected but hereditary leaders needs to be re-examined in a democracy.*

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All accounts seem to indicate that the King's birthday was a tremendous success. Maswazi Shongwe and his team deserve to be accordingly congratulated on their good efforts and on shaping up the arena at King Sobhuza II's Memorial Stadium. The often-sleepy town of Nhlanguano and its overgrown wild vegetation received a little pruning especially along the paths where the King was to tread. The tall grass and ugly trees, which were further from the royal view, escaped the wrath of mowers and rattling of axes and saws. It is an unfortunate tendency of human nature to hide the dirty linen from public view, and to clean the front side of things instead of the whole lot when a king or a VIP is going to be around. The important guest will leave the place with positive impression and go about telling the world how wonderful Nhlanguano is. It remains a constant challenge for all Town Boards and City Councils to keep our towns clean and healthy at all times. King's birthdays have positives and negatives. It is good, for example, for the nation to come together to celebrate the birth and life of the King. The visibility of the King on such occasions encourages the renewal of allegiances from the nation, and I am sure when the King renews his vows that he will lead the nation with wisdom and true reverence to God. This is necessary despite the fact that such occasions are not part of Swazi tradition. I guess it is one of those good things Sobhuza II warned the nation to take or copy from Western civilisation.

During the days when Swaziland was a British Protected State, we never celebrated the birthday of our king, but every year we celebrated the birthday of the British Monarch. This was done in spite of the fact that the British Queen was thousands of miles away from us. We used to call this event the Queen's Parade. Evelyn Baring and St. Mark's were white schools then and they entertained us with band music, the drum, trumpet and marches. It was all fun especially when we little boys and girls were given an assortment of biscuits (*imicatsane*) and a bottle of cold drink (*namanede*). For some of us these little food items boosted our love for the Queen we had never seen. We sang "God save the Queen", and chanted that the sun never sets in the British Empire, Forward Ever and Backward Never. Well, those were good old days, days of brainwashing the youthful minds to always admire lands and personalities, which were far away, yet close enough in the institutions of colonial governments. But it does seem that the present day generation is complaining that it is not wise to spend exorbitant amounts of money for just one day. The recent celebrations have cost this nation over E1 million. With the declining power of our currency, next year's budget for the King's birthday is likely to double.

“Dissection” believes that any wise government should interest itself in issues of expenditure of public funds, take stock of the necessity of such expenditure, or even find alternative ways and means to cut expenditure so that at the end of the day, birthdays are seen as blessings, not curses, for the nation.

One way of cutting expenses is to expect the surrounding chiefs to contribute, say, twenty heads of cattle per chief towards the birthday expenses. Of course we would end up with over 2,000 or so cattle. Then we would auction and sell the ones that would not be slaughtered for the day so that the money acquired from there would pay for other expenses. Money not used would go into a special birthday fund to be used again the next time around. That is what we expect from a government that properly takes its stock.

The speech of the King was eloquently delivered as usual. The English translation of the speech by Mr Paul Shabangu was good indeed. Shabangu enunciated the speech well and without the exaggeration we sometimes hear from other translators. The speech was not long and boring. It was to the point and effective. The only problem of course was the content, which seemed to spoil the glamour of the day. Why for heaven’s sake do we need to go on about the constitutional review process in the *Vuse/a* style? The experiences of the two recent *Vuse/a*s are well known to us. Commissioners are handpicked; the terms of reference are drawn in such a way that the whole exercise becomes a royal project, not a national event. Once the report is produced, arbitrary decisions are made on which recommendation should be implemented. The whole concept of national involvement and participation gets lost in the royal protection of certain institutional and practices.

I am complaining that it should be the same nation at the cattle byre that should prioritise the recommendations. Besides, drawing the supreme law of the land calls for the involvement of highly skilled technicians. It is not an easy affair to decipher the finer points of meaning from the many voices that might contribute to the exercise. There must be scientific methods of ensuring that the masses understand what they should be talking about, not such ridiculous claims as Swazi widows are the cause for the absence of rain and the decline of our economy. Or rains cannot come because there are too many airplanes in the atmosphere. We have heard such nonsense talk before, so we should avoid subjecting this great national exercise to the discussion of trivialities and myopic ideas. That is exactly why the exercise must be open and transparent. It must not alienate any members of the society. It must accommodate all political philosophies without prejudice, and must listen to all organised voices in the spirit of national unity and patriotism. No member of society should promote selfish considerations. No king or commoner should seek the entrenched clauses and articles that may compromise national unity.

Thinking of kings and commoners, did you hear the utterances of the Zulu monarch at the Garden Party? I was amazed by his audacity to meddle in our industrial and political affairs. It did not amaze me to hear him defending the institution of monarchy. But certainly how does a Zulu king come to Swaziland and start perpetuating the myth that King Mswati III was nearly

dethroned after being sent on leave? Swazis have not resolved that issue we first heard about at Engabezweni on 27 July 1996. The police have not yet apprehended the alleged plotters of the royal coup. I honestly feel that the Zulu monarch should have just proposed the toast and left for his trouble-torn country. The institution of kingship at KwaZulu is having some problems right now, and we are aware of the circus game between the King and chief Buthelezi. King Zwelithini should be asking why African kingship is in such a mess in post-colonial Africa. It would seem self-evident that Africa needs kings for the protection and promotion of cultural practices, customs and values. But once kings venture into politics, the foundations of kingship shake, and national hegemony cannot be assured. Kings are traditional leaders. Even though they can be referred to as heads of state, they are not on par with presidents or prime ministers. The latter are elected, yet kings are installed for life through traditional superstructures. These are the issues our modern day monarchs should be addressing.

In short, I thought the Zulu Monarch erred by touching sensitive issues on a day of jubilation. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right, but it has limitations, especially in areas of legality where a high treason case is in potentiality. The last upset of the celebrations was the failure of the ZCC to honour their prayer date with the Kings at Mbangweni. Certainly, Prince Sobandla must explain what happened. It is unbecoming of a religious leader of the stature of Barnabas Lekganyana to just decide on whim to cancel a prayer service he had arranged with the authorities the previous day. I seem to smell a rat here. Bishop Barnabas is a powerful man. He is not a head of state but wields ecclesiastical powers over millions of followers. You do not take such a leader for granted and cannot speak anyhow just because you are a prince or a minister. This leader has councillors, and more so, UMOYA the spirit. If UMOYA has detected something, it is addressed appropriately at the direction of UMOYA, but Prince Sobandla owes us an explanation.

## **TELL THE KING: “YOUR MAJESTY, YOU ARE WITHOUT CLOTHES”**

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*In this article, Mzizi continues to lament the lies that are spoken by those around the King, who give him the picture that everything is under control in Swaziland when the country is rapidly sliding down into oblivion. He calls for the King to be told the truth.*

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There is no pain greater than to witness the slow death of your country. Swaziland is dying, and it is a painful death. What is sad is that this death is taking place at the hands of Government and Parliament both of which have completely lost direction. His majesty the King was wise to call for revamping of our political, or should I say, our election process. The cries were loud and clear to the effect that Swazis have problems with *Tinkhundla*. One did not have to be a political genius to sense that *Tinkhundla* would ultimately kill this country. We have said it before that *Tinkhundlacracy* is the worst mistake Swaziland has ever made. I say it again that unless this system of Government is completely changed, this country is heading for the worst of times. The chief architect of *Tinkhundla*, King Sobhuza II is not around to tell us what to do in times

like these. But I do not believe that it was the King's intention to give his nation a poisonous, lethal system. He must have thought that things would work out, but history has proved him otherwise. Yet we must admit that the *Tinkhundla* mistake is a product of dubious intentions. Since the late 1950s and the 1960s, King Sobhuza II did all he could to discredit political parties. He argued that parties were divisive and a foreign element.

Unfortunately, the alternative he gave us was very divisive indeed. What else would you expect to get from a system that elects leaders who have no political vision? What would you hope to get from politicians who never convinced us about their political agenda; politicians without an elementary education on what politics are still about. If you do not believe what I am saying, just tell me the wisdom behind the incarceration of the SFTU's leadership. Even if the Shabangu's Industrial Relations Bill had clauses that were unfavourable to the SFTU, this is simply just not the time to use this controversial Bill. It is not the time to harass the leadership of SFTU thinking that you are solving a problem. We are still shocked that His Majesty signed the controversial Bill despite the opposition from both workers and employers. It did not surprise me to see the Bill passing through in both houses for Parliament. But I thought wisdom would prevail upon His Majesty not to ignore the industrial climate in the country.

Now we are not sure if the Royal blessing of the Bill was rushed in order to deal with the leadership of SFTU. This reminds one of a story I heard a long, long time ago. I am sure readers of "Dissection" will enjoy it. Once upon time there lived a great and pompous king. He was a wise and extravagant king who wasted the finances by buying expensive robes, jewellery for his wives, the latest models of every prestigious automobile. Oh! This king loved himself. It could not be established if he ever loved his nation. He was a careless fellow! One day he wanted to try some of his expensive attire. He summoned the entire cabinet to report to his palace at 5.00 p.m. This was not an unusual summons for the King who was in direct control of Government. He called members of the cabinet anytime and for anything. One day he noticed a fly in his soup. Instead of calling the waiter, he phoned the Prime Minister who was chairing a regular cabinet meeting. The Prime Minister had to be escorted at once. Upon arrival the King accused him of allowing flies at the palace. "I order you to write a white paper now. Cabinet must deliberate the issue of flies. You should use this soup as evidence of what I am talking about. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. Your servant will make sure that flies will be pushed far away from His Majesty's Palace."

Anyway, at exactly 5 pm the King put on his latest flamboyant robe and took his golden stuff the ministers had never seen before. He entered the lounge where the ministers were curiously but sheepishly seated.

"How do I look? Do you love this one?" asked the King when he turned round and round like they do in a fashion parade. The ministers thunderously praised him in great admiration.



“Your Majesty, you look wonderful. We have never seen anything like this before oh! Wise and generous King!”

He left and came back in another velvet robe decorated with gold and diamond chains. “How do I look now? Do you like this?”

“Very wonderful Your Majesty. You are stunning and we love you. Oh! Good and generous King.”

He went to change for the third time, the fourth, and the fifth. The ministers' praises were the same. And the King got worried. He decided to undress and go to the ministers completely nude. No sooner had he entered the lounge of praises that the ministers thundered their admiration, according the King a standing ovation.

The Prime Minister was heard saying: “This is your most wonderful suit Your Majesty. The golden chains are so glittery and I have never seen anything like this. What can we be without you oh wise and generous King!”

At that point, the visibly angry King fired the entire Cabinet, charging them with dishonesty.

A five-year old prince entered the lounge. He looked at the King and said, “Your Majesty, you are nude. You look terrible and unsightly. You should be charged with public indecency.”

This is a sad story. But I believe that is exactly what Swaziland is suffering from. This country is heading for death at the hands of dishonest councillors of the King. The King is always told a lot of lies. The SFTU announced in November last year that there would be a mass stay-away in January. They took a strong stand against the political system of this country and later called a meeting of civic groups to reason with them about Swaziland's political system. It is only a foolish government that never judged the magnitude of the problem that can allow the situation to get out of hand. It is stupid leadership that thinks Swazis can be threatened with police violence when they stand up for their rights. Days of cowardice are over.

It is thus vitally important to listen to the cries of people and respond to them appropriately and honestly. The Mbilini Government cannot restore its image by police and soldier brutality. So many voices have cried about the removal of this government. I believe our King has heard a lot of such cries. The problem is not Mbilini, although Mbilini makes the problem worse. Swaziland is the state of voicelessness and the kind of *Tinkhundla* dictatorship, which can see a terrible piece of legislation like the Shabangu Industrial Relations Bill pass through the Parliament of the King amidst complaints. As I write this edition of “Dissection”, I wonder who the Sishayi Tripartite Committee will talk with if Jan, Nxumalo and Mkhathswa are behind bars. I wonder who can call off the stay-away if the SFTU's leadership is locked up. What kind of advice does Shabangu, with his experience as leader of SNAT, give the Prime Minister and the King? Should we really be having this problem? His Majesty must have advisors and councillors who will tell him the truth. He must have people who will tell him the exact size of the problem. I doubt if the cadre of advisors around the King are doing a good job. If not, the King must fire

them before this country catches fire, which will destroy all of us and the little that we have left in our economy. But the real truth is that the confidence level in the Mbilini Government is no more. There is no way it can be restored, not even by parading the former Prime Minister Obed Dlamini who at least left office having scored some political points. In fact Obed killed his political career by agreeing to be sent on a fruitless mission by parliament.

A careful political actor should have known that certain announcements just cannot work when people's tempers have reached boiling point. As the nation continues in limbo, we deserve to know what the King is thinking. Surely, we cannot live like fatherless children. The King must do something right now before Swaziland breathes her last. The real issue is not the twenty-seven demands. The issue is far greater than the Sishayi Committee. It is the political system, and it needs to be addressed very urgently and honestly. In my honest opinion, I see nothing wrong with unbanning political parties and working out structures of creating fair representation in government. Those who feel otherwise, like Mndeni Shabalala, are probably not honest with themselves. I like the boldness of that young prince: "Your Majesty, you are nude!" It is this kind of honesty this country needs if it will be saved from the vultures now hovering in the skies.

## THE MONARCHY AND DICTATORSHIP

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*This is one of the few articles where Mzizi makes strong points against the monarchy, getting closer to concluding that the King was a dictator. He was reflecting on the Marwick Khumalo saga, when the King refused to recognise the democratically elected speaker of parliament, and decided to remove him.*

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King Mswati III comes out of his 2004/5 long and much needed seclusion only to be greeted by a nation suffering from bouts of anger and frustration over his somewhat tyrannical rule. A year ago the King was being talked about in hushed tones, that he would refuse to open the first session of the eighth Parliament because he had a serious personal gripe against the then-elected Speaker of the House of Assembly, Marwick Khumalo. Although it was a believe-it-or-not kind of story, as days and weeks (forgive the pun if it sounds like Marwick's) passed, it was clear that something was just not adding up. The actual date of opening of Parliament could not be known. When the boil burst and indeed it was the Marwick saga that was at stake, others started to ask questions about the role of the Monarch in our parliamentary democracy, or whether or not we have anything closer to democracy to write home about.

Speakers of the House are elected by the entire House of Assembly as its first official duty after the national elections. Marwick's election was a much lobbied affair. He emerged the hot favourite from a pool of highly respected candidates. At first it appeared that the King would have it rough with Parliament as some novice politicians vowed to die where Marwick would die. When the moment of truth came, Marwick was alone to face the fiery flames at the stake. Marwick showed his mettle when he refused to be shoved into resigning without hitting back. His fiercest side-kick landed squarely on the forehead of the King as the fearless Marwick

declared that he was stepping down as Speaker because the King did not want him in that position. The fresh 2004 Swazi Parliament thus sadly began its political career on a note of great and embarrassing defeat. They had been overruled without any clear political reasons and without any reference to any law or standing order. They succumbed.

The President of the Senate, Mathendele Dlamini, went to town, licking the wounds of the whole Parliament, pleading a case for Marwick before the King when Parliament was eventually opened. The quality and relevance of his pleas were as good as aiming a 9mm pistol at the centre of the sun. When the King spoke, it was business as usual. It was the same old story in 1999 after the then Speaker, Mgabhi Dlamini, was forced to resign over a cow dung scandal. Despite the fact that the Mgabhi issue invited negative publicity for Swaziland, it was business as usual. The Prime Minister, A.T. Dlamini, assumed a bedevilled office on all fronts. The worst of all the fronts was the collapse of the rule of law. Dlamini made promises that he would attend to this quagmire as a priority. Political observers pitied Dlamini for making false promises on a matter he would have no control over. The collapse of the rule of law in Swaziland was caused ostensibly by the titanic clash between traditional authority and modernity. The Swazi Courts had ruled with one voice over the Macetjeni/KaMkhweli evictions that they were illegally enforced and the affected families should return to their places of birth. By the way, the Macetjeni and KaMkhweli people were evicted. Government spin-doctor, Percy Simelane, who seems to be on a nasty collision course with journalists, has preferred to use the term "relocation" as if that sounds heavenly.

For the past four years Simelane was broadcasting at SBIS and writing news there. I am sure that he used the term "eviction" when describing what happened to the people of these two chiefdoms in October 2000. Prior to being appointed Government spokesperson, Simelane had adamantly refused to relocate to Siteki, arguing that it was clearly vindictive and not done in good faith. I agreed with him. What would be wrong if a people questioned an imposition of a chief over their heads? Are questions not asked under Swazi law and custom? The anger right now reaching boiling point proportions seems to be well anticipated by Swazi authorities. For some reason, the King's safety is given unprecedented attention. Whereas it is commonplace now for low flying military helicopters to make an aerial inspection of every valley and corner the King would traverse when accompanying the Lusekwane boys, this year the air show was just too conspicuous.

The presence of the army in red uniform during the main *Incwala* day was another telling presence. It is clear that things are just not quite right. This is not a safe Swaziland anymore. As 2004 was winding down, it was clear that the solution to the rule of law saga was neither here nor there. *Sive Siyinqaba*, *Sibahle Sinje* Cultural Organisation, famous for its pro-monarchy stance and brisk attacks at the democratic movement, wrote a sad parting note to the Monarch. In their statement, the organisation excused Government and all its structures from responsibility for the rule of law collapse. *Sibahle Sinje* isolated the Swazi Monarch as the sole architect of the plight the nation finds itself in. Almost parallel to the known respect and character the

organisation is known for, *Sive Siyinqaba* warned of an impending violence, using the war words "Enough is enough!" The power of *Sive Siyinqaba* in Swaziland is not yet apparent. But we should take clues from the fact that the erstwhile Marwick Khumalo is a founder member of the organisation. The current chairman is Senator Isaac Shabangu. Senator Winnie Magagula is former Chairperson of the organisation. Senator Ngom'yayona Gamedze is former publicity secretary. MP "Cracker" Hlophe of Sandleni Inkhundla is former chairman of the Nhlanguano Branch. Need I continue? It is clear to all and sundry that as Marwick continues to show zero tolerance for all state machinations, especially questionable deals that entail the Monarchy and the Government, Sibahle Sinje is one hundred percent behind him. Another organisation that came hard on the monarchy at the close of 2004 was the Coalition led by Mandla Hlatshwayo and Musa Hlophe.

The Coalition's statement points a gloomy finger to the King after carefully analysing the total political landscape of Swaziland. PUDEMO and the NNLC may be banned political organisations, but they have repeated their angry voices that call for the abolition of the *Tinkhundla* system of Government. PUDEMO is very revolutionary in approach, having declared to be going to the bush in May 2003 to militarily fight the *Tinkhundla* Government. The NNLC, although slightly compromised by its current President, Obed Dlamini, whose silence as an MP has raised eyebrows of many lovers of democracy in the Kingdom, is also talking the language of revolution. Dominic Tembe, the NNLC's Secretary General, sees the *Tinkhundla* system as on a rampage of engaging culture as a means to political domination. The NNLC wants to counter this tendency by calling for genuine democratic reforms that will allow for the existence of political parties and the removal of the King from the centre stage of the political field of play. Both PUDEMO and the NNLC have not as yet come to the point of calling for the abolition of kingship. But if things continue as they are, those calls might be made sooner than later. The crux of the political crunch in 2005 will be the national constitution.

The King might have looked forward to the finalisation of the document with unrealistic excitement in the past year. Indeed, he had even promised the world that Swaziland would have its supreme law by the end of 2004. It was not to be, thanks to Prince David's confusion. After clandestinely slipping the document through an ignorant "*Sibaya*", Prince David thought he would rush the Constitution Bill with no questions asked through both Houses of Parliament. The anger of the nation, just like the making of the constitution, has been a process unfolding slowly. Since 1996 King Mswati III has been told that the constitution making process was not inclusive. As the process comes to finality, will the King swallow the bitter pill when unions, civil society, the African Union, SADC, the Commonwealth human rights watchdogs, tell him that this is a bad constitution? Will he use the armed forces to bash his nation to accept a document that makes him a tyrant? The threats of mass action and the mobilisation of the international community should tell us one thing that for better or for worse, the chickens have come home to roost. The floodgates of revolution are ajar, and there is no turning back. Democracy will prevail!

## PRINCESS SIKHANYISO AND THE *UMCWASHO* CEREMONY: WHEN HIP-HOP AND SWAZI CULTURE COLLIDE

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*In this article, Mzizi focuses on King Mswati's eldest child, Princess Sikhanyiso, who had, in two incidents, brought the attention of the nation to herself, when she first made unauthorised announcements with regard to the young girls' regiment. She had also behaved in an unprecedented way during the Umhlanga ritual when she took her music with her, made noises that were irritating to the headman, who beat her. At the heart of this article Mzizi looks at how royal children must be treated, the challenges they pose to their parents and how adults must relate to today's children, who are growing up in a different context.*

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The young Princess Sikhanyiso, no doubt a darling of the press and, might I add, an icon in her own right, seems to be attracting media attention for the wrong reasons these days. It all started five years ago when the Imbali regiment was formed and ordered to wear *umcwasho* in her honour. Although we all knew about her, that event brought her closer to the public eye, for there was a huge responsibility suddenly entrusted to her as a child of thirteen years. The period of the *umcwasho* rite was declared to be five years, much longer than any other since the *umcwasho* days of Princess Bethusile's in the 1940s. Normally *umcwasho* lasts for a couple of years. Whereas the rite has always marked an important episode in the history of the nation, such as the participation of the Swazi regiments in the Second World War in the 1940s, the attainment of self-rule in 1968, and the King's Diamond Jubilee in 1981, Princess Sikhanyiso's major event was the devastation of the nation caused by HIV/Aids. The five-year period was thought to be a compulsory moratorium during which all teenage girls would remain virgins. The name of Indvuna Ntfonjeni was associated with the ritual right from the onset.

What remained unclear was whether the young Princess would have any authority status over the ritual, or if she was simply just a symbolic head. Out of the blue she announced certain modifications on the code expected to be followed by the young maidens. The changes she announced were a bit radical, befitting of a young Princess growing up in twenty-first century Swaziland. She flew to London and was not around when questions were asked about the announcements she had made. Speculation was wide that there were adults behind her complaints, otherwise how could such an innocent child have the gall to challenge certain codes already made and announced by traditional leaders such as Ntfonjeni? I must say that while others were a bit taken aback and shaken to the marrow, wondering if the Princess was really cut out for the event, I thought she had a point. Adults have a tendency to forget that the child of today is not like the one of the early 1900s. Children today ask questions. We, who grew up in the 60s, were taught how to drill and take orders from an instructor, military style. Drilling lessons were compulsory in colonial Swaziland, and it is not difficult to figure out why. Discipline was defined in terms of taking orders and not asking questions. When the Princess announced a few innovations to the *umcwasho* rite, lo and behold! A can of worms had been opened. Princess Sikhanyiso's announcements were soon dismissed as those coming from a silly little girl who had just decided to be mischievous. Meanwhile, little Princess Sikhanyiso

enjoyed herself in her short and revealing skirts and dresses. The cameras were always there. And the public was repulsed.

In one year when her mother, iNkhosikati LaMbikiza, was pushed to the brink of explosion by remarks made by some MPs on her daughter's dress code, she told them where to get off, and reminded everybody of the challenges of bringing up a teenage child. I heard and empathised with her. I had a few of my own and knew exactly what she was feeling. But it was clear that Princess Sikhanyiso's childhood was not going to be normal and smooth running. Phinda Zwane of *The Observer* once reprimanded her and her brother Lindani, reminding them that as children of royalty much was expected of them. Zwane's fear was that these important children of the King were getting spoiled somehow and needed to be brought to order. Whether writing about them was the correct way of reprimanding them remains another matter. But having stayed in London, the Princesses and Prince Lindani already knew that there was no privacy for children of royalty. The sons of Princess Diana and Prince Charles are forever in the news and subject to paparazzi gossip more often than not. So, was Zwane right? Your guess is as good as mine. Five years carrying the *umcwasho* tassel and going through the agony of watching girls falling by the wayside must have been too much for the young Princess and everybody concerned. In most communities around Swaziland the first culprits were the maiden leaders at chiefdoms. The agony of demanding fines cannot be anyone's cup of tea in days like these when poverty and unemployment are at an all time high. But I recall Princess Sikhanyiso leading a band of young maidens to a homestead in the South, there to demand a fine. In some cases the fines had to be paid by the very King who had commissioned the rite, something that others failed to see in a positive light. They had forgotten that even King Sobhuza II's daughter broke the rite and fell pregnant in the 1940s. Sobhuza II paid the fine, a sign that he also was as human as everybody else. His children were not angels, neither was he made of flesh and blood from another planet. King Mswati III paid his fines and life continued.

The 2005 Reed Dance coincided with the termination of the *umcwasho* rite. Once again Princess Sikhanyiso was in the limelight. She declared that five years later she was still a virgin. But the young Princess, now reaching the age of eighteen, never said to anyone that she was not growing up like a normal teenage girl. She still liked her revealing attire, her kind of teenage music and still enjoyed to party. She may have taken her celebration spirit rather too far when she brought along her music system to where the girls were cutting the reeds. But that is Princes Sikhanyiso. Like any child would do, in the absence of rules, they create their own. Where the rules are many, they bend them to breaking point. There had never been a ban of music systems at the Reed Dance. In fact, maidens spend a good deal of time out in the wilderness, cutting reeds, talking a lot of nothing and getting bored most of the time. Music, therefore, being the only past time they know, brings them back to life, especially in the still of the night. For some reason iNdvuna Ntfonjeni got very irritated and went to where the "noisy" vibes were coming from. I can imagine him frothing in the mouth, cursing and snarling in the manner of a rabid bulldog. His aim, we are told, was to confiscate the music system. But the Princess would have none of that. The two must have exchanged a few swift verbal

venomous stings before Ntfonjeni let go with his stick, which struck the Princess once or twice. Sikhanyiso, being who she is, would not take the attack lying down. In an instant, the *Times* news crews were called to her place of domicile. She posed for them rather quite generously, indicating the black spots left by Ntfonjeni's whip. The public was divided over the revelation that the Princess had been beaten. Some saw Ntfonjeni's action as a clear violation of the rights of the child. Others felt that Princess Sikhanyiso had invited it, for she should have known better as a role model and a Princess what things were acceptable and not. The spare the rod and spoil the child domain seemed to be winning the day, amidst strong voices from such organisations as Save The Children and UNICEF condemning the action. Princess Sikhanyiso was no longer a child according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that Swaziland ratified over ten years ago. It was a nice argument. Ngwempisi MP, Vulindlela Msibi, who is also chairperson of Save the Children, supported the spare the rod spoil the child camp, while his organisation felt otherwise. It made interesting reading indeed. Just like five years ago when Princess Sikhanyiso left for London under a cloud of controversy over new innovations she had crafted for the *umcwasho* ritual, this time around she has left for the United States spitting fire and brimstone at Ntfonjeni. From an observer such as me, it would seem that royalty is divided over the issue.

King Mswati III and the Princess's mother must be completely unhappy about Ntfonjeni. But before we blame the parents and judge them as favouring a naughty little girl, something which they will regret a few years down the line, let us ask an honest question. Was Ntfonjeni's beating a punishment or an assault? I would not be amused to find scars on my child's body inflicted by another man without my consent. If he unleashed his stick while they were shouting at each other, something more than likely under the circumstances, then that was assault. Punishment, to be effective and correctly administered, should wait for the time when anger has given in to reason. Indvuna Ntfonjeni's action could have been more catastrophic than what we saw. If he had lost his temper and then lost control of himself and the situation, he could have easily hurt the young Princess worse than he did. Is Ntfonjeni guilty as charged? Is the Princess as innocent as she wants us to believe? I am afraid that there is no balance of probability in this case. Ntfonjeni overstepped his fatherly limits. If he felt the Princess was out of order, then reporting her to higher authorities would have been in order. In the premise, it would appear that he was revenging the episode of the innovative announcements made five years earlier, or is that far-fetched? I think the *iNdvuna* has lost his stature to be entrusted any more with royal children and those of the entire nation. Judging him also on how he botched and threw his weight around during the recruitment of female soldiers a few months ago; I am simply just not impressed. *Ekhaya Ndvuna!!*

## SWIMMING IN UNCERTAIN WATERS: *INCWALA*

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*In this article, Mzizi examines the annual ritual of Incwala, which was approaching whilst at the same time the trade unions were threatening to strike. He analyses Incwala, its processes*

*and meaning and significance for the stability of nation. Then he locates it to the challenging context of the approaching strike and suggests that Incwala would be meaningless if citizens are aggrieved simply because their working conditions are unsatisfactory or because the royal house has imposed one of them to rule communities as chief without proper consultation. What emerges here are issues that are conflicting issues around politics and Swazi culture and Mzizi calls for these to be brought into coherence.*

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Thought it was pretty nice and appropriate for *Sive Siyinqaba* to congratulate His Majesty the King on celebrating the tenth anniversary of the *Incwala* ceremony. Chairman of the organisation, Robert Zombodze Magagula, also reminded us that the *Incwala* is symbolic of Swazi unity, if not strength. *Sive Siyinqaba* as an organisation edged once more to preserve kingship and protect it from all manner of enemies and adversaries that might want to destroy this precious heritage of the Swazi people. Mr. Magagula said something, which resonated with all our statements of true patriotism and perfect national hegemony. Around this time last year, this column carried two articles about the essence of *Incwala*. The emphasis was this ceremony is more than a ritual of kingship. It is more than apex, centre and circumference of Swazi religion. But it is the time of celebrating nationality and national unity. Anthrogy might argue that at this time the King renews his strength when he asks supra-tremendous emerging to the *Inhlambelo*.

It may look terrible and as though it's out of this world, but the truth is that during the time that kingship and the Swazi nation reconnect with nature and the power of the universe it might be the virtual force. Lightly potent medicines are used for this reconnection: in fact so potent that the King himself must take them and be advised by the traditional practitioners. If misapplied, the King might not see beyond the rituals. That is why highly trained specialists are the officials at various stages of the ceremony. *Incwala* is likened to a solemn season of prayer, a religious feast of the first fruits. The King is the major player because, as J.S.M. Matsebula once noted, without a King there is no *Incwala*. Swaziland is probably the only Nguni country that so elaborately celebrates *Incwala*. The Zulu have it; and we hear of the revival of the ceremony amongst the Ngonis of Zambia, Malawi and possibly Uganda. Otherwise, the ceremony died with the advent of colonialism, which destabilised African cultures on contact. One of the worst crimes of colonial masters was to kill the political institutes of Africa whose nerve-centre was kingship. In degrees that varied from place to place, institutions of kingship were undermined and marginalised.

The colonial powers knew that if they dealt a death-blow on the central locus of power, ethnic unity would not be assured and these people would be easier to colonise. When Swaziland experienced the encroachment of white settlers, especially the Dutch, better known as the Boers, and the British, Swazi Kingship was at stake. As a matter of fact, the British who made Swaziland a protectorate and eventually a protected state never recognised the Swazi monarch as the King. From 1921 to 1968, Sobhuza II's official title was that of paramount chief. This was demeaning indeed, and was a sad show of British arrogance, a nauseating colonial attitude which history will never forgive. But despite all these odds, the Swazi's rallied behind their



*Ingwenyama* and they called him *Nkhosi* or King. During this time *Incwala* was very important because each time the nation would meet at the sacred kraal, they remembered their heritage as they invoked the national ancestors to help in the establishment of national unity and hegemony. *Incwala* united the Swazi by providing a formidable base for launching a cultural and political front against the colonising powers. *Incwala* is, by and large, a national ceremony. I agree that it is the institution of kingship that makes *Incwala* come alive and celebrate-able. This is because in kingship, national unity, aspirations and dreams ought to be realisable. The involvement of diversity of individuals in the actual ritual of kingship means that no single group or clan can claim monopoly status of the *Incwala*. Those who are the main actors are not specially rewarded for doing so. They are simply performing national duties for the public good. If they feel a sense of importance, they soon realise the irrelevance of such a feeling. We read with amazement that one of the troubled chiefdoms in the East complied that the water party did not take up abode at their place as usual. They instead went to KaNgcamphalala.

The troubled chiefdom then lamented if they still can call themselves subjects of King Mswati III. Important as their argument may sound, one does not expect the water party to go through troubled spots as they fetch sacred waters. In fact, if they did go through a place that smelt of disaster and death as a result of chiefdom disputes, your guess is as good as mine that the whole *Incwala* ceremony would be contained and therefore spoiled. I trust that in the true spirit of unity and national cohesion, our elders have the task to revisit the kaMkhweli and Macetjeni chiefdoms, asking in the process if the whole idea of imposing Prince Maguga as chief serves to unite or divide these communities. If the communities are so polarised that there is a smell of death in the air, then revisiting the Maguga appointment will be the only prudent thing to do. We are approaching *Incwala* 1996 as a nation struggling to swim in uncertain waters. We are worried mostly by the ever-growing chasm between government and the Trade Unions. The SFTU in particular has threatened another mass stay-away next January. The consequences of any stay-away are incalculable in terms of national inconvenience and the dire economic consequences. I do not think that even the threat of mass action is good for any country's economy. For one thing, potential investors will become highly suspicious. Investors on the ground are forced to look for alternative fertile soil.

In these days of the fast democratisation of some countries, they may not have to look too far. I believe that it should be every stakeholder's responsibility to protect the economy of the country. The major stakeholders are of course the unions, workers and employers. In the process of fighting for the workers' rights, the economy of the country should not be sacrificed, because to recover an economy as we have learned from a good number of countries in Africa, is a notoriously tall order. That is why I believe the SFTU should revisit the strategy of a strike threat. That is why government should do all within reasonable means and limits to avert strike action. A Swazi government tends to believe that a great deal has been done to meet the twenty-seven popular demands. They have proof of this as former minister of labour, Albert Shabangu, was always on record providing the evidence. SFTU feels government's efforts are not bargaining; one party cannot walk away with the whole chunk at stake. Bargaining is a give-and-take two-

way process that ensures that at the end of the day each party has lost and gained on a fair table. The country should not be led by a half cooked and always-irritable bunch of leaders. But we want tomorrow's politicians and technocrats to be confident of themselves, always willing to give their best and receive the best from others. We have supported the teachers' course of bargaining for a better financial package in the current fiscal year. We have condemned government for acting improperly by affecting a no work, no pay rule. SNAT and SNACS are the right bodies to seek the intervention of the justice system if they feel government acted extra-judiciously by deducting the salaries. I always believe that the courts are there to check and balance possible excess that may contravene certain legal provisions. Resorting to go on strike, though a human right, should not be applied without careful reason.

We are still wondering if the two mass stay-aways by SFTU and the lengthy teachers strike achieved anything positive other than polarising the workers from government, sowing seeds of tension between employers and employees, and creating clouds of suspicion and mistrust between the workers and the union leaders. We are not looking for heroes here, but it is our country, which, when we go, we wish to leave a better place than when we found it. This *Incwala* season should be a time of reflection for action past, and indeed for the morrow so uncertain. It should be a time when no king or commoner thinks there is anything better than national unity, the King of unity which cannot dwell on the same table with exploitation, dictatorship, inequality and all the social evils we find in national structures. When Mswati III dismisses *Emabutfo* at Engabezweni early next year, may he do so with a happy face, a face full of pride and dignity, and then we shall say we call captured the true spirit of *Incwala*.

## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF *UMCWASHO*

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*In this article Mzizi focuses his attention on the Umcwasho tradition, which requires maidens to wear red tassels around their necks, during which time they are not to be touched by male admirers or to engage in sexual intercourse. If a man impregnates a girl during this time he is fined a number of cattle. Mzizi criticises this tradition as something that is used for money-making by the girls, and claims that it has lost its significance.*

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Never in the recent past has there been a customary practice that has caused more controversy than the September 2001 re-introduction of *Umcwasho*. First, it was the "untrousering" of the maidens that invited their immediate objection. Then it was the departure of iNkhosatana Sikhanyiso, the Princess of Honour, to London very soon after the re-launch of the event. Next in line was the betrothal of the *Umcwasho*-wearing Liphovela Ntsetselelo Magongo of Lobamba Lomdzala to His Majesty the King. It was an unfolding melodrama that captured every inch of one's attention, evoking laughter here, a sense of cultural pride there, and an admixture of intrigue and uncertainty everywhere. The melodrama came to an anticlimax when the Princess of Honour, in a surprise move that nearly shook the foundations of Mdzimba mountain range, called a press conference to announce some amendments to the code of conduct given to the

girls last September. This earned the young Princess a severe tongue-lashing, criticism and rounds of gossip, a kind of life not new to her marriage home.

A handful of chiefs remembered rather later that the enforcement of the cultural practice remained in their hands. They called the young maidens and gave their orders. The focus of attention shifted markedly from the Princess of Honour to HIV and Aids. But more about that later. I recall one voice that suggested that boys, too, should wear *Umcwasho*. Interesting, interesting! A voice from the wilderness of women's lib! There was a cacophony of protestation from the male cadre here, and the voice had to get lost in the deep dungeon of the bush. Meanwhile stories about the behaviour of maidens who were harassing homesteads demanding fines even before they were sure of the crimes hit our front pages. *Umcwasho* girls were a charged, loose "impi" causing terror and fear in everyone with a girl child, for they could make you an object of public embarrassment and suck you dry and broke as a church mouse.

The public acceptance of *Umcwasho* ranged from a strong nonchalant to a mild and feeble nod of approval. The girls themselves preferred not to be seen in town with the tassels hanging down their backs. It was clear that the *Umcwasho* call was to be tested through storms and hurricanes of doubt. Some chiefs were heard taking the tough line and forcing every girl in their fold to wear the tassel. But some parents staged a strike of silence with their money. When belts are fastened tight, where is the money to buy the wool especially for this generation of young people? Others naturally heeded the call. Then there was Waqunga of Mhlatane High who must have looked up and down, this way and that way, sniffing the air, and finally deciding that for Mhlatane High, it's the "no tassel, no admission" for girl students. He got the desired publicity. But not all were impressed. The Head of Mhlatane had forgotten one thing or two. Girl students in his school have parents who have chiefs. Matters of culture had better be left to the appropriate custodians.

Secondly, policy of this magnitude should have descended from his superiors at the Ministry of Education. Interestingly, national schools, which were built on a strong cultural foundation, did not buy into Waqunga's idea. Waqunga had his admirers ofcourse, some of which chose to congratulate him with tongue in cheek. Some members of the fourth estate smelled a rat: should the focus of *Umcwasho* shift now from the Princess and from HIV and Aids to Waqunga? A tough question indeed! Waqunga's girls displayed their respect for the custom (and Headmaster) at the opening ceremony of Maguga Dam. Tough as teak, Waqunga has stuck to his guns come rain or shine.

A search for the meaning and purpose of this custom has never been so urgent. Fanyana Mabuza has told us a story of a Hlathikhulu man who was harassed to fork out a thousand Emalangeni by young unruly girls acting on a pre-*Umcwasho* pregnancy. What Fanyana did not mention in the story is that the man is recovering from a stroke that nearly took his life as a result of this experience. Sgi Dlamini lost his two wives not too long ago. He is a single parent who is looking after and educating over ten children, most of whom are girls. The community knows that Dlamini has a thousand and one problems in his hands. If he dies now, who will take

care of his brood? But the *Umcwasho* maidens see him as a potential sponsor for free drinks and biscuits. Swaziland's modern history reveals that the first *Umcwasho* during Sobhuza II's reign was launched in 1935 in honour of Princess Bethusile, Sobhuza's first-born child. She had reached puberty, and the King, at over thirty years, was now considered a grown man. It lasted for one year, marking an important event in the life of the young monarch, a moment of growth and maturity. Ten years later, in 1945 *Umcwasho* returned.

The Princess of honour was Pholile. The event was the return of the Swazi soldiers from World War II. The late World War II veteran, Magayiza Mmemma of Hlathikhulu, related to me some time back why Swaziland participated in that European war. It was for our land, a return of our land, Magayiza emphasised with visible pride and glory. It was the mentality of the time, perhaps cleverly interwoven by Sobhuza II himself, together with the British. Swazi independence was only returned twenty-three years later in 1968 with more than 70 per cent of Swazi nation land lost to South Africa. But the 1945 *Umcwasho* celebrated the return of the soldiers. The story is told that most of the maidens, including Princess Pholile herself, fell pregnant and failed the event. This is blamed on the sudden unleashing of the soldier full of a five-year stock of sexual energy. But again that may be too speculative to be believed.

The 1969-71 *Umcwasho* marked Swaziland's gaining of independence. It was a remarkable achievement, full of promises and a myriad of challenges. The Princess of honour was Sabisile who led the Lunyati regiment throughout the commemorative years. Once again we had scored a point in our political economy. Sobhuza II sealed his illustrious political and socio-cultural career with the 1982 *Umcwasho* where the Tingabisa regiment was to demonstrate pride in the King's longevity and largess. The King's Golden Jubilee had been celebrated in 1981. Princess Phumelele led the girls during the sad times following the King's demise later in 1982. The question then is: What was Swaziland celebrating in 2001? What had been achieved by the sovereign? It is my considered view that it was the coming of age of Princess Sikhanyiso who is Mswati III's first-born child. It is unfortunate that the coming of age of this Princess happened when the whole world is hit by the HIV/Aids pandemic. But the focus should be on the life of the King and the Princess, not on the negative impact created by HIV/Aids. When we all focus on the good life of the King, we are looking at our brighter side of our story, the story of hope, life, peace and prosperity. We know that even though we are in a valley of death and despair, the Great Spirit is with us. We shall come out and defy the statistics that we may all be wiped off the face of the earth in 2020. Tongues wished His Majesty a happy birthday and a prosperous future full of wisdom and vision!

## PART 3 – ON HUMAN RIGHTS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE *TINKUNDLA* SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

### WHAT IS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION?

There is a general perception that, when demands are heralded on such basic freedoms as the freedoms of speech, assembly, worship and expression, some think that these freedoms should be exercised anyhow. We have to acknowledge that all freedoms come with responsibilities and obligations. The freedom of worship, for example, does not grant one the right to impose one's religion as the only philosophy of life. Neither does it mean that such worship can be done everywhere and anyhow. The standard rule with regards to freedom of worship, otherwise called freedom of conscience, is that such a freedom should be exercised in regard to domestic laws that provide for national defence, public order, public morality and public health. Secondly, the rights and freedoms of those people who do not subscribe to the religion in question should be protected. These latter rights include the right to observe and practise any religion or belief without the unsolicited intervention of members of any other religion or belief.

Thus, it is essential to understand that freedom of expression, as a human right, does not mean the right to insult and upset others. While basic rights are universal and owe their origins to a supreme power, they can only be protected and promoted within the confines of a regime of law. I hasten to add that the regime of law that gives force to the rights and freedoms concerned should not attempt to derogate the freedom concerned from that which is the fundamental right. Claw-back clauses or reservations when International Conventions and Protocols are ratified are dangerous for democracy because in the majority of cases the reservations are spelled out in order to safeguard certain ideological frameworks of the dominant regime.

The 1968 Constitution of Swaziland talks about the protection of freedom of expression as follows:

*Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference (whether communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons) and freedom from interference with his correspondence.*

The Constitution, however, spelt out the parameters within which freedom of expression may be exercised. Once again, the yardstick of defence, public safety, public order, public morality and health are cited as fundamental to this right. The protection of the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons including disclosure of information received in confidence, should all be tested against the principle: "Reasonable and justifiable in a democratic society."

The concept of freedom of expression was addressed in May 1984 in the Paris Minimum Standards (April 1984) and in the Siracusa Principles (May 1984). On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1985 "The Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of expression and access to information" were adopted by an assembly of experts in international law, national security,

Article 19, the International Centre Against Censorship and the Centre for Applied Legal Studies of the University of the Witwatersrand. The principles are based on the “Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Paris Minimum Standards of Human Rights Norms in a State of Emergency”. The first Principle defines freedom of opinion, expression and information. For ease of reference, I quote the Principle in full:

1. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his or her choice.
3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph (b) may be subject to restriction on specific grounds as established in international law, including for the protection of national security.
4. No restriction on freedom of expression or information on the grounds of national security may be imposed unless the government can demonstrate that the restriction is prescribed by law and is necessary in a democratic society to protect a legitimate national security interest. The burden of demonstrating the validity of the restriction rests with the government.

I should observe that a democratic society, according to the Johannesburg principles, is a country with a government that is entirely accountable to an organ outside of itself, namely, periodic free and fair elections underscored by universal and equal suffrage and the secret ballot. Secondly, society should be free to organise political party opposition for purposes of checks and balances of political authority. Finally, there should be in place effective legal guarantees of fundamental rights enforced by an independent judiciary.

On the question of expression that may Threaten National Security, the principles put the burden on Government to demonstrate whether the expression was meant to incite violence. The Principle records legitimate exercise of this freedom as follows:

1. where the expression advocates non-violent change;
2. where the expression constitutes criticism of, or insult to, the nation, the state or its symbols, the government, its agencies, or public officials, or a foreign nation, state or its symbols, government, agencies or public officials.
3. where the expression constitutes advocacy, or advocacy of objection, on grounds of religion, conscience or belief, to military conscription or service, a particular conflict, or the threat or use of force to settle international disputes;
4. where the expression is directed to communicating information about alleged violations of international human rights standards or international humanitarian law.

It is interesting to note that the principles allow for criticism and insulting of the nation, the state and its symbols, the government and its agencies and public officials. Foreign nations and

governments may also be criticised or insulted. The yardstick here is that: *the criticism or insult should not be intended to, or likely to incite imminent violence.*

## WHAT IS THE *TINKUNDLA* SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT?

While I reserve my right to disagree with the notion that *Tinkundla* Government is a system, it is fair to observe that *Tinkundla* were conceived as a viable option to a political party dispensation that had obtained in Swaziland from 1960 to 12 April 1973. *Tinkundla* can best be described as a reactionary invention that aims at romanticising Swaziland's ancient values by affirming the institution of kingship as pivotal for national hegemony in such areas as: *culture, traditions and customs; modern and traditional forms of governance; economy and sustainable development.* According to "The Establishment of the Parliament of Swaziland Order, 1978" *Tinkundla* are local councils, which are established by the King. Their primary duty is to carry out traditional functions and elect according to traditional norms and procedures an *Inkhundla* Committee, which would in turn elect two people to represent the *iNkhundla* as delegates at the Electoral College. The order further establishes a bicameral Parliament where 25 per cent of the members of the House of Assembly are appointed by the King and the remaining 75 per cent elected by the College. The King nominates 50 per cent into the Senate. Executive authority vests in the King. He appoints a prime minister and the Cabinet. He may dismiss a prime minister or any minister at any time.

The 1978 order was meant to confirm the elimination of party politics from the Swazi political landscape and also indirectly influence the election of members of the bicameral parliament. It can be argued that this kind of influence was more cosmetic than real. But it is this practice that lasted for the following fifteen years. The 1978-order was replaced by the 1992 one following two consultations on reviewing the *Tinkhundla*. Under the revised order the major change was that in *Tinkhundla* people now vote by secret ballot for the people that will go directly to parliament. The person does not have to have a political programme. To be sure, politics, which is how Swazis are governed from both strategic and national policy points of view and the day-to-day operation, remain the prerogative of the King, not parliament. This observation is likely to be denied by *Tinkhundla* advocates. However, it is tragic that all the recommendations of the 1992 Constitutional Review Commission have done precious little to win national confidence on the question of political change.

The Swaziland Government sees what it calls Swaziland's *Tinkhundla* Representative System of Government as a unique approach to democracy:

*The Tinkhundla Representatives System of Government aims at satisfying the aspirations of the Swazi people – their cultural, historical and ethnic norms and values. It distinguishes them as a nation of distinct and unique principles, with checks and balances against the abuse of power. It is a system of rule and consensus, but one which acknowledges the opinions of minority groups. And it is a system preferred by most Swazis, as it seeks to promote and foster political and social stability, harmony and peace in a continent and world plagued by racial and ideological hatred and conflict. Tinkhundla seeks to uphold the unity of the Swazi*

*nation, while respecting different views and opinions in the course of nation building and development. It transcends boundaries of economic wealth and status in upholding equality and justice. And it encourages Swazis to shape their own destiny from the grassroots rural and community level to representation at local, regional, parliamentary and even ministerial level.*

Well, I do not quite believe what I am reading! *Tinkhundla* rhetoric has never been my cup of tea. But it gives us an insight as to what is going on. Political change in Swaziland is managed by a king. This is called a top-down model. However, knowing that this model smacks of dictatorship and unacceptable principles of managing change, the status quo turns around to seek legitimacy from the gullible public. The CRC is a case in point. A lot of time has been spent by the commission on trivialities such as distributing the current constitutional framework, piles and piles of which are still lying unread and undistributed in the same place. The same team is engaged in both civic education and the collection of views from the public. In other words, they are teaching the people what a Constitution is, and possibly how to say and what to say when presenting points to the CRC. The submissions will not be subjected to open debate. Need I continue?

## **IS THERE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN SWAZILAND?**

It is appropriate to conclude these observations by asking this question, which I alone cannot answer exhaustively. The definition of the concept of freedom of expression demonstrates that it is not limited to the press alone. Both the drafters of the 1968 Constitution and the tradition of the Johannesburg Principles underscore the fact that this freedom belongs to all. It is everyone's right to criticise or insult a government. But I do not think that such criticism or insult should be destruction or ridicule for its own sake. It may be in a form of protest, peaceful march, or peaceful assembly. Or it may be peaceful mass action, all meant to call the status quo to the negotiating table. The question is: Is the status quo sensitive to public criticism? That is the crux of the problem from which may be bred elements of anarchy and intolerance.

We are aware that since 1973 certain sections of this society are not allowed to organise, associate and express themselves as a unit. It is part of *Tinkhundla* to spread the ideology of traditionalism Nkonzo Hlatshwayo addressed in his legal studies. Traditionalism as an ideology says that Swazis are united; they speak with one voice; there has been peace and tranquillity here since 1968 because Swazis are united under the monarchy. What traditionalism does not ask and parade is why the army was established soon after the repeal of the Constitution in 1973. Why are political parties operating underground and externally? Why have the police been bashing peaceful marches and processions? The airport incident comes to mind. A troubled section of the society decided to go and show their long faces to their King, who was returning from abroad. The police allowed them to hang around for the better part of the day. Just when the King was almost where the crown was, live ammunition was opened on the fleeing demonstrators. Why did we have Black Wednesday? No one has asked whether Black



Wednesday was some sort of political revenge. The report, though finally released by Authur Khoza when he was in Education, has never been actioned.

Just last year teachers of this Kingdom used, as a form of expression, a coffin to express continuous assessment. The innocent box was confiscated, God knows why. The last we heard was that that form of expression was unSwazi. That is the dilemma here! In short, I conclude that if freedom of expression exists in Swaziland, it is for merely a handful.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO GOOD CONSCIENCE FOR PUBLIC LEADERS?

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*Using the case of one MP who was alleged to have embezzled funds allocated for destitute children of his school by government, Mzizi exposes the corruption that runs all over the system of governance in Swaziland with impunity and calls for accountability from all levels, including Members of Parliament.*

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I was hoping that Honourable MP of Zombodze, Emuva Titus Thwala, would have done some very swift damage control by now and would have offered the nation some credible explanation on how he has been running the finance department at Moyeni High School. The breaking story which concerned money earmarked for the destitute children at that school was one of the saddest I have read in a long time. I cannot understand how someone bestowed with trust to run a high school office of the headmaster can in this day and age divert school finances to his private pocket, as the story led us to conclude. According to the report, which I still hope Thwala will deny and set the record straight, the school account was already much depleted when the third term of 2003 got underway. A huge cheque to the tune of over E80 000 from the King's E16 million Education Fund was received and duly deposited into the school account. This money was ostensibly meant to pay for the education of the destitute children Moyeni High had identified. It would appear, therefore, that Thwala, as Headmaster, must have submitted to the Ministry of Education a long list of needy children at his school. The officers responsible for funds must have been convinced beyond doubt that Thwala's cases were genuine and beyond reproach. But did these officers really do their work? What boggles the mind is that since 2002 and, indeed for the better part of 2003, the Teaching Service Commission was not at peace with Thwala.

As I understand the developments, he was supposed to have taken his transfer and demotion to the position of deputy head first at Timphisini High in the Hhohho Region and next at Ekuphakameni High at the outskirts of Mankayane sub-district. These transfers occupied the TSC for the whole of 2002 and 2003, with Thwala dilly-dallying, playing hide and seek all the way. In essence, the man was flatly refusing to take orders from his employer. Naturally, the TSC was left with no option but to slam him with a suspension, ostensibly for insubordination, let alone the failure of running his school. Thwala has to account for school monies for most of the years that he has been at Moyeni High. It was the elections fever that may have clouded the Thwala issue. But one should ask the question that since the TSC and the Ministry of Education

are housed in one building, when the cheque for the destitute children was processed for Moyeni High, who did the relevant officers think would receive it at Moyeni, given the confusion in the leadership of that school?

It is common knowledge that when Thwala refused the transfers, he did not hand over the keys to office to whomsoever the TSC may have legally authorised to run the school. Hence, when Thwala was contesting either silently or actively his transfers and demotion, there is no indication that he vacated the office of headmaster for Moyeni High. If indeed this is true, who then was supposed to officially and legally receive any transaction that pertained to Moyeni High? That is where caution became a stranger to the ministry's officials. The story of the massive and quick withdrawals soon after the cheque had cleared reads like a soap opera. There is a limit according to the ministry's accounting rules and procedures for keeping hard cash, petty cash, in the schools safe. Otherwise no payments can be processed without proper invoices and official receipts. Thwala knows these simple accounting procedures very well. Besides, the money the school received from the ministry should have been accordingly allocated to the affected students and duly indicated in the student ledgers for proper audit purposes.

The new headmaster for Moyeni High, according to the report, has established that the needy students still have not paid their fees. The sooner MP Thwala explains what those withdrawals were meant for, the better he may counteract speculation that he was financing his campaign spree in the South. The catch phrase for Thwala's campaigns was deliberately plagiarised from the Smart Partnership fever this country was caught up with in the winter months up to the middle of August. "Smart Zombodze" was his rallying trump card. He made promises after promises about how he envisions a new "Zombodze" with a new and dynamic MP. No doubt, Thwala stole the show and became an instant hit amongst his people. One veteran educator who is well known in the area, and who was possibly aspiring to run for the elections considering his imminent retirement decided against the idea after he had heard Thwala speak. His eloquence, his boldness, his sweet-tongue, would make the devil rush to hang on the cross to die for all the sinners he misled to damnation. Thwala went so far as pledging part of his salary as an MP to the alleviation of poverty in the area. Good ideas, good promises indeed, my foot! But did someone ask Thwala a simple Standard One question: How was he financing his campaign spree? Where did he get the money and the gumption to engage on such a glossy and expensive campaign, considering his embattled career with the TSC?

He has a business alright, but why is it that in all the schools where he served, from Edwaleni High to Florence Christian Academy, there is a trail of alleged pockets of unprofessional behaviour and a lot of unanswered questions? I recall that in the run down to the elections, Thwala was recognised by one over zealous columnist, whose mission on earth I despise to the core. This writer even claimed that Thwala was Cabinet material. He recently used theological jargon to justify Thwala's woes in politics, Lucifer of Lucifers! The story of his big dreams as Cabinet material was already making the rounds, hurting him all the way, had he not received professional advice from a wise member of the Fourth Estate to deny everything. One reporter

had splashed the news, not out of wanton purpose, but after reading the signs of the times correctly. In front of His Majesty he had claimed to be clay, a simple clay for the King to press and mould into whatever object the King desires. However, one can interpret that metaphor; Thwala was joining the whole lot of unprincipled politicians who have let the King down in recent memory. With whom did Thwala share the loot? Of course, denials and counter-denials may abound, but a forensic audit of his campaign spree, I should imagine, may implicate quite a number of people, some in high places. I do not quite exclude a possible golden handshake to that God-forsaken columnist. But surely, and again I repeat that I still give Thwala the benefit of the doubt, should it have all come to this? If all is what it seems, it is called stealing from His Majesty's fund for destitute children to finance His Majesty's election campaign. Stealing from Peter to pay Paul, as they say! Whatever happened to good conscience? The people of Zombodze should ask themselves a smart question if indeed this is what they bargained for in Thwala. Is this the kind of MP they want to send to His Majesty's Government, or are they duped to the core? From what I recall, there is a former Speaker there, Musa J. Nsibandze, who as I know him, served this country with great honesty and dedication.

## MINISTER MUST EXPLAIN THOLENI MURDER ISSUE

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*In this article Mzizi raised the issues of inefficiency in the justice department, using a case study of the release of Mr Tholeni Nkambule, who had confessed to the killing of a nurse, by the Director of Public Prosecutions DPP, Mr Andrinkah Donkoh. Mzizi takes the DPP on.*

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"Dissection" painfully wonders if the DPP Andrinkah Donkoh was aware that he was opening a can of angry worms by writing that order which released Tholeni Nkambule, the self-confessed killer of Nurse Themba Gamedze. Times have changed in Swaziland and only the stupid gradualists still believe that the Swazi of 1940 is exactly the same species as that of the late 1990s. Swazis are now no longer bound by dangerous mentality based on the doctrine of "might is right", the sort of survival of the fittest law of the jungle first espoused by Charles Darwin in 1859 in his celebrated publication titled *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Darwin advanced the argument that because environment resources are always inherently lacking to sufficiently sustain human and animal life, it was necessary for the living species to compete, thus eliminating the less fit from the environment. He called this process natural selection. While we cannot be detained by Darwin's theory and the furore it caused leading to the Oxford debate in 1860; and also the neo-Darwinism of today which reveals the source of the variation of organisms as genetics, we can safely conclude that the urge to survive has resulted in a multitude of crimes against humanity.

Colonialism, for example, spread the malicious lie that some nations were ordained by the creator to be perpetually subservient, and that the colonialist was carrying out the will of God. Fifteen years after the end of the Second World War, colonial regimes were seriously challenged. Most of them put up a formidable fight in a bid to perpetuate evil, in this case camouflaged as

European development of Third World nations. Lives were lost and indigenous populations were destabilised. The next problem of Africa after colonialism was two-fold: tribalism and socio-economic status. Certain ethnic groups started competing for space and control using ethnic identity as their trump card. On the other hand, those with money and wealth automatically gained respect at the expense of the poor and the downtrodden. "Dissection" has read with interest the allegations that the Tholeni Donkoh mystery release must have been engineered somewhere on the planes of the high and mighty. If indeed these allegations have an iota of truth in them, I am personally disappointed with Mr Donkoh. I think his personal reputation in the legal profession is at stake, and only the high and mighty can save him. His image in the eyes of the public is certainly in great doubt. His colleagues in the legal fraternity do not speak well of him, accusing him of the kind of inflated ego that results from high and impeccable connexions.

Donkoh himself has not denied his "friendship" (for lack of an appropriate term) with the head of state. I was at the capital city the day after Tholeni had been released. My son spotted him at the Plaza and in great disbelief shouted: "Father, Tholeni is out; there he is!"

I looked at this swanky gentleman and immediately recalled that his bail application had been denied. Little had I know that in his last remand hearing before the Christmas holiday, Tholeni would be released by order of the DPP: "Son, you must be mistaken wena, phela that could be something like a lookalike, you know?"

My son insisted as I questioned my own judgment of the figure sauntering in the midst of cloudy and drizzling weather conditions. When we bought the paper later that morning, all I could do was to read the headline completely stunned and confused as my son nodded in approval of what he had seen. I read the story. It did not make sense to me. In one Manzini shop, I found two gentlemen vigorously arguing about the issue later that day. One of the gentlemen, who were both visibly worked up, uttered angry words at the justice system of Swaziland, concluding that it was all because of Donkoh. The other sounded a bit sympathetic towards Donkoh. His argument was that Donkoh acted within his professional rights by releasing Tholeni and not explaining why.

I jumped into the discussion with these words:

*Gentlemen, the issue is not our justice system, nor is it the powers and privileges of the DPP. The issue is: somebody is dead here and we want to know who killed him. Someone has lost a son here, and wants to heal from the ordeal as justice takes its course. The only credible suspect is out. That is the issue!*

It was clear to me that what Donkoh had done would stimulate a litany of accusations and counter-accusations. The public has a right to talk about this issue. No one can deny them this right. And whoever thought the action of the DPP would be received in silence just because he is the DPP and has certain connections was dreaming under a heap of blankets. Swazis cannot be taken for granted any longer. We want to know why Tholeni is out. We want to know who killed Mr Gamedze. We want to know why Donkoh acted the way he did. And we are not prepared

to rest until satisfactory answers are provided by the concerned. Real pressure in this case is exerted squarely on the Minister of Justice, Hon. Chief Maweni Simelane. He cannot relegate this one to his principal secretary whose recent utterances on this issue have raised further confusions. Maweni must realise that the issue of Gamedze has turned political and ethical. It is now a human rights issue. By the way, the Christian Media Centre under the Swaziland Conference of Churches disgraced itself by broadcasting the New Year message from that conservative Christian Zambian vice-president. Human rights struggles are the business of the church. *People are walking away from the church because of its irrelevance to socio-political and economic matters, including the dignity and worth of the human person.* I wish I could have a chat with that Zambian politician so that I may demonstrate to him that the church cannot be neutral in its evangelistic ministry. It must take sides and be the voice of the voiceless, the comforter of the Lazaruses of this world, and the prophet who pronounces God's judgment to those who do not execute proper justice in all nations, Zambia and Swaziland included.

"Dissection" made a personal investigation on the Tholeni case. Here are a few facts worth pondering upon. Tholeni and his friends took the body of Mr Gamedze to the hospital where they did not wait to write a statement in front of the police. The officer who attended to them had advised them to await the police, but this advice went unheeded. Tholeni did not immediately seek medical attention as someone who had been stabbed according to the Donkoh submission. If Gamedze had stabbed Tholeni with a "high precision surgical knife", it stands to reason that Tholeni must have been badly hurt. So, what exactly does the DPP mean when he argues that Tholeni was lucky to survive? I further investigated how many "high precision surgical knives" does the Mbabane government hospital have, and if any had gone missing. I learned that the hospital has only one, none on order, and none in the storeroom is missing. So the question is: who has produced this "high precision surgical knife?" I was further told that the one Mr Donkoh used as evidence of Gamedze's aggression is new. Really, there is something terribly sinister about this case.

"Dissection" wants to know if a postmortem on Gamedze was conducted, and if the stab wounds fitted the instrument described by the DPP. All questions would have been answered in a court of law, certainly not by a silent DPP whose handling of this case leaves a lot to be desired. Finally, it is clear in this case that evidence was tampered with, and the state seems less than interested in prosecuting the case. Because of the controversial nature of the case, I suggest that Tholeni's charges be re-preferred and he should be remanded in custody. I further suggest that Mr Donkoh be suspended from duty in the public interest, and for the sake of investigating a charge of defeating the ends of justice, which I suspect Donkoh should answer. I make these suggestions to Minister Maweni before this case invites the militant participation of frustrated citizens. We in the Human Rights movement are obliged to take this case to our international compatriots, and are thus watching the Ministry of Justice very closely.

There is another case in a small town in the South. A Shangaan (Mozambican) was gunned down in someone's homestead. The media has not covered this case properly, and the

investigations of the police are riddled with some suspicions. Again, I am talking about the life of a human being that has been maliciously snuffed out, and the feet of justice are dragging under the cloud that a high profile individual might have to answer to. This individual may be innocent, but he cannot be exculpated by the police, or by himself. The law must take its course. Gamedze's spirit has joined many others in the world over yonder who know their killers, and know that the killers know themselves. But justice was denied!! There is the spirit of a woman, of Sandleni Hlathikhulu, whose brain was punched with a strong nail in the hands of her son. She languished as a vegetable for a month before giving up her spirit. Today the accused is out, charged with the lesser crime of common assault. What is happening at the DPP's office?

## REMEMBERING BLACK WEDNESDAY

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*On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1990, students from the University of Swaziland went on a strike. An army of soldiers and police were ordered to disperse them. They beat the students so brutally that some of them landed in hospitals and it was alleged that one student died during the beating. In this article, Mzizi is reflecting on that incident, talking to the issues of the right to march and strike without fear of brutalisation.*

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Black Wednesday stands like a septic sore in the history of the University of Swaziland. It was on 14 November 1990 that a combined army of young soldiers and the police were ordered to flog students at the Kwaluseni Campus. The students were beaten under the pretext that they had refused to vacate the campus after the Senate had ordered that it be closed. A great majority of students had assembled in the library where they thought no one in their right senses would disturb their peace. But their action was perceived as potentially volatile; hence the safety of the library and the entire campus could not be assured. There were conflicting stories about the behaviour of students in the library. One observation held that they were riotous and had threatened to burn down the building in which they had taken refuge.

It was not clear from this version if the students had decided to die also in this building since, if any fire was to be started, many of them would have been seriously burned. The other version was that the students were peaceful and non-threatening. In fact, this version was attested to by one of the library staff members, the Tanzanian Mr Tawete, who later on told stories of how, from then on, he was no longer on good terms with the hierarchy at the University. The real truth about the character of the students in the library will never be ascertained because later in the evening of 14 November, armed forces stormed into the library to evict the students. Then all hell broke loose. Tables were overturned and books were thrown off the shelves; chairs and furniture were twisted and doors were broken. In the aftermath of the fracas, the library looked like a war-zone. It seemed as if a grenade had landed right in its centre. It took a great effort and thousands of Emalangeni to restore the place to normal once again.

I was one of those who witnessed Black Wednesday. The brutality of the armed force was sickening to say the least. There was blood and torn limbs, all inflicted on defenceless and

already fleeing students. Students were chased from the library, via the front of the administration building, to the main car park where another bunch of blood-thirsty soldiers kicked them with boots, batons and guns to escort them to the gate. This was the longest escort of their lives. I remember one mature student, whom we called J.F., trying to run for dear life while two soldiers took turns to trip him. He would each time land with a thud on his back, front and head. J.F. would be ordered to rise with a heavy kick on his side or neck. He lost his strength and collapsed. J.F. never finished his degree because doctors advised him that the brain damage he had suffered would get worse if he continued to exert his brain with academic work.

The whole wide world turned its attention to Swaziland, a small southern African kingdom known for its peace and stability. Did it mean that her innocence had ceased? Was it a country coming of age? Was Swaziland joining the bandwagon of countries whose histories were written in blood? These were the curious questions. Meanwhile rumours of students who had lost their lives circulated worldwide. Africa Watch even carried the number of dead students. But soon the rumours of death were denied. Only broken limbs, teeth and gouged-out eyes. One student, a daughter of a high-ranking civil servant, lost an eye. She later on sued government, and in an out-of-court settlement was awarded about a quarter of a million Emalangenji. J.F did not sue, and neither did many others. They suffered in silence ...

The government of Obed Dlamini received mounting pressure to institute an inquiry into the causes of Black Wednesday. The team was headed by Justice Ben Dunn. It was expected that the recommendations of the Dunn Commission would not only bring the real culprits to book, but would go a long way in suggesting improvements at UNISWA. The commission finished its task, handed in the report, but government took her time to study it. Then the Minister of Education was Prince Khuzulwandle, and it was clear that the report would never be released. It took only a brief reshuffle, which saw Minister Arthur Khoza come to educate, and then Khoza worked hard to make the report public. After the report had been made public there was a long silence, especially on the things, which had to be implemented. The University Council could not take the responsibility to implement the report because it had no mandate from anyone. Government, on the other hand, did not know how it could start because the university has status that guarantees its autonomy.

Political pressure on the University could boomerang and do more harm than good. Right now nobody seems to know what to do with the report. But the painful part is that children of this nation were brutally beaten by the security forces, the very people who were supposed to protect them. The physical pain and scars, and the emotional and psychological dislocations, will take a long time to heal. That is why it is important to remember Black Wednesday. Revisiting the past can be the healing balm for the present and also ensure that similar occurrences are prevented in the future. I do not know if J.F. would agree with me. Each time we think of Black Wednesday, matters of the extent of the academic freedom in our colleges come to the fore. I am not saying that Black Wednesday took place because of the absence of academic freedom.

The much-celebrated definition of academic freedom was provided by the Dar-as-Salaam declaration on intellectual freedom and the social responsibility of academics. It defines it thus:

*... the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing and writing.*

The Cote d'Ivoire statements insist, rather interestingly, that –

*... academic freedom is to universities and academics what immunity is to members of parliament and diplomats. It contributes to guaranteeing a law-abiding state by protecting the university from political tribulations and by safeguarding the requisite serenity, objectivity and scientific nature of education and research, to enable them to fulfil their noble mission.*

In 1990 African academics assembled in Kampala, Uganda, to talk about academic freedom in Africa. The academics were concerned about the effects of structural adjustment policies, which were imposed by the International Monetary Fund. The roles of states, civil society, academic communities and donor agencies were found to be greatly compromised by the imposed policies of structural adjustments. It was therefore imperative for the Kampala meeting to redefine the relations among the major stakeholders in education. Article 14 of the Kampala Declaration clearly states, “the state shall not deploy any military, paramilitary, security or intelligence, or any of the like forces within the premises and grounds of institutions of education”.

The Kampala meeting must have come to this conclusion after examination of the confusion that reigns after a university campus has been held under siege by the army or police. I remember Kwaluseni in the aftermath of Black Wednesday. There were police everywhere on campus, all armed to the teeth. UNISWA had become a police state with patches of blood from the library up to the main gate. It was a sorry sight. Since we know that security forces are under the state, we still wonder who exactly ordered them to pounce on the defenceless students. These questions will haunt UNISWA for many years to come, even beyond the current regime in both government and university governance. “Dissection” would like to urge all concerned to do something about the Dunn’s report. It has indeed gathered enough dust, but the memories of the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1990 will never be wiped away. They will linger on until doomsday. If anything, that episode taught the UNISWA community that violence should have reasonable restraints in applying for the intervention of security forces in internal affairs. No one emerges a winner after a violent confrontation. But more than that, UNISWA should strive for healing and reconciliation. There ought to be cordial relations between the administration and the academic staff and healthy relations between the administration and ancillary staff. Students, who are the major stakeholders, should not be left out of the affairs of the University. In fact, the University can ill afford to look down upon students. It can only do so at its peril. Students, on the other hand, must strive to help the administration so that their affairs are handled well and without prejudice.



## ALBERT AND KATI: ARE CAIN AND ABEL

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*Mzizi remembers the good relationship that used to be between Albert Shabangu, the then Deputy Prime Minister, and Meshack Masuku, who was the then president of the teachers' union. The two had been colleagues in the union, but once Shabangu joined government they became big enemies. The bigger debate here is what happens to comrades when government divides them by co-opting some of them and what that does to the struggle for justice and democracy.*

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In August 1990, I had the honerous privilege of congratulating Albert Shabangu at the Matsapha High School hall after he had won yet another term as Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) president. This coincided with the launching of Mr Shabangu's Biography, which readers can obtain at the Websters Book Shops around the Country, an account that chronicles the life history of Shabangu up to 1987. The writing of the book was inspired by the many tribulations Shabangu went through as a leader of SNAT, especially during the *Liqoqo* regime, and his resolute stance in defence of truth and principle. There was no doubt in the eyes of Shabangu and the teaching fraternity that then Minister of Education, Dabulumjiva Nhlabatsi, was out to frustrate him. But a few days ago Shabangu was on the air kind-of exonerating Nhlabatsi from his tortures. I was taken aback of course, as I am sure were many citizens who still remember what happened. I shall revisit this point later. When I congratulated Shabangu in 1990 I said his winning the election may be seen by many as a sign of yet another African dictator in the making. African leaders have the awful tendency to hold on to the power until their death. Most do this through corrupt and clandestine means of campaigning. They so centre power on themselves that the voting masters are hood-winked to believe that no one can ever replace the President. In the final analysis the President is only after their vote, and after winning he wants their heads and blood; he pockets national wealth and distributes the rest to trusted friends, his comrades in corruption.

In 1990 Shabangu had been President for over fifteen years, a rather remarkable record, although we know that SNAT was in limbo for seven years of that period. The banning of SNAT was sad indeed, but the banned national executive continued to vigorously negotiate for the ban to be set aside. This was eventually done by the Prime Minister Bhekimpi Dlamini in early spring 1983. I have no doubt that Shabangu led SNAT well for nearly twenty years, between 1972 – 1991. When teachers voted him in, they were not using him, but expressing an honest confidence in the man whose manner of leadership was beyond reproach. However, when the Prime Minister Obed Dlamini invited him to join his Cabinet in 1991, he left a vacuum, a yawning chasm in the organisation, in fact a hole so large and uncertain that his executive issued statements to the effect that they would create a base for him should the system throw him out. Shabangu had joined the *Tinkhundla* Government that had mercilessly tortured him, the government Dabulumjiva Nhlabatsi had worked for during those darkest days in Shabangu's career. When everybody smelled a rat that this illustrious unionist would decline the offer, Shabangu cited the compulsion of national duty as more essential than his reserved political

misgiving about the system. This of course angered a number of his compatriots, including Dr Ambrose Zwane in whose Congress Party Shabangu had served in the 1960's.

Ironically, Obed was a former unionist and an active member of Zwane's party as well. Soon after assuming his new post in Cabinet, as Minister of Transport, Shabangu hit the headlines with his anti-abuse laws. He opened a can of worms and new enemies for him surfaced again. Death threats and the story of the towel were still remembered even to this day. But all vindicate Shabangu for doing the right thing. Government vehicles had been abused for too long and too little had been done.

Present at the 1990 SNAT conference was a member of the World Confederation of Organisation of the Teaching profession, an august body onto whose executive Mr Shabangu had been elected. I remember him only as Tom. He asked if I had chronicled a biography of Albert. I explained briefly. He was a tall man with an imposing figure and a reserved sense of dignity. Tom then said Albert Shabangu belongs to a strange pool of God's people. These are people who always work hard for results, yet through stormy weather they must go. In the process they create enemies, but they are never deterred; they face adversity and yet refuse to give in. Tom warned me as Shabangu's biographer to be always on the look out for the next calamity in this man's public life. It was at that point that I looked back to the early formation of Albert as a leader. He clashed with school authorities at Franson Christian High as a student and together with Kati Masuku and twelve other boys was suspended from school, thus disturbing them in their J.C. final exams.

After serving the suspension, the school headmaster Rev. Neil Pagard, mentor for Dr Busa Xaba, called him back to later dismiss him without a clear reason. Albert still does not know why he was expelled from Mhlosheni. Calamity and adversity are the spices Shabangu has grown to live with in his daily portion in life. But I must say that the current fireworks between him and President of SNAT, Kati Meshack Masuku, are disturbing indeed. I have known both gentlemen for a good number of years. In fact I am not even far off the mark, when I say the two are like brothers. As children they faced the wrath of mission authorities at Mhlosheni. When Albert was indisposed after the Mhlosheni expulsion, Kati Masuku found him a Form IV place at Matsapha and then went to search for him. He found him at a physician's place next to Nhlangano. Together they became leading voices of SNAT during troubled times. When SNAT was in limbo, Kati was pursuing his degree studies at our local university. These two gentlemen loved each, and they loved the same things for a long time: what the devil is happening now with this admirable, brotherly and exemplary relationship? For all we know the rift came soon after Shabangu left for a political post. It seems Kati had not enjoyed the best of status as his vice at SNAT as most of the organisation's operations were manned by the General Secretary and later by Administrative Secretary, Maduduza Zwane.

As observers we could notice that the chemistry between Shabangu and Maduduza was positive, but a bit cool between Shabangu and Kati, much cooler between Maduduza and Leshudu Hlophe who was then full time Administrative Secretary. That Leshudu resigned

unceremoniously on the eve of the 1990 conference is history. But there were signs of a cancer within SNAT which unfortunately was never arrested in time. When Kati spilled the beans about missing funds in the organisation, laying the blame at the door-step of Maduduza, the rift between him and Shabangu widened. Apparently they differed on the approach to the scandal. When the fracas started they were still on talking terms. But as the story unfolded the name of Shabangu was unavoidable since many of the funds had disappeared during his term as president. A Commission of Inquiry was put in place comprising respected SNAT veterans and leaders like Mr L.B. Lukhele, who had taught Shabangu maths after the Mhlosheni suspension, and B. Putsoa, remembered for his editorship of *The Eagle*, SNAT's magazine.

The matter of Maduduza and the missing funds has not been concluded to this day. I feel this is unfair to both SNAT and Maduduza. It is important for the latter's name to be cleared once and for all because right now wherever he goes, whatever he says, people start smelling rats that may not be there. Kati Masuku has lambasted Albert for championing the 1996 Industrial Act. He says this was unbecoming of a person who knows what it is like to suffer helplessly in Swaziland. Why should it be him who teachers supported in Swaziland? Why should it be him who teachers supported during her darkest days? I hope Kati is asking these questions honestly, not because of any special vendetta. That Albert is now a politician is not in dispute. Perhaps he rode the wrong tide to politics in as far as teachers are concerned, but now that is not the issue.

It is a personal choice Albert made; he therefore must be seen to serve the system. In doing so he hurts some people and pleases others. He creates more enemies than friends but that is the kind of life Albert is used to. He does not go out to create enemies but, in the process of work and personal conviction, enemies are created and almost naturally, "a strange pool of God's people". Kati has further reminded Shabangu of the Dabulumjiva days. Here Shabangu has shifted from blaming the former Minister of Education. It is true that Nhlabatsi never wrote any letter to Shabangu but, it is obvious that he used the structures of the time to deal highhandedly with Shabangu. People who wrote him letters were Musa Nsibandze, then P.S. for education, now Speaker in Assembly, Nkambule and Muir of the Teaching Service Commission. I believe teachers sympathised with Shabangu because it was clear that he was meant to suffer for being a leader of SNAT. Attempts were made by the former minister to dangle a carrot in front of Shabangu, but Shabangu resisted because he believed the SNAT's maxim of "NOT BY FAVOUR, BUT BY MERIT" was a call for transparency in all national appointments. Prince Khuzulwandle replaced Nhlabatsi in education. At that time Shabangu had been retired in public interest, but was fighting the retirement in the courts. Soon after his appointment, Khuzulwandle summoned teachers to the Trade Fair to sort of "Vusela" them. This was politically very wise because SNAT and the ministry had endured sour relations when Nhlabatsi was in office, and worse still during Dr Pim Dlamini's time.

It was now time for healing, and Prince Khuzulwandle seized the moment to score a political point. Speaking on behalf of SNAT were Kati Masuku, and A.V.V. Hlanze. Both speakers used

metaphors to describe the plight of Shabangu. Kati Masuku in particular likened Shabangu and Leshudu to dead bodies, which teachers were carrying. Masuku is never short of descriptions, and very effective ones for that matter, when making a crucial submission. Some of his metaphors and descriptions are hair-raising, but it is all intentional. Prince Khuzulwandle subsequently asked Shabangu to appeal to him as minister. The matter was later on withdrawn from the courts and the Minister, through a special tribunal, evaluated Shabangu's case. A recommendation was made to the Teaching Service Commission to re-instate Shabangu with all his benefits. Teachers and the general public were pleased indeed that truth always emerges as the winner in such things.

Finally, I congratulate Kati on his election for yet another term as the boss of SNAT. While we may ask why Kati stood for the election when his health is known to be failing, while we may ask why again Magagula should shoulder the difficult responsibility of acting for a sickly president, teachers must tell us if there are no longer good leaders in their lot. Why should teachers create another potential bomb by perpetuating, unnecessarily, a leadership legacy which may boomerang in the near future? Sometimes I think it is the leaders themselves who enjoy power and then refuse to step down to allow for new blood. This is a sheer manipulation of people's confidence. If you love an organisation as well as you profess to, allow others to lead it while you may be called to render advice. Perhaps this is a blessing in disguise for Albert who claims to have written seven letters to SNAT leadership asking for an audience. It is in the interest of SNAT's public image to allow Albert this opportunity and stop this character assassination in the mass media.

## **POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IS A GOOD VIRTUE**

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*In this article Mzizi argues that tolerance and the ability to handle difference is important for the future of Swaziland, religiously, politically and culturally.*

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As someone in the human rights struggle, I always wonder why it is so easy for people to downplay the issue of human rights. I was listening and watching Jim Gama and his counterpart, Sigcokos'yancinca, presenting on TV their famous *Khala Mdumbadumbane*. Although I am still struggling with why it is necessary to beam on TV the same programme that can be heard on radio at least twice a week, I am not too surprised because there are many Swazis who believe every word that proceeds from the mouth of Jim Gama. Gama epitomises a revival of Swazi cultural values at a time when it is not easy to tell what it means to be Swazi. He claims a deep knowledge of our culture and is able to articulate it in the fashion of a religious fanatic. When he argues a point, especially where questions of patriarchy are concerned you would think his whole life depends on what he is saying. Hence, Gama has large listenership. He has been accused by many for seemingly crude and uncouth language he uses. But he has defended himself fairly, claiming that a spade should be called by its proper name.

There is a lot of breaching of Swazi ethos, and it is high time offenders are called by their right names so that they may hate their actions and accordingly repent. Nevertheless, it remains true that the programme is bound to be biased because of the maleness of the presenters. The female gender and those of us who uphold the human rights tradition are constantly worried when women are defined as lesser beings and properties of males. In Gama's language to say: "*Lona ngumfati wami*", carries a lot more positive sense than when a female says: "*Lena yindvodza yami*". A man may own a woman but not vice versa. But in his Tuesday programme Gama allowed his tongue to stray when he said he is always surprised why there is so much talk about rights, rights and rights. Rights for what? he asked: "Swazis have always had rights. That's why whosoever wants to divorce a man or woman is free to do so in Swaziland." I found myself muttering: "Wait a minute Mbhokane, do you believe what you have just said?"

That is when my mind kept worrying why after so many years of Gama's programme, first with Mkhumbi Ngcamphalala, then briefly with Marwick Khumalo, now with Sgcoko, there has been no programme sponsored by women, also purporting to solve problems from an informed women's perspective. Granted, the radio and TV subscribe to the principle of free speech, and Gama solves the problems on his own volition with no pretences to speak on behalf of those media houses. This being so then other people who want to advance another school of thought should not be barred. Open debate and differences of opinions should be allowed in all cultures and world-views. We need not see reality the same way in order to live together. This leads me to the essence of today's "Dissection": How to deal with differences as we enter a new era of change. There is no doubt in my mind that when Swaziland's constitution is finally adopted in 1999, political parties will be operating freely and the disabling decrees of 1973 will be totally irrelevant.

The year 1998 will mark the end of term for this type of government. In 1999 we expect a fully democratic government founded on the basis of parliamentary democracy and majority rule. If this will not be obtained in 1999, then this constitutional review process is a dismal waste of time and money. The question is: If freedom of association and assembly are enshrined in the new constitution, together with the rights of citizens to choose and dissolve their government, will there be enough time to put together a multiparty machine for the sake of democratic government in 1999? In all objectivity, there will just not be enough time. The process should be anticipated right now. That is why I subscribe to the view that this constitutional process should be negotiated by citizens who hold diverse opinions. But let not diversity destroy us. Instead it should enrich the process and open up avenues for positive national development. I fully respect King Sobhuza II's efforts of striving for national unity under the difficult days of British colonialism. Soon after he was coroneted in 1921, Sobhuza II had to face four square the matter of the land question. Legal scholars and historians are aware of the Privy Council appeal in the Sobhuza II versus Alistair M. Miller and other.

The British Privy Council eventually ruled against Sobhuza II and the land Swazis had lost to questionable concessionaires during the Mbandzeni era had been lost forever. King Sobhuza

Il was aware that the presence of white structures in Swazi society was divisive indeed. He sought ways and means of consolidation, Swazi hegemony with kingship accepted as both symbolic and active in the effort of uniting the Swazi populace. An opportunity availed itself with Christians of the Zionist persuasion. The influx of various churches since the 1880s, up to about 1914, had shown all and sundry that church doctrine was divisive. Anglicans and Methodists could not worship together even though they preached the same book. Missionaries of the same so-called historical churches had to agree by polity around 1911 on which parts of Swaziland should be evangelised by what group of churches.

Although this agreement later on died a natural death, its signs are still prevalent today. Missionaries from the USA, England and Norway influenced the southern side of Swaziland. Mission stations such as Mhlosheni, Florence, Bethel, New Haven, Ebenezer, were born as a result of that policy agreement. The Nazarenes dominated the northern Hhohho region at Endzingeni, Pigg's Peak, etc. This is a rich history in its own right. But Sobhuza's major concern was turned to the fast proliferating movement. It was clear to him that Zionists were a major force to reckon with. When the colonialists had other ideas of deadline with them, Sobhuza took them under his protection. Eventually the League of African Churches in Swaziland (LACS) was founded. Earlier on before 1935, Sobhuza had suggested the founding of Swazi Christian church in the same fashion as British Anglicanism, German Lutheranism, Italy's Roman Catholic Church, etc. He wanted a national church to consolidate all believing Christians under one banner. The League was a result of such an effort.

The next major attempt occurred in the 1960s. Sobhuza had been opposed to the formation of political parties on the grounds that they were a foreign element and clearly divisive. He had made this known to the British Residence Commissioner who believed that true independence could be given to Swazis only on the platform of multiparty democracy. I do not think the British were necessarily wrong, or that they had ill intentions for Swaziland. Party politics had been fashionable all through British Africa and had promised the practice of establishing transparent and democratic regimes in the spirit of the 1948 declaration of Human Rights embraced by the UN and the British Commonwealth. But Sobhuza loathed such parties to such a degree that his long time trusted academic and educator, J.J. Nquku could no longer be trusted because he had founded the Swaziland Progressive Party. Yet Sobhuza II was pushed to the corner, he founded the *Imbokodvo* National Movement, all in the spirit of achieving national unity, the real intention of *Imbokodvo* was to unite all Swazis under the King and purge all foreign ideologies, which would prove too costly for national harmony. Both the League and the *Imbokodvo* were Sobhuza's great milestones. But in spite of their presence, Christians have continued to be divided.

Denominationalism and spiritual connivance can only assure the world that church unity and the true ecumenism will not be realisable this side of the grave. The same applies to politics. As soon as *Imbokodvo* was founded in 1963-64 there was a vigorous campaign to recruit strong stalwarts of the mainstream political movement. Arthur Khoza was won over from the

Congress Party. Sishayi Nxumalo was won over from the Democratic Party. Many leading politicians like Drs George Msibi and Allen Nxumalo, to name a couple, crossed bridges to *Imbokodvo*. Because of the King's position in *Imbokodvo*, any Swazi who was anti-*Imbokodvo* was perceived as anti-kingship. Seeds of political intolerance were thus planted and watered. They grew and grew until, on 12 April 1973, they gave fruit and all political debating and opinion were severely crippled. The Bill of Rights was scrapped. I was reading the Decree No. 1 of 1996, which clearly states that the power to legislate by decree was vested on the King by the King's Proclamation to the nation of 12 April 1973. This decree establishes the Swazi National Council standing committee. The major function of the standing committee is to advise the Ingwenyama on all matters regulated by Swazi law and custom connected with Swazi tradition and culture. The norm for doing this function is to ensure good governance and the building of a coherent and integrated Swazi nation. Swazi law is definitive on the terminologies used. For instance, there is a special significance when the King is referred to as the Ngwenyama.

The 1968 Constitution was even clearer that the King was the Ngwenyama when he played his traditional role in the context of culture and traditional practices. What I am after is that the SNC is legally expected to advise the King on matters that bear upon tradition, but at the same time purport to build a coherent and undivided nation. The word used for the latter is integrated. I argue that differences already exist in this nation. It could be wished away. We cannot allow pieces of legislation that have the net effect of breeding a culture of intolerance and tension. Churches are different, but they can coexist. That is why such bodies as World Council Churches came about. Coexistence means learning to appreciate others even though they differ with you. What has Vusi Ginindza said after feasting with Sibahle Sinje last weekend?

*Why then do we allow a piece of such stupid legislation tear this country apart? I do not subscribe to a lot of Sibahle Sinje's objectives, but I can tell you now that had we not met ... we would not have agreed to disagree.*

My hope for the appointing of Prime Minister Sibusiso Dlamini was that he would pioneer a culture of tolerance in times of change. I trust that he can still do it if he can only learn from his own mistakes of nearly two weeks ago. Tolerance is a sign of maturity, a sign of level headedness, and as such it is a virtue in the political spectrum.

## **HIGHLIGHTS ON THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS**

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*In this article, Mzizi reminds the nation of the importance of human rights, an issue that is contentious in Swaziland because of its bad record of human rights.*

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Tomorrow, the whole of Africa will celebrate the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The Charter was established under the direction of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) for the sole object of promotion and protection of Human and People's Rights in Africa. Similar documents to the Charter are the European and the American Conventions on Human Rights,

which try to contextualise the concept of rights for these continents. The African Charter was thus an attempt to Africanise the tradition by aligning the concept of rights with African aspirations, cultures and traditions. The African Charter came about due to many voices at the turn of the turbulent 1960s. Toppling repressive colonial regimes carried with it the responsibility to create or craft a new world order based on the respect of human worth and dignity. Thus African jurists met at a conference on the rule of law in Africa in January 1961. They met in Lagos, Nigeria, hence what is known as the Law of Lagos was put in place resulting in a number of conferences and symposia geared to sensitise the newly independent states about the need for a regional instrument for the promotion and protection of human rights.

In 1979 the OAU resolved that the Charter should be written and a preliminary draft should be circulated. The draft was reviewed by Ministers of Justice of Member States of the OAU, and then Heads of states and Governments adopted the charter in 1981 whereupon it was agreed that it would come into force after receiving the ratification by a simple majority of the OAU. Five years after the adoption, the Charter came to force on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1986. This year's celebration is special in many ways. First, it is the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African Charter. Ten years after taking effect, Africans have to ask themselves whether the Charter serves any purpose, or whether it is simply a waste of time. In this evaluation, it is important for member states to ask critical questions about the Charter with the end in view of amending it for the sake of legal effect. Secondly, out of fifty-three states of the OAU only three states have not yet ratified the Charter.

We hope that sooner rather than later the revisions which were asked for by the Constitution Court will in due course receive the blessings of the Court and the whole document receive much awaited Presidential assent. South Africa's Constitution, like that of Namibia, is going to be a strong beacon light of hope for our sub-region which has suffered irreparable damage under a regime of inhumane laws promulgated to protect minority interests since 1948 when Malan won the election on an apartheid ticket. Prior to 1948, the segregation laws of South Africa were no less inhuman. But after World War II, in which the whole world learned about the holocaust, i.e. the killing of six million Jews by Hitler's Nazi regime, one would have expected apartheid to have been irrelevant on the agenda of any body politic. The same year, 1948, when apartheid came into force, the United Nations was ready, on 10 December, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

South Africa is therefore moving fast to catch up with globally accepted standards of governance after over 300 years of racial segregation and nearly fifty years of apartheid. The preamble to the Constitution of South Africa is telling indeed:

*We, the people of South Africa, recognise the injustices of the past, honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land, believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity ... [and] therefore ... adopt this Constitution as the supreme*



*law of the Republic so as to heal the division of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.*<sup>12</sup>

There is no doubt in my mind that the new constitution of South Africa is consistent with the expectations of the African Charter. Impressive indeed is the Bill of Rights enshrined in chapter two of the constitution. South Africa will soon ratify the Charter and then only Ethiopia and Eritrea will remain. When we look at the history of ratifications of UN Conventions and protocols, we can safely say that the Africa Charter has done well in that it has been around for ten years and almost the whole continent has embraced it. Thirdly, for Swaziland, the celebrations for tomorrow and the rest of the week are important because in 1995 this country ratified the Charter. It has been too embarrassing for our country to be afraid to endorse a document that recognises human rights. It is still embarrassing now that Swaziland has not ratified a good number of the UN Conventions, and no one seems to tell us the reasons why. When, for instance, will Swaziland ratify them because they are human rights? Hence rights are universal, a point that justifies the international protection. Article 60 says that:

*The Commission shall draw inspiration from international law on Human and People's Rights, particularly from the provisions of various African instruments on Human and People's Rights, the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other instruments adopted by the United Nations and by African countries in the field of Human and People's Rights as well as from the provisions of various instruments adopted within the specialised agencies of the United Nations of which the parties to the present Charter are members.*<sup>13</sup>

The African Charter articulates a number of basic rights and fundamental freedoms of the individual covering a whole range of civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as people's rights, and makes them applicable to the African States. Examples of individual rights and freedoms include the right to life, the right not to be subjected to torture, arbitrary arrest or detention, the right to fair trial and freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Examples of people's rights include the right to self-determination, the right to development and the right to a satisfactory environment. The Charter contains rights that are exercisable without any qualification. This is true, for instance, of the right to equal protection of the law, the right to a fair trial and the right against discrimination. Other rights and freedoms however, are exercisable subject to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women, Convention on the Political Rights of Women amongst others.

Once a country ratifies a Charter, treaty or convention, it thereby undertakes a legally binding obligation to give effect to the rights specified under the Charter or treaty. The country must then develop a domestic law that will give effect to the provisions of the treaty. Swaziland has

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12 The Republic of South Africa (1996), *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, [Online], available from: <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/index.htm>.

13 African Commission on Human and People's Rights (1981/86), *African Charter on Human and People's Rights*, [Online], available from: <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/>.

embarked on a rather slow and a bit too stale controlled constitutional dispensation. Whatever the outcome of the process, it is expected for the country to entrench in the Constitution a Bill of Rights modelled after the rights and freedoms found in the Charter. That to me is significant indeed because failure to do so would render the whole exercise futile and a political joke and the blunder of the century. The African Charter, as said above seeks to define the African concept of law and human rights having in the backdrop African culture and traditions. This does not mean that the charter is oblivious of international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN covenants. In the preamble, for instance, the Charter recognises the link between the universality of human rights and the African customs and traditions. The preamble states that the historical traditional and values of African civilisation should inspire and characterise the formulation of the visions of the Charter.

At the same time, fundamental human rights come from the basic notion that human beings have limitation by domestic law. Examples of these include the right to express and disseminate one's opinion, the right to freedom of association and the right to participate in the government of one's country. I argue that it is such caveats that constitute a threat to the enjoyment of the basic rights. That is why in a number of instances states have relied on these caveats to adopt repressive laws, which curtail and render null and void the very rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Charter. In a sense, this reflects the very nature of the origins of the Charter, namely an instrument blessed and debated and amended by Government politicians, most of whom were dictators. Space does not allow me to write about the African Commission which is tasked to affect the Charter, composed of eleven experts who must promote human rights by collecting documents, undertaking studies and researches on African problems, organising seminars and symposia, disseminating information, etc. (Article 45).

Although the eleven commissioners serve in their own capacity, they are elected by secret ballot by an Assembly of Heads of State and Governments. The nominations are submitted by states to the Secretary General of the OAU. How far is the Commission immune from any state interference? Are the Commissioners well respected in the very states that ratified the Charter? These are worrisome questions. But let me stress for Swaziland the Charter is very essential if the Constitutional process is to go on well. Since states are the main implementers of the Charter, Swaziland must read in particular Article 1, which recognises state parties to put in place the rights, freedoms and duties enshrined in the Charter and to adopt legislative or other measures to give effect to them. Next week I hope to discuss some inadequacies that have been identified in the Charter. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice is expected to lead Swaziland tomorrow in celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter. If the ministry will not be committed to this, Africa will ask why.

## **COMRADES INDEED ARE ALSO COMRADES IN TRUTH**

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*Reflecting from an experience he had had of being criticised by SNAT followers after challenging the organisation, he was attacked, and his commitment to the struggle*

*questioned. Mzizi argues that there is a need for collaboration in the struggle even if there is a divergence of ideas.*

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Our tiny world of paradoxes! HUMARAS sent a mission to the SNAT extraordinary conference of 13 November 1999. After the mission had published its findings, tongues started wagging and the opinion poll on myself, especially, rose and fell like an erratic yoyo. I met a colleague in a corridor who eyed me with a suspicious eye: "I think the message to SNAT was right J.B., but the timing was pathetically wrong ... well I'll talk to you some other time." He took his farewell while I was searching for the right words.

Then there was this strange phone call from an anonymous caller in the Lubombo region:

"Is that Mzizi?"

"Yes, this is Joshua Mzizi, can I help you?" said I.

"No ... Ye.s.s... I thought you were a comrade."

"But who are you?" I asked.

"No listen, comrades do not sell one another. Why did you sell the SNAT?" he asked.

"No, I did not sell anyone. I just told the truth as it was. Besides, comrades should not build their relationship on lies and follies. But who are you?"

He hung up on me.

By Tuesday afternoon when the SNAT executive announced that the strike action had been suspended, there was no doubt in my mind that I had earned myself a thousand disapprovals and an equal number of approvals. I got really stressed out and worried. I wondered why people were hot under the collar, whether against me or against SNAT. HUMARAS had questioned the SNAT vote of 13 November 1999, which was indeed crucial, but not isolated from the developments of the events thereto. The vote could have been revisited as suggested or as per laid down SNAT procedures, but that is life. It is actually the risk all human rights activists take as they go about their business. It does not matter whether you are dealing with individuals, organisations or governments. Once you criticise on the basis of human rights, your target sees you as an enemy and naturally kicks back. It takes a mature person to hold back and ponder, rather than to listen to the dictates of outrage and anger. Little do they reason, they who place their brains on the frying pan of emotions – J.B. (Quote of the week).

For example, that teacher who made utterances about the HUMARAS statement was completely beside himself. If he had wanted to be fair, he should have approached the source of the statement instead of going to a mass meeting with a mind full of wild speculations. This includes the teachers who were murmuring and cursing in low tones. Backstabbing in battle terms is an act of cowardice. Some African war generals in history killed those soldiers who never faced their victims. Also, a soldier stabbed in the back would not receive a heroes' funeral because that would have meant he had been caught running away from the charging

enemy. The backtracking of an army is not the same as running away. It is an act of semi-surrender where, if killed, the spear should catch the front part of the body. It is also an act of re-strategising and re-invigorating. I have to commend SNAT President and Mr Kati Masuku for not allowing that teacher to continue on his path of dangerous talk. Mr Masuku and his executive have since met the HUMARAS executive to clarify issues. The meeting went so smoothly I could not believe that these are the same guys who are always locking horns with the government negotiating team. I personally concluded that perhaps HUMARAS needs to send a mission to the negotiation meetings in order to get first hand information on why the teams end up quarrelling and walking out on each other.

The latest set of evidence since 30 October indicates that SNAT has written a series of letters to the government team. We are made to believe that even the Prime Minister is fully aware of this. But the response from Capitol Hill is as cold as a dog's nose. Let me explain here that HUMARAS is sensitive to areas of human rights regardless of the perpetrator. We have no comrades in the sphere of rights as we are suspicious of everyone, including ourselves. Human rights are divine and God-given. They need not be earned or deserved. We all have them by virtue of the fact that we are human beings. Rights are sacred. They are not acts of generosity from a large-hearted organisation or a government that wants to win the next election. The United Nations, after a long tradition of rights in Western thoughts, finally got around to writing them on paper after the atrocities of World Wars I and II. It is noteworthy that it was a woman who championed this course. This was Mrs Roosevelt, and thanks to God we had her around. From 1948 to date the culture of rights has swept right across the nations of the world. Next year the United Nations will celebrate the Golden Jubilee of this landmark epoch ever to grace human history. We hope that HUMARAS, in her envisaged Swaziland Centre for Human and peoples' rights (SCHUPRI) will do all it can to popularise this culture at a time when Swazis are grappling with matters of constitutionalism and constitution making.

Because human rights are God-given, activists in this area necessarily have to be called, just like ministers of religion. In HUMARAS we have uttered so many statements on behalf of certain aggrieved individuals and bodies without expecting to be paid a cent. I am not saying that money is not needed. In fact, we need it in order to carry out a number of assignments on behalf of God's people. With money, we could be more effective. In the middle of the last week I was called to Maphiveni to witness the sight of a child who suffered constant abuse at home. The description given to me by the reporting agent, and the threats of death from the abuser, made me wish to jump into my bakkie, but I had no petrol. Right now we have well over twenty pressing issues shared across the executive members. But the purse is problematic. Since rights are not a product of positive law, but of a divine power, prophets of rights are responsible to that power and no other. Positive law is of course necessary. But it must conform to the standards of divine power. Human rights activists use all manner of strategies for fighting for rights. Theologically, they stand on the mountaintop and shout so that everybody hears. This clarion call cannot be negotiated over a round table without allowing all the stakeholders involved to be present.

If anyone breaks God's law, they are not warned in secret, but in the open. As a consequence of this, human rights activists suffer under dictatorial regimes. A lot of our people are languishing; some have been bombed and blown-up. I do not think death is of any matter here. You may release a million fleas to torment me to death; they will drink my blood but never drown the truth. Someone said once that if they drink the blood they will understand what rights are and never again hanker after human blood. Well, if you can have enough blood to change a million fleas, you will have saved probably ten million human lives. It should not shock anyone therefore when from time to time we come hard on people, governments and organisations. We have a vocation to honour. We have a commitment to carry out. If you should find it necessary to label us otherwise, go ahead if that is your job. But if history and reality proves you wrong, do not come to us to apologise for you will have seen the light. The blind man said, "I do not know who did this to me; all I know is that I was blind but now I see." The old missionary song: "Asidvonse kanyekanye (3x) 2x, umsebenti wenkosi. Ungewami, ungewakho, ungewetfu sonke." The Kenyans call this "the *harambee* spirit". Let us pull together as comrades for peace, justice and integrity.

## SAY "YES" TO PEACE AND "NO" TO CONFLICT!

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*In this article Mzizi calls for the prioritisation and commitment to peace in the process of reviewing and drafting the new constitution in the country. For Mzizi this will be possible by not marginalising progressive movements in the process but by including them and listening to their views. So peace is not an outcome of excluding those who differ but by including them, and conflict is not a result of including them but excluding them in the process.*

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Prince David (Minister of Justice) must be aware by now that the task he was given by the King to lead the CDC was not an easy one. He acknowledged this fact when he presented the "draft" constitution to the King at *Esibayeni kraal* (traditional meeting place) on 4 October. The enormity of the task, in my view, did not lie in simple inter-personal relations within the CDC, something which could have derailed and delayed the progress of the exercise had it arisen and been poorly managed. At least lessons learned by Prince Mangaliso, leader of the ill-fated CRC, were learned well. I am delighted that Prince Mangaliso and his Secretary, Bheki Maphalala, were in the CDC, if only to share their experiences with the team for the sake of avoiding some of the pitfalls of the past. Rather, and I stand to be convinced otherwise, the enormity of the exercise lay in the methodology adopted by the status quo. Unlike most countries that usually strike for a fair balance of national sentiment in constitutional making, Swaziland adopted an exclusivist method disguised under the veneer of the so-called individual merit. That was not a mistake created by Prince David and his team.

After all is said and done, we should afford the Prince some credit for trying very hard to involve some of those groupings that had been either deliberately sidelined since 1996, or had chosen to boycott the exercise due to their political motivations. The Prince tried to reach out and

embrace as many sectors as possible, in a sense rebelling against the traditional method of leaving out organised groupings. In his pleas for support the Prince would request the groups to help the CDC draft an acceptable document. I must say that although suspicious at first, he won my heart with his sincerity. I had to shift from a mental state where I had told myself that I would have nothing to do with the constitution because some people with dangerous ulterior motives had bulldozed the exercise from being a national project to a strictly royal and stage-managed programme. I am glad that I was not alone in this mind-shift, however belatedly. We collectively thought that we could indeed make a positive influence in the shaping of the final document.

When such groups as Women and the Law, the Law Society, HUMARAS and the women parliamentarians, to name a few, made their presentations before the CDC, there was no working document to critique and reflect upon. At the speed of lightning, the CDC completed the draft in record time. In May 2003, the draft was presented to the King who in turn commissioned the same CDC to make available a siSwati version of the exercise and accordingly distribute to the various *Tinkhundla* centres. Meanwhile, animated debate on the draft constitution had begun in earnest. When we were debating the contents of the draft our understanding was that it was still a draft subject to rigorous scrutiny by the nation, and especially the informed stakeholders. I do not know whether the Prince was expecting the exuberant dissection of the document, or he might have thought the draft was almost perfect as it was, a hurrah salute expected from all readers.

The European Union and other major international stakeholders were quick to endorse the document, hence some of us worked hard behind the scenes soliciting expert intervention of such bodies as Amnesty International and the International Bar Association. We wanted our international friends to get a fair assessment of the document from people who have no stake in Swaziland per se, except that they are democracy-loving creatures of God. Prince David will recall that, at the HUMARAS Consultation held a couple of months after the release of the draft, Amnesty International sent a team of experts to facilitate the deliberation. The CDC was represented and their cameras recorded everything that was said in that historic meeting. When Prince David acknowledged the structures that helped him in the drafting task, he mentioned the Commonwealth, the IBA and Amnesty International. I do not know whether it was deliberate to leave all the local structures that made informed analysis of the draft constitution. If it was deliberate, then I am obliged to believe that the Prince had fallen into the same trap as all his predecessors who become overly selective with the truth at very crucial moments.

Blunder number one: Prince David repeatedly expressed his distress when a majority of speakers at the cattle byre strayed. What did he expect them to do? What more should these people have said that had not been said before? I am not condoning the slovenly behaviour of Sibaya in this regard, but I equally think that the Prince was expecting too much from the people. If he had been carefully following all the Commissions since the Prince Masitsela one up to the CRC, he would have known just what he was dealing with here. It is from the straying

public that the status quo assembles what it calls national consensus, which in fact is the view of the dominant aristocracy. As an educated man, Prince David should have risen above such petty political behaviour, knowing that some day history will judge him and the entire CDC. Blunder number two: Prince David presented to the King, on 4 October 2004, the same draft he had presented to the same King in May 2003. I was hoping against hope that this would not happen, and I admit that Thulani Maseko had told me so.

I had sincerely hoped that the suggested changes would be effected, not just sung about as the 58 IBA interventions. What did the CDC do about all the observations that were made? If indeed accepting submissions was not part of the mandate of the CDC, why was the nation encouraged to talk about the draft constitution? Unlike former Ministers of Justice before him, I am impressed by Prince David in many ways. But the question of why the nation's time and money were wasted from May 2003 to 30 September 2004 completely defeats my imagination. If I had the gumption on this one, I would haul the Prince to Court to tell the nation that what the CDC was doing for nearly sixteen months is tantamount to public fraud.

Blunder number three: Let me be clear at the onset that no constitution in the democratic world ever begins on a premise of a certain political system. Constitutions should express universal principles, the creed of the nation if you like. I have opposed Chapter Two on "official religion" exactly because of this notion. A constitution cannot prescribe a religion for the nation, nor can it stipulate a particular political system. Swaziland has ratified enough international conventions to know that the freedoms of assembly and association in a political community are universal and should be captured in the creation of a free democratic society.

Unfortunately, Prince David allowed the constitutional debate to degenerate into silly quarrels about party politics instead of the upholding of democratic values. I am a democrat, and would not be in the human rights movement if I did not believe in the efficacy of a healthy opposition in our parliamentary system. I support *Tinkhundla* only as local constituencies for development. But to the extent that chiefdom politics forms the bedrock of the *Tinkhundla* system, then I cannot see the free flows of the democratic spirit in such centres. I believe the advocates of *Tinkhundla* are dishonest with themselves when they try to see democracy in such an amorphous scenario. Prince David surprised himself and startled the nation when he came up with statistics about the supporters of *Tinkhundla*. He made the cheap journalism of Qhawe Mamba draw jaundiced conclusions about the supporters of the King. Of course Qhawe is a joke in the profession, and one wonders why our authorities have allowed him to dabble with the name of the King in unnecessary controversies for so long. But it is Prince David I blame for the statistics he provided, conveniently forgetting the many voices he should have taken into his count since May 2003. I am not quite ready to condemn Prince David as yet just another Prince, but these blunders have far reaching consequences. Now, can he correct the perceptions he has created, as he was travelling the last mile of the constitutional journey?

## WE ARE LIVING A LIE

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*In this article, Mzizi calls for the Swazi nation to accept the need to change the political system and move towards democracy, for the status quo has no future and is a lie to the nation if it thinks it can go on with business as usual.*

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On 14 July 1999, Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS) issued a statement purporting to shoot down the efforts of those who were doctoring the NDS Document. Despite the tragedy that befell the royal family which, unfortunately, has since been unnecessarily used as a soft shield for the postponement of the royal launch of NDS and ESRA II, the truth is that the NDS was felt to be causing a lot of discomfort among traditionalists who have made it their vocation to protect the *status quo* even when it needs no protection. The real tragedy about this nation is that those who claim to love this country and nation most of the time overdo their sunshine stunts by showing a strange kind of love full of bitterness and hate. Such a paradox even confuses the devil. That Swaziland is in a process of change, and that the wheel of change is moving forward, invokes cold shivers down the spines of our professional conservatives. I am going to continue to warn this nation that the spirit of freedom cannot be determined but at the peril of all the good that Swaziland promises this and future generations. Those who hate democracy have succeeded in twisting the arm of the King, thus making him panic over nothing. They have scored a point by telling our international friends how easily manipulated Swazi politics is.

I pity the good organisations like the European Union and the UNDP, amongst others, which have financially supported democratic reforms in Swaziland. I pity the act that millions of Emalangeni have been dumped into a corrosive sea of nonsense, which neither listens to nor accepts difference as a good political tool in modern governance. Those who hate democracy may think they have won the battle. Unfortunately, they have not won the war. The people of this country will continue to call for meaningful democratic reforms that are congruent with international standards. I mean the basic and common as enshrined in the international customary law of which we are signatories. The haters of democracy have succeeded in making our King a mockery of mockeries at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Mswati III can no longer walk tall amongst other heads of states and boast that Swaziland is on the way to democratic reforms. No sane leader would believe him even when he extols our national customs and traditions for their role in ensuring peace and stability in our political community. God's truth about this land is that there is no truth here. We are living a lie. We are ruled through a lie, a white lie that is told to the gullible Swazi public. We are a country at risk!

After the HUMARAS's July statement and the many other voices that called for the launch of NDS as is, the government decided to tell a heap of lies as usual. We were assured that the King would launch the document as is, possibly to allay the tensions that were dangerously mounting and simmering amongst the stakeholders; and secondly in order to guard against bad press in the days leading to the "great" launch that never was. Swazis are generally not too



enthused to take to the streets. I personally am not the kind as well. But on this point of doctoring the NDS, I would have screamed, come hell or high water, and faced the consequences. For the first, and perhaps the last, time, thanks to former Premier Obed Dlamini who began the NDS programme, Swaziland was going to have a national policy, which would serve as the conscience of the nation in the core areas that are concerned with public welfare, economic progress and development. Yes, I repeat that the NDS was started in 1998 by a progressive-minded PM. It has taken a good few years to get afoot. Just when it picks up its first step into 2002, somebody thinks they have the right to chop off one of its major toes. I dare say that it cannot dare limp any further until that toe is unconditionally restored. Readers might not be aware of why there is such an outcry as a result of the doctoring of the NDS. The section on good governance has been removed arbitrarily without the consent of the stakeholders who contributed a great deal in the fashioning of the document. As I have said, it has taken a good ten years of thinking, meetings and workshops, a great deal of consultation, to finally come up with this document. Only insanity can brood a scintilla of wish to trash all these noble efforts. Only the insane can believe that Swazi people are part of the species that were created to be taken for a ride, and then thrown into the sewer tank when they are no longer needed. Here are the six points on participation in governance which were cruelly left out:

1. Promote an environment that allows free political expression and allows for a clear guidance of the political process until a new constitutional settlement is reached.
2. Ensure that all bodies and processes leading to constitutional making have wide representation and legitimacy.
3. Establish structures for promoting broad participation in the politics of the land to ensure full participation of all formations in the formulation of a constitution or set of national conventions.
4. Mount educational campaigns on constitutionalism to ensure the empowerment of the people and their effective participation in the process. This will further ensure that the formation of the constitution involves all stakeholders in society and that the constitution is based on national consensus.
5. Establish structures with the full support of the people (such as a constitutional assembly and constitutional court) to ensure full participation of the people in the debate of the drafting of the constitution.
6. Guarantee freedom of opinion and expression of all sections of the society, including the media.

In the July statement HUMARAS emphatically pointed out that we are proud that these noble views originated from the Swazi people. The NDS had further observed that in order for the new constitutional dispensation to be acceptable to all, laws that are prohibitive of free political expression should be scrapped. The constitutional process should ensure wider representation for the sake of the legitimacy and national consensus of the final document, which would be the supreme law of the land. HUMARAS was in complete agreement with these sentiments

and views. It is possible that some of the chapters of the NDS were drafted before 1996 when the CRC was put in place. It is interesting that the stakeholders then had a clear vision of the path that had to be travelled toward a legitimate constitution for this land. One only wishes that when the then Attorney General Mr Ezekiel Zwane drafted the terms of reference for the CRC he should have been guided by these national sentiments on participation.

I may be sounding as though I am saying that the section on participation was meant solely for the crafting of the constitution. There may be sense in making that assumption. We should recall that the Mahlalengangeni TRC came up with clear recommendations to establish a national constitution with an acceptable Bill of Rights. The TRC report even spells out some preliminary observations on the separation of powers, the place of the *Ingwenyama* and the functions of the traditional institutions. At least that report saw the light of day. It even recorded the views of the minority of the commissioners who felt much needed to be said on the question of multi-partyism and human rights. On the question of party politics, the TRC said the sentiment should be tested in the near future. 1999 is not exactly the near future to 1993. The NDS attempted to incorporate those views in addition to others, which had been advanced by the stakeholders. What remains to be seen now is how much doctoring will go into the Mangaliso CRC. That it will be doctored is not in doubt. That the process is a doctoring spree is clear even to a little child. I submit that while Sobhuza II used the then SNC to monitor and control change during the turbulent 1960s, it seems Mswati III is relying on his own version of the SNC to steer the wheel of change. The only problem is that the boat is bound for the rocks, while we laugh and dance spunkily at spurious launchings. May heaven come to our rescue!

## **THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PEOPLE BY THE POLICE BRUTALITY IS BEING SOWN IN THIS COUNTRY**

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*Although on the surface Swaziland looks like a very peaceful country underneath it is a violent country, where ordinary citizens are ruled by fear of the security forces. Public meetings and marches are spied on by police and a number of activists have been beaten, some openly, others secretly. In this article, Mzizi continues to warn the nation about police brutality, which was on the rampage in the country, and argues that this was an impediment to the progress the nation was making towards democracy. He draws from the experience over the years of how different governments under different prime ministers responded to resistance.*

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The A.T. Dlamini-Government is busy as a bee these days. On the down side of things is the scholarship furore for first year and transferring students at the University of Swaziland. After the ministry of Education failed to solve the problem, students decided to march to the Prime Minister in protest. Anybody reading the events would have concluded that not all is well with the Ministry of Education. Why is it that only yesterday teachers were telling us that they had a problem just striking a simple conversation with the top ministry officials?

Today it is students who are struggling to win a listening ear from the same officials. The Principal Secretary, obviously agitated to the core about the issue, is bad news for the students for he cannot tell them anything positive. Call it arrogance, anger or mere frustration, whatever it is; a solution to the matter is a remote possibility. The worst-case scenario was the physical assault of the frustrated students by the police. Whoever made the decision that the students deserved to be beaten and tear-gassed made the biggest blunder and I do not think it befits A.T. Dlamini's government profile. Police brutality on protesting civilians is something we have lived with since 1973. I remember the 1976/77 student riots following the wildcat teachers' strikes over the Wamala Commission's report. The Prime Minister was Prince Maphevu, a Colonel in the army. The beatings and tear-gassing of students and teachers was done with such barbarism and cruelty you could easily mistake Swaziland for another Beirut. The Maphevu Government was struggling to deal with matters of intelligence in its effort to enforce the 1973 decree. Then it was the Mabandla Government, which tried to calm the situation at a time when Swaziland was moving from the impasse of 12 April 1973 to the 1978 *Tinkhundla* experiment. It was the demise of King Sobhuza II that caused lots of tension, uncertainty and anarchy in both the royal family and the public at large. The *Liqoqo* regime, in its efforts to ameliorate an otherwise volatile situation, put petrol to the burning fire.

The consequences were too ghastly to contemplate. Police brutality reached an all time high during the tenure of that regime. University students and members of the public, who were protesting the deposition of Queen Regent Dzeliwe, were severely brutalised by the police. There was an attempt by the *Liqoqo* to infiltrate the University and destabilise University administration by blacklisting certain members of the teaching faculty and some administrators. Chief Dambuzza and Professor John Daniel can tell the rest of the story. The Students' Representative Council was not spared. Remember the Kenya six? They were later declared dissidents by the SRC and their lives on campus were a nightmare. Police brutality and state wrath in the period from 1982 to 1986 was at two levels. Internally all those who opposed the machinations of the *Liqoqo* were dealt with severely. Some public servants lost their jobs, while others were detained without charge.

Externally the Swazi state was in cohorts with apartheid South Africa in the flushing out operations of ANC insurgents in the country. Eugene de Kock, who was detailed to murder ANC operatives in Swaziland, can tell the rest of the story. He told part of it during the TRC hearings over five years ago. The wheels of fortune, being what they are, soon ground in the opposite direction, and sooner rather than later most of the *Liqoqo* stalwarts were at the receiving end of the stick. Then came Prime Minister Sotsha, a former crack and nonsense cop. Sotsha, like Maphevu and Mabandla, hated corruption with a passion. But Sotsha was a cop and not a politician. To a cop, red is red and blue is blue. There is no grey or in-betweens anywhere. That was Sotsha's downfall after a short three-year stint at Hospital Hill. In the history of Swaziland, he was the only Prime Minister who was shown the exit door rather frankly and roughly by the Head of State. Swaziland was on the brink of a devastating strike with untold economic consequences. Remember David Mncina, then leader of the Financial and Allied Workers' Union? Powerful

man that was! Then came Obed with an open door policy, especially to progressive-minded citizens. While Obed did nothing to reform *Tinkhundla* as such, the choice of him as Prime Minister was timely in that he understood trade unions and could easily persuade them at a time when our economy needed no disruption. His big-heartedness towards SWAYOCO was his undoing. But during his time, there were fewer or no tear gas canisters that were put to use. Then came Prince Mbilini, an otherwise strong disciplinarian and shrewd Politician when he was at the ministry of works, who found Swaziland on fire.

He could not tell where the smoke was coming from. Threats of strikes were in the air and the SFTU was slowly but surely spoiling for a big show with Government. Prince Mbilini's approach to the popular 27 demands and climate of the time was more confrontational than was necessary. He quickly lost popularity at a wrong time when King Mswati III needed a strong Prime Minister. He was gracefully retired in 1996 after he had spent quite a fortune on the armaments for riot control. The Sibusiso Government, welcomed by the entire Swazi nation as bringing an air of relief after Mbilini, adopted a more serious, confrontational approach against trade unions and the underground political movement. The beatings and incarcerations were unbelievable. Swaziland had become a police state and everybody felt the discomfort. However, it was Sibusiso's genius, in my estimation, that destabilised the trade union and underground political movements to the extent that they are today in terms of strength and strategy, let alone the lack of mass support. Knowing how the SFTU had grown by the late 1990s, in 2005 what we see is just a shadow of what we know.

It just might be possible that Jan Sithole has long outlived his usefulness in the position he has occupied for over fifteen years. Jan might be needed in some capacity perhaps, but he needs to exercise lots of introspection on whether his presence as Secretary General is doing the SFTU some good or bad. The riot squad budget was used to the limit during Sibusiso's time, and the beatings and brutality of sorts are still the talk of the town, reminiscent of the *Liqoqo* years in many respects. I do not think A.T. Dlamini's Government should copy the bad examples of governance strategies of yesteryears and use them today. His Government had an enormous task of restoring the rule of law left in tatters by the former government. The efforts are commendable and challenges still enormous. The level of corruption is reaching alarming proportions and the Prime Minister is coming out clearly that he is prepared to match it pound for pound. At a time when it is clear that there is dirty linen somewhere at the ministry of education, wielding the stick and polluting the air with tear gas may not be the best option.

## PART 4 – POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE IN SWAZILAND FROM A WESTMINSTER MODEL TO A HOMEGROWN CONSTITUTIONAL DISPENSATION

In the aftermath of the 1973 events, Sobhuza II set up a Royal Constitutional Review Commission. Membership and the terms of reference were wholly determined by him. The terms, which were never gazetted, included a provision to inquire into the broad parameters upon which Swaziland's Constitution should be based. The commissioners were to craft this philosophical framework taking due regard of the history, culture and way of life of the Swazi people "and the need to harmonise these with the modern principles of constitutional and international law" Kuper 1978:338). The report of that commission, including its modus operandi, was never made public but a logical assumption is that the Kings-Order-in-Council 23/1978, which established Parliament, was a consequence of the Royal Commission. The Order not only established the procedure for election, but also retained the powers of the King to make laws by decree and cemented the 1973 Proclamation as the Supreme Law of Swaziland subject only to amendment or repeal by the King after a "new Constitution for the Kingdom of Swaziland has been accepted by the King and the people of Swaziland and brought into force and effect".

Commenting on the tensions in Swaziland since 1973, B. Khumalo (1996:13) writes:

*One reason for the escalation in the nature of the constitutional tensions arising from the dual system operating in Swaziland since the introduction of Tinkundla in 1978 has been the manner in which this system attempts to consolidate traditional authority structures within a predominantly modern system of government. Prior to the repeal of the constitution in 1973, the traditional structures were given recognition, but at a separate level of the administration. In this way, although some tensions were inevitable, they were much more confined than they have been since 1978. The question which arises, therefore, is how can we address the tensions in view of the fact that there will always be some interaction between the traditional and modern sectors?*

The search for a truly Swazi philosophical framework was a plausible idea, but the exercise was stalled by a dilemma about how to go about it and perhaps its focus in the first commission was derailed. The male dominated commission comprised unapologetic royalists in the persons of Polycarp Dlamini (former secretary to the Swazi National Council), Chiefs Sifuba and Ndleleni Gwebu (members of the Swazi National Council), R.P. Stevens, who seconded the parliamentary motion to repeal the 1968 Constitution, David Cohen (the Attorney General, who read the decrees in the King's Proclamation of 1973) and Authur Khoza (the King's Private Secretary who had defected from the NNLC). It would appear that the motive behind the composition was to put together a team that would carry out an already predetermined task. These men knew that the axis of Swaziland's constitutional framework had to be the monarchy.

The weakness of the 1968 Constitution was that it had enshrined the powers of the King at two significant levels. Firstly, the King could not act arbitrarily on the appointment and operation of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The elected House of Assembly was expected to be

the base of the power and legitimacy of the Executive. Secondly, by being a constitutional monarch, the King was not above the Constitution.

Although it was traditionally believed that the King has limitless powers, this notion is incorrect – the checks and balances provided for Swazi kings and queens in effect meant that they could not do as they pleased. To be “the mouth that tells no lie” meant to be the mouthpiece of the entire nation; the epitome of national aspirations and visions on all critical issues. The King speaks within the limits of instructions given to him by the various councils (Booth, 1983:45-6).

The commission did not entertain the issue of multiparty politics but instead focused on laying the groundwork for an electoral system that would be controlled and superintended by chiefdoms, and ultimately by the King through royally appointed committees. According to the 1978 Order, elections were to be conducted for the purpose of establishing an Electoral College, the body that would elect members of Parliament. Nominations for Parliament were made in secret, much removed from the public eye. After deliberating for weeks, the Electoral College would announce the successful candidates. Quite clearly this was a way of ensuring that Parliament was comprised of the right candidates who would enhance the power of the King. Although Sobhuza II had indicated that the 1978 reforms were an experiment, the executors of the experiment believed otherwise, regarding it as a permanent arrangement worthy of being safeguarded by hook or by crook. There was much national consternation about the unrepresentative nature of Parliament; the seemingly uncouth methods of selecting candidates for the Electoral College and the eventual voting by an open single file in the manner of cows bound for a dipping tank. Defenders of the experiment held that it was the most traditional way of doing things but one thing was certain: the power of the monarch over the modern political process remained intact. This was considered the primary motif that would hold the nation together and ward off so-called foreign ideologies.

Sobhuza II died in 1982 during the first phase of an experiment that was already sending signals of political corruption and abuse in the name of the King. Booth (1983:46) explains the functions of the *Liqoqo* prior to and in the aftermath of Sobhuza’s demise thus:

*In times past, the Liqoqo and Libandla were the only means by which the King received public counsel to guide his rule, the true “voices of the people”. Those were times when communications were slow and vital issues were not as numerous, complex, or rapidly developing as they are now. From independence to the early 1980s, the national Parliament became the forum for debate over modern issues of governance. During the interregnum after Sobhuza’s death, however, events have turned the Liqoqo into the main policy-making body with Parliament’s powers correspondingly diminished. Liqoqos have tried to take on this role in the past, notably following Mswati’s death, fortunately without lasting success.*

The *Liqoqo* was announced as the Supreme Council of State soon after Sobhuza’s demise. It started by amending the Sedition Act of 1938, coming up with the 1983 Sedition and Subversive Activities Amendment Act. Opposition to the *Liqoqo* was considered a seditious act and carried a maximum prison term of twenty years. The regency left by Sobhuza II was thrown into turmoil as the *Liqoqo* wielded unbridled power, creating self-serving legislation.

The final showpiece of the *Liqoqo* was the dethronement of the Queen Regent for failure to accede to some of the fast lane innovations. But internal power struggles weakened their resolve and, by 1986, the *Liqoqo* had disintegrated. Mzizi (1995:185) writes:

*Yet it was all the more clear to any intelligent observer that the country was reaping the fruits of Sobhuza II who had by example, weal and woe, taught that political power was sweetest in the absence of opposition.*

Mswati III, Sobhuza's son and successor, has made three major attempts at reform. The methods he has chosen, for good or bad, hinge on the doctrine of consolidating royal power. Instead of taking a neutral position and letting Swazis debate the nature of the monarchy they desire, the King, like his father; has been in control of all the efforts. Mswati III set up the first commission in 1990 as an outgrowth of his traditional kraal meetings, dubbed "the peoples' parliament" by the media. A senior prince who had served in the Sobhuza II Cabinet was appointed to take the wheel. This commission had a loose structure and non-formal mandate; hence its report was verbally presented at the kraal with no attendant pomp and circumstance. The King must have learned his lesson from this loose structure that had encountered procedural problems as people talked about anything under the sun, and the media were there to report on every public meeting. For that reason, he set up the *Tinkhundla* Review Commission (TRC) by Decree 1/1992 more to focus on the electoral system than on the constitutional question *per se*.

Once again the normative factor was injected in Section 3(b) (iv) of the terms of reference. The commission's mandate was to receive views regarding "the way in which Customary Institutions in the Kingdom of Swaziland should and/or could be accommodated in the political system of the Kingdom of Swaziland in view of their important constitutional and social role in terms of Swazi Law and Custom." Khumalo (1996:9) remarks as follows on the limitations placed on the commission:

*First, the investigation into the structural arrangement of the constitution was necessarily limited. The monarchy for instance, and its role in the constitution was presumed to be beyond question ... Second, the initial presumption appears to be that the customary institutions must be accommodated in any future constitution.*

According to Khumalo, the question of monarchical support should have been put to the public. Had this route been followed, different opinions would have emerged and a fresh concept of the monarchy would have been possible in a new constitutional dispensation. Secondly, the reference to customary practices was a clear mandate to expand and refine the *Tinkhundla* philosophy of 1978, hence the official name of the commission. Khumalo agrees that while *Tinkhundla* as a system –

*... provides a useful method of delineating constituencies, what is wrong is the attitude that because they are presented as customary institutions, they automatically deserve to be protected, regardless of the views of the public.*

The commission reported that Swazis had rejected the return to party politics. This was obviously noted because of its importance in the determination of the strategic direction Swaziland was

to take in the envisaged dispensation. Executive authority was to be vested in the King who would continue to appoint a prime minister and a Cabinet (in consultation with the prime minister). In relation to electoral procedure the commission recommended two elements: that representation to Parliament should be direct, and elections should be by secret ballot. These two elements were incorporated in the Establishment of Parliament Order, 1992. But again the supremacy of the monarchy over the entire system was spelt out in Section 51 as follows:

*The King may require the Prime Minister and other Ministers to consult with him on any matter relating to the Government of Swaziland, and the Prime Minister shall keep the King fully informed concerning the general conduct of the government of Swaziland and shall furnish him with such information as he may request in respect of any particular matter relating to the government of Swaziland.*

In addition, Section 55(2) stipulates that the King may remove the prime minister or any other minister from office at any time, and is not obliged to give reasons for his actions. The King's decision cannot be challenged in a court of law. Although the TRC (1992) report recommended that Swaziland craft a constitution with a Bill of Rights, four years passed before a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) was set up. Like all previous commissions, the CRC was directly stage-managed by the King through a prince.

As in 1992 there was an attempt to appoint a broad-based commission but the non-representative clause in the terms of reference fuelled suspicions and this, together with other precipitate factors, caused some progressive and enlightened commissioners to abandon the exercise. One commissioner, Mandla Hlatshwayo, a known political activist belonging to the Peoples United Democratic Movement (Pudemo), withdrew from the 1992 commission, citing a conflict of interests. This was a landmark case of humble disobedience to the machinations of the monarchy, which, since the days of the late King, Sobhuza II, has been perceived to be using the tactic of "open-yet-controlled" policy of accommodation in order to legitimate monarchical motivations. The 1996-attempt again included Mario Masuku, president of Pudemo, who withdrew for the same reasons as those of his counterpart in 1992. The 1996 Commission was very large, composed mainly of a cocktail of individuals perceived to be supporters of the monarchy but with no understanding of the task before them. Many of the commissioners, while glorying in the fact that they had been royally appointed, saw their new task as an employment opportunity.

The intentions of the paymaster (the King) had thus to be protected. Internal debates and bad blood within the commission resulted in the resignations of the vice-chairman, Jeremiah Gule, an academic; the secretary Nkonzo Hlatshwayo, an advocate and academic and Mhawu Maziya, an advocate and academic. Zombodze Magagula, a legally trained company executive, never effectively resigned, but cited work pressure as the reason for his non-participation. Deviating from its original mandate to produce a draft constitution within two years, the commission managed only to come up with a shoddy report three years after the deadline. On the role of the King, the CRC (2001:77, 82) states:



*All powers of governing (ruling) and reigning over the Kingdom must remain entrenched in the Ngwenyama, according to Swazi law and custom and existing laws; if the King is not there, in the Ndlovukazi, and if both are not there, in the Authorised Person ... The nation further insists that the King's Office must be established, be autonomous, be strong and be a microcosm of the various government ministries, departments and sections. The office must also include the King's legal Adviser ... Parliament must work to perpetuate the Tinkhundla System of Government. Members of Parliament have a dual role: to pass laws and be development officers. The King should continue to appoint and dismiss a prime minister and any other minister. The independence of the judiciary should be maintained as it is, but the Courts must perform their functions with due regard to the customs and traditions of the people of Swaziland.*

The CRC, like the 1992 TRC, commented on the question of multiparty politics:

*An overwhelming majority of the nation recommends that political parties must remain banned. They do not want political parties in the kingdom. There is an insignificant minority, which recommends that political parties must be unbanned. The recommendation is that political parties must remain banned in the kingdom. The existing laws regarding this position must be enforced.*

King Mswati III's attempts at reform have been marred by a litany of problems. Firstly, he is aware that he has no option about whether he should be seen to be responding to the calls for democratisation. Secondly, internal pressure, although officially ignored, continues to disrupt the royal agenda of how change should be managed. The dissenting voices are heard far and wide, thanks to the international media and access to the Internet. Faced with these realities, the King has landed himself in further trouble by assigning unto himself the prerogative to manage change virtually on his own terms. This modus operandi creates problems of legitimacy because of his inherent vested interest in the outcome of the process. Holding unequivocally to the strategy and philosophy of his late father, King Mswati III desires to see a constitutional dispensation that will endorse him as unbridled superintendent of all the modern and traditional socio-cultural and political institutions. He thus elects to go about this exercise in ways that are self-serving, nursing a hope that he has the majority of the population behind his efforts.

His commissions, because of their chronic failure to demonstrate scientifically how they reflect public opinion, can be seen as tools for repeating, at best, what they perceive he wants to hear and, at worst, what he tells them in regular closed consultative meetings. The mutations and redefinitions of tradition by the ruling elite have been reconfigured and, with little regard to the complexities of the implications, impose traditional elements on every facet of Swazi life. This has caused problems in governance and the rule of law, as will be shown in the next section. On the question of individual liberties and fundamental freedom, the CRC (2001:83) reported:

*The nation recommends that rights and freedom, which we accept must not conflict with our customs and traditions as the Swazi nation. Agreements with other states and international organisations, which deal with rights and freedoms must be submitted to the nation (at Tinkhundla) before such agreements become law in the Kingdom.*

## STATE OF THE OPPOSITION

The banning of political parties in 1973 in effect meant that any organised opposition to the operation or processes of government was circumscribed. The major opposition to the King's Party was the NNLC, whose popularity increased in the run-up to the first elections of 1972, and which was probably the target of the ban. The King's Party continued to exist, but in name only since the machinery of government was manned by officials who had been sponsored by or had materially supported the INM in the 1967 elections. The enactment of draconian legislation to enforce the King's Proclamation to the Nation killed the ethos and spirit of opposition politics so vital for emerging democracies and good governance in general. Dr Ambrose Zwane was detained and harassed and used the gap between the expiry of his detention order and its renewal to elude the police and escape to neighbouring Mozambique, eventually seeking refuge in Tanzania. Zwane's escape did not please Sobhuza II, who, despite the views he expressed at home about the important role played by tradition in developing innovative political strategies, wanted to be viewed as a supporter of Africa's liberation. In addition, Zwane's ancestors and other close relatives had traditionally been connected to Swazi royalty and had played very significant leadership roles and functions. He therefore reverted to diplomacy to secure Zwane's return, on condition that he would make no further attempts to disrupt the *status quo*, while Sobhuza undertook never again to detain Zwane. Zwane returned to the Kingdom a sickly and frail man. The ordeal had taken its toll on him, and Sobhuza had succeeded in killing off the NNLC.

During the *Liqoqo* era a group of university students responding to the widespread violations of human rights in general and the deposition of the Queen Regent in particular launched Pudemo. Pudemo's programme expanded from these primary concerns to address the core of the problem, namely the absence of an official opposition. The detention without charge law was used to deal with Pudemo malcontents, but their voices were heard far and wide because their concerns resonated with popular public sentiment both within and outside the borders of Swaziland. In a letter to the King written in 1994 (Mzizi, 1995:188-9) Pudemo clearly spells out its demands:

- The 1973 State of Emergency and all other representative laws should be repealed.
- The unconditional return and indemnification of all political exiles should be gazetted.
- An interim government should be established to administer the process of democratic change.
- The Tinkhundla Government is squandering public funds and further fails to properly manage the country's economy. A government that is not democratic, transparent and accountable to the masses but is controlled and directed by secret cabals. A government where those government officials who were found guilty of corruption and treasonable acts are rewarded with promotions. A government, which does not listen to the voices of the toiling masses.

Apart from issuing statements and organising marches, Pudemo has not embarked on an aggressive strategy to force government to the negotiating table. Police torture and harassment, self-exile and death from natural causes of members of the original leadership succeeded in killing the initial enthusiasm. Through its youth wing, the Swaziland Youth Congress (Swayoco), Pudemo has continued to apply pressure by appealing to external forces to join in the call for the democratisation of Swaziland.

The Swaziland Solidarity Network, operating from Johannesburg, South Africa, is one such body that continues to make periodic attacks on the Swazi government. Police harassment and charges against the leaders of Pudemo serve to enhance the body's political image as well as to rekindle public memory of the party both internally and externally.

Alongside Pudemo, the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) was also making calls for democratisation, using both internal and external mechanisms. Internally SFTU would call for workers' meetings and announce an agenda with a distinctly political inclination. The police would pick this up and either call off the meeting or infiltrate it. The SFTU's policy document indicates a resolve to fight for citizens' rights; human rights; political, cultural, and economic rights:

*We are convinced that workers' rights and Trade Union Rights are inseparable from human rights, and that one needs to be a human being first before he can be a worker if they are lucky to have a job as such workers' rights cannot exist where human rights are taboo.*

The SFTU has exploited its status in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to make a strong case for Swaziland. Its technique is to quote an oppressive law and pinpoint a corresponding ILO convention violated by the law thus making workers' rights untenable in Swaziland. Cases of police harassment of SFTU members and other workers are carefully documented to support the charges. As a result of SFTU's sustained complaints, the ILO has deployed no fewer than three missions since 1998 to review the *status quo* in Swaziland. This is usually very embarrassing for the government who have charged that the SFTU has a secret agenda to overthrow the state (Mzizi, 2002:210-3).

This strategy has kept the Swazi Government on its toes, since the repercussions of losing the export benefits made available through the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), and other import/export privileges, are too severe to contemplate. Swaziland's textile industry and sugar export trade will only be sustainable if these trade benefits continue to exist. The SFTU's credo clearly records its wider agenda:

- We believe people should govern and this can only happen where the political environment is democratic.
- We believe that all people have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
- We believe that everywhere workers are a vehicle for social transformation.

- We further believe that workers have a duty to fight for democracy because even workers' rights are stifled under a non-democratic system of governance.
- We also believe that silence where workers' and human rights are systematically and brutally assaulted and mutilated makes the silent party equally guilty with the perpetrator; in fact the silent party becomes an accomplice.

Other formations that have been calling for democratisation include the Council of Swaziland Churches through its Peace and Justice Department, the Human Rights Association of Swaziland, Lawyers for Human Rights, and the Swaziland Democratic Alliance. Each of these formations has made its voice heard at various stages of Swaziland's contemporary history. They have all been systematically ignored by the powers-that-be. However, a landmark process, first mooted by government in the late 1980s, finally saw the light of day in 1997 when various stakeholders were assembled to craft a vision for Swaziland in 2025. What emerged from the deliberations was the National Development Strategy (NDS) Document (Swaziland Government, 1997). Chapter Eight of the NDS concerns "Governance and Public Sector Management". The opening paragraph underscores the progressive notion that good governance is the collective responsibility of the entire society. Referring directly to the effects of the 1973 events, the NDS posits:

*...The separation of powers between the three arms of government, particularly the role of the judiciary was compromised. The lack of a participatory process, specifically in the political sphere, led to the progressive erosion of a national set of values and vision around which the citizens could be mobilised.*

Although it appeared after the CRC had been set up, the NDS suggested some strategic objectives that would make the envisaged constitution widely acceptable. According to the NDS (1997:66) a constitution:

*... which will be the supreme law of the land, ensuring the separation of powers of the three arms of Government (the executive, legislature and judiciary), defining the universally accepted tenets such as a Bill of Rights guaranteeing freedom of association and speech; rule of law; freedom of the press; protection of disadvantaged groups; equality and protection against all forms of discrimination.*

The NDS recognised that a viable constitution-making process should take place in an enabling environment where free political expression is guaranteed and mechanisms for wider representation are respected.

*Establish structures for promoting broad participation in the politics of the land to ensure full participation of all social formations in the formulation of a constitution or set of national conventions.*

When the King launched the NDS in 1999, the government had been pressured to doctor the original document by removing all references to political issues. The explanation given was that the CRC was working on those matters. However, it was not indicated what harm political issues would cause to a long-term national strategy such as the NDS. In the light of the history

an intelligent guess can be made that the fear was that if it included political issues, government would be perceived to be removing the process from the sole jurisdiction of the King. The legal ramifications were perhaps exaggerated, for no national strategy or development plan carries any force of law. The NDS was nothing more or less than a guide.

A series of blunders that have compromised the judiciary since the late 1990s have resulted in yet another formation: The Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations (SCCCO). Launched on 2 January 2003, the SCCCO comprises the Federation of Swaziland Employers, the Swaziland Chamber of Commerce and Industry the Association of Swaziland Business Community, the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions, the Swaziland Federation of Labour, the church, the Law Society, The Coordinating Assembly of NGOs and the Swaziland National Association of Teachers.

Expressing similar sentiments to those of earlier formations and calls made in the past two decades, the SCCCO was:

*... concerned with the disastrous state of affairs prevailing in the country, breakdown in the rule of law, deepening bad governance, deteriorating economic environment and growing threat to the country's trade privileges i.e. GSP and AGOA and absence of convincing political direction, attendant fear and uncertainty to the social and business environment.<sup>14</sup>*

The factors that have given rise to the formation of the coalition are: the non- observance of the rule of law by the Swazi Government; the intended purchase of a jet aircraft for the King, costing more than half a billion Rand and the resignation of all the judges of the Appeal Court. All these factors are blamed on the fact that –

*... Government has failed in its responsibility to ensure justice, peace and stability for all citizens. The magnitude of the problems is being caused by Swaziland's system of governance.*

SCCCO complains about a lack of fiscal discipline, loss of investor confidence, deteriorating economic environment, threats to job security, the growing budget deficit and the loss of competitive edge in the region. Since the formation of the SCCCO the Prime Minister has continued to make arrogant remarks that fuel the body's anger and frustration, making it lose all faith in Government's political will to put things right. The Prime Minister has continued to ignore calls for him to respect the rule of law. When government ignored the SCCCO's deadline of the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2003 to restore the rule of law by repealing the Prime Minister's 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2002 statement in which he had not only derided the judges of the Court of Appeal but categorically spelled out Government's resolve to disregard the court's judgements, the coalition resolved to march on Parliament to deliver a petition spelling out its concerns. Of particular note are the solutions suggested. Reverting to the NDS, the coalition notes that a lasting solution to Swaziland's problems lies in the crafting of a democratic constitution that will enshrine:

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14 *The Swazi Observer*, 3 January 2003:4.

- a justifiable Bill of Rights;
- separation of powers;
- establishment of an independent electoral commission to ensure and guarantee free and fair elections;
- codification of customary law;
- provision of the role of the monarchy;
- establishment of the office of the public protector.

To put pressure on government, the coalition threatened to disrupt the SMART Partnership International Dialogue scheduled to take place in Swaziland in August 2003. Although government appeared unperturbed by this threat, it knew that if it was carried out by the coalition, the bulk of whose membership was material to the success of the summit, the consequences would be far reaching and dramatic.

Not only would investor confidence continue to nosedive, Swaziland would be put under the spotlight as an intransigent country unworthy of receiving benefits from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad).

The coalition's march on Parliament was followed by two days of mass action called by the two workers' federations and the teachers' and civil servants' associations on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2003. The issues that precipitated the mass action are the same as those raised by SCCCO. The peaceful demonstrations revealed unprecedented support for the issues at stake. As the Prime Minister continued his smear campaign against the "nefarious intentions" and "lack of success" of the action, the King was reportedly very worried and had every reason to be so because the image of the country and royalty were at their lowest ebb (see *The Swazi News* of 8 March and *The Sunday Times* of 9 March 2003). He is reported to be losing confidence in the bodies and individuals that advise him.

The Swaziland authorities have thrived by showing arrogance in the face of any opposition and ignoring with impunity all calls for meaningful and participatory change. Those who call for an inclusive plural society are labelled anti-Swazi or anti-monarchy. These labels are used to repel even the most genuine of voices that support the dominance of the monarchy in the political community save only for a few necessary adjustments in the area of political participation. Sive Siyinqaba, Sibahle Sinje was one such organisation. Setting itself up as a cultural formation it commanded respect from royalists and former members of the Imbokodvo National Movement but by 2002, the tone of its demands for political reform were in tandem with those of the known progressive formations.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the ideology of traditionalism is under severe threat. Unless adjustments are made to both the traditional and modern political structures, the winds of change might shake the foundations of kingship and compromise the [false] peace and

stability Swaziland has been known for since independence. The trend is for basic tenets of modern governance to supersede the traditional notions that have only succeeded in silencing dissenting voices and have provided fertile ground for corruption and political failure.

To the traditionalists, Sobhuza II's concept of the dual role of the kings of Africa who ruled and reigned needs to be preserved and entrenched. The competing view is that such a role is dangerous for the continued existence of the monarchy itself; hence it is imperative to respond to modern democratic processes. As the tensions rage between the old and the new, matters of national security cannot be ignored. The preservation of the old, as indicated above, received the military touch in Swaziland in 1973 when the Swaziland Umbutfo Defence Force was crafted along the age-old regimentary system. Notwithstanding what has happened in the army since 1973 there has generally emerged an amorphous re-creation of tradition and attendant institutions that pretend to respond to modern democratic ideals as defined by the ruling elite. The major players in the process of selecting and adapting what should be nationally accepted are the ruling elite, who, as has been argued above, use their individuated understanding of tradition as a yardstick both in the selection process and the adaptation agenda. Any attempts to establish national consensus on fundamental issues are usually motivated by forces external to the dominant group that also determines not only the *modus operandi* but also the outcome of the exercise. The dominant group uses its power to edit the final product so that it confirms and conforms to its own values and aspirations. It is not overstating the case to say that Swaziland was colonised at two levels: externally by a foreign power that lasted effectively until 1968; internally by forces that predated European colonialism, with a mission to perpetuate the Dlamini aristocracy beyond independence from Britain. The intentions may be for the common good and stability of the nation, but the lack of openness gives rise to suspicions and allegations of dictatorship.

## CONCEPTION OF SECURITY: A CASE OF COMPETING POSSIBILITIES

*... the really significant formal feature of the State which seems to have most continuity and certainty is that it is a relatively continuous public power. For Vincent (1987:21) "this public power is formally distinct from both ruler and ruled. Its acts have legal authority and are relatively distinct from the intentions of individual agents or groups". (This is not to say that specific members of a group cannot control the state.) Thus, the state – as public power – embodies offices, rules, coercive power, ideologies, and institutional practices, which carry (or purport to carry) the authority of the state (Du Pisani, 2002:50).*

The idea of public power as a constitutive element of state legitimacy perhaps raises the question: What is the primary source and function of such power? In other words, is the power imposed or contested, and who finally reaps the benefits of the whole economy of power display? It is less complex to answer these questions in working democracies for there the location of power is invariably the electorate. But of course it cannot be assumed that all democracies are always like that. When power is willingly transferred from the electorate to the rulers, the assumption is that such power can automatically be withdrawn if it is no longer serving the intended purpose.

The reality, however, is that elected leaders may, for various reasons, refuse to give up power and then rule without a public mandate. This corrupts the whole notion of, and assumptions about, public power. For Thomas Hobbes, as for Plato, the state was the epitome and symbol of virtue. The function of state (public) power was to maintain order. Even if the state is indeed the embodiment of virtue, it must still be asked from where states draw that function.

Peter Amato (1997:79-80) identifies the fundamental differences between Plato and Hobbes on this question. Hobbes' Leviathan concept sought to describe states with their requisite components, namely equity laws and sovereignty as naturally ordained to protect and defend the subjects. The commonwealth, to Hobbes, is not served by separate orders or classes of people, as Plato would argue.

*In Plato, social order conceived as harmony was to be established between unequals and aimed at an all-encompassing conception of the good or virtuous life. What makes Hobbes so strikingly modern by contrast is that he proposes that the commonwealth is instituted to maintain an asocial peace between equals in a universe that reason knows only as matter in motion.*

Hobbes' Leviathan principle supported the theory of the divine nature of kings, who are answerable only to God. It would appear that it is this Hobbesean mentality that underpins Swaziland's conception of traditional authority and then, in turn, complicates the concept of national security. To the extent that the head of state is regarded as the embodiment of virtue, and as such inseparable from the state, Swaziland's dominant philosophy is Hobbesean. The head of state defines public order and determines the mechanisms for maintaining that order. The purpose of Parliament, and indeed of all state institutions, is to serve the head of state, and therefore, the state. The monarchy in this regard, becomes the principle and the rule.

What happens then if this notion of, and dialectic between, state and head of state is no longer shared by the majority of the citizens? Should it be imposed and enforced with impunity? The doctrine of separation of powers presupposes that no one organ of state may hold sway and control over all others. Secondly, no organ of state may interfere in the operations of another. That means that, as a servant of the state, the King cannot be the state, for he is only transient and mortal, subject to imperfections and evil. Former monarchical states in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in Africa, removed for various reasons the executive authority of kings, and retained only their symbolic functions. The dividend reaped was increased civil participation in the political community. Public officers executed delegated authority and were therefore easier to monitor and bring to order. It is these developments that have prompted scholarship on conflicts in Africa to suggest political systems that guarantee competition and periodic elections (see Abdulla Bujra, 2002:37-8). Competitive political systems ensure, among other things, extensive devolution of power; eradication of corruption of any nature in the political community; principles of good governance and the extensive involvement of civil society in the monitoring of policy and implementation and service delivery.



It can generally be argued that states develop policy for the purpose of dealing with friends and enemies. There are perceived benefits in adopting a particular policy. Most of these benefits have to do with self-preservation, survival and duplication. A state duplicates itself when its policy is positively copied and adopted by another in the whole economy of cementing bilateral relations. But in matters of national security the primary motif is inward looking. There are perceived outside and inside threats that necessitate the formulation of a national security policy.

Whereas one agrees with Hobbes that states serve the function of defence against foreign and local injuries, one has to contend that as state power grows, the state may become a source of threat against its own citizens. The maximal model of state argues that the state is more than the sum total of its constituent parts and, as such, has interests of its own. Theoretically therefore, the state stands above the purview of its citizens, but plays the role of protecting the same citizens (and itself) from both external and internal threats. The inherent danger is that the state can easily be detached from, and legitimately unresponsive to, the individual security needs of its citizens.

In the Swazi situation, the state manifests itself in the head of state, the King, who is the embodiment of national virtue in the Hobbesian sense. Everything else is therefore subordinated to the state. The head of state is automatically elevated to the position of an independent force that asks for opinions knowing that it will not be bound by them, for it demands total obedience. One of the interviewees for this study reasoned thus:

*Therefore, the national conception of security in Swaziland centres around the conservative ruling elite whose philosophy is to safeguard the King's authority and the attendant rituals like the Incwala, King's birthdays and independence celebrations. All these and other ceremonies are for the ritualisation of kingship, which is the centre and axis of Swazi socio-political and religious life. Active security measures are taken to protect these ceremonies that extol the Head of State as custodian of Swazi ethos.*

Rousseau's social contract would hold that since Swazi citizens accept their nationhood it follows that they agree to be subjects of the King. They must therefore confirm their nationhood by participating in all national ceremonies. By so doing they renew their allegiance and loyalty both to the head of state and to the state. Nevertheless, as indicated in this study the civil discontent that manifests itself in mushrooming formations and the declarations they make suggests that the idea of national security is strongly contested. On some occasions, the powers-that-be try to make concessions, however inadequate and clumsy, for the sake of maintaining the [false] peace and the make-believe sunshine policy that change in Swaziland is by national consensus. This study indicates that, in practice, national dialogue is more idealistic, and therefore ideological, than empirical. National policy on matters of security thus hinges on the ideology of domination first coined by Sobhuza II. Sobhuza philosophised that he had no enemies because he believed in dialogue. This has become Swaziland's quasi-national policy in matters of conflict resolution. Yet in reality, as another interviewee indicated,

*this is seldom the intention in Swaziland. Dialogue to us means monologue with an italic 'd', for when issues are of a political nature, the monarchy resorts to heavy handed tactics in order to deter dissenting opinion and deflate militant malcontents.*

Swaziland does not have a written security policy. It is assumed that every soldier will know what it is he must protect the minute the gun is thrust into his hands. Internal security policy is determined on a case-by-case basis, largely influenced by personal considerations.

An informant from the Intelligence Department of the Umbutfo Swaziland Defence Force (USDF) explained this point thus:

*The head of state determines the approach to be taken whenever there is an internal security issue. The antagonising forces are identified in terms of leadership and then appropriately targeted. As such it is not the issues these leaders raise that matter, but themselves as frontline players. Therefore, policy directives are engaged based on personalities rather than the issues at hand.*

The processes followed in deciding security policy are as follows: First, the Commissioner of Police identifies a problem and gathers intelligence information to support his case. He then takes the matter to the King with all the facts he has obtained. The King summons the heads of the army and prisons, who, naturally, cannot hold opinions contrary to those of the Commissioner of Police. The King then takes the matter to his various advisory bodies, most, if not all of which have no expertise in matters of security. The resultant action is taken based on the advice given by these advisory bodies. But it must be underscored that as Chief of Command the King takes charge of all operations in which the army is involved. The Defence Council exists only in name, according to most of the key people interviewed for this study. The rules of procedure for the council are neither here nor there. A well-trained senior soldier responded to the question on intelligence as follows:

*Most national security related actions taken in this country are more reactive than proactive. This has largely been influenced by members' fears of being the harbinger of bad news. The system has an in-built tendency to shoot the messenger rather than address the issue. Therefore people are loath to offer proactive advice. In addition to this, such offers may show a relatively advanced knowledge of security matters. Which, in turn, may be interpreted as a threat by the powers-that-be.*

Regionally Swaziland's strategic position was seriously tested during the liberation wars waged by the ANC and Swapo in the 1970s and 80s. During that time the nine Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) member states were involved in an economic campaign to reduce their dependence on the South African economy. R.H. Davies *et al.* (1985) argue that the fact that Swaziland's governing clique had secret links with the apartheid leadership compromised the political independence of Swaziland to judge regional issues as a sovereign state. Secondly, the conservative nature of the Swazi political regime gave credence to a silent legitimization of the apartheid state.

The liberation movements were seen as a threat to Swaziland's peace and stability because of the political party motivations in the country. Finally the SADC and Frontline states made

particular demands that Swaziland would find very difficult to accept. It was precisely for these reasons that prior to 1974 the Swazi regime consistently refused to give open support to the liberation movements, especially the ANC and Frelimo. There was no open support for Swapo either. The major reason for this position is, of course, the economic risk the country would have suffered if it had supported any war, particularly against South Africa. The SADC option was not viable enough, nor was the South African Customs Union link that became high profile in the post-independence years. On the other hand, any open support of the apartheid regime would have been equally destructive. The Swazi monarchy was reluctant openly to denounce the activities of the ANC because it claimed that it was involved in the formation of the movement in 1912 and had retained some sentimental attachment to it. It should be noted that in the 1960s and the early 1970s there was less cooperation with the apartheid regime. For instance, in 1969, Swaziland signed the Lusaka Manifesto, which spelt out clearly that South Africa had to be isolated save only when matters of power transfer in that country were to be discussed.

In 1970 Swaziland joined Lesotho, Ivory Coast and four other countries in abstaining from condemning Pretoria for the "dialogue offensive" adopted by the John Vorster regime. Practically, the Swazi regime was opposed to the continued occupation of Namibia (the then South West Africa) in the face of numerous UN resolutions condemning it and, surprisingly, South African refugees were received and tolerated. But as the war raged in the mid-1970s, the Swazi regime came under extreme pressure from Pretoria, which demanded that Swaziland impose restrictions on refugees "and act with greater vigour against any real or imagined attempts by ANC guerrillas to traverse Swazi territory". During this period the apartheid state was hell-bent on using its poorer neighbours to act as policemen for Pretoria. The dangled carrot was economic support, including various handouts and perks that would come with the proposed Constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS). Swaziland, like all the affected parties, refused to recognise CONSAS. This led to a direct and cruel onslaught on refugees and alleged guerrillas in the region.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a kingdom that has vested all executive authority in the monarchy, Swaziland is unique in the SADC region. The system has been imposed by the monarchy itself; playing on the notion that tradition does not recognise power contests. However, increasingly there are voices in the kingdom calling for the redefinition and re-conceptualisation of kingship and traditional authority. If the monarchy elects to remain in the mainstream body politic, how far can it accommodate these dissenting voices? Arguments based on tradition are, of course, dismissive of such voices because the King has unlimited political power and his authority is beyond challenge. As a result, much effort is wasted on attempts to silence the voices and on sponsoring the illusion that a king can also be an agent of meaningful change. The result is that any change is either deliberately gradual, and therefore irritating to the progressive elements, or non-existent, and therefore frustrating and confusing.

Swaziland needs to solve the fundamental issues raised in this study namely to shift “tradition” from an ideology of domination to a shared value system in a transitory situation dictated by modern imperatives of an ideal society. Khumalo (1996) argues that a meaningful strategy on the route to a constitutional dispensation is to determine the nature of the interconnections between the traditional and modern structures in a particular unit. Once the links have been identified, the tensions caused by the competing elements of modernity and traditionalism may be minimised. Khumalo’s proposition has been raised by several other voices since the 1996 project, but agreement on the best way to find appropriate definitions is neither here nor there. It would appear that if the ideological roles of tradition could be eliminated as the search for appropriate solutions continues, the process would be relieved of the excess baggage that results in stops, starts and false starts.

The voices calling for meaningful democratic change are growing louder and the attention and role of the international community cannot be ignored. Recently the Commonwealth, the European Union, the International Bar Association and the International Commission of Jurists have sent missions to assess and report on the rule of law crisis in Swaziland. In addition, international and regional missions have been sent to assist in the constitution drafting exercise as well as monitoring the 2003 national elections, adding their voices to that of the ILO, whose interventions are cited in this study.

Swaziland might be in danger of being isolated by the international community. The diplomatic interventions of some SADC heads of state as well as the demands that will come from states participating in trade initiatives like those of Nepad are all indicators that, if Swaziland continues to be intransigent and deceptive in the project of democratisation, it might qualify sooner rather than later as a security risk to the region.

## PART 5 – TRADITION AND POLITICS

### TOO MUCH EATING, TOO LITTLE TALK: WHEN TRADITION BECOMES OUR MONSTER

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*In 2003 there was a total collapse of the rule of law in the country. The Prime Minister had total disregard for judges. Mzizi is warning of the danger of undermining the independence of the judiciary either by government or the traditional system as a threat to the future of democracy in the country.*

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The civil strife in the Kingdom of Swaziland tells of one thing: that, alas the age of anarchy and lawlessness is upon us! The structures that are supposed to solve the problems are busy fuelling chaos and confusion for reasons best known to them. We have heard and seen the

discontent of the Judges of the Appeals Court. They resigned *en masse* not out of political mileage, but under protest that their services had been unduly insulted and rubbished by the Head of Government. We have heard the protests by the Chief Justice and all the Judges of the High Court. They are all saying that under the prevailing circumstances it is difficult to execute proper justice. The executive arm of government has declared a *coup d'état* on the Judiciary, and the consequences are too ghastly to contemplate. Magistrates Gumedze and Khumalo are confused about what to do with suspects that have been legally set free, or held under remand for days on end. What the Commissioner of Prisons is doing is not found in any of the legal textbooks that were in the curriculum of the Magistrates.

What should they do if the law is removed from the trained professionals to politicians who do not have Course 101 in Law? When the Non-bailable Offences Bill was made law following the scrapping of the sixty days Detention Order in 1993, there were cries all over, ostensibly as it seemed that Government was taking back with the left hand what it had given with the right hand. Legal opinion was that it was extralegal for a politician, in this case the Minister for Justice, to have the prerogative to add or delete anything he likes on the schedules of offences. Besides, the courts are qualified to determine who is eligible for bail and who is not. It was clear in 1993 that this law was going to be strongly contested, for it undermined the competence of the judicial officers. The pain suffered by the judges and Magistrates has a ripple effect. Lawyers and their clients can never have faith in the judicial system. When the Law Society resolved to join the mass action called by the trade unions last week, they were trying to make a point, that what was obtaining in the country had the next effect of grounding the whole justice system. Judges of the High Court had already taken a resolution never to entertain matters brought by Government. Again, the message was that Government was guilty of meddling, and this was not acceptable. What then is the sense of telling yourself that whatever happens to you, you can always resort to the law for protection and redress?

What is the point of believing that as a nation we are better than lions and gorillas in the jungle? I understood and empathised with the members of the legal fraternity. But I had a question, a very pertinent one for that matter. Is Government's flagrant disregard of the law the end of the road? In other words, if the legal fraternity is as helpless as we all are what next? Yes, strikes and protests are means of expressing discontent. Their success is not necessarily in the numbers or the economic damage they cause. That is not the primary intention of strikes and mass actions. To be sure, every striking worker with matter in the box above his or her shoulder will tell you that striking is not for fun. It is not an act of laziness or revenge. Rather, strikes are mechanisms for attempting to create a crisis that will make the negotiations table an option. But look at Government's infantile reaction: "Oh! The mass action was a flop. After all the bulk of the marchers were the unemployed." Nonsense! I say. Strikes are not about numbers, but are about urgent issues that must be addressed. Any government that fails to take strikes and mass protests seriously needs a psychiatric examination. How hopeless is the situation in Swaziland? The eyes of the international community are wide open, and there is no escaping.

Soon the reports of the international Bar Association and the International Commission of Jurists will be released to the international community. By the looks of things this might take place when the King will be yet again outside the country, attending meetings that can be economically attended by Government officials. Just on this point, as a nation we have a reason to be worried about the endless spree of royal excursions. Of course, I for one would like my king to be exposed to the world. He has to know what takes place in Asia, Europe and the Americas, not merely for feeding his personal curiosity, but the macro national benefit. The current scenario, I am sorry to point out, is perceived negatively by the international world. We are uncomfortable with such questions as: Why is your king always globetrotting? The question behind the question is: How can you afford to finance such trips, given your economic muscle?

Back to the crisis. Once the Kingdom's skeletons are exposed to the world, what will happen? The reports by the two eminent bodies mentioned above will result in the isolation of Swaziland. Already the European Union and the Commonwealth have sent deputations to assess the situation and offer useful advice before the worst becomes worse. The isolation of Swaziland will mean that in the next Commonwealth summit, Swaziland might be on the agenda as Zimbabwe was last year.

Swaziland's status in the Commonwealth might be revoked. Readers will recall that before the close of 2002, three diplomats of our own defied protocol and went straight to meet the King about these hovering dangers. The King was already in seclusion. The Head of Government, whose love for the country is yet to be demonstrated, came out spitting fire, accusing the diplomats of bypassing his office. We were all amazed. No. That is an understatement. We were shocked and flabbergasted by this shameless display of arrogance. If the King had deemed it fit to meet these eminent workers of the state, who had the right to complain? On the surface, the PM's outbursts sounded like the proverbial sour-grapes story. In reality, he was telling us that Government was capable of holding the monarchy under siege. I did not like it for the life of me. The advice given by the diplomats fell on deaf ears.

I am not in the habit of agitating for the sake of causing chaos and confusion. But I would like to ask each one of our MPs what he or she thinks is the role of Parliament in the Swazi context. Is it a legislative body, or just a group of individuals that assemble to talk about non-issues? Make laws that will not be manipulated by the Executive without Parliamentary authority? What is the role of Parliament really? I can sense that this being election year, many of them would like to return as members in the next Parliament.

Yes, I must admit that I have seen respectable MPs in this Parliament. The names of Mfomfo Nkambule, Ndimandze of Ntontozi, Marwick Khumalo, Majaheb'timba, Walter Bennett, to name but a few. The quality of an MP, as we learned from former fire-brands like Msunduzeni Dlamini, Potgieter and Dzingalive, is to ask questions and take strong position in order to keep the politicians in check. MPs are not little schoolboys that can be bought with a king-size bottle of Coca-Cola Majozi style. They are lawmakers, and as such represent the public morality of the nation. To ask, therefore, what the role is is to recognise that our current Parliament represents

all that it ought not to. We cannot all blame it on the 1992 Legislation that established the post-1978 "experiment". Yes, our Parliament lacks teeth because it was founded on a Kings-Order-in-Council. But that has been the design of things here. How then can Swaziland ever have an independent parliamentary system? Can we ever hope to have a quality Parliament, less concerned about the sitting allowances and prospects of scooping Cabinet positions? MPs that will hold the bull by the horns, and assert that: "We are either custodians of public morality, or we are out of here." Perhaps our MPs should join the mass protests, and for God's sake forget about the politics of their precious stomachs.

## **TOPSY-TURVY, SWAZI POLITICS**

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*In this article, Mzizi reminisces about the political instability in the country and the lack of direction the country is taking politically.*

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Swazi politics is full of twists and turns, in fact so full that if you relied on your memory as most of us do you would completely lose track of events. The authorities of this Kingdom must be wondering why is it that every little change they make tends to invite a host of bitter criticism from the vociferous public. Time has come for the King and his advisers to search for themselves, asking what is wrong with either them or the public. One thing is clear to all and sundry. The Swazi populace is restless, anxious and impatient. There are many reasons for this. The spirit of freedom blowing through the entire globe, once dubbed the "winds of change" by Harold McMillan in the early 1960s, has engulfed the Swazis. There is no two ways about it and this reality cannot be wished away. People want to have a say in the machinery that runs the affairs. People want their voices to be recognised and heard. This is the spirit of freedom, which cannot agree to bow to any form abject slavery or colonial mentality. Theologically only God can bring about the spirit of freedom. I am talking about total and holistic freedom, not the kind that frees one's soul, which suddenly realises that the body is trapped in endless human agony. God's freedom is absolute, complete and not relative. Relative freedom is the kind that overemphasises the salvation of souls at the expense of socio-economic and political freedom. Freedom cannot be relativised. God cannot be compartmentalised. God loved the world as the world, not merely souls trapped in God-forsaken bodies. Another respect of this restlessness and impatience manifests itself in open defiance of authority. It may be said in silent tones, but the message is the same – that the Swazi of today no longer believes in the divine right of rulers. Unfortunately, certain rulers still deceive the world and themselves, thinking that God gave them the power and majesty to rule without opposition, since all opposition comes from the house of Satan.

The truth is that rulers will be constantly pricked to give up power and stop any manner of dictatorship. Swazis by nature love the institution of kingship. I think this is true of most Africans. African kingdoms were destabilised by colonialism and the sad story is not for me to repeat here. But the end result was the total loss of cultural behaviour and identity amongst

colonial African state leaders of revolution as imperial power shifted from kings to some elitist nationalists who commanded respect through other qualities besides royal birth. There is no question that Swaziland has stood the test of time. It does not take Swazis a whole lot of effort to rally behind the voice of the King. But exactly how long this holds out is the question you and I are asking in our secret places. This year alone our Monarch was called upon to quench two fires, one by SFTU and the other by SNAT. Both fires burned this nation in degrees that cannot be fathomed. Both fires defied the laws of the land because the laws were perceived to be diabolical and worthy to be defied. The King in January ordered, in a visibly military mood, the end of the SFTU Mass Stay-Away. Of course, Swazis obeyed, and in fact there was the hope that the King would ensure that the twenty-seven demands are speedily attended to. A negotiating team was set up, but it bore no fruit. Where did that put the world of the King? *Ngabe livi lesilo lawela phansi yini?*

Then came the teachers' strike in the middle of the year. It caused havoc and shook the foundations of our educational process. The nation was divided. Some blamed Government; others blamed the teachers, charging them of unreasonableness, insolence and gluttony. There were reports that one community in the South wanted to assault the teachers. Eventually the matter reached the King. Let us not forget that the King promised to call teachers for another meeting where only good news would be the order of the day. The process of meeting the King was appropriately acknowledged in our custom as Kwembula Ingubo Enkhosini, an appeal for mercy to the highest court of the land.

After the appeal, no sane Swazi would invoke any law to punish any victim. No law in our system is above the King. But in 1996, this known custom was breached right before our eyes. This ridiculed the institution of kingship in ways that defy the description of my pen. The Government in Mbabane affected a no-work no-pay rule, a slap in the face of the King or a stab in the back. The King never called the teachers as promised, and might not feel courageous enough to do so because his Government paraded the power of a law while downplaying the power of the Ingwenyama. The recent Government reshuffle is still the talk of the town. While I was touched by Mr Ephraim Magagula's complaint, that he wished he had been forewarned by his boss of the impending sacking, I wondered why Magagula did not resign on principle after the shocking sacking by his former boss. But again, what would he have done had he been told that he would be sacked? Nothing.

The sacking is as dramatic as the appointment. Next time I want to hear a minister whine about a shocking appointment. I have heard the complaints on the removal of Von Wissell from Finance. The answer is simple. Von Wissell was no longer serving the interests of the hand that appointed him. I see no reason for complaint. In my judgement we do not have any single minister who holds public opinion higher than the system that appointed him. No minister is accountable to the public, and until this is changed I cannot waste my precious tears weeping over people who failed the hands that appointed them. If I am deeply moved, I can only weep for the King. I trust that when the King makes his appointments, he hopes that the public



would welcome them as given and the appointees would so do their duties that a balance of loyalty between the public and the King would be reached. But none of his appointees can boldly do that because of the locus of political power in Swaziland. A reliable source disclosed to "Dissection" that one of the ministers was shocked by Von Wissel's resignation: "*Unani lomlungu, wente info lebulima kangaka. Uyekela kudla akuphiwetsine lokudla sitokudla.*" What is wrong with this white person, how can he give away so much money? This is the kind of politician our system shapes and braces. In the aftermath of last January's mass stay-away and the June-July teacher's strike, SFTU and SNAT are frothing at the mouth calling for more strikes, possibly in January 1997. While we wonder if there is any industrial law in this country since the current one has come under serious legal review, we wonder what those who were to do good to His Majesty's words are saying. Are they going to wait until the King is misled into believing that there are forces that want to overthrow him? Now the task is on the shoulders of the Prime Minister. But meanwhile, SFTU and SNAT should responsibly ask if the past strikes achieved anything. If not, why should a similar line of action be followed again? This must be made clear to the followers who should not allow emotional rhetoric to reign over reason. At the end of the day, we ask, for how long should the King be called upon to clear the mess created by his appointees? This is a critical question that attempts to say that the days of democracy have come. The clearing of this mess makes the King a rubbish collector, and this should stop. I say this because I respect kingship and will adore it to my grave. I get concerned when my king is made a doormat and garbage cleaner. And 1998 is too far away.

## ZIG-ZAG UNCHANGING CHANGES IN SWAZILAND

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*When the Constitution Review Commission was set up there was a debate as to who must be included and the critical question asked was what would be the role of the progressive movements be. Mzizi argued that they must be involved if there was going to be credibility in the process.*

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Why is it that the change in Swaziland moves in an unearthly and unnatural fashion? All wheels move either forward or backward. In Swaziland the wheels move sideways and then engage in a pitiful merry-go-round. Let me be clear that the nation and all world leaders who are concerned about Swaziland praised His Majesty for setting in motion the Constitutional Review process. "Dissection" was equally impressed until the shady appointment of the Commissioners. I always thought that there is no national task greater than the formulation and adoption of the Supreme Court of the Land. Because of the enormity of the task, it stands to reason that any team selected to stem the tide must have a legitimate base. You cannot approach a team of unaffiliated individuals, people who do not have a vested interest in the task at hand, save their patriotism, and expect them to appreciate history-changing Constitutional provisions. Soon after the Commissioners were announced, there were wild cries about the manner in which they were selected. The heart of the matter was that such a task should have been carried out democratically so that the people's CVs would be publicly known. How can you entrust such

a responsibility to someone whose ability to move at least even half a centimetre on it you are not sure of? Secondly, Commissioners, it was expected, should be the body that will debate legitimate and representative submissions in their bid to come up with an acceptable document.

It therefore goes without saying that the commission should comprise an enlightened and diverse cadre of individuals who know the meaning of informed debate, individual who can always revert to their constituencies in case a debate overwhelms the point of view advanced. What seems to be the case in SD is that our Constitutional talks are held in absence of basic freedom and rights. This process at least assures us that for the next twenty-four months Swaziland will have no Bill of Rights. My count tells me that SD will have no Bill of Right for twenty-five of its thirty-five days of Independence by 1998. This is an alarming record to say the least. But then I am baffled by our good neighbours who rush to heap praises where one is not sure they are deserved. It would seem that these original leaders either do not know what they are talking about or they are not told the whole truth. The word that Swazi leaders fear most is democracy, which simply means majority rule or majority decision. It is feared that if you allow people to make decisions, then the power of monarchy will be in jeopardy. That is why the Commissioners are chosen by the King and the terms of reference indicate that the Commissioners are accountable to the King who will receive on or about August 1998 the first draft of the new Constitution.

If the King will not be impressed with the submissions, he will have the option of throwing the document into the dustbin. This is a dangerous malady and our regional heavyweight should certainly know better by reading between the lines, unless of course they do not take SD seriously. I have said we guaranteed the absence of the Bill of Rights for the next two years. This is the pain people like Mario Masuku are going through. Let us not blame them for their most recent utterances. The truth is Jerry would not be known in contemporary Swazi politics were it not IDEAL. Themba of SFTU is in the same boat. The participation of these gentlemen in the constitutional talks cannot be inconsistent with the historic Kwaluseni declaration of 2 March 1996.

IDEAL, SFTU, PUDEMO are signatories to that Declaration which called for the revocation of the 1973 King's Decree as a fundamental to the normalisation of effort at participating in our political, constitutional and economic life without fear of intimidation. The Declaration, which is the cornerstone of SD Alliance specifically, states that:

*Freedom of speech and assembly is immediately guaranteed with the removal of King's Decree of 1973 and concurrent removal restriction; the Constitutional Commission is representative and participative as possible and has inbuilt mechanisms for feedback to the political organisation, formation and group represented. Further, all parties in this forum have equal status and power – the constitution drawn up by this forum can only be an interim arrangement to enable the first democratic elections to be conducted.*

The Kwaluseni Declaration was widely published; I am sure Government and King's office must have seen and studied it.

In the history of struggle in SD, the struggle for voice, the Kwaluseni Declaration was a watershed, a true landmark, which our neighbour and foreign envoy should have recognised as such. The question then is why were prominent members of the Democratic Alliance selected into the constitutional committee? I think the answer is simple. This was meant to test their loyalty to the King because he is the master of change and their allegiance is to the party position. As readers can see, this is a perilous choice. The Alliance had declared in the document to protect kingship and elevate it to a position above corruption, politics, and far from the reach of cabals. But what should be the Alliance's position when the King at the control of the wheels of change? That is the dilemma members of the SDA find themselves in. Since their appointment they have dilly-dallied, and now the terms of reference recently gazetted seem to confirm the wide gulf between the Kwaluseni Declaration and the Constitutional Review Process.

Another reason for the selection of members of SDA, despite their declaration, was to make the Commission appear representative to the outside world. That is why many of our international friends have praised the King for putting together such a team. Now the truth is out. The Commissioners were not selected by their constituencies; hence they have no obligation to table partisan positions before the commission. They have no mandate to negotiate Constitutional provisions on behalf of legitimate parties or groupings. I consider this a deadly affront to the processes of democracy. In this day and age Commissioners of this nature must come with a mandate. They cannot be just a composition of an individual; otherwise the work of the Commissioner can take us to doomsday. Again, I must stress that the process is not essentially democratic and representative in SD. Hence, as a reader I expect Gule and Masuku to be the first to challenge the exercise. This they have done with great effect and vigour. But who listens? Does it mean each time there's a crisis in the talk disputing parties will rush to Lozitha? I hope not, unless we take the name of the King in vain. But anything goes in SD.

Another zigzag in Swazi politics is the belated terms of the Swaziland National Council. Why the Council was established before a Constitution was drawn still puzzles me. I would have expected the Council, which had been defunct for donkey's years, to nevertheless be through a Constitutional provision. The standing committee of the SNC, as we have repeatedly pointed out in this column, was responsible for matters of Swazi Law and Custom according to the Constitution of 1968. You have to take great and dangerous strides to suggest that the Council should have a say on legislative, executive and judiciary affairs. Yet the fact that the present Council has advised the King on the appointment of commissioners seems to suggest more power on them is on the wings. This term of reference, of course obviously influenced by the 1968 Constitution, do still contain matters of Swazi Law and Custom, and very interestingly they are accountable of a larger body called the SNC, defined traditionally as every Swazi adult male. Now the question is what the motive of appointing to Council was? Is it because the days of the central committee are over? One of the most disturbing questions on the lips of every Swazi these days is the remuneration package, which entails a wage of R4,000 per sitting and travelling allowances. "Dissection" confirmed this package with the Attorney General, and it appeared I had never been so disappointed with the authorities. I had to ask myself why the

country's governance is so expensive. We have a prime minister, a set of over fifteen ministers, two Houses of Parliament, a central Committee, and now over twenty members of the SNC.

Yet we continually complain of staggering deficit and an ailing economy. Only fools believe us. Actually, we do not believe ourselves. Although we know it makes little sense to ask a question in SD, we still ask anyway; why should councillors to the King be paid? How much can they ever be worth? On a more serious note, it may be true that the councillors will be paid for saying the right things, things that go along with the thinking of the *status quo*. Any councillor who deviates from the norm on grounds of conscience would be endangered species. Pay them well not to oppose the system – how can they bite the hand that feeds them? Essentially councillors' should not be paid for this natural service. Paying them goes a long way to compromising the nature of their mission. But now the milk is spilt there's no going back. All we can do is ask questions and expect no answer, the zigzag merry-go-round wheel of change. Finally, I can congratulate the house of *Logcogco*, the generation of Queen Tibati, that even in our time the son and grandson of *Logcogco* would be called upon to name the Constitutional Review Committee and the Swazi National Council.<sup>15</sup>

## **BETWEEN RADICAL AND MODERATE POLITICS: A DIALOGUE WITH SIVE SIYINQABA**

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*As an intellectual who was non-partisan, Mzizi was willing to talk to all people in spite of the movements they belonged to. In this article, he had a meeting with Dr Amos Vilakazi who had just been elected as President of the Sive Siyinqaba Cultural Movement, which is close to government and seeks to associate itself with the King's government. In this discussion, they discussed their views on the role of the monarchy, the government, trade unions and the employers.*

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Recently I ran into the newly elected president of *Sive Siyinqaba*, *Sibahle Sinje*, cultural organisation, Dr Amos Vilakazi, the medically successful practitioner who has decided to go into business. I have known Vilakazi for a good number of years as a fellow University student at the then UBL, as a friend, and as a family doctor. He was, to my knowledge a careful thinker, a man I admired as a debater of issues, an eloquent speaker with a good command of the Queen's language, and a fellow with an admirable personality. We had not met since his election thus, naturally, when I met him with a generous offer of a hand of congratulation, to which he modestly responded with a careful remark, "*Ngangitsi bo Mzizi batangibulala uma ngikhetfwa kulesikhundla.*" I assured him that I personally adore freedom of speech and association. My crusade for human rights carries with it a sense of respect for all who choose where they want to belong. We then had an hour long discussion which I feel can be shared with readers of this column.

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15 Here Mzizi is referring to Prince Mangaliso who was appointed by the King to head the CRC. He comes from the line of Queen Tibati who was one of the most revered Queens of Swaziland.

I should preface my analysis of our discussion with the remark that Dr Vilakazi struck me as a rare pragmatist. His interest in *Sive Siyinqaba* developed coincidentally after he had noticed that Swaziland cannot afford mass stay-a-ways. He was concerned about the destruction of Swaziland's economy in the absence of a viable alternative which seemed to be the destiny of this country from the 1995 stay-away to the 1997 one; "Why should we destroy this country which has come a long way since 1968 only in the name of change?" Dr Vilakazi seemed to ask. Since I am someone also against strikes, let alone mass action, our discussion turned into a lament, a kind of lonely intellectual journey into nowhere. But Vilakazi went on to question the unholy alliance between the SFTU and the Federation of Swaziland Employers. Such an alliance is not only unholy, it is clearly just unworkable, Vilakazi stressed. In our reflection, especially of the vision 2020, we concluded that this was a marriage of inconvenience. The target is the Swaziland government. If the government of the day can no longer align with employers, and has no sympathies with the workers, then where is it left? Truthfully speaking, though, it is that employers and employees just cannot enter into any matrimony.

Employers are there to exploit the labour of the gullible employees, and trade unions attempt to protect employees, especially where labour excesses have been reported and properly documented. Any marriage between the two is simply just a farce. Of course we did remember Musa Hlophe's condemnation of Jan Sithole's Geneva call for sanctions, which loudly sounded more political than labour related. Our reflection then shifted to the question of power in Swaziland. Dr Vilakazi admitted that it is important to know who exactly is in charge for all socio-political decisions. If the King is indeed in charge, how is he protected when certain decisions boomerang because the executive branch of government implements totally unworkable innovations? Whereas we both realised that cabinet has regular meetings with the King, when cabinet announces a decision, the King is procedurally believed to have endorsed it, however unpopular. The question then is why should our King be placed at the centre of controversy at the painful expense of his office? Why should unscrupulous politicians hide in the skin of our King for their sins? This definitely hurts the King. It was this point that Vilakazi and I explored in the matter of multi democracy in our land. We agreed first and foremost that kingship is central to the political life and heart of Swazis. Anyone who tampers with this nerve centre risks total rejection or ostracisation from society. Vilakazi and I could not imagine Swaziland without a king. That is why any calls against the monarchy immediately invite angry reactions even from quarters outside the realism of such defence. The example is Meshack Shongwe's reaction to the allegation by priests that the King was the head of the Zionists. In my view Shongwe's explanation lacks the historical connection between Zionists and the royalty for which this column has written about in a number of editions. Zionists, through the LACS, have remained under the custodian of Swazi kingship since 1937, and all churches belonging to the League have their major decisions vetted by the King.

King Mswati III has not acted any differently from his father; and the Queen Mother is directly responsible for the League's finances. This is a tradition, which has nothing to do with government; hence I should humbly say that government was out of order to address this

issue. The League believes that they are a regiment of the King; and the King is their High Priest. A rebuttal of this stance should have come at least from the Swazi National Council, and not from government or its Ministry of Home Affairs. Anyhow, Dr Vilakazi believes that this country is truly headed for multi-party democracy. He sees nothing wrong in this as he speculates that His Majesty would not be opposed to the idea only if clearly spelled out rules are in place. Vilakazi's opinions rest on the King's declaration that Swazis should be free to discuss the powers of kingship in the envisaged constitutional dispensation. I agreed with him *in toto*. But then we discussed if the King should have an interest in the matter. For one thing, a CRC has been created, but its independence of the monarchy is much in doubt. Vilakazi felt that it was only right for the King to establish the CRC, but the commission should not think that it is there to protect kingship. It is there to receive the ideas of the populace, and everything will be duly debated. We conceded that all the King's appointees suffer from a chronic disease that, once appointed, theirs is to serve the appointing authority in their bid for recognition. Dr Vilakazi wants the CRC to remain faithful to their mission, and that is what will please His Majesty and the entire Swazi nation. It is true and irreversible that the CRC cannot be disbanded without a great affront to the image of the King both locally and abroad. Hence, we agreed that the exercise should go on.

It would appear that political parties will remain banned at least until a new constitution is fully adopted. The act of the progressives to disrupt CRC meetings and vandalise the distributed booklets can only appeal right now to their membership. I honestly have my doubts if the general Swazi population is impressed. The net effect of such behaviour and vandalism is likely to work against the progressives themselves.

Vilakazi and I agreed that what the progressives needed to do was to seize the opportunity to spread their propaganda at the Tinkhundla centres, pose as responsible and matured citizens so that any right thinking seeker of alternatives would lend them an ear. I then asked Vilakazi if he thought people like Prince Mfanasibili should be sidelined, since I strongly felt that, despite the vicissitudes of yesteryears, they have more knowledge about this country and its governance than the movie politicians of 1993. Vilakazi agreed and, if we both had our way, Prince Mfanasibili would be in the main band-wagon advising especially royalty about the goings-on. I have said it before and I shall say it again, that Prince Bhekimpi should be forgiven and returned with trust; Mathendele Dlamini should be forgiven and entrusted with a high profile job at the United Nations; certainly someone must tell me what mortal sin Mfanasibili committed that was worse than the million ones we have witnessed since 1993.

While it is mine to campaign for anyone for political officer, there are people who, while active and alive, should not be ignored because of a grudge. Their knowledge of our history can help in shaping our political dusting. Vilakazi and I concluded our discussion with a light-hearted joke, which I attributed to my son, Nathi. A bald-headed chief was chairing a chieftom meeting on community development. He asked the community to establish a garden that would grow

fruits and vegetables. I am afraid I should tell it in siSwati: “Ngifuna emaklabishi langangenhloko yaMabuza lapha. Sukuma Mabuza bakubone.”

Mabuza stood up and said: “Nkhosi!” and the audience clapped.

The chief continued: “Ngifuna Bhatata longumbholojana njengehloko yaNkhabindze. Sukuma Nkhabindze babone inhloko yakho.”

He stood up. “Ngifuna Mangoza Tindumbu takhe letifana ne silevu saSishayi Sukuma Ndvuna bakubone.”

The DPM stood to the applause of everyone. “Kwekugcina, ngifuna Emapentshisi lanjengetihlatsi tembube uma imoyitela. Sive singatsandza uhleke Mbube.”

Indeed the King smiled and then said these peaches will be displayed at a stadium as beautiful as the chief's head. He asked Bhekimpi to display his head. (Take it easy Prince, it's a children's joke.)

All in all, I found Dr Amos Vilakazi the pragmatic man I have always believed he was. I hope in future he will not tempt me to consider himself a political chameleon. He has vision for his organisation, indeed a vision for Swaziland. The major concern for Dr Vilakazi is Swaziland's economy. He has ventured into business as I motivate above. But he wants Swazis to be totally in control of the economy of the land as is the case with developed countries like America, which he recently visited. As I dissected his argument, my mind raced to the Marxian notion that if you are economically dependent, you cannot be politically independent. The case of South Africa came readily in mind. The Boers are still in charge of that country's economy. Then if so, how far can Mandela make innovative political decisions without risking a possible economic pull-out? Or how far can the ANC make political decisions without having to consult the real bosses of the land? Coming back home, who, exactly, is in charge of the politics of this country. Is it ESRA, Dr Sibusiso Dlamini's personal vision, or is it a convenient demand for the real bosses? What is wrong or right about that, after all? My meeting with Dr Vilakazi is not over.

## **REFLECTION ON THE ELECTIONS AND CHALLENGES FACING THE MONARCHY IN SETTING UP GOVERNMENT**

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*Reflecting on the elections of 2003 Mzizi raises pertinent issues such as lack of transparency, true representation, dominance of the Dlamini aristocracy and the threat to real democracy in the electoral system of Swaziland. Mzizi identifies that the biggest problem in Swaziland lies in the way government is formed, as the King is supposed to satisfy a number of interest groups and in the process marginalises some, like professionals and business people.*

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If the hands of time were fair to us in Swaziland, we would be breathing a sigh of relief, that after all the hectic moments climaxing in the tumultuous evictions of Swazi citizens in the Lubombo

Region through royal command in the latter part of 2001, right up to the anti-climax marked by the elections and putting in place of a new Government in the closing months of 2003, there should be some kind of light at the end of the tunnel. But the way things have developed lately makes one wonder if indeed this country is prepared to change and make its political processes more open and transparent. Perhaps the word transparency does not exist in the Swazi political dictionary. I say this because after the highly contested elections of 2003, a whopping one-third of all Parliamentarians, according to the law, were yet to be appointed by the King using methods and means not quite known to the general population.

The rule of thumb stipulates that after the nation has elected, it remains with the King to fill in gaps especially where certain groupings and interests were either under-represented or not represented at all. That is what the drafters of the electoral law may have had in mind. In other words, just to borrow from the loose terminology of our time, if too many progressives had been elected by the various constituencies, the King would be expected to balance them up with a few conservatives. He would not end there. Gender balance is another consideration, and so is the sector of professionals and distinguished business people. In addition, there are a number of other marginalised sectors that need to be brought on board when a democratic government is set up. Another consideration that King Sobhuza II always ensured, and King Mswati III had continued this as a general legacy until the recent elections, was to recognise the racial mix of the Swazis, and how this translates into the formation and composition of both the Legislature and the Executive.

We cannot deny the fact that we have white and coloured Swazis all paying taxes here, all with the interest of this country at heart. The King also needs to bring on board the traditional structures as well, for example chiefs, princes and princesses. The latter domain is very complex because of the extended family unit of the Swazis. The Dlamini aristocracy is as wide and ranging as the nature of Dlaminis themselves. But for argument sake, and in recognition of the fact that princes and princesses are not necessarily those who share a common father with the incumbent King, I should admit that I am on record for having warned that it is dangerous for the King to rule with his own blood brothers and sisters. I know that this issue makes some princes hot under the collar. They have reason to be angry because I am sounding like someone denying them bread. The problem then is not the merits and demerits of the argument, but bread and butter issues. Princes in particular, no matter how loyal and humble, will always have that little leaping frog in their Adam's apples, wishing that they, too, would have been eligible for the position of King. Talk of pretenders to the throne. We have not forgotten that after the demise of King Sobhuza II there was royal division in the palace. Prince Mfanasibili is on record claiming that one of the contenders to the throne was Prince Gabheni, now slowly returning with the steel and stealth of a cunning python. He is indeed now once again our Minister of Home Affairs.

Prince Gabheni, undisputedly one of Sobhuza II's most loyal and beloved sons, was alleged to have recruited a few princes to motivate a theory that he had "been traditionally adopted" by Queen Regent Dzeliwe Shongwe. Had this theory seen the light of day, the then Crown Prince



Makhosetive's candidature would have naturally fallen by the way side. Confusion would have reigned supreme. The problem does not lie with the theory *per se*, but the fact that Prince Mfanasibili has been systematically ignored is a recipe for disaster. Writers of Swazi history will give a half-cooked account of what happened in the intervening years between 1982 and 1986. We have belaboured the point of corruption in the last election. But another concern that is fast emerging is: how committed is the Swazi *status quo* to change? Why do I smell a rat that the more things are said to change the more they stay the same? A classic egg in the face of any hopeful change has been the much dreaded bouncing back of the former Prime Minister Dr Sibusiso Dlamini. With the rule of law in tatters, and the economy in the intensive care unit, you wonder if Dlamini will be a Prince Charming and give the already dead hopes of the Swazi nation a lease of life. What are the signals, the real message the King wants us to hear loud and clear? I hesitate to second-guess this one. It is clear that the former Prime Minister had run his race very well. The doubting Thomases had better look carefully at where they were on the field of play when they passed the nasty judgments. On the eve of his departure, he and Prince Maguga were decorated with high royal honours. This is why we should really begin to pinch ourselves on whether we are truly living in this Swaziland or another fantasy island. Why is it that when national sentiment points in one direction, royalty comes with a bitter alternative pill to swallow?

I can only pity the new Prime Minister whose welcome has been alarmingly over-played. As the nation was welcoming His Excellency, Absalom Themba Dlamini, I thought the same voices are already rehearsing a resounding "crucify him!" in the not-too-distant future. The former PM, I prophesy, will lead that parade. The problem, we should all admit, lies not with the calibre of the Prime Minister *per se*. It is our system of Government that needs a complete overhaul. Whereas the King has openly taken a lead in the processes of change, his efforts have invariably been marred with controversy, not from anti-royalists, but from those who feel the King should be protected from the mundane slippery roads of politics. He is our sun, and as such cannot afford to have favourites. A partisan King cannot rule and reign in peace and tranquillity. So long as his brothers are allowed to come closer to him, the devil is in the details, and we shall lament with Shakespeare that indeed *Uneasy is the head that carries the crown!* I am an optimist by nature; otherwise I would have long ago hanged myself. But really is there anything to inspire any scintilla of hope in me after the obviously nepotistic setting up of the King's and Queen's advisory bodies? Why is it that the like-minded are tasked with the greatest responsibilities of our nation? Will these people debate issues? But my greatest lament lies with the blatant sidelining of professionals, in particular the medical and legal professions. I can only warn that if setting up a government in our country is synonymous with dishing out job opportunities and rewarding old friends and royal hangers-on, then it will boomerang some day. The casualties will not be ourselves but the future generations from whom we have borrowed this country.

## OUR INDEPENDENCE IS NOT SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF

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*In this article, Mzizi looks back to when Swaziland gained its independence in 1968. He laments that there have been no fruits of the freedom from colonisation after forty years of freedom. He laments that this is not only Swaziland's plight, but that most African countries have hardly made any progress and they are all languishing in bad governance and poverty. He argues that Swaziland's independence is not something to be proud of for Swazis have not benefitted anything from it, in fact their situation has worsened under a democratic government.*

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A political system that is intolerant to opposition cannot abide! To be sure, such a political system I doom to catastrophe because it lacks checks and balances, which are very essential for political progress. In fact, any intolerant regime is bound to be corrupt and dictatorial. African regimes since the Uhuru decade of the 1960s have not done well in terms of being tolerant and receptive to difference. The reasons advanced by most of these regimes from Nkrumah's Ghana down the line to Mugabe's Zimbabwe are:

1. A newly independent state has no time to waste on such petty things like politics. Economic development should occupy the centre stage in the scheme of things.
2. Politics is a luxury of Western nations who no longer need to concentrate on matters of the economy because their economies are strong and stable.
3. Multi-party democracy is too foreign for Africa. In fact, Africa is content to be ruled by one man, as is the case with chiefdoms and kingdoms. Once Africans engage in party politics they will always tend to kill one another for the sake of power. It was precisely because of the above reasons that most independence constitutions were scrapped or shelved soon after Uhuru.

Swaziland attained her independence in 1968 on a constitution that allowed political parties to operate. Talks on the independence of Swaziland had begun much earlier than 1968. It is my observation that if Sobhuza II had agreed with Sir Brian Marwick, the then British resident commissioner, to receive independence on a multi-party platter, Swaziland would have been independent as early as 1961 or 1962. Sobhuza II's greatest fear was that political parties would destroy kingship and therefore destabilise the Swazi state. A careful reading of Swazi history reveals that Sobhuza II and the Swazi national council detested party politics ostensibly because of the one-man one-vote principle. The Swazi King expressed this sentiment as early as 1959. After that there was tension between Sobhuza II and Sir Brian Marwick, tension between Sobhuza II and the new political formations like the Swazi progressive party led by the legendary J.J. Nquku, and the united Swaziland Association led by the European community here in Swaziland. It is noteworthy that Sobhuza II used the Swazi national council to scheme his way into debunking party politics.

The climax of it all was when the results of the referendum were announced indicating that Swazis had chosen "their lion" and rejected the reindeer beast with many twisted horns. But the British would not budge. They wanted the future rulership of this country to be contested mainly because this had become the norm all over the free world. The Imbokodvo National Movement was founded by the Swazi King after a piece of advice from Verwoerd's attorney. The aim of Sobhuza II was to put all Swazis into one basket, and this basket was not a party in the conventional sense, but a movement whose chief patron was the King himself. Some Swazis, like Dr Ambrose Zwane, refused this assimilation. Others jumped into the basket after being promised milk and honey. It is public knowledge that the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Arther Khoza, and the former DPM, Mr Sishayi Nxumalo, were leading members of the opposition. The party that Sishayi founded was the Swaziland Democratic Party (popularly known as DOMKATI). Khoza's party was the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC), now under former PM Obed Dlamini. I am not too sure now if Khoza is still proud of that past. I say this because when he presented his curriculum vitae for publication soon after he was appointed to the position of DPM late last year, he conveniently left out the fact he was once secretary general of the NNLC, and that he once went to Ghana to study under Kwameh Nkrumah, whose gospel of pan-Africanism was sweeping the continent of Africa. I was glad that Foreign Affairs Minister Albert Shabangu acknowledged that amongst the institutions in which he acquired education was the Kwameh Nkrumah Ideological Institute. Albert was an active member of the youth wing of the NNLC. Anyhow, the trick of forming a party-cum-movement worked well for Sobhuza II.

Imbokodvo swept the polls in the Legislative Council elections of 1994, and three years later Imbokodvo won every seat of the House of Assembly in the elections of 1967. It was the election of 1972 that caused the problems we are experiencing today. The NNLC won three seats in the Eastern constituency. All hell broke loose. First, the citizenship of one Bhekindlela Ngwenya was contested. The story of Ngwenya was that he was of South African extraction and therefore should not have been allowed to stand for the 1972 elections. Yet the crux of the matter was to cripple the opposition. The Court of Appeal ruled in Ngwenya's favour. Then the next trick was to kill chapter two of the Independence Constitution. This chapter contained a vast array of rights and fundamental freedoms, and the contestable issue of citizenship. The final deathblow on the Bill of Rights was delivered on 12 April 1973, outside the Lobamba Royal cattle byre.

Only simple minds can fail to understand why some Swazis still cry for freedom. Mr Khoza thinks that these voices are mad because Swaziland attained her independence nearly thirty-one years ago. I think Khoza is playing tricks here. He knows too well that the voices, which are crying for freedom, want to determine their political destiny, not in the manner things are going where the King is sole director of the Swazi ship. They want the King to assume a higher position because if he is a player in the political field, chances are that he will get hurt. It is in that light that I understood the loud cries at Big Bend on 1 May. It is foolish to think that workers of this kingdom should not interest themselves with the politics of the country. Labour and politics to me are intertwined. If the political climate is harsh, the economy sneezes and the workers catch the cold. You may call the progressive by any superlative word-game you have in your

vocabulary of terms of lampoonery, the fact still remains: Swaziland is not yet free. That we attained self-rule in 1968 is no longer something to be proud of.

The people of Zimbabwe attained theirs in 1980, thus breaking Ian Smith's tragic chain instituted in the 1965 UDI. To date the Zimbabweans are not proud of 1980. Mugabe, who was their Moses, has suddenly changed costumes – he is now their pharaoh and he is determined to remain in this position for as long as he lives. He is Africa's freshest dictator. This year the people of Zimbabwe celebrated their freedom wearing long faces, as analyst Dr John Makumbe told the BBC. I ask myself what is the sense in telling the nation that Swaziland's political question should be left with the CRC. It seems the CRC has been debased to the position of a doormat where all of our political mud is brushed. The truth is that the King has not come out clearly on what he will do with the drafted constitution. The CRC's terms of reference are silent as well, except that the CRC will present the document to the King. Speaking on the throne nearly three months back, the King said that the drafted document would be presented to him in the traditional way. I refuse to imagine what that means. The point is that the document will be handed to the King, who will then decide what to do with it. He may shelve it or shred it. He may change some of the articles if they do not conform to his taste, or if they seem to undermine the authority of the King. No one can challenge the King on that score, not even Mbho's parliament. The reason is that the CRC is clearly a royal project. King Mswati III has not so far convinced me that he is a different kettle of fish from his father. But it may be too early or too late to judge him on this matter. We shall wait and see!

## **DON'T BUILD SWAZILAND ON A MISFIRED *TINKHUNDLA* SYSTEM**

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*Tinkhundla is the system of government on which the political system of the country is built. Tinkhundla are centres that combine a number of chiefdoms and these elect the parliamentarians. Unfortunately, the system is also dominated by the monarchy system that does not allow the free participation of political parties, which are not yet allowed in the country. Mzizi added his voice of objection to the democratic legitimacy of this system.*

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The wheels of the constitutional review process have at last been set in motion. It is a process that is bound to sacrifice not a few heads and expose the real nature of the so-called Swazi democracy for what it really is. The Lion of the Swazis thundered on Wednesday, 8 May, and at the end of the evening Mbilini was gone. We are told that when he was appointed in 1993, Mbilini was amongst the first to arrive at the royal kraal. But on Wednesday, 8 May, he was the first to leave, almost two hours before the meeting commenced. He must have got wind of his fate and wanted to save himself from public embarrassment. There is no dispute that the deposed Swazi premier was probably the most unpopular head of the government since 1968. His cabinet was a team of unwanted men who stumbled over highly political issues like the twenty-seven popular demands, pieces of legislation like the Non-bailable Law and the Industrial Relations Act, 1996. Scandals have been talked of in the town in such areas

as kickbacks from the purchase deal of the now defunct Fokker 100, the delayed Mbabane-Matsapha Highway, ministerial involvement in the Usuthu Pulp Mill, massive retrenchment, etc. Two ministers of the Mbilini cabinet were dismissed following accusations of being found with stolen property.

The Non-bailable Offices Act did not sink its teeth in them, a situation only the DPP Mr Donkoh can explain. It has been a government of scandals, a government whose only glory lay in the hate it evoked from the public each time it took decision. During its term, industrial strikes were the order of the day. Instead of amicably attending to problems, the government flexed its unpopular muscle as it preferred confrontation to conference. The historic two mass stay-a-ways were not a result of unruly workforce, but of a dilly-dallying government that only gerrymandered issues for brief political advantage. When I observed last September that there was a leadership crisis in cabinet for only a tyrannical government can declare war on fellow citizens, Minister Themba Masuku challenged me to identify the rotten potatoes in cabinet. I thought that was a cute challenge but on second thoughts I wondered what Masuku thought of the collective responsibility of cabinet. "Dissection" feels that this cabinet and parliament should be dissolved in order to give way to the new structures His Majesty and the nation are charting right now.

It was a blunder of the first order to implement bits and pieces of the Mahlal'engangeni report and leave out the rest, e.g. the calling of the drafting of the national Constitution and the un-banning of political parties. I am aware that on the latter the commissioners were non-committal. They simply said that the desirability of parties should be tested in the future, and did not care to define future. This was a dishonest view that can only come from people who wanted to make the best for themselves out of the present situation without the disturbance of dissenting voices and philosophies. What did we see? Chairman Mahlalengangeni, Arthur Khoza, Majah'enkhamba Dlamini, Maweni Simelane all landed in cabinet positions. Who was there now to monitor the implementation exercise? And then, as if talking in his deep three-year slumber, a parliamentarian stands up to raise a motion seeking to adopt and implement the 1992 report. This came barely a couple of days before the 8<sup>th</sup> of May meeting at the Kraal. As far as I am concerned the *Tinkhundla* review report was presented at the Kraal, but the nation was not asked to adopt it. What for heaven's sake does this parliament have to do with its adoption, especially in the eve of more rigorous talks about the supreme law of the land?

King Sobhuza II rightly observed that the *Tinkhundla* system was an experiment, but I think with the 1993 elections the experiment has gone from bad to worse. The reason is simple and obvious. People without any political acumen and without political visions and beliefs, are transformed overnight into politicians through a non-political electoral process. Come to think of it, it was not Mbilini who blundered in cabinet. Indeed it was not Sotsha, Obed, Bhekimpi or Mabandla. It is the system that is a blunder. A traditional set-up called *Tinkhundla* Centres cannot accommodate modern democratic political structures. Our political philosophy needs a major overhaul and it has taken us this long to recognise that fact. It has taken us the

blundering of the present government to stop and think about what to do next. Having come to power through the *Tinkhundla* process, our present leaders became the greatest protectors of the system that feeds them. The politics of their stomach!

Conventional wisdom is clear that no government can manage its own change. We need a purely transitional structure with a clear mandate to champion change, not a structure founded on the principles of selling the *Tinkhundla* ticket. We need the wisdom of the present politicians coming from the public gallery, not from their leadership positions where they would be maliciously biased. It is on this score that the present structure founded on the 1992 report should give way to new avenues that the nation will suggest. I can only hope that the new suggestions will be in line with not only national aspirations, but international practices as well. Swaziland cannot credibly hold onto archaic forms of political decision making at the expense of losing the support and voice of her own enlightened population, and also at the expense of being isolated by the free world. These are times of change. It does appear that the most feared monsters in our political language are political parties. There is a general feeling that parties have the potential of dislocating our institution of kingship and therefore causing national disharmony. This view was repeated by Sishayi Nxumalo recently when he was again singing the praise of *Tinkhundla*. It was like the Deputy Prime Minister was saying:

*Look, Tinkhundla system is really great. I served as DPM for three years without authorising an instrument. For three years I received all my financial benefits for doing nothing. Can't you see that in a multi-party system I would not have had that?*

*These are the blunders of the Tinkhundla philosophy.*

When Sobhuza II resisted the implementation of parties in the 1960s his argument was that they were divisive and foreign. But in spite of this royal resistance, Sishayi himself formed the Democratic Party. Between 1960 and 1972 Swaziland was a multi-party country and I do not know in what way kingship was undermined. Come 1973, the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, parties were no longer good, just because in the 1972 election the Congress Party won three parliamentary seats. The result was the repeal of the 1968 Independence Constitution, a constitution which contained amongst other articles a Bill of Rights. It is the section on the Bill of Rights that our *Tinkhundla* diehards fear. They would rather be comfortable with the UN declaration and the OAU Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. But to bring these rights home is a problem. Where is the problem? I think Swaziland has failed to maintain peace and hegemony since 1973. What has happened is that corruption in high places has gone unchecked and oppressive laws like the 1996 Industrial Act have been passed without opposition.

Politicians have learned the trick of hiding behind the King whenever their actions are questioned. Yet in a free democratic dispensation the public, which elects a politician also monitors his or her political behaviour and effectiveness. It is the electorate that should have the right to withdraw the political support from a candidate who has compromised public trust. In this scenario the King retains his position as the sun, the noble position of being above political quibbling and bickering, while politicians are accountable to their constituencies. It was a good

sign of a promising future to send Mbilini home. Let us then start the constitutional talks on a *tabula rasa*, set up our own goal posts, draw our own scheme and players in full recognition of the plurality of political views and ideologies. Let us admit that the *Tinkhundla* experiment has been a costly mistake. Finally, I hope the nation at the royal byre will honestly address the matter of the 1973 decree. No one should be hoodwinked by the views of Majah'enkhaba and Arthur Khoza who argue that in practice the decree has been overtaken by events. We know that it is still dangerous by hanging above our heads with the alacrity to deny us our fundamental rights and freedom.

## WHAT IS PARLIAMENT'S MANDATE IN THE CONSTITUTION BILL?

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*Towards the end of the CDC process there seemed to be no clear idea of what the role of parliament was, more especially because the King had appointees in parliament, and Mzizi was calling for an independent view from members when engaging with the constitution instead of being afraid to be independent.*

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The constitution-making process is getting very confusing indeed as we near the end of the long tunnel. It was a dim-lit tunnel of black despair characterised by emotive outbursts and the lack of courage at some points. Some well-meaning citizens decided to walk out of the process very early when they realised that their personal beliefs and convictions on how everything has to be driven were not listened to. Others elected to stay on; hoping against hope that the God of miracles would turn things around and let common sense prevail as such a mammoth national assignment was rolling out. There are those who stayed for very selfish economic reasons. After realising that money was not a problem for an assignment of this magnitude, they shelved all their reasoning capacities and did not mind to be labelled fools so long as they were milking the fattened cow to the maximum. At the end of the day, it was the Swazi nation whose resolute mind was seriously questioned by the community of nations: Why should such an important national exercise be subjected to political bickering and moribund tactics? Were the rift and the tensions that resulted indicative of a homogenous society going to the dogs? Put more emphatically, if kingship's the centre and axis of Swazi society, did the divisions and boycotts mean the centre could no longer hold?

On the latter question, I take a very different view. I believe that King Mswati III has done all he could to convince his nation that he is for political reforms. As a monarch, he cannot be expected to be as progressive-minded as some of us would like him to be. I have said it before that in him I sense a progressive spirit sufficient to give us hope that he is for change, but he has to deal with a host of countervailing traditional forces that would not allow him any proper space to be himself. Just the other day I was listening to ultra conservative Moi-moi Maselela questioning the independence of the justices of the court as enshrined in the Constitution Bill. Masilela said, in no uncertain terms, that judges must not be given unbridled authority because, in his view, this would elevate them to some godly status. Even the King, Masilela continued

to argue, is not independent for he has councils that check and balance his powers within the traditional superstructure. I was amused by Masilela's honesty, although of course he was questioning. It is very important for us to accept the fact that the Swazi King is as progressive and as conservative as the various councils that advise him. When he appears to be taking fifty steps backwards and only two forwards, it is not him *per se*, but the nature of the councils around him that dictate the pace and direction. In a majority of cases, these councils may mislead the King because they too have vested interests to protect, should the forces of change threaten their positions.

In any event, the King has managed to push the process to where it is right now. When Trade Union Federations and the banned political parties went to court to apply for an interdict that parliament should not debate and adopt the constitution, the outcome of the application was written on the wall. In the Roman Dutch legal system it is important to establish *locus standi* in any application. Workers' federations and banned parties may be composed of Swazi citizens, but where do they get the mandate to speak on behalf of the nation? These considerations make or break a case in law. This leads me to the gist of my argument today: the authority and mandate of the present parliament to amend or reject certain clauses. While it was naturally acceptable that the constitution would be adopted by parliament, does parliament actually have the mandate, let alone the capacity, to make changes on the Constitution Bill? Yes, this is a Bill, but not just an ordinary Bill.

It is about the supreme law of the land that has gone through various stages to be written and shaped the way it is in the Bill. I thought Prince David had made this point very clear on the first day of the reading of the Bill. He repeated the same sentiments with much vigour and eloquence on Monday afternoon, even to the point of intimating to his fellow MPs that, unlike them, he was lucky to be privy to background information on each of the clauses in the Bill. By pointing this out, he was saying the MPs could not just rip apart the Bill because the final authorities of the constitution are the people of Swaziland who, through the various *Vuseslas* have been making their voices heard. Parliament is not a constituent assembly by any stretch of the imagination. After all, the same MPs had had enough time to make their submissions as individuals at the various *Tinkhundla*, and finally *sibaya*, like everybody else. What right do they have now to sway the clauses the way they have been doing? Yes, someone will say, the House was expected to debate the Bill not rubberstamp it. Fair enough, I say. But when I listened to the quality of the debate, with due respect I came to the conclusion that maybe the "honourable ones" needed a thorough workshop on the Bill. Surely whatever changes they have suggested to be made will have a rippling effect on the whole document in the final analysis. That is why a good workshop would have benefitted the ones who are taking this work seriously. Let us not deceive ourselves; a constitution is a legal document with far-reaching consequences. To be sure, ours is rather too verbose and therefore open to various loopholes here and there. But expert opinion was duly made by concerned parties and forwarded to the CDC in good time. The CDC should have benefited from the submissions and saved us from a long, overwritten and wordy document. Time will tell!



## COME SWAZILAND, WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

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*Swaziland experienced white-collar corruption, which was threatening to deplete the meagre resources that were to be used for the development of the poor. In this article Mzizi is calling the nation to be aware of the challenges of growing corruption for the country.*

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Two issues are at the centre stage of Swazi socio-political life today. First, it is the war against corruption, which the Prime Minister seems to be spearheading in the fashion of words louder than actions. There was nothing wrong with declaring war on white-collar corruption in Swaziland. As a matter of fact, when the Minister of Finance tried to attach E40 million values to what Swaziland loses per month, we were all alarmed. It was only a few months down the line that the Prime Minister tried to qualify that figure, disputing that it had been made on empirical evidence. Minister Majozi had given us the clue at least. If we had lawmakers worth their salt, they would have taken the bull by the horns and called for a speedy resolution to the problem. I see no reason why government should continue doing business with companies that are suspected of short-changing it, by inflating prices of goods supplied and issuing invoices for other goods that are not yet supplied.

The second thorny problem is our new constitution. It has been reported that when His Majesty, the King signed the supreme law on 26 July 2005, the law came into effect as from that day. This goes contrary to what was explained by the Justice Ministry, which was that the Constitution would come into effect six months later. We all thought that the six months was necessary to put matters into perspective. Apart from staging an aggressive civic education on the new Constitution, it was imperative to redraft some laws that have been rendered archaic and irrelevant by the new Constitution. I am not sure if anything did take place. We thought every office that was created by the 1973 and subsequent decrees, including the establishment of parliament orders of 1978 and 1992, was supposed to poise itself for change, but there were no announcements to that effect from Government.

As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs have not given the nation a time line and an agenda of activities regarding the new Constitution. But more on that later, what is intriguing about the war on corruption is that the Prime Minister has declared Government's position, but no other minister has taken up the campaign. Minister of Works, Elijah Shongwe, only wakes up from a deep slumber after Walter Bennet has pointed at the rot in his backyard. When the press reported a few months back that he had said his ministry was the worst when it comes to corruption, he reneged and said that he had been misquoted. Yet we know that it is the capital projects, which invariably involve lots of money, which make the Ministry of Works vulnerable to corruption. Even when he tries to say anything about the illicit outsourcing of garage services, we do not hear of aggressive measures befitting of fighting high calibre corruption. The officers who are alleged to be doing shady deals with government are still in office, probably doing worse crimes than what is known. Human behavioural studies reveal that crime is addictive. If one stole ten thousand Emangaleni last year, this year the same

person is looking for ten times that figure to steal. Crime hallucinates and intoxicates the mind so that the one stealing thinks only of self, and completely disregards others. That is why a criminal would shoot to kill just to rob an innocent civilian of E500. Human life is valueless and meaningless to a criminal. By the same token, those who steal from state coffers think only about themselves. The state, being our sovereign and symbol of unity and identity, is supposed to be respected by all, feared by all. But white-collar criminals have no conscience at all. They do not think that it is a serious crime to steal from government. While we are alarmed by the blatant looting of the development fund by so-called politicians, we have not easily forgotten the looting of the Swazi bank a few years back. When it was clear that the bank was sinking, the poor cotton farmers of the South were invaded through the grab-a-cow scheme. Many were left in shambles, while those of blue blood remained untouched.

I do not want to doubt the professionalism of the new MD, Stanley Matsebula, for it does indeed show that he has taken the bank back to where it belongs. But Matsebula has not told us about the sums of money owed by some citizens, most of whom are not insolvent. The little I know about King Mswati III is that he hates corruption. Those who stole from government are well known. People should know that Swaziland is too small to hide any from crime. The Constitution of Swaziland came into effect on 26 July 2005. That is what legal minds tell us. In fact, it is true that the document does not have a suspension clause. The six-month period might have been there in the draft released in May 2003. But, like a good number of sections in that draft, it was deleted in the final document.

What is problematic is that the attorney general was present every step of the way in the constitution-making process. The deputy attorney general was an *ex-officio* member of the drafting committee. There is no way these fellows could have failed to advise the drafting team that if there is no suspension clause, the coming into effect of a gazette starts on the day it is signed into law by the head of state. Then now there is the talk that, after all, January 2006 is just another pipe dream. The King would still be in seclusion, although I have never known him to be in seclusion for the whole month of January. It would seem that somebody somewhere just wanted to make mockery of us Swazis. When you look at how even the groups that are protesting the constitutional process are taking us back in time and thought, and how they are ending up at CMAC, instead of the court you realise that that is a tragedy of the first order. I am not too sure if we know what we want as Swazis.

## EXCITING TIMES: THE CHANGES IN SWAZILAND'S POLITICS

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*In August 1996 the nation was summoned to the royal Kraal where the King announced the removal of Prince Mbilini, once of the most senior Princes from the position of Prime Minister, whose time as PM had been marked by civil protests and disillusionment by the ordinary people. Prince Mbilini possessed very minimal education and was replaced with Dr Sibusiso Barnabas, a highly-qualified and experienced accountant and Government leader who had been a Minister of Finance and had had a stint in the World Bank in New York. His appointment*

*as Prime Minister received positive affirmation from the public. In this article, Mzizi is adding his voice of support whilst at the same time offering critical counsel to the Premier.*

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Political developments in Swaziland are reaching very interesting new heights. The most exciting news is the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Dr Barnabas Dlamini. His appointment has been well received by the nation. I am sure Dlamini has received the congratulations with delight. In fact, in recent history the masses are always happy when a prime minister gets the boot, but when a new one is announced there usually are undertones of disappointment. The appointment of Prince Mbilini never excited anybody. It was clear from day one that his term would be mucky and uneventful. But one should be careful not to get too excited when public acceptance is high. For one thing, it shows that the public has confidence in the new Prime Minister.

This confidence is based on Mr Dlamini's illustrious record as a Minister of Finance. During his time Swaziland ranked amongst the top three well-managed economies in Africa, and this was attributed to Mr Dlamini's genius in matters of finance. Public trust is, however, a dangerous commodity. Jesus Christ's earthly ministry is full of episodes where he performed miracles and preached to the multitudes. The desperately poor and meek masses were always around him marveling at what he was capable of doing. Jesus went about doing well and preaching the gospel to all and sundry. One can more-or-less claim that Jesus was a popular man, popular especially among the poor and the underprivileged. The high and mighty were very uncomfortable with his deeds and utterances. They were always searching for opportunities to trap him on matters of the Mosaic Law, knowing of course that once he stumbles on principles of law, no Jew would accord him favour. Nevertheless, such popularity that Jesus wielded turned out to be a nightmare at the moment of crucifixion.

The gospel narratives climax the story of Christ at the crucifixion because that is where we learn about the essence of a life of sacrifice, the giving up of your life as a ransom for many. The quasi-judicial nature of the trial of Jesus indicates that the crowds were the ones who determined the nature of the trial. Crucify him! They staunchly shouted. Indeed Jesus was eventually crucified. The masses that had so benefited and supported his ministry turned against him on whim in what seemed like mob behaviour. Our new Prime Minister should therefore accept the congratulations knowing fully well that once he starts working, public opinion will shift and turn according to how he is perceived to be operating. It is crucial for him to be always sensitive to the needs of the people, to lead a government team that is well respected and accepted by the society, a team that responds to public outcry like a mother does to the screams of her baby.

"Dissection" hopes that Mr Dlamini will be given the chance to work like a true leader, the chance to draw a set of goals and realise them too. Swazi politics is tricky and ambiguous. There are too many groups and formations to be pleased and consulted every step of the way. The most difficult group is obviously the traditional super structure, which by design is the locus of power. Once you displease this group your fate as a prime minister is written on the wall. The

traditional super structure has rules, which are not written down. Every prime minister should abide by these rules if he or she means to survive. Yet, because the rules are not written, it is all too easy to break them and thus face the wrath of the mighty. I trust that the Swazi National Council will not make the job of our Prime Minister very difficult by constantly reminding him that they recommended him to the King.

The Council, like all members of the inner circle, would not make it a career to gossip about the Prime Minister to their majesties in the bid to discredit him. If they have something good to talk about, they should do just that and fully appreciate the fact that to be Prime Minister is a challenging and difficult job. Of course it is true that Dlamini should perform in order to silence the critical voices. He should employ a double portion of the zeal and determination he had as a Minister of Finance. Another exciting development is the new Constitutional Review Commission. In the absence of clear terms of reference it is difficult to know for sure what this Commission will do, and what it is up against. It is an interesting combination of people, some of whom probably know nothing about a constitution. I would not be surprised if most of them have never seen, let alone read, the 1968 Constitution. It means that a lot of money, time and patience should be spent on teaching the Commission what they are expected to do. A constitution is a negotiated document; hence the Commission should know that every view is given a chance. The Commission is not there to impose its ideas on all of us. That is why it is important to allow freedom of speech and association so that all manner of opinions are listened to; all political philosophies are put on an equal footing for the good of Swaziland and future generations.

King Mswati III innovated the *Vusela* style of data collecting. As much as this form of opinion gathering has merits, the crunch comes when the diverse views and opinions are analysed and properly documented. It calls for highly trained researchers to aggregate a thousand views into a comprehensible statement. That is why people always disown the reports of *Vuselas* because a lot of latitude for subjectivity is given to the compilers of the report. The Commission presents a report to the King and ultimately to the nation where no test is conducted for the authenticity of the report. "Dissection" says that a more scientific approach should be used in the constitutional community while we perpetuate the lie that we are doing things the Swazi way. What is a Swazi way anyway in these days when the world has become a global village? After all, a constitution is not a Swazi idea.

It is a Western concept that the world over has embraced as a brilliant mechanism for developing a sound legal tradition for a country. Speaking of a constitution, the commissioners should know that without a definitive Bill of Rights, a constitution is meaningless and bankrupt. Our Bill of Rights must be patterned after many global convenors especially after the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations has developed civil and political rights, rights of children, women, refugees, etc. Fortunately Swaziland has ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Our constitution should therefore be a reflection of these internationally accepted standards. It cannot be seen to contradict any of the conventions and

special protocols. The commissioners should know the UN and African Charters like the back of their hands. This is a must, and I hope the Attorney General will do all he can to expose the commissioners to intensive education on these world standards. Another exciting development is the workshop on managing change held at the University of Swaziland. It is interesting to hear that the Vice-Chancellor has declared that the University should take a lead in discussions of this nature. Some of us who hold liberal political views sometimes feel uncomfortable in an institution without a clear stand on matters of national policy. Respected universities in South Africa took definite positions against apartheid and any form of discrimination. The University of Swaziland is a national University supported through state funds. But that does not mean that it should compromise its role as an institute of higher learning. I have said it before that a University is unique in that it assembles the best minds from all over the world. By definition, a University cannot be domesticated; otherwise it ceases to be a University and assumes the devolution of being a glorified high school.

This new position, although coming in the evening of Prof. Makhubu's vice-chancellorship, should be commended and encouraged. What was surprising was the deliberate sidelining of the faculty of social science, which houses the best intellectuals on the subject under discussion. I hope this was an oversight because, if not we shall be tempted to question the motives of the organisers. If you want to mount a workshop on the impact of religious diversity in Swaziland, you cannot justify asking the Department of Mathematics to run it. The math department may have religious people, but surely informed ideas about religion can only come from the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. Minister Majahenkhaba may be an expert in constitutional law. Yet his views about the 1968 Constitution and the 1973 Decree are not divine. Non-initiates in the subject will believe him without question. He needs other scholars in the field to challenge him. If we believe all we read in the papers, I found it laughable to hear that we have always been saying that the constitutional crisis of 1973 was illegal. We have gone on record saying that the actions of the King and Parliament should receive a judicial review.

When I said that, I was accused of saying the King should be taken to court, yet *ungumlomo longacali manga*. When a Zambian lawyer said the same thing he was threatened and had to catch the next flight to Zambia. Now Majahenkhaba has said it ... we shall wait and see ... Anyhow, the same Majahenkhaba is reported to have said the King has no power to annul the 1973 Decree. Only a constitution can supersede the Decree. Mfanabili said the same thing a couple of months ago except that he believes only the nation can instruct the King to kill the Decree. I find these views self-contradictory. A gullible listener perhaps can find no reason to question Majahenkhaba.

All in all, I think it is only fair for future workshops of this nature to be given to the relevant departments. It is fair for the University management to trust all its scholars, to benefit everyone with the scholarly responsibility of organising a workshop and running it too. These are indeed exciting times. Our Prime Minister has the difficult job of harnessing national views and leading this country to greener pastures. Let us give him our total support and expect him to pay us

back by being the best Premier since 1968. The constitutional team has a challenging task, but first the team needs thorough education. It is here also that the University has a role to play, using its experts for the benefit of all of us. Scholars should not compete but co-operate, this is indeed a vision of the future.

## WHERE IS SWAZILAND IN THIS CONFUSION?

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*In this article, Mzizi is raising questions about the mission, vision and autonomy of one of the cultural groups in the country called Sibahle Sinje, which also acted as a political party. In this discussion, Mzizi is calling for the party to declare its true colours and role in the political landscape.*

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In my article in “Dissection” last week, I lamented that the new cultural group, which calls itself *Sibahle Sinje*, is starting on a perilous collision course by its declared position to be the opposition to the opposition. Whereas the group did us a lot of favours by disclosing its mission right at the onset, one feels that a little more education might have paid the launching of *Sive Siyinqaba* some dividends. Right now, many Swazis are asking themselves who the real sponsors of this group are, and where they are located in the social strata of power. When Vice-Chairman Masalekhaya was asked if *Sibahle Sinje* was the *Imbokodvo* Party incarnate, he would neither deny nor agree. *Imbokodvo*, like Inkatha of KwaZulu-Natal, appealed to the cultural sensibilities of the indigenous people. In a sense, the basic philosophy, even in 1964 when *Imbokodvo* was formed, was that Swazis are alright as they are. Swazis did not need to engage into politics along the British favoured multi-party system.

It is noteworthy that the *Imbokodvo* National Movement was created at the national byre by the Swazi National Council. It is noteworthy still that *Imbokodvo* did not like to call itself a political party. It proffered the word “movement” because this word connotated the support of all patriotic citizens united under their king, united against all manner of foreign ideologies. It is not far-fetched to conclude that as long ago as the 1960s, when political change as advocated in Swaziland during the pre-independence negotiations, the ticket that won the day was designed along a *Sibahle Sinje* philosophy. There is little doubt that political change is imminent in Swaziland. Whether or not Swaziland will go multi-party is still a closely guarded secret. But many Swazis have been preparing themselves for the unknown, hence the sudden emergence of various formations in the recent past.

The euphoria to belong somewhere in anticipation of the unbanning of political party activity was not ignored even by *Sibahle Sinje*. If need be, therefore, cultural groups may metamorphose into a formidable political party. Meanwhile the euphoria has also hit the older formations like PUDEMO. There has been an attempt to break away from the past legacy of the leadership of Kison Shongwe and Dominic Mngomezulu, which the younger progressives of the movement believed had outlived its intentions. PUDEMO is establishing new branches and reviving old ones all in anticipation of what might occur. We are all aware that different voices crying

for the same thing create more chaos and confusion than order. To be sure, all the political formations, with the exception of *Sibahle Sinje*, have called for a new political order founded on modern democratic principles in line with the times. The ban on political party activity has made campaigning for this line of thinking very difficult, if not impossible. We all know that a large majority of the Swazi population is not found in the cities and peri-urban areas, but in the countryside. Unfortunately, the countryside is under the traditional jurisdiction of chiefs who are always suspicious of voices from the elite and educated city dwellers. Chiefdoms are the primary citadels of Swazi traditional authority. Kingship cannot thrive in the absence of strong chiefdom rule. That is why it is expected of chiefs never to entertain ideological positions that have not been blessed by the King. If a chief was to allow PUDEMO, for instance, to freely propagate its ideology, such a chief would be charged with breaching traditional norm, and the Council at Ludzidzini would have to deal with him. Realising the frailty of scattered voices calling for one cause, and recognising that unity will forever be strength, the democratic forces in the country came together to form the historic Swaziland Democratic Alliance (SDA) not so long ago.

The SDA was quick to announce the goals and objectives of this body in the now famous Kwaluseni Declaration. It was obvious to all and sundry that the alliance was formed in great anticipation that sooner rather than later the *status quo* would open up for freer political participation and so it was not necessary to divide the freedom-loving cohort into many independent pockets. The message in the voices has been one, even though, with political maturation, natural differences would surface as regards substantive matters of policy. The united voice of the SDA could not flourish without some opposition, for no action can thrive without counter-action. Then *Sibahle Sinje* was born, with a set agenda to counter the methodologies of older formations accusing them of being anti-Swazi and anti-Swazi traditional authority. The SDA claimed to be a federation of over twelve organisations, therefore legitimate enough to be a representative voice of the progressive voices. No sooner had *Sibahle Sinje* been launched than the claim was made that it had a huge support from corners of the Kingdom. The euphoria was assisted by the unusual media attention, amidst criticisms and doubts that *Sibahle* had nothing to do with culture but everything to do with politics.

By vehemently attacking the SFTU leadership and that of the SDA, including a lame attempt by its Vice-Chairman at lampooning the Secretary of HUMARAS, *Sibahle* confirmed the observation that it is pro-establishment. "Dissection" is, however, very convinced that there is more to the intentions of this new organisation than meets the eye. The *Sibahle* leaders know that Swazi politics is cruel and unpredictable. No one who calls a spade by its proper name wins the day. So it is better to sing the tune of the *status quo* so that only from within can one influence changes. I say this because the respect I have for the leaders of *Sibahle* does not allow me to think that they are of the opinion that all is well in our socio-political and economic superstructure.

Something is wrong; otherwise the public outcry would not be there. What is wrong is not necessarily the pitch of the voices that are crying, but the cause of the out cry, the *status quo*. The euphoria continued, and there emerged another cultural organisation, announced by educator Magagula of the Ngwane Socialist Revolutionary Party. The eyes of the nation turned to Magagula who had now become a detractor of *Sibahle*, consciously or unconsciously. Meanwhile *Sibahle* prepared to announce its Constitution and the intended countryside salesman tour in the style of *Vuselas*. Despite the claim of popularity, *Sibahle* is getting a cool reception, a suspicious reception from the not so gullible public. People have seen enough of these organisations that arise with diamond and gold promises, only to become stepping-stones to greener pastures for the founder leaders. Even established organisations like SNAT and SNACS have suffered the same fate of being stepping-stones. The public is thus learning to be extra careful and not to be too trusting.

Our friend euphoria knows no bounds. She hit the office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Prince Sibonelo had a grand idea:

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*What about if I united all these different voices into one thing? Mine is not a party because as Prince (Lilangeni) I can't point a finger to my King. Remember the fate of Dumisa ... No; I don't want to go into exile. Simple thing let me call the 'respected' leaders and find out their opinions.*

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The likes of Benedict, Jabulani Nxumalo, etc. were contacted. But bang! Albert Masango smells a rat. This Prince is forming a political party and the world must know. Masango earns himself the promise of a scholarship to go and study good journalistic ethics: that when a Prince forms a party, you do not rush to the public. You can only say: "*lilangeni belibhunga nalamanye emajaha kutsi kwentenjani shengatsi lelive lakagogo seligcwele emahalinyane.*" Good. That is royal journalistic ethics. This lady euphoria now at the DPM's office is dangerous. I seem to hear Sishayisedolo: "*wololo make! Sewungentani lomtukulu wa Sobhuza? Uyangishisela! Kutawutsiwa utfunywe ngini! Ye J.V.! Phikani lentfo mani nkhosi ingaze ingibitele eZitheni.*" So it was that the DPM's office denied that Prince Sibonelo had formed a political party. Whether Benedict, Jabulane, Marwick, etc. were interviewed prior to the denial, your guess is as good as mine. But ... until Sibonelo pulls another of his many tricks ...! The DPM continues,

*Ye J.V. iphi kani lentfo lengatsi yilungiseni ngekusebenta kwe Tinkhundla? Lamuhla awulali ingakaphumi. Itolo loku bengitjela tindvuna tembuso kutsi kungumsebenti wato kuphakamisa ligama letinkhundla. Sengifuna kubacalela lengoma ngobe sewafa Mgabhi kuyivuma yedvwana.*

Come 5 June 1995, *The Swazi Observer* carries: "The way we are governed: How the *Tinkhundla* System of Government works, national, regional and local Government explained." This document is ironically published when we have no substantive prime minister. It is published at a time when Swazis are ready to write a document on how the *Tinkhundla* system does not work and how multi-party democracy can change our political countenance. So we are asking



ourselves if it is not correct to say that the chief enemies of change are the very government leaders we have. His majesty has a vision about the future. But his own Cabinet is asking: "Siyaphi Sinje. It's better to be Sibahle Sinje!"

It is the spirit of euphoria that is sending politician and non-politician helter-skelter, all engaged in a moribund happy-go-round circumlocution where the way forward is the way backwards. It is only when this present euphoria has subsided that we can begin to talk and agree on the way forward. This Sunday "Dissection" would like to commit His Majesty, the King to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. It is God alone who can help the King to see beyond the euphoria. God is the wisdom of all humble kings and I would like to count my King amongst those. May God richly bless the King and his nation!

## **THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD AS SWAZILAND IS USHERED INTO THE DUNGEON OF DEATH**

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*Using Kubler-Ross's analytical theories, Mzizi analyses the socio-political issues facing Swaziland and concludes that unless something is done the country is on the brink of collapse, but wonders why the leaders seem to be oblivious to the urgency of this matter.*

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Several years ago in a Psychology class, I remember an animated discussion of Kubler-Ross's work on the five stages of dying. I am recalling that brilliant study not necessarily in the context of the terminally-ill patients, but in order to illustrate that one can use Kubler-Ross's analysis in understanding the socio-political dungeon Swaziland is slowly getting into. This is a country on the brink of collapse; and it seems terminal and real. While everyone is fully aware that we indeed have a chronic disease as a nation, there is no agreement on the prescription of medicine. The general feeling is that we should all, as much as possible, participate in finding the cure, while a minority view is that lots of Swazis have already participated in the exercise and that they should now drink their medicine. Swaziland's medicine is concocted from the CRC, NDS and ESRA.

The leaders believe that these ingredients are perfect, in fact so perfect that we can go out and tell the world that Swazis have found the cure. Yet a great number of Swazis are suspiciously looking at the bottle of medicine and complaining: "It's imposed! It's prescribed! It's poison!" As the shouts of discontent reach fever pitch, local authorities bluff themselves that it is normal for a sick person to be always complaining. Meanwhile, the ravaging disease wastes away the essential organs of our socio-political and economic lives. The first stage of death is denial. The terminally ill will not want to trust the diagnosis, and may therefore downplay the intensity of his or her condition. As the days go by and the pounding pain is experienced, the patient will develop anger and resentment. At this stage the patient pushes blame to someone else, especially available friends, family or even medical personnel. The patient here struggles with the fact of death while others will continue living.

Gradually the patient accepts that death is a reality, and in stage three a lot of bargaining is done. He or she may plead with death to allow him or her a few more years in order to finish a special task, or to attend the graduation of a special child. Then depression sets in at the fourth stage when it does not seem that bargaining is realistic to all. Kubler-Ross said that depression is divided into two categories:

*It may be either a reactive type stemming from shame or guilt at being disfigured by illness, or a preparatory type. The latter has its basis in feelings of loss of the meaningful aspects of one's life – of loved ones, the natural beauty of the world, the cherished book.*

The last stage is that of total acceptance when the patient is weary and tired of pain. He or she asks relatives to pray for his or her peaceful demise. The patient is eager to meet God, but does not understand why God is not calling him or her sooner.

I think there are correlative elements between these stages and Swaziland's slow death process. It can be argued that the disease, which has been eating this country away, made its first attack on 12 April 1973. Much has been written about that notorious event. Legal scholars may quibble over whether it was an act of state or a royal coup. Propagandists, who lately are surfacing in the CRC itself, may argue until they turn blue that the 1968 Constitution was imposed. The fact of the matter is that it was chapter two of the Independence Constitution, the chapter enshrining basic rights and freedoms. Which the Makhosini<sup>16</sup> Government in conjunction with the royal household felt was a threat to Imbokodvo dictatorship.

African politicians, since 1957 when Ghana was born, placed a divide between politics and development. They felt that the priority should be the latter. They then used all the tactics and tricks under the sun to quash the opposition, yet singing the destined song of democracy. Shelving the independence constitutions was one of the tricks; hence Swaziland was not unique in this exercise. In the pursuit of developmental goals, one-party states were created; national defense forces were put in place with the mandate to defend the ruling elite; national economies crumbled as the rulers squandered and abused public funds. The marriage between development and independence resulted in the miraculous birth of dictatorship. The sons and daughters of dictatorship are as countless as the sands of the sea. They are all deadly and cantankerous strange beings. After 1973 there was no voice of the opposition, neither was there any meaningful development. The Congress Party had been dealt a lethal blow with the introduction of the notorious 60-days detention without charge. Swaziland learned from apartheid South Africa that opponents of the system should be locked up because they are a nuisance to development, and law and order. South Africa then had a renewable ninety days without trial.

In fact, Swaziland had learned a lot from South Africa. Apart from the *toyitoyi* dance of defiance first crafted by the freedom fighters of colonial Rhodesia, the Swazi state has learned that Government has the right to withdraw advertising in the free press. Apartheid South Africa

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16 Makhosini Dlamini was the first Prime Minister of the independent Swaziland.

withdrew Government advertising in the English independent press in the 1980s at the height of apartheid under P.W. Botha. The state bringing of the newspapers to be propaganda machines and the using of the SABC for the same goal led to endless scandals from the John Vorster regime to the Botha one. Today the Swaziland Government has not only withdrawn advertising in *The Times*, but has instituted the publication of a weekly newsletter titled "Government ... oops! Swaziland Today." Where has the money come from in these days of zero economic growth? Why is it that the Sibusiso Government will go down in history as having set a record in spending millions of Emalangeni in self-promotion and cosmetics-image? There is sense in saying that we are still in stages one and two of our death. We are denying the fact of the impending political death. While we know deep in our marrow that things are just not right, when somebody tells us that, we lunge at their throats and accuse them of interference. Meanwhile, the 1993 cancer is eating us away. We are also angry and resentful. The finger-pointing contest is not fun to watch.

Since 1993, the present Government has been an object of serious ridicule and growing hate. Unfortunately, instead of improving its political countenance, Government has put on a stone face. For some strange reason, the Government is not concerned about whether it has a good name or a bad one. It will stubbornly advance its course though thick and thin. Unfortunately, the Swazi monarchy is located right at the centre of the Government machinery. Except for the politically naïve, every Swazi has reached a stage of depression. The mass stay-aways, which yield nothing substantial at the end; the illegal strikes and the "I don't care" attitude to the no-work, no-pay rule: all these are signs of depression.

Teachers in Swaziland are so depressed that they can sacrifice the student's preparation and writing of final examination. Final examinations, especially the external ones, are the major preoccupation of teachers. But today depression has taken its toll. The real cause of depression is simply that there is no one in the echelons of power who is prepared to solve our problems. There is pride and vanity up there, and stubbornness and rudeness everywhere. I laughed when I was reading Rev. Nhleko's outdated theology of state authority. For goodness sake, states must earn the respect of the citizenry.

Nhleko's position is that to defy Government is the same as defying God, reducing God to a malicious dictator and political thief. It also elevates dictators to the position of God. This is idolatry of the first order. But perhaps under the current circumstances it is far more liberating to wish for stage five: i.e. to long for death, for the final demise of the present system. We shall meet our creator and be judged accordingly. Even those who are busy oppressing others will be judged and cast into the lake of fire. The oppressed will be judged for being complacent and not fighting for their liberation. But beyond the grave there will be the resurrection, the realisation of a new earth and new heaven.

## LET REASON AND PEACE SAVE US FROM OURSELVES

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*In this article, Mzizi laments the chaos and lack of good governance at the cabinet levels in the country where there is one blunder after another. He puts his finger on an important point that Swazis have themselves to blame for lack of good governance and development instead of unseen forces.*

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An office neighbour of mine, convinced to the core, described the current national *impasse* as a spiritual warfare not clearly discernable by the naked eye. In thought that was an acute and honest observation, for how else can one explain a whole Cabinet of sixteen minds making a mockery of our external examinations? Some members of the Cabinet, including the Minister of Education himself, are former heads of schools. They thus know from a practical point of view what the concept of national and international examinations entails. How else can one explain the brutal torture of Mrs Masuku, the wife of the Minister of Finance, neatly planned to coincide with the current national strike? The wounds inflicted on the innocent body of Mrs Masuku may heal, thanks to medical science. But the psychological scars will haunt the family for many years to come and Masuku will curse the day his former boss, Senator Obed Dlamini, drafted him into the precarious Swazi political boat. How else can one explain the loud calls for the present Government to dissolve, with hardly any explanation by the callers on alternative arrangements? If indeed Sibusiso and his team should bow out, how will the vacuum be filled so that whatever team comes in does not suffer the same fate? Under the current state of affairs, it is the King who makes a Government. In fact, individual members of the executive wing of Government may have token bosses to whom they routinely report, but they nevertheless know to whom they are ultimately responsible. In this scenario, it is not unthinkable to find a minister going behind the back of the Prime Minister to discuss matters of the Cabinet with their Majesties or their advisers.

The truth is that the locus of power in Swaziland lies in those low lands of Lozitha-lobamba flat valley. It is this sad arrangement that makes the Cabinet appear foolish and childish in the eyes of the public. The crux of the present crisis with teachers lies with the 18 per cent pay rise. The president of SNAT has tried to explain that actually the issue is no longer 18.5 per cent for indeed 9.9 per cent was awarded last year. This year, by agreement, the salaries were supposed to be subjected to review. Not long ago Meshack Shongwe published the approved terms of reference for the commission, albeit in the absence of SNAT and SNACS's input in drawing up the terms. For all we know, there has been a hide and seek game between SNAT and Government; and the separation of SNACS from joint negotiation with Albert Shabangu and Maxwell Lukhele respectively did upset the harmony of negotiations.

This year the Swaziland Government was prepared to award an 18 per cent salary adjustment even outside the ambit of negotiations as per the negotiations pact. Talks were held with the fledgling and internally divided SNAT. The results of the SNACS agreement with Government were hastily announced by Minister Mswane and SNACS' boat rocked to splinters as

resignations and wars of words became part of the public's menu for juicy news. But the worrying question is why Government failed to see the light here. The 8 per cent and the 1.1 per cent in effect "belonged" to the 1996 talks since the 1997 salaries were supposed to be decided by a review commission. Why was it hard for Government to conditionally agree on the 18 per cent demand and then negotiate the implementation stages, while teachers negotiate the staggering of percentile awards for the purpose of closing the salary gaps? Money was not so much of an issue since Government had already prepared awards as reflected in the budget speech of 1997. It was just a question of politics and then a change of language and tone. I do not think we would have experienced the present predicament had common sense been allowed to prevail.

The devil then took over from where common sense ended. The matter of the salaries was unfortunately perceived as the SNAT's bid to overthrow the Government. Instead of downplaying this silly and incredible rumour, government played into its hands by gerrymandering with the teachers' salaries, hoping that when the flock is hungry the shepherd would have deserted, hence an early exit of the strike action. This has not worked because somehow there is a general rejection of the Sibusiso Government. Some observers think that if the monarchy is in crisis right now, as vociferous complaints catalogued from November 1995 to date might indicate, the Government is to blame. The appointments of the Prime Minister Sibusiso and the Swazi National Council worsened the situation. But the deadly but slow poison was the Kraal announcement of the CRC. The CRC is perceived as the worst thing that has ever happened in Swaziland as its mission as currently carried out seeks to consolidate the *status quo* and then seal with the false label: "For Swazis, By Swazis ... Our unique *Tinkhundlacracy*." It is blunders such as this that can propel a panicky government to believe that teachers do not matter when final examinations have to be administered.

The attempted murder of Mrs Masuku shocked this nation if not for anything but the timing. Mr Masuku is Minister of Finance and may be believed by the uninitiated as having the final word on matters of finance. Perhaps this is true to some extent since his expert opinions will count whenever decisions of finances have to be made. Teachers had just been denied their salaries on the eve of their pay day. A few days earlier Masuku had incensed the SFTU by calling them political thugs. It does seem that the lynching was politically motivated, and I dare say it was unfortunate and completely uncalled for. I hope I shall be proven wrong by the investigations. As we condemn the violence on Mr Masuku's house, we cannot isolate it from the police brutality on the minutes of His Majesty's return from Great Britain last Tuesday.

Sources at the scene testify that the teargassing and charging with batons on the crowd was totally uncalled for. This resulted in a counter attack. The whole scene became bloody as the King drove past to Ludzidzini Palace. If the story of unprovocation be true, then one can explain it in no other terms than that the police were giving a warning that Swaziland does not like these embarrassing processions, especially because the following day Prince Charles was reportedly going to be met in similar fashion. The international press and paparazzi would be around to

hang Swaziland's dirty linen all over the world in times when she least needs negative publicity. The paparazzi are good at tabloid reporting and may easily nail our sort of monarchy on an eternal cross, never to rise. But still, why was the violence necessary in times like this, even on the day William Pitcher was celebrating Black Tuesday. I think the answer is hard to come by. Although I have to confess total ignorance of what goes on in royal circles, I am inclined to believe that his Majesty, the King is surrounded by advisers who are either short-sighted about issues or are deliberately letting kingship sink to despicable levels.

One observer said that since the present Cabinet and Parliament hate Prime Minister Sibusiso, they will do anything to see him kiss the dust like his predecessor Prince Mbilini. If that be so, what can stop any of the royal hangers-on from doing the same to His Majesty? The solution is for the King to identify the root cause of our problems and then kick full blast in defence of his position and the welfare of the Swazi nation. If this does not happen, the worst of times will be the worst of times. I tend to agree with my neighbour. This is not a physical battle. We are faced with principalities in the air. Hence we need prayer and action as we fight on. Prayer alone would be of fear and cowardice. Where are the prophets of God?

## WHITHER SWAZILAND IN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE?

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*In this article Mzizi is interrogating the role of Swaziland on the African Renaissance programme. He is therefore calling for the country to be involved in such programmes.*

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The week ended yesterday was full of activity, festivity and commemoration in neighbouring South Africa. I personally had not put too much stock on 2 June 1999 Elections because the results were highly predictable anyway. I think the Independent Electoral Commission did a tremendous job, and indeed left an indelible impression on the sands of time, that democracy and accountability are birds of the same feather. For their meticulous work to have come off in our corruption-ridden continent definitely should not only make us proud as Africans, but should send a positive message to the whole wide world that Africans are not just found in the trouble-spots such as the *coup-d'état* black spots of West Africa, or the tribalistic, drunk Great Lakes Region. But if one of the leading, if not the leading, African countries can hold elections that even Lucifer in his hell knows in his gut were free and fair then congratulations to all South Africans, especially to the African National Congress, on leading the pathway to true African democracy, a democracy that does not isolate itself from the definitions of democracy found in the free world.

President Thabo Mbeki is taking over the reins after an illustrious leader who, to me, has ascended to the mountain top of all legendary personalities. Madiba, as he was affectionately called by his people, is both a person and a super human being. I run short of words to describe the latter characteristic because philosophically that which is human cannot be super human at the same time. But the life of Mandela boggles all fine philosophical thought. As a human being

he has had his fair share of human frustration, especially at the family level. While divorces are on the increase in Africa, Mandela in his eighty-odd years, take away twenty-seven years of no normal family contact, has had two divorces and three marriages. That's a record in Africa for people of Mandela's age group. Usually divorces are fashionable amongst the youth and certainly very rare for royals such as Madiba in his native Tembuland. Not much is known about Madiba's first marriage. In fact many people think that Winnie was Mandela's first wife. The truth is Winnie was number two. The reasons for the failure of the first marriage are scattered here and there. It would seem that when Mandela committed himself to the struggle, his first wife was not happy. She was, and still is, a devout Christian.

It is therefore tempting to speculate that Mandela must have been equally frustrated by this family problem because, for him, to fight apartheid was a life commitment and he declared in the 1960s that the struggle was his life. The coming into the picture of the beautiful Winnie must have been perceived as "the will of the Lord" for not only was she intelligent and beautiful, she was committed to the struggle as well. Together the couple could talk on the same political wavelength, but not for long. Winnie was left to carry on the struggle while Mandela served life at the notorious Robben Island off Western Cape after the infamous Rivonia trials of 1963. Whatever Winnie did with her life for the good part of those twenty-seven years is what made her a heroine and a villain at the same time. Her husband remained the moral force in the hearts of many in South Africa and abroad. If there was a reason to fight and dismantle apartheid, I mean the tough apartheid made vicious by the De Kocks, Vorsters and Bothas of this world, it was the resolute stance taken by South Africa's living martyrs, languishing in jails for crimes against injustice and dehumanisation. Winnie's villainous behaviour hinged on the fact that she had grown too big for the exiled ANC. She was out of control, even to the extent of forming a Mandela Football Club without the sanction of the ANC, the very Club that led to her downfall and subsequent conviction. Dogging her admirable political vocation up to now is the blood of Stompie Seipei.

When Mandela was released from prison in February 1990 the eyes of the world were upon him and upon his wife. This was because he was the symbol of hope for a better South Africa and she, because she had played the double role of Mary and Jezebel of the struggle. As a Jezebel, she had pursued unethical means to fight the evil systems. As Martin Luther King Jr. Would say, immoral means cannot justify moral ends. And so it was that the marriage of Mandela hit rock bottom at an inopportune time when he had to concentrate on consolidating the struggle and marshalling all the world effort to dismantling the stubborn apartheid. Citing bedroom reasons for the final collapse of the marriage, Mandela was once again free from the ridicule he would have carried had he re-ingratiated himself to Winnie. I have said it is difficult to talk of Mandela as both human and superman. As a man he obviously has been unfortunate to be such a dismal failure when it comes to issues of family. But strangely, while Bill Clinton, Prince Charles and Elizabeth Taylor would make the tabloid industry rich overnight due to carnal signs and scandals; the world was always ready to forgive Madiba. The world "understood" his plight and then saw him as fighting a war greater than any ordinary family

feud. What is rather human and superhuman about Madiba is that he could not forgive Winnie, but then soon after April 1994, he embarked on one of the noblest masterpieces of human history – The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. His transitional Government was called the Government of National Unity. Anyone who has experienced real torture and humiliation for twenty-seven years cannot be expected to reason with balance matters that pertain to one's torturers' human rights. But Mandela here earned himself that saintly touch: "Forgive them for they knew not what they were doing!" Mandela was not even deterred when De Klerk and his unpopular National Party decided to pull out of the Government of National Unity.

The question you and I have to ask is whether President Mbeki is the kind to follow in Madiba's footsteps. I noticed with a tinge of interest that it took the Government of Swaziland a good while to congratulate Mbeki and his ANC on winning the election. Gideon Dlamini of *Sibahle Sinje* overtook them in the same style as Magadey's wife went ahead to cut the sod at the Nhlangano-Lavumisa Highway, thus forcing the King to cut it on the reverse way at Mantambe, something never heard of nor seen before. Something as strange as when the controversial Walter Bennett asked gullible parents and children at a getogether in the Lubombo region to stand up in a minute of silence for the "recovery" of the Queen Mother. For God's sake, minutes of silence are not for recoveries! Thabo Mbeki strikes me as a no-nonsense man. His tough military training in Moscow and the many years of agony he and his father Govan have suffered make him a different kettle of fish from Mandela. He is younger, quick-witted and he is talking of the African Renaissance. Nearly four-score years ago Africa's idol leader of pan-Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah, preached the evangelism of African Conciencism in the Western horn of Africa, or North of here if you like. Both philosophies are a clarion call to all Africans to remember the basis of the African personality – African Communalism. I do not know if it is possible to translate this concept neatly into current economic terms seeing that the economic giants of the North are forever prepared to bomb to ashes any economic system that is not based on free enterprise, the Christian name for capitalism.

I should not sound as though I am saying Mr Mbeki will be an iconoclast. He certainly cannot afford to destroy all the bridges Mandela built in the last five years. But he may as well come with a set of new blocks, and this he must. While we take interest in what takes place in South Africa on a daily basis, our chief preoccupation is on that country's foreign policy. There are seven pillars on which rests South Africa's foreign policy. Each one of the countries of Africa, whether close neighbours or not, should gauge their own future relationship with the South African state using these seven principles:

1. A belief in the preoccupation with human rights.
2. A belief in the promotion of democracy worldwide.
3. A belief that justice and international law should guide regulations between nations.
4. A belief that international peace is the goal to which all nations should strive.
5. A belief that South Africa's foreign policy should reflect the interests of Africa.



6. A belief that South Africa's economic development depends on growing regional and international economic cooperation.
7. A belief that South Africa's foreign relations must mirror a deep commitment to the consolidation of its democracy.

It is in this context of both the micro- and macro-socio-political engine that Mbeki talks of the African Renaissance. It is African because it has to mirror the local realities of South Africa. It is African because it must enshrine the common ideals of the entire African continent from Chisano and Mswati III in the East to Mugabe and Gaddafi further North, to Obasanjo and others in the Western horn. The question is: Whither Swaziland?

## THE JUDICIARY IN SWAZILAND AND THE RULE OF LAW

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*In this article, Mzizi is questioning the leadership legacy of the Prime Minister, S.B. Dlamini, after he had undermined the independency of the judiciary unilaterally and also for his attempt to undermine the nomination of his deputy, Mr Albert Shabangu, to the Secretariat of SADCC. Then he laments the lack of good and focussed political leadership. It is important to note that this critical article was written whilst the Prime Minister was in office, which was brave of Dr J.B. Mzizi.*

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The coming steadily but surely of the court victory of Ben Zwane has signalled one important thing about our Judiciary – court rulings are consistent and without favour. Our judges are not afraid to rule against Government despite the risks of loss of security of tenure. This judicial sterling backbone disposition is perhaps the only thing that separates us from Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe. Yet it would be false to package all Zimbabwean judges into one dishonorable bag. The fact of the matter is that the Zimbabwe Justice System is as much politicised as the ZANU-PF versus MDC mainstream political divide. To survive as a judge in Zimbabwe you must toe the line. I should, however, note with caution that Mugabe, in spite of his litany of political blunderings, which have heamorrhaged that country's economy and human rights record to numbing levels, is still a friend of the Kingdom of Swaziland. His last visit here was in August 2003 during the SMART Partnership International Dialogue where he promised our King that he would read the draft Constitution and proffer his comments. I do not quite know what King Mswati III could learn from one of Africa's worst dictators in the twenty-first century, except dirty tactics of wielding unbridled power through acts of terror. As the Sibusiso Government was making its notorious history of defying court judgments, thereby denting the image of this country to the international community, it was all too easy to identify a pattern with other dictatorial regimes such as Angola, Chiluba's Zambia and Mugabe's Zimbabwe at the time.

Our head of Government had suddenly attained the stature of a Leviathan, unapproachable on matters of substance, unbending on decisions he had made, and unpredictable even to his own team of Cabinet ministers. Just to illustrate how this man had become something between a prime minister and a president: His Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Albert Shabangu, was

being earmarked for a very important position in the African Union. There was much support for Albert's candidacy in the SADC. His Majesty, the King went out of his way and campaigned with all his might and conviction of heart for Shabangu. I was attending a conference in Namibia when a top Government official of that country called me aside and confided in me that a highly confidential letter had been sent to all the SADC Heads of State and Governments advising that the Swaziland Government did not support Shabangu's candidacy. I was completely devastated and confused by this development. But soon thereafter as the competition for the position gained momentum, Shabangu was shifted to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, as if to remove him from the erstwhile Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade where he had made a good account of his name during the Angola-Zambian crisis. Until Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini explains this matter clearly, I personally will never understand why he was not only unfair to his fellow countryman, but also why he stabbed our King in the back. Was his Cabinet involved in making this momentous decision? If not, as I suspect it wasn't, then can we not say that Sibusiso had become the institution we called Government, by assuming all decision-making powers and raping the concept of Cabinet collective responsibility on matters of governance? The matter of Ben Zwane has completely embarrassed the former Prime Minister. Perhaps forgetting that he is no longer protected by any immunity as pertaining to the office of PM, he has uttered highly libellous statements, which I am sure Zwane will not take lying down.

Chief amongst the allegations is that Zwane at some point in time had become a security risk to their Majesties. This will require a rigorous burden of proof on the former PM's part should the matter go to court. If Zwane wins the day, the former PM may find himself languishing in jail with half of his fiefdom already on Zwane's lap. Political observers were not comfortable when the King appointed the former PM to the SNC. This act was seen as a royal blessing of the series of political blunders of the last Government. The SNC, which the former PM was not quite comfortable to work with at first, because of its proximity to the King, later split superficially between those who went with the former PM and those who were neutral. Sibusiso had thus gained an important survival strategy. Drawn into the spurious fold of the Thursday Committee, the former PM became a partner-in-crime in the architecting of the collapse of the rule of law in this Kingdom. It was on this score that many feared that the new PM would not be a man of himself with the Leviathan legacy of Sibusiso towering over him. The new PM scoffed at these observations, and it was a case of wait and see. The Zwane saga triggered a volley of exchanges between Sibusiso and the PM, A.T. Dlamini. Suffering the worst embarrassment ever, the former PM was not pleased to learn that A.T. Dlamini's Government had vowed to respect the court ruling on the Zwane issue. He unleashed a broadside, stopping short of calling the new PM a weakling of sorts. A.T. returned fire and reminded the former PM, who was now in charge at Hospital Hill. Was this the beginning of the end of the honeymoon between the two giants?

Let us not forget that Sibusiso's baptismal catechism taught him to have a "long memory" especially on issues and individuals that rubbed him up the wrong way. Masalekhaya Simelane of *Sibahle Sinje* has interpreted Sibusiso's outbursts on the Zwane issue as signs of ageing,

the last kicks of a dying horse. Others seem to feel that the former PM has done well to give character to the incumbent at a time when he needed a wake up call, and fully declare that he means business with the rule of law. However varied the opinions may be, one thing is clear: Sibusiso's Government remains a black spot in our post-1986 history. If Sibusiso thought he had it together, behold now the centre cannot hold. Things fall apart. It remains for King Mswati III to stomach five more miserable years with Sibusiso as his advisor. Or if the man from Ekukhanyeni is capable of seeing the light, his best bet is to resign from the SNC and go and fight his wars with his brother Ntunja over the family fields.

## **POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE SWAZILAND TELEVISION AND BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

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*In this article, Mzizi reflects on the issues around political interference in the only television station in the country owned by Government. There were power struggles between political leaders that influenced the functioning of the station. Mzizi argues that the media must be autonomous for it to contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation.*

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The Celani Ndzimandze case involving the Board of the Swaziland Television Authority and Standing Committee of the Swazi National Council (SNC) has rudely confirmed to all and sundry that in Swaziland the more things change the more they remain the same. The current Prime Minister's resolve to be a catalyst of change in our current quagmire has received a rough baptism of fire through both the Ndzimandze case and the Ben Zwane debacle. Both cases could be described as symptomatic of the rot that has spilled over from the sewerage pipes of the last Government. Former Senator Masalekhaya Simelane has made a telling observation, that Ndzimandze was actually an ally of the former Prime Minister whose mission to control, intimidate and muzzle the media was very well known. The former STBC Director, Dan Dlamini, was suspended with pay and no disciplinary hearing, thanks to the direct political interference of the former Government.

The formula for dealing with dissenters, perceived or imagined offenders in an extra-judicial fashion, was to cause them to "sit under trees", as Sibusiso has recently described the humiliating manner used in the Ben Zwane issue, thus frustrating them to the core at the expense of the tax payer. We still have former Justice P.S. Hugh Magagula whose over-zealousness in trying to sort out then Director of Public Prosecutions, Lincolyn Ng'arua, boomeranged, and catching the musical icon pants down. Magagula might retire serving an indefinite suspension, sitting under a tree with a remote possibility of the due process of law. Simelane sees a connection between Ndzimandze's unceremonious return to the position of acting Director at STBC and Sibusiso's presence in the Swazi National Council Standing Committee. I do not know why Ndzimandze decided to take his matter to the SNC instead of the Industrial Court.

What I know is that it has paid off for him. But the King and his Council, whether they are bothered by it or not, have been done in, remaining with a rotten egg to wipe off their faces.

Involving the King or his Council in a purely industrial relations matter is to compromise the image and function of the King while grossly undermining the laws and structures of this country. The SNC knew in their gut that they were opening a can of worms by entertaining the matter of Ndzimandze in the first place. Knowing as they did that the search for a new CEO is at an advanced stage, why did the SNC make a ruling in favour of Ndzimandze so late and, yes, so callously disruptive? King Mswati III may not be well aware that by creating so many advisory councils, his image as King and Head of State became the envy of the very people he may have entrusted with his confidence. In fact they contest for his attention, and in the process, mess up a number of things. To be sure, the SNC, believe it or not, sees itself as an alternative government, enjoying unbridled powers with a mandate so open-ended that they could deal with any matter under the shadow of the sun. That they operate at the largesse of the King, coupled with the fact that they are on duty at the Lozitha Palace twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for the next five years, is temptation enough. They may consider themselves more important, enjoying divine qualities that render them more indestructible and eternally indispensable to the office of the King than the King himself. This is the temptation we saw with the *Liqoqo* of the 1980s that called itself The Supreme Council of State. It was succeeded by another council, the Central Committee which, instead of solving the *Liqoqo* syndrome, behaved almost in like manner.

The Swazi National Council is not a body conceived only in 1996 by the present King. Historically, the SNC was first formed as a counter-part to the 1949 European Advisory Council whose mandate was to advise the Resident Commissioner on issues that pertained to European affairs, and also entertain matters referred to it by the Resident Commissioner. The SNC would advise the Paramount Chief on matters under his jurisdiction. Let us not forget that Swaziland had no Parliament during the colonial era. King Sobhuza II's mandate was confined to traditional matters only. However, the King's interest in negotiating a peaceful handover of power to the Swazi nation necessitated that he worked with a structure of sorts, hence the SNC was born and immediately involved itself in matters of politics, especially the constitutional talks from the late 1950s to 1967. It is not clear from historical records how King Sobhuza II formed the SNC. But the fact that he appointed them and they had to work at his discretion is not in dispute. The presence of this undemocratically established, yet powerful, body must have worried the drafters of the Independence Constitution.

Under the miscellaneous section of the Constitution, they defined the SNC as consisting of the King, Queen and all adult male Swazis. Its function was to advise the *Ngwenyama* on all matters regulated by Swazi law and custom. The pre-independence SNC had successfully schemed with Sobhuza II to discredit multi-party politics within the Kingdom. This was viewed as a great threat to democracy by the British Government, hence it became necessary to streamline the powers of the SNC, completely dislodging it from dabbling in matters of modern governance. The fear, as I have indicated above, was because the formation of the SNC was undemocratic. Between 1968 and 1996 Swaziland did not have a legal body called the SNC. The British had in fact anticipated that the utility of this body would dwindle with time. Ironically, Mswati III revived

it together with the CRC, hence indirectly implying that the body would play the role of being constitutional overlords. The 1996 Terms of Reference underscore the traditional function as enshrined in the 1968 Constitution, and then add an open-ended function written thus: "... and any other matter referred to it by the King." It is common knowledge that the King is the final Court of Appeal in our traditional structure. But one assumes that all decisions of "lower courts" should be taken into account as the process leads to the final body of appeal. Ndzimandze had recourse through the Industrial Court and its appellate structure. Our laws allow industrial matters to be reviewed by the High Court, and finally the Appeals Court. It boggles the mind why the SNC entertained a matter that had not gone through all these legitimate structures. In fact, it smacks of corruption of the highest order. What did Ndzimandze do to deserve such preferential treatment? But, worst still, has the SNC not bitten off more than it can chew? Time will tell.

## THE INSTABILITY OF SWAZILAND'S ECONOMY

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*In this article, Mzizi focuses on the threat of economic instability for the country and calls on Government to take responsible measures to improve the situation and evade the ensuing catastrophe that would be caused by economic collapse.*

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Swaziland will be on the global map for all the right reasons for once between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of this month, when it hosts the Global 2003 Smart Partnership International Dialogue. The primary objective of this historic dialogue is to foster limitless opportunities and wealth that is shared, that is sustainable and that allows the participants to function in the global knowledge economy. Its successful functioning depends on a win-win and prosper-thy-neighbour relationship among partners. All the partners – be they political leaders, civil servants, entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, management, labour or people in general – play different roles according to their different circumstances, but all operate from the same set of principles. Locally a good deal of preparation has gone into making this global dialogue a success despite Swaziland's insignificance in terms of size, economy and political innovation. Although small in size, Swaziland has a lot to showcase – the beautiful rolling hills and mountains, the meandering lush countryside dotted with a variety fauna and flora surviving in near-desert conditions and the vexing climatic types that boast of a long corridor of lowveld climate in the Mkhondvo Valley from Buseleni near Hlathikhulu to Sidvokodvo in the Manzini region. Up the mountains on either side of this corridor highveld weather conditions enable both plant and animal to enjoy the best of both worlds. This miracle and rare climatic type is now attracting an extension of the sugar belt region traditionally located along and below the Lubombo Mountain range in the eastern escarpment of the country running, as it does, from the beautiful lands Swaziland lost to KwaZulu-Natal right up to the Mpumalanga region, the fertile sugar beds of Malelane, Nelspruit up to Barberton.

The Creator of Heaven and Earth took his or her precious moments when designing this, our Wonderland of Africa. The economy of Swaziland is ranked favourably as in the middle-income bracket, thanks to our eternal link to the South African side of things. When President Thabo Mbeki sneezes and the Rand catches a cold, the Lilangeni goes to the intensive care unit. Yet, on the whole, Swaziland has a promising economy that, if well managed, has the potential of becoming an icon of the subcontinent. The unique bipolar economic advantage cuts across the private and public sector extreme, reporting to the national treasury on the one hand and a strong royal axis stage-managed at the King's Office with no visible relationship with central government on the other hand. One can only guess how many miles ahead Swaziland would be economically if the two sets of our economic scene were to merge and command one central control. It is the strange political scenario of Swaziland, especially the collapse of the rule of law in recent history, which nearly saw the Smart Dialogue kiss the beautiful Kingdom a rude farewell.

The Smart Dialogue idea dates back to 1995. Soon thereafter a handful of local patriots of no less stature than the retired Federation of Swaziland Employers Chief, Musa Hlophe, shared the vision with His Majesty and suggested he embrace the idea and perhaps localise the concept for the sake of good governance and economic sustainability. Whatever happened to the idea after the King had heard about it is neither here nor there. All we heard was that the King had offered to host the 2003 Dialogue as Chief Patron of Club 29. With the rule of law in shambles and the political winds of change whistling a monotonous, moribund tune, it is not at all clear what His Majesty wanted to demonstrate to the world by offering to host this event. All indicators are that hosting Global 2003 will bleed our shaky economy dry. It will be a one-week event worth millions in our local currency, perhaps billions in terms of human resource and traffic management. After the 17<sup>th</sup> of August we will be left with huge bills to pay and a nice pat on the back for being wonderful hosts from our Smart Partners. We will be left with an expensive and luxurious Smart Partnership Village located at the prestigious Ezulwini valley beckoning for another round of visitation by the high and the mighty. The hustle and bustle, indeed the trumpets of joy exuding melodies of celebration, will be gone then. All that will remain with us will be the glitters of gold to remind us of how we once stood tall in a world that counts us as dwarfs. It will be the paradox of fame and disaster, the kind where the world will ask us why we decided to adorn our throne with borrowed paraphernalia. When all is done and gone our minds will race to the events of late 2002, the story of the rape of the rule of law, the stealthy cajoling of the Smart Partners who wanted Swaziland to engage in smart dialogue before the global one. We will realise just how lucky we were, after all, that our King bolted from the traditional cocoon and hosted a "Towards a Smarter Swaziland" dialogue way against traditional sentiments.

To our dismay, perhaps, we will wonder whether we achieved anything out of that local initiative, or if it was just another royal fiasco, much ado about nothing. If we will not have changed a bit after 17 August, then it will be the time to go for the jugular vein of the one who offered to be the "Lightning Arrester" and ask him where he was when the Smart fires burnt Swaziland to

ashes of shame. I mean our Prime Minister, Sibusiso Dlamini. His Majesty has time and again observed that in Swaziland the culture of dialogue is part of our traditional institutions. We have Kraal meetings for the simple reason that, like all traditional African societies, we desire to talk until we agree-disagree agreeably, if you like. I do not think such meetings were a drain on our traditional economies. This is what we should have desired to teach the world: that Africa can come to dialogue and appreciate the simplicity of life. At the Kraal? I seem to hear a deafening NO! But certainly at an open space where all are free to talk, free to dialogue, free to express views, exchange views – indeed free to be fools with the foolish and wise with the wisest. At the end of the day Smart Partnership should be about personal reflection, the praxis of knowledge and the realisation that no human being can ever pretend to be an island in our day and time. We need the world to help us remove the log that so blinds us. And all it takes is a little bit of humility, the swallowing of our pride when we together start looking between the ashes of those IBA and ICJ reports our children commit to the burn-out of our own foolishness and self-serving pride.

## THE NEED FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN SWAZILAND

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*In this article, Mzizi identifies that Swaziland is undergoing a process of social change. He identifies three key groups, e.g. conservatives, the progressives and the moderates in the country, each playing its own role to influence the type and outcomes of the transformation that the country is going through.*

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Some say Swaziland is at the worst crossroads of her time. Others spice it up by saying actually it is a significant crucible made in heaven, taking Swaziland to the Promised Land. An optimistic view holds that Swaziland is undergoing a reasonably slow but sure social and political transformation. On the ground, the social strata in Swaziland can generally be divided into three camps: the conservatives, the progressives and those who flow with the wind. Very little can be said about the latter group, yet they are, demographically speaking, hugely significant. They have equal sympathies for both the progressives and conservatives, but it depends on who came to them first, and how persuasive they may have been. If you left them even for a day under the care of one camp, it would be enough to sway their thinking to the general ideology of that camp. They may not be too committed to it, hence when another brighter idea comes up, especially with certain perks, they go for it as if nothing ever happened before.

The progressive camp is comprised of left-left wingers, left-wingers and the moderate or liberal leftists. The left-left wingers demand a social revolution because, as far as they are concerned, no system can reform itself. What is needed is a radical transformation. The left-leftists can easily be described as anarchists and therefore always inviting the vigilant eye of the Police Intelligence Unit. Their language of revolution may entail calls for the sudden destruction of the present order, followed by a recreation of an equitable, just and participatory social order. The theories of Karl Marx and Engels are often inspirational in their basic philosophies. According

to Marx's theory, it is the peasants, the workers and the poor, who, through their labour, should create a new society. That is why left-leftism always thrives amongst the labour force. In post-colonial and post-despotic rule in Africa a few of our former and current presidents came from the labour movement. But, as George Orwell was able to indicate in *Animal Farm* way back in 1945, striving for a just social order can only be a catalyst of change. This same catalyst becomes irrelevant or malignant once change has been achieved. Equality becomes a relative rarity once the comfort of the seat of power has been experienced. The leftists, while in general agreeing that change is necessary and the *status quo* needs replacing, dismally lack the vision for their own *modus operandi*. One thing they know is that the *status quo* needs to be opposed; hence opposition becomes mere opposition for its own sake without a clear-cut strategy on what should be done to replace the *status quo*. The lack of resources puts the leftists at the risk of disintegration or even sharp apathy and floorshifting should better-looking chances surface elsewhere. The moderates, on the other hand, while operating within the progressive camp, pride themselves in being strategists and always calculating, moving with the times without losing personal vision.

The moderates are seldom violent. They want orderly change that must not be disruptive of their lives. They are mostly concerned about human rights. Given the intransigence of a system, the moderates would rather exhaust all available channels of negotiations, with the failure of which they may become divided on the question of whether it is morally right to join a system for the sole purpose of changing it from within. Whatever the case, the moderate leftist is both a friend and an enemy of the system. As a friend of the system, his role is to proffer advice on how best to be responsive to imperatives of change. As an enemy, the moderate leftists can never fully embrace the policies of the system. He will forever remain a threat to the *status quo* until such time that proper in-roads are constructed, and at least there are enough give-and-take relationships with the *status quo*. Why am I going to such lengths with this sketchy anthropology of Swaziland's political consciousness? Briefly, I am trying to understand what exactly is going on with the 2003 Election. If I were to stand on Mount Everest, looking down on the unfolding drama here in Swaziland, what would I see? Certainly, the left-leftists are represented by the PUDEMO-Swayoco factor in Swaziland. Apart from their calls for change, they have gone a step further in recent months to threaten the *status quo* with violence. They have a vision of a democratic Swaziland, which they developed in the early 1990s. They have been calling for a negotiated settlement to Swaziland's political question, and a constituent assembly to shape the country's constitution.

What Lawyers for Human Rights are doing now is to bring to currency an old PUDEMO agenda, which could not see the light of day thanks to scarce material resources and the bulldog tactics of the police. Yet we should recognise that leadership attrition and the sad demise of some of the founders of this movement led to a compromised growth in the vision and strategy for change. Some PUDEMO stalwarts have shifted gears from being die-hard left-leftists to being leftists, or even moderate leftists. What the organisation should ask is why there has been this paradigm shift over the years. Living legends of the movement who can assist with testimonies



are Ray Russon, now somewhere in South Africa; Mandla Hlatshwako, who has gone into the corporate world, and is calling for meaningful change from the point of view of the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations, a loosely structured formation of concerned civil society groupings launched at the height of the rule of law crisis in Swaziland; Sabelo Dlamini, that humble royal who suffered a series of persecutions in the 1990s. Dlamini was together with Russon when they occupied the USA Embassy in Mbabane seeking asylum in November 1990 following Black Wednesday at the University of Swaziland. Upon completing his studies, he went into political oblivion despite heightened expectations that he would be an exemplary tried-and-tested youth leader. Sabelo had undergone his fair share of the Golgotha experience as a student at Uniswa, and also with the police crackdown of 1990/1991 in the aftermath of the PUDEMO Mawelawela secret launch.

The moderate leftists are well represented by the likes of Obed Dlamini of the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress, also leader of the defunct Swaziland Democratic Alliance. With a Pan-African backdrop, the NNLC has been met with serious challenges in their preaching of a Pan-African democratic ideal in the context of Swazi monarchism. Like all Swazis do, the NNLC adores kingship. But this adoration calls for the monarchy to remove itself from the dangerous battleground of politics. For this reason, and sadly so, the NNLC has been viewed since the 1964 Mpondompondo referendum as the enemy of kingship. The bi-polar Swazi society of the 1960s was either one that belongs to the NNLC or to the *Ngwenyama* and, deductively, his *Imbokodvo* National Movement. Drafted as Prime Minister in the tumultuous years of the late 1980s, Obed was short-changed by *Imbokodvo* stalwarts in the 1993 Election. His technical failure to win the election led perhaps to the resurfacing of the best in him as he joined the progressives lock, stock and barrel without any whimper. Obed is running for election yet again and is poised to win. He is one of the many progressives who have vowed to make a difference at this critical moment of our history. The threat of the progressives is bound to be met with strong and dirty resistance from the conservatives. The divided house they are, the conservatives will do anything to counter the invasion of progressivism in mainstream Swazi politics.

Time may not be in their favour since the out-going Government has created so much mess. Even the staunchest of conservatives has been swayed to at least lend an ear to the long cries of the progressives. Whatever the case, the 2003 Election will certainly polarise this nation for either better or worse. At the horizon of time, women are riding on the SADC crest, demanding their 30 per cent pound of flesh. They do not have any issues on the table save that the women's voice is their rallying ticket. Men folk, on the other hand, are weary of this female encroachment on their territory. It remains to be seen if quality will match quantity in the women's movement. As all this is taking place, the electoral law used is the old one which Prince David's CDC has tried to modify and sharpen in the draft constitution. But, as the election race rages to maddening levels, who cares about a new electoral law? The focus is fighting for political office and leaving the details to the devil and his angels!

## ELECTIONS AND THE *TINKHUNDLA* SYSTEM

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*For a long time people kept talking about the Tinkhundla System, which is the basis of political governance in Swaziland, but no one had ever done an analysis of this system. In this article, Mzizi attempts to dissect the system so that it is clear what it is and how it affects the election of public officials.*

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Swazi politics could not have been more exciting than it was in 2003, especially in so far as the run up to the elections was concerned. The *Tinkhundla* System of Government espouses a high doctrine of individual merit as our humble alternative to political party power contestations. But this year Swazis have been challenged to really examine much more closely just what individual merit means in the context of our times. One of the definitive terms of reference in our *modus operandi* when gathering peoples' views has always been that group submissions are taboo. It has been on this score that a number of legitimate and underground groupings have seriously protested to the extent of openly boycotting the national tasks at hand. It is not all too clear why group submissions are anathema to these crucial processes, except that our leaders have a phobia, a deep-seated fear about opposition politics. To consolidate the non-party character of our political system, groups, whether loosely organised as in the underground political parties, or strong as in the trade union movement, are looked at with great suspicion. I am aware that Sobhuza II and the then Swazi National Council of the 1950s and 60s had a problem with the notion of "one-man, one-vote". To Sobhuza this was a threat to traditional authority. But he had to go around it and form the *Imbokodvo* National Movement because the British would not budge. Here we are, more than forty years since Sobhuza II expressed his phobia about political parties, still harbouring worse fears than the King did. The irony is that all around us the emerging democratic spirit is pointing in one direction: those plural political systems are the order of the day to safeguard the right of the people to elect a Government of their choice.

The Swazi doctrine of individual merit is neither here nor there. In fact, it is an illusion even amongst the die-hard traditionalists themselves. I shall explain why. When *Sive Siyinqaba*, *Sibahle Sinje* was formed in 1996, many critics saw it as a new version of *Imbokodvo*. Amongst the original supporters of this formation were princes and princesses and many influential people in high places who were worried at the time about the looming threat of trade unions and the cultic leadership displayed by Jan Sithole. Almost overnight Sithole had become an embodiment of evil, the anti-Christ of our State. The language of the likes of Walter Bennett and Maselekhaya Simelane was enough to portray Sithole as some sort of pretender to the throne. *Sibahle Sinje* won the hearts of many by parading their unflinching defence of the monarchy. Some over-zealous commentators from *Sibahle* were even against the whole notion of having a constitutional monarch. Their idea of the institution of kingship was so abstract and metaphysical that it would be sacrilegious to commit the establishment and function of the King to ink and paper. Of course all that was balderdash. But no sooner had *Sibahle Sinje* enjoyed a long honeymoon with the *status quo* than it became apparent that they had a totally different definition of culture. Apart from then Prime Minister, Sibusiso Dlamini who suspected,

after having been rubbed up the wrong way, that this cultural formation was not what they had always believed it was, the *status quo* generally tolerated their presence. It was on the King's jet issue that they left little doubt about what they were up to. Now it is history that they have taken Parliament by storm, the caveat being that they see themselves as the next Government of Swaziland, if not now, certainly in 2008. How have they managed to short-circuit the system's holy doctrine of individual merit? Why are they such a hard nut to crack?

Following his dubious election to the position of Speaker in the House, Marwick Khumalo naturally selected his comrades in the struggle to nominate possible senators. I say the election of Khumalo was dubious because it appears that the motion that was read by Clerk at Table, Magongo, was written prior to the swearing in ceremony. If indeed it was so written, why did the office of the Clerk of Parliament, I mean Promise Msibi, accept a motion that was flawed? It is common knowledge that Msibi is a member of *Sibahle Sinje*. Besides, can someone prove it beyond reasonable doubt that soon after Khumalo was elected, the airline was asked to process his ticket to Mauritius? Promise and Marwick left in the afternoon of the Monday on which Khumalo had been elected. I am not casting aspersions at Khumalo as a person, but as a man who should henceforward stand for the truth he should have avoided unnecessary speculation that everything that took place on that fateful Monday was carefully pre-cooked. Reality right now is that *Sibahle Sinje* will certainly receive preferential treatment from the Speaker. If *Sibahle Sinje* was able to prevail against the King's jet issue that embarrassed the former Government to the core, it became very necessary for King Mswati III to select his team carefully.

I submit that he did not take the individual merit route, but reverted to the group method approach. Part of the great anxiety in the new dispensation borders on the powers of the King in the new Constitution. Following in the footsteps of his father, Sobhuza II, the Swazi King wants to both rule and reign. While this boggles the modern mind, the King wants to have unbridled powers over the traditional and political domains of Swazi society, and both roles have legal implications. Apart from Prince David's Constitution Drafting Committee, it was the Constitutional Review Commission that had impressed the King the most about the limitless powers he ought to have. That is why in his team of nominees he recycled the likes of Themba Msibi, Gelane Zwane, Sonyboy Zwane, Mphiwa Dlamini, amongst others. Some were promoted from the SNC to Parliament for a particular purpose. My hunch tells me that after all the dust has settled and noises surrounding the jet issue calmed, the King still wants the deal done and sealed. It became important, therefore, to nominate strong monarchists who will ward off the threatening spirit of *Sibahle Sinje* and parade the super-power model of kingship with impunity. In the absence of a credible opposition, the in-coming Parliament of Swaziland will be a house divided right from day one. Both *Sibahle Sinje* and King Mswati III's monarchists will put a high premium on the King. Their approaches will be as far apart as east and west, and royalty will be hard-pressed to survive the ideological warfare. One hope much against hope is that five years down the line we as a nation would have learned our lessons well, and grown a bit taller from the phobia we have about plural political communities. Let us trust as well that five years

down stream our King will positively heed to the calls that pray him to reign and leave ruling to the lesser mortals and their party systems.

## MATHENDELE DLAMINI AND THE *TINKHUNDLA* SYSTEM

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*Mathendele Dlamini was the Minister of Foreign Affairs and had been the Speaker of Parliament. In this article, Mzizi reflects on the days when Mathendele Dlamini had been a teacher and an activist against the Tinkhundla System which he now served as a member of the Cabinet and had served as a leader of Parliament. The gist of this article is a look at the systems ability to co-opt committed activists and make them serve it, thus disempowering the progressive movements.*

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I was listening to the President of Senate, Senator Mathendele Dlamini, strenuously trying to defend the *Tinkhundla* system of Government as Swaziland's "parliamentary participatory democracy". Dlamini was being interviewed by Qedusizi Ndlovu on the business of Parliament three days before it was opened. I thought to myself that some people are really, really lucky to see reality where the clouds are dark and the storm is heavy. I have known Mathendele for a good number of years; hence I have no reason to doubt that he was being sincere when he said *Tinkhundla* is a democratic system. As a former teacher, groomed into the profession during the days of Albert Shabangu as leader of SNAT, Mathendele knows what democracy is. What I know of him is that he was a vibrant public speaker at SNAT meetings during the difficult days of the mid-seventies. He spoke with such a passion, using the siSwati idiom appropriately to express his ideas in graphic and dramatic fashion. He would capture an audience with his skill of oration and none would doubt that Mathendele was always speaking from his heart. Somewhere between the Great Usuthu River and the branch-off to Sidvokodvo on the Yith'Abantu Highway there is a historic valley where I last saw Mathendele speaking his mind in the face of adversity?

The forces of Police Commissioner T.V. Mtsetfwa, captained by the then Manzini D.C. Walter "Wara-wara" Dlamini, were unleashed to feast their batons on over 400 hundred defenceless teachers from the South en-route to Lobamba there to meet the King, His Majesty Sobhuza II. The year was 1977. The riots of Soweto the previous year and the reaction of the South African Police was a much talked about affair the world over. Since the Swazi state was copying almost *verbatim* all the tactics of oppression perpetrated by apartheid South Africa, the beating and tear-gassing of teachers in July 1977 was to be expected. It did seem even then that South Africa was even training our riot squad, apart from receiving all arms of riot control from the Defence Department of that pathetic apartheid state. In our case, the interest of South Africa was that since 1948 a number of teachers had crossed the borders into Swaziland because they could not stand the implementation of Verwoerd's Bantu Education. But while in the country these South Africans were obviously posing a threat to the regime in various ways. The 1976 Soweto riots led to a mass exodus of young people from South Africa purposed to do military training in Zambia and Tanzania. Swaziland was a safer zone, having since the mid-60s served as a safe passage for such personalities as Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma, Tokyo Sexwale, to name a

few. Things were changing in the seventies as Swaziland, Botswana and Lesotho were seen as dangerous neighbours by South Africa.

The concept of creating beggars out of South Africa's neighbours was started by the apartheid regime to exercise secret political controls of the goings on in these three former British High Commission territories. The idea of the South African Customs Union was orchestrated for similar reasons, and so was the creation of the Constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS), which was later botched and abandoned by the apartheid state. What I am saying is that the politics of the Kingdom in the 1970s, or quite ostensibly since the post-1973 developments, were remote controlled from Pretoria. Whereas it was difficult for Pretoria to establish diplomatic relations with any democratic country elsewhere in the world because of the stinking apartheid policy, it opened a diplomatic mission in Swaziland, which was disguised as a trade mission. Well, what do these developments have to do with Mathendele's activism as a teacher? At Sidvokodvo Mathendele was arrested together with a few other teachers for being ring-leaders on that teachers' journey to see the King. I remember him standing up and facing Wara-wara four square like a fearless tiger with the eternal truth that neither him nor his brother, then Minister of Education Godolwezimamba, had any right to stop people from going to see their King.

For that simple truth Mathendele was arrested. In 1983 Albert Shabangu recalled those events at Sidvokodvo when SNAT was unbanned unconditionally. He named that place at Sidvokodvo, "The Valley of Smoke and Tears". Shabangu was not at Sidvokodvo in 1977. Through what he had been told he was able to make out the nature of that pandemonium when professionals of this land were beaten, kicked and tear-gased by their own children. I was there and when I heard Shabangu giving a name to that little patch of pain, I could give a face to it. I had seen some of my own teachers from Hlathikhulu Central running helter-skelter for dear life as the young boys had a good time for their training. Mathendele stood for the truth then, and history will never forget his sterling posture. The *Tinkhundla* System was introduced in 1978 while Mathendele was winding down his career as a primary school head teacher to join the National Curriculum Centre. By the mid-1980s, he was in Parliament climbing the ladders and getting introduced into that kind of obscured *Tinkhundla* politics of the pre-1992 era. As Parliament interpreter he once interpreted a wrong speech for the throne during the *Liqoqo*-Prince Mabandla war of February 1983. Mathendele was interpreting the Government speech while Rev. Siphetswe Dlamini was reading a *Liqoqo* version of the speech. It was a fiasco that I do not think Dlamini wishes to ever remember. When Prince Bhekimpi became Prime Minister, Dlamini was appointed his Private Secretary, a position he carried with great pomp and ceremony. By that time Mathendele was an unapologetic fan of the *Liqoqo* regime. I am glad that today, together with Prince Mfanasibili, George Msibi and Robert Mabila, Mathendele still believes that the *Liqoqo* was right in all its operations, especially in ensuring that the then Crown Prince eventually ascended to the throne. However, following Mswati III's coronation, Mathendele was tossed out, first to a lesser position in Lubombo, and then to an infamous retirement in the public interest.

The *Tinkhundla* System had disowned him, and there was very little he could do. Claiming a distant drop of blue blood in his veins, Mathendele carefully wormed his way back into the civil service after very trying times in limbo. Unlike Albert Shabangu who resorted to the courts to fight his retirement in the public interest, Mathendele made clandestine representations here and there until it dawned on the powers that be that he was entitled to a living for he had not killed anyone. This is the man who today can boldly tell the nation that *Tinkhundla* is a democratic system. If I heard him correctly, he intends to popularise the Government's decentralisation policy being piloted by Albert Shabangu, the DPM. I have yet to read the Bill, but my understanding is that it seeks to decentralise Government's social services, not the politics side of things. I have no qualms about that. My problem is why decentralisation before Swaziland concludes the constitutional debate? We should not be deceived to think that all Swazis are agreed on the constitutional dispensation stage-managed by the King. There are endless problems that are already costing this country dearly. The economic collapse we see in the sugar industry, the uncertainty in the textile sector, coupled with rampant corruption in high places where Government money is officially stolen by a few business lords, are worrying signs of the times. At the time of writing this edition, the Deputy Prime Minister, Albert Shabangu, is out in Europe on a roller-coaster damage control mission, selling a false image of Swaziland to an otherwise wiser world. I am afraid that sometimes politicians do not tell the truth even if they know it. Swaziland's democracy is totally deficient at best, and at worst pathologically malignant! What should we do? Do we tell the world that alas! All is just right? Or do we say: We are the only country that is misunderstood in the whole world, and forget that Mugabe's Zimbabwe is also misunderstood by Tony Blair? Come on Swaziland, let's get a life!

## GOVERNMENT AND THE PROSECUTION OF JUSTICE

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*In this article, Mzizi continues with his observations that the Tinkhundla Government has a way of coopting bright people to it and using them to support the system. However, he also observes that the moment they seem to oppose the Government it also finds a way of marginalising them and ultimately spitting them out.*

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My love for my country is receiving the best test of its time these days. Just when I thought I had lost all there was during the tenure of the Sibusiso Dlamini Government, there came A.T. Dlamini and Prince David. My writings are testimony of the fact that when the two seemed to tackle the real issues that had put this country in a serious quagmire, hope was restored. Here were two novice politicians, brave enough to tell the world that all was not well in Swaziland. The modus operandi of the Sibusiso Government was to deny, lie and justify every wrong they had done, of course at a high premium for the Swazi nation in most cases. The former Prime Minister had his hopes nailed on the chest of the Attorney General who travelled more during Sibusiso's time than ever in his lifetime. Phesheya Dlamini had to defend blunder after blunder, write legal appeals to the American Congress at a time when it was obvious that the GSP and AGOA were fizzling out. When the former Prime Minister reported each time on what he and his

team of fire extinguishers had accomplished, he would never forget to praise the AG for a job well done. It appeared the two were politically married, a kind of marriage made in hell in my political vocabulary. A.T. Dlamini started in late 2003 by frantically drawing up a long catalogue of promises, telling us in a thousand words that he had the political will to fix the system left in tatters by Sibusiso. Yes, there was a time when the monotony of his voice and endless promises got the better of me. I had to fight off my own weariness with the hope that while it takes a fortune and time aplenty to build a strong house, earthquakes and tsunamis need less than a second to bring a strong edifice to rubble. Dlamini indeed had a lot of debris to clean up. On the other hand, Prince David, who seemed to have excelled as a man of delivery on the constitutional question, had enough tonnage of national confidence that he would do a fine job in restoring the rule of law. The rule of law had collapsed and sent the Appeals Court Justices packing their legal files and fleeing the Kingdom with a lot of gall splashed all over their learned faces. Those were the events of the aftermath of the dreaded 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2002 statement of mass destruction.

The real test of the rule of law restoration did not quite lie in the Ben Zwane case. Zwane was fighting for his labour rights, which were crudely taken away from his hands by a vengeful and heartless Prime Minister. Sibusiso was a man who rejoiced in settling scores with his juniors by "putting them under the trees", frustrating them to the point of ego-destruction. Zwane stands as a hero today because he vowed to fight for a principle and won so many times, but justice for him was both delayed and denied and twisted. Thank God, he was never broken. As the King's birthday approaches, if our King recognises the valour of his own people, he would decorate Zwane with a medal of courage, the fighting spirit he needs to see in his nation. The Court of Appeal Judges wanted the displaced people of Macetsheni and Ka Mkhweli returned to their homes unconditionally. That was the litmus test we all expected to see Dlamini and his team aspire to. Evidence before the High Court and subsequently the Appeals Court was that the evictions were carried out illegally. That was the crux of the judgements the Swazi justice system failed to understand, or should I say, still fails to understand even to this day.

Prince Sobandla who signed the eviction orders is a born again Christian who should know better that it is a crime and a sin to send to exile a man of God. I do not care whether Mliba and Mtfuso were ever chiefs or not, a point Prince Mfanasibili seems to be an authority on. What matters to me is that gross injustice was done to these people and their followers. Two settled communities were destabilised for no other reason than questions of power. Scores of evictees suffered and died in the wilderness, most of whom were never even allowed to return to be decently buried beside their fathers and mothers. It is for this reason that I think the Appeals Court is not in this country because justice has been served. Yes, we are concerned each day that they preside over the pile of cases whether or not they returned properly to continue a job they had left in protest two years earlier is not clear to us.

It would seem to me that the Justices have been hoodwinked to see the political side of things as more important for Swaziland than the justice scenario. I say this because both Madeli and

Mliba have been returned to their original homes on condition that they go via the late Maguga's jinxed chief's Kraal. The two brothers have been humiliated in ways beyond description. I look at them as two monuments of history that represent the worst that Mswati III's rule has done in his short eighteen years on the throne. Besides, the Court of Appeal has not reversed their ruling that Police Commissioner Hillary and Deputy Regional Commander, Agrippa Khumalo, should be jailed for contempt of Court. That ruling has not been appealed by Prince David's Government either. Instead, the Justices are being told that their ruling is being affected the traditional way. I do not care what everyone else thinks, but I am not impressed. If A.T. Dlamini and Prince David are convinced that problems created by our modern system of governance can only be solved the traditional way, then I am delighted to call them murderers of the truth, liars of the twenty-first century who want to restore the dented image of Swaziland by black-painting it even further. It's not the time for stock-taking and sees achievements where they may not quite exist. This nation demands a full restoration of the rule of law, not the piece-meal instalment case scenario, replete with the jaundiced sense of justice of the likes of Jim Gama and Jahamnyama.

If Dlamini is serious about fighting corruption, let him begin right now by calling for the suspension from Parliament of the personalities who have been reported to have skeletons in their closets. Without prejudice, I am referring to Senators Mpheni Dlomo, Thandi Maziya, MPs Titus Thwala, Cracker Hlophe and Maqhawe Mavuso. He should ask if justice was served when Magwagwa Mdluli was allowed to stand for an election he had tried to short-change and was eventually found guilty of electoral fraud. Yes, he should open an inquiry into the integrity of all the MPs, from the Speaker to the rest, whether, when they campaigned, they did not solicit votes through illegal means. The case of Marwick Khumalo should be followed to the letter, and not personalised just because Khumalo is the only effective MP we have in Parliament since the days of Msunduzeni Dlamini, P.D. Dlamini and Potgieter. The worst political crime that will haunt Prince David to his grave borders on what he did to the Constitution of Swaziland. If he knows, as he has so often admitted, that few Swazis contributed to the crafting of the supreme law, why should he push it for adoption? He has been told that some groupings were sidelined right from day one way back in 1996. If he believes this story, which I am sure he can scarcely prove otherwise, then what is the point of pushing this Bill? My major problem with the Prince is that he was given expert analysis of the draft in 2003. Serious loopholes were pointed out. He decided to ignore most of those submissions. I hold him guilty of constitutional fraud of the first order in that, while aware of the truth, he decided to do the opposite and frustrate the wheels of natural justice. I repeat, history will not forgive such an act of civil impropriety.

## STUMBLING BLOCKS IN SWAZI POLITICS

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*In this article, Mzizi discusses the problems with Swazi politics, in the way that the Swazi National Council (SNC), which advises the King, is letting down both the King and the nation, by not offering good advice to the monarchy.*

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Last Sunday this column gave a summary of events that took place prior to the constitutional talks of the early 1960s. Very remarkable in these events was the active role of the Swazi National Council in advising the monarchy on modern political issues. The British were fully aware of the power of the council. However, they did not think this body was representative enough. For example, only adult Swazi males had a voice in the council. Women and the youth were excluded, so were foreigners and white settlers. It was, therefore, an exclusive body of conservatives, which existed only to protect the monarchy against all manner of foreign ideology. The council was suspicious of people like J.J. Nquku and Ambrose Zwane, not only because they were lettered, but because they were planting the seeds of popular democracy on Swazi soil. Swazi democracy, according to the council and Sobhuza II, could not be defined in other words except as approved and sanctioned by the SNC. But it is interesting that in 1964 the *Imbokodvo* National Movement was formed as a political party, much against King Sobhuza II's sentiment against parties.

*Imbokodvo* was conceived to be the ultimate unity of all Swazis under the King. Anyone who was not in the movement was clearly labelled as one who was anti-monarchy. Patriotism was thus defined in terms of royal allegiance and not necessarily the love of the country. It was then dangerous to belong to the opposition because one could easily be denied personal privileges and favours. The likes of Sishayi Nxumalo, Arthur Khoza, George Msimbi and many other stalwarts of the opposition were slowly swallowed by the *Imbokodvo* as they had to abandon their parties. Many of them were rewarded with high positions in their new-found political home. No doubt they demonstrated great zeal in *Imbokodvo* and helped to shape it into the monster it became by 1973. The power of the Swazi National council died a slow death with the formation of *Imbokodvo*. By the time the 1968 Constitution was finalised, the council could only be charged with the responsibility of advising the monarchy on all matters of Swazi tradition and custom. The British had hoped that the council would finally be rendered obsolete by history.

Indeed there is no evidence to indicate that Sobhuza II used the council for anything after 1968. Not even during the political vacuum years between 1973 and 1978 did Sobhuza II attempted to revive it. His waning health must have troubled him in 1981 whereupon he summoned the Minister for Justice, Polycarp ka Lazarus Dlamini, to draw up an instrument that would revive the *Liqoqo*, which had also become extinct. Sobhuza II reasoned that it would be the *Liqoqo*, which would assist the Queen Regent in running the country, especially during the critical years before the next king reached maturity. There is no evidence that the Minister for Justice brought the instrument for royal assent. He was reminded of the task several times until the King went to "rest". Then the minister emerged with a list of fifteen men who comprised the *Liqoqo*. An instrument that established *Liqoqo* called them the supreme Council of State. Again no mention of the Swazi National Council was made. It had gone into the dustbin of history. Talks of the revival of the SNC started in 1992 during the Mahlalengangeni *Tinkhundla* Review Commission. As a matter of fact, the Commission recommended that SNC be revitalised and charged with the same tasks as defined by the 1968 Constitution. It is interesting that in 1996, just before

setting in motion the constitutional talks, the King revived the SNC. The definition of their duties is exactly as it was in 1968. But then the Council was given *de facto* powers by the King, when he announced that they would help him identify a new Prime Minister and also deliberate on the composition of the Constitutional Review Commission. This signal could have been wrongly interpreted by the Council as being mandated to talk about matters of Government as well.

So far we have not heard of anything pertaining to Swazi tradition and custom that the Council has addressed. Yet we hear that they meet almost every day instead of the three days a week as approved by Government. What do they talk about? Let us remember that each month the nation forks out over E100,000 to pay members of the Council for a job we do not know. Where was the Council before 3 February 1997, when national peace and safety suffered a devastating stroke in this country? If the report is true that it was two members of the Council who bulldozed the Minister for Justice to manufacture the flimsy charges against the SFTU leaders, a scenario that led to the arrest of these leaders, then one can safely say that His Majesty should reconsider if indeed he needs these people, let alone such a body. My political barometer records that the Council is likely to interfere with Prince Mangaliso's committee. It is likely to interfere with almost anything, save matters of Swazi tradition and custom. At a time when the Council should be concerned with the notorious chieftdom disputes, some touching on senior princes, the Council is not making its ruling and intervention known to all of us. Really, what are we paying these folks for? The Constitution Committee seems to be coming to life this month. They are still educating themselves about what they are going to do. Clearly, they were given a task for which they were not prepared.

Now it is time for schooling, yet they are being paid for it. Interesting! This can only happen in Swaziland. How will Prince Mangaliso know that now they have received their education to the acceptable level? Will he conduct exams and tests, fire some who are below the level and aptitude, or what exactly will happen? These education sessions are not free at all. They are draining national resources, which could be put into better use. But what did we expect the Commission to address as a priority? First, they are aware that many civic groups did not appreciate the manner in which they were composed. Even though the Commissioners regard themselves as employees of the King, they should know that it is only symbolic language to say so. In essence, they should be accountable to the nation. After all it is the nation they will be working with. Why then not make the terms of reference friendly? Secondly, the Commission should be aware that the 1973 Decrees would make their work very difficult. Everywhere they go, people will ask them to address that issue as a priority. Since that problem can easily be anticipated right now, why can't the Commission recommend to the King that the decrees be shelved, and people be allowed to submit, debate and negotiate for the sake of an authentic constitution for Swaziland? This should be the starting point – perhaps the Commission can win a few hearts if they agree on this one, which of course, would lead to a revision of the entire terms of reference. But does it help to comment on these issues in Swaziland? Time will tell.

## MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION IS MULTI-PARTYSM IN SWAZILAND

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*In this article, Mzizi is sharing his resolution for the 1999 New Year which is to work and call for multi-partysm in Swaziland which is a very unpopular and contagious issue in the country. Through it Mzizi is arguing in support of the Government to change the system that bans political parties in Swaziland.*

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The New Year, 1999, has brought with it a lot of challenges. Apart from the technical hiccup in my computer last week which resulted in the non-availability of this column, there were just too many odds and ends, most of which were competing with personal time, the meeting of deadlines for submitting external examinations grades, all of which ended up overcrowding one's better sense. The indication is that this will be a busy year indeed. I have therefore made a number of resolutions, some of which have to do with this column and my resolve to fight for human rights. "Dissection" is not a human rights column, but human rights form the cornerstone for our analysis of issues. They are not necessarily incidental. This leads me then to one of the issues, which made me start the New Year in a somewhat uneasy fit of anger. As part of my New Year resolutions, I had resolved, in my own personal scheme of things, never to be at loggerheads against *Sive Siyinqaba* because of certain accusations against and misconceptions about my person generated by my critical comments on this organisation in some past "Dissections". One of these accusations was that I had hated the organisation soon after it was formed in the first quarter of 1996. The word "hate" was of course a misnomer. The correct word was that I was "critical" of the reasons behind its formation, and I had points of arguments to substantiate my misgivings.

My only problem was that, when I attempted to articulate them, the likes of now Senator Masalekhaya reacted with a fury, which always dragged the issues to the wrong side of the argument spectrum. In short, the argument would end up being personalised and therefore trivialised. I did not like that. *Sive Siyinqaba* does have reasonable people. For example, when you hold a conversation with now Honourable Marwick Khumalo or Gideon "City" Dlamini, or even their secretary, Eric Sibanda, you find very reasonable and objective people who are equally concerned with the direction of this country. There was a time when Maslekhaya, former Vice-Chairman of *Sive*, was vehemently critical of the constitutional review commission process. He was deeply concerned about a number of irregularities, most of which still obtain today. I was impressed with that position because to many of us it removed the myth that the CRC and *Sive Siyinqaba's* sentiments and positions on issues are the same. But as someone who likes to listen and appreciate difference, I always reserve my right to differ and declare my position to whosoever cares to listen. Coming to the organisation itself, I think it is remarkable that a number of its overt and staunch supporters made it to Parliament. Like everyone else in those Houses, their manifesto matters but little here. All they had to do was to convince the electorate that they would do X, Y, Z, and then leave everything to the finger of fate.

The manifesto had no place; otherwise *Umphatsi lukhetfo* would have nullified their election. In other words, I am saying that the declared policies of *Sive Siyinqaba* are not going to bind the members of the organisation now in the houses of parliament. Existing legislation does not permit such political behaviour. As we say "*Lapha ka-Gogo*", "they are there in their personal capacities". That is why there was a re-shuffle in *Sive Siyinqaba*'s executive committee. This, in my view, was done to dispel the notion of being elected on a party ticket. But more than that, the aspect of double interest in a political culture that preaches an archaic monolithism. Having said this, I would like the Chairperson of *Sive Siyinqaba*, Winne Magagula, to come out clear and tell the nation why she believes that the progressive camp in this nation was responsible for the spate of violent bombings in this country.

Winnie, in her New Year statement, categorically said that her organisation does not believe that all the formations in the Kingdom, which are calling for political transformation, are innocent of the spate of bombings. I listened to this hallucination with the contempt it deserves, hoping that someone in the organisation would tip Magagula off that there was no need to dishonestly and crudely ruffle feathers at this stage when the security forces were hard on investigations. It is now the 10<sup>th</sup> of January; the Magagula statement has not been retracted or amended. What this means is that what Magagula said should be considered not only as the official position of *Sive Siyinqaba*, but also as one of the possibilities, in fact a strong possibility, despite the condemnation of the act by such personalities as Jan Sithole, Mario Masuku and Bongani Masuku. After all these condemnations and denials of knowledge about the source of the bombings, followed by police investigations and harassments of suspects, Winnie still witch-stylewise wants to add salt to injury and then have a long, long mad laugh ever after. That is not the way of honest politics.

In fact, I shudder that in a free democratic Swaziland it is people like Winnie who will sow seeds of division and anarchy in their desperate attempt to win favour at the expense of truth and honesty. I do not want to raise the stale argument of whether *Sive Siyinqaba* is a political party or a cultural organisation. Maslekhaya said so well in 1996 that the UNESCO definition of culture does not leave out politics. In fact politics is ubiquitous. We are all political animals; and might I add, of one stripe or another. Our problem in Swaziland is that we want to blot out the stripes and then pretend that they were after all of foreign extraction. That is downright nonsense! If we are engaged in a battle against practices that are foreign, then let us do away with elections by secret ballot; do away with the whole notion of parliamentary democracy. Indeed, do away with the executive and Judiciary wings of governance. If you cannot do away with these structures, then it is folly to continue banning political parties in the name of preserving the State of Swaziland from foreign ideologies. Cultural movements would get bored if they forgot to talk squarely about how they are governed. To me therefore, and I am sure to all who have carefully been listening to the utterances of *Sive Siyinqaba*, politics is high on their agenda. As a democrat, I say there is nothing wrong with that. It is a human right to belong to an assembly or organisation of one's choice. *Sive Siyinqaba* has the right to exist. But it is politically inexpedient to tell lies and raise false speculations about other formations. If

I may educate Winnie for just a moment: HUMARAS is not part of the SDA. This was carried by the four media houses soon after the SDA had been formed in 1996. HUMARAS cannot be part of political formations because it is a watchdog for any violations of human rights everywhere.

Political formations, whether they are *Sive Siyinqaba*, *Imbokodvo*, PUDEMO; and organisations like SNAT, SFL, SFTU, etc. are all prone to violate the rights of the followers, or even of national structures and the nation at large at some points. The role of human rights organisations is to be the voice of the voiceless whenever such scenarios arise. By definition, human rights organisations are not expected to trample on the rights of people or individuals. They are expected to be well informed on all details of rights. These include social and political rights; cultural rights; economic rights; and all the specialised rights like the rights of women, children, refugees, prisoners, etc. As watchdogs, human rights organisations operate autonomously in society and ask for no favours from anyone. The second point Winnie should learn about is that as a human rights body, HUMARAS cannot participate in acts of violence or sabotage. This is an international principle. That is why HUMARAS promotes dialogue instead of confrontation. HUMARAS supports peaceful demonstrations as a way of expressing dissent and calling to the conference table regimes and governments that are intransigent and obstinate. HUMARAS supports all peaceful means to conflict resolution. HUMARAS condemns the bombings in the same tenor as it condemns state violence. It is therefore a sign of ignorance and shallowness of mind to assume that HUMARAS know something about the spate of bombings in this country. In fact, it is politically and morally naïve to make that assumption. As we call upon all acts of violence to come to a stop, we call upon Government to exercise a high degree of introspection. Where has everything gone wrong? If the acts of sabotage were politically motivated, what can be done right now to circumvent the re-occurrence of such tragic action in the future? These are the questions any responsible government should be asking.

## SHOULD GOVERNMENT FUEL THE FIRE OR PLAY A MEDIATORY ROLE?

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*In this essay, Mzizi calls for Government to exercise its mediation role when there is conflict between protesters and the police.*

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One of the most important indicators of a democratic and open society is the citizen's freedom to talk about national issues without let or hindrance. This freedom extends as well to whatever lawful expression the citizens might adopt in order to make their point. Protesting and processing are part of such expression, which unfortunately tends to irritate many a government of the day or any establishment for that matter. It is for this reason that if the head of police is waiting on the alert this should be an indication that public order is getting compromised his riot squad should be at the ready.

Last week I argued that governments respond differently to riotous situations. And sometimes it may be the same government responding differently to different situations. Take for example

the march on the Prime Minister by Clerics of the Council of Swaziland Churches. There was no danger whatsoever posed by these men and women of the cloth. The same case was witnessed during the march on the Commissioner of Police by the Sidwashini youth protesting the murder of Mathousand Ngubeni. The police on occasion handled an otherwise volatile situation very calmly and professionally. I always tell my friend in the force, Abion Dlamini, that what he and his staff did on that day was just excellent. The march by the Clerics was, however, condemned by members of the public, including some MPs, who appeared to be scoring some political points on a matter so delicate. King Mswati III also expressed his displeasure about the march in the meeting he had called for the Swazi clergy during the debate on the Christianity clause. The general feeling was that men of the cloth should not take to the streets in the manner of "people of the world", whatever the expression means. I do not quite support any attempt by anybody to suppress someone from expressing themselves so long as the expression conforms to known methods of non-violence. What changed America in the area of race relations were marches organised by the Civil Rights Movement, a Christian-inspired movement which had realised the social role the gospel should play.

The historic march on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of 28 August 1963 stands as a landmark event on what the power of the clergy can do in a free society. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I have a Dream" speech in front of a crowd of well over a quarter of a million, coming from all over the United States. President J.F. Kennedy could not ignore the march; hence he called the leaders for a caucus meeting in the Oval Office. The Civil Rights leaders had a point that America had to listen to. Indeed the Civil Rights Bill was signed into Federal Law in 1964, a few months after Kennedy's tragic assassination. There is a brewing civil society march, protesting the recently assented to constitution of Swaziland. I am not quite in agreement with their strategy to challenge the constitution in this manner so late in the day in so far as the process was concerned.

I have been a Swazi long enough to know that there are certain things you just cannot change in Swaziland. Whether that is the price we have to pay for being a monarchy state, or the dividends we should enjoy or endure, it's anyone's guess. The fact of the matter is that King Mswati III, as he has been saying since 1996, will receive the final Constitution Bill inside the national Kraal at Ludzidzini on 26 July 2005. I cannot see him favourably responding to civil society's pressure at this stage to undo what he did. That is why I personally feel that the efforts to protest the Constitution at this stage had better be utilised elsewhere. But that is a different argument. What should be the response of the Government in highly volatile matters such as this? For starters, there is no doubt that the march will attract a lot of media attention. International Crisis Group (ICG) and the Swaziland Solidarity Network, based in South Africa, are keen on the happenings here, and let us not fool ourselves that they are not networking with other governments right across the world. It is in times like these when people like Percy Simelane, the Government spokesman, should stop being confrontational in their language when explaining Government's position. Mr Simelane's use of language has sometimes been a bit irresponsible and uncalled for, especially when a crisis situation is in the making. Sometimes

he is difficult to blame because one gets the impression that actually, or perhaps, he is nothing but "his master's voice". He is supposed to be the voice of the master, alright, but the master cannot tell him what words he should use when dealing with a sensitive matter.

The Prime Minister, A.T. Dlamini, was rather too quick to respond to the news of the march. While he remains a friend of the church, he has not told the nation whether he delivered the Cleric's petition to the King left at his office on 12 May 2005. Instead he has uttered some words I cannot quite make out. The Clerics went to him as their *lincusa*, ambassador, and I am not sure if he has reported back. Right now he said that the protesters must prove demographically that they indeed have a huge following. What if they can demonstrate this? Would he allow the march to the King to go ahead? Secondly, he said something about protecting the Constitution. All we know is that this document will come into force next January. Right now the law that is operating is that of the legacy of the 1973 Decree. Does protecting the Constitution mean beating up citizens who are trying to raise constitutional matters? Why insinuate that the police should be involved in the Prime Minister's project of "protecting the Constitution"? At all material times the Constitution is a public document, not a Government document. Yes, governments have a duty to enforce and protect the supreme law of the land. But so far, that obligates him to protect our new Constitution. What the PM is asking the police to do is extra-legal and could cause a crisis of vast proportions.

Putting politics aside and subscribing to the doctrine of doing everything in the public good, I would suggest that those who are complaining about the Constitution be afforded an audience with the King, where they would table all their problems as honestly as possible. In the spirit of the SMART dialogue, I would expect the King to also give his side of the story, and then a way forward would have to be sought. They would have to reason with the King whether it is wise or unwise to undo what he has already done right now. In my estimation, there is no going back to the times when we had no Constitution. Let us rather work with the document we have, rather than throwing away the baby with the bath water. If it proves difficult to amend the Constitution, then let workable suggestions be made in a manner that would be listened to.

## **UNITED YOU STAND AND DIVIDED YOU FALL: A WARNING TO THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**

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*There had been conflict amongst members of the unions in Swaziland, arising from the fact that the General Secretary of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions was being accused of corruption and dictatorship. Others were threatening to break away and form a splinter group. Drawing from his years as an activist, Mzizi warns against dividing the unions, for that would disempower them and weaken their struggle.*

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It is always disheartening to see a fragmented and sterile trade union movement at a time in history when its strength is needed the most. Let us face it, Swaziland, after Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, is a better place to push the trade union agenda without fear of reprisal.

The ruthless Government of the former Prime Minister had so much bred, with impunity, a culture of intolerance and hostility that many started believing that Sibusiso Dlamini actually was being misunderstood by the majority. He wanted to speed up change by incensing the pressure groups so that they might act more aggressively. I do not think the former PM would agree with this perception. But the manner in which underground political movements and the trade unions did things seemed more and more routine, a memory of past glory that is no longer relevant for our day and time. The SFTU has been at the forefront of all calls for genuine democratic change in Swaziland. Jan Sithole's name and personality has been synonymous with the SFTU and, by extension, the most vocal opposition to justice in Swaziland. Sithole, no doubt, has been the most successful of all secretary-generals of this worker's federation since the days of Obed Dlamini. The unfolding drama between the SFTU and three workers' unions that were suspended does not promise to be a laughing matter at all.

It would appear to me that all daggers are drawn at Sithole, who is being accused silently or loudly for being dictatorial. I am well aware that Sithole did not impose himself into the position he holds right now. He was elected through a popular vote. Perhaps, what the unions need to consider carefully is his job description. In times like these when it is too easy to ignore the voiceless, Swaziland needs the likes of Sithole, and there aren't many of his kind to go round. Charismatics are needed to fuel the fires, create crisis situations and give everybody the reason to hope for a better future. It is not usual to find a charismatic leader who is also a good administrator. In church experience, the kind we call evangelists, being the ones who are constantly in the task of soulwinning, usually make bad pastors. When an evangelist has to shepherd a congregation, the moment of truth comes when he has to deal with the spiritually wounded members. It would be found that he has neither the time nor the ear for them in the majority of cases. At worst, the evangelist uses the stories of the spiritually wounded as subjects for his next sermons. The end result is total anarchy and disillusionment in the church. The SFTU needs to employ a first-rate administrator, who should concentrate on the public relations aspect of the federation. The implementation of the strategies and objectives of the federation should be the major task of the secretary, not running the nitty-gritty of office affairs. The spirit of the concept of separation of powers, the secretary general should not interfere with the work of the administrator.

All I am saying here, perhaps contrary to popular opinion, is that the days of Jan Sithole are not yet over. The federation should not consider the option of retiring him at this stage. Redeployment with clear mandate would perhaps save the day. The SNAT is yet again experiencing a threat of a major split. As a member of the Board of Trustees, I am not supposed to tackle the issue at any level at the moment. But what I have observed over the years might help those who are at the point of breaking up. They may want to reconsider their options. During the days when SNAT was in limbo, the Ministry of Education encouraged secondary and high school principals to form an association that would also run the athletics and ball games that were the cornerstone of student's extra mural activities during those days. The association of principals was accepted with great suspicion by a number of teachers. The feeling was



that the headmasters were now selling out SNAT at a time when everyone was in mourning as a result of the 1977 unprecedented ban pronounced by then Police Commissioner, T.V. Msetfwa. Whatever could be said about the association of principals, the schools athletics and ball games suffered a major setback between 1977 and 1983. When the ban was lifted unconditionally on SNAT in 1983, the question of the Headmasters Association lingered on. Most of the leaders of SNAT, who were themselves heads of schools, were not quite comfortable with the Headmasters Association. I remember a fruitful meeting the executive members of the two associations held at the Manzini Post Office building. Albert Shabangu was leader of SNAT and Simon Brian Makhanya was of the Head Teachers Association. The ground was levelled and we amicably resolved to draw a memorandum of understanding, if for any thing, to clear the dust of yesteryears. From that meeting, as headmasters, we went on to strategise on how to involve primary school heads in our association. Indeed, a few years down the line the SSHA was born. Its sole purpose was to address professional issues that headmasters face from time to time, which may not be necessarily within the purview of SNAT as an overall teacher's body.

Since 1983, I have witnessed three major threats of division within the SNAT. First, it was a scathing charge made by Mfomfo Nkambule, now the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy. He stood up in a meeting held at the Trade Fair grounds in Manzini to deliver some kind of mischievous comments, bordering on telling the SNAT executive that it was dictatorial and far from being democratic. The spirit of Mfofo tarried, even after he had long left the teaching profession. It culminated in the birth of the Swaziland Democratic Teachers Union (SWADTU). The leadership of SWADTU was strong in the South with the likes of Armstrong Simelane of Nhlangano Central and Sambo of Mbukwana. Titus Thwala once joined SWADTU following a serious financial scandal as a member of the National Organising Committee (NOC) that had embarrassed him to the core. I remember having a discussion with Thwala in my office asking him to go back to the SNAT and apologise because the only way to bring change in SNAT was through active and unrelenting participation in the structures of the organisation. Thwala did just that. He eventually won a position in the national executive with a clear majority to be editor of the SNAT. Today not much is heard about SWADTU, at least in the public arena.

The most recent attempt, whose dust had hardly settled, was one involving highly politicised teachers who, in my view, feel the NEC has lost the cutting edge. These teachers were attempting to oust the NEC in 2004, accusing it of breaching the Constitution of the SNAT. Whether by design or conscience, there was a ploy to embarrass some members of the NEC. The bottom line was that the current NEC needed to be retired and ropes given to the BOT, which would facilitate a fresh election. It has been a very trying moment for the NEC, for indeed to lead a mass of people who are receiving conflicting assessment about your leadership can be unsettling. We saw this in the number of press releases from the Secretary General, trying to set the record straight. The current debacle involves primary school teachers, who feel that they are marginalised. We hear them raising genuine concerns, but I am not too sure if they have done their homework well on the ultimate solution. Forming a splinter organisation of this magnitude is a tall order indeed because those who are agitating for this change have to

convince every primary school teacher to abandon his or her membership in SNAT; a situation where there are primary school teachers in both the SNAT and the new organisation cannot be tenable. In essence, this means that all the benefits these teachers have been enjoying by being members of the SNAT would have to cease. These include belonging to the SNAT cooperatives, burial scheme, educational scheme, etc. I cannot see every primary school teacher willing to take that risk. But on the whole, such challenges are necessary for any organisation to grow, make periodic introspection and evolve with the times. What I hate in life is forming splinter organisations just for the sake of it. Bargaining power lies in the demographics, and splinter groups weaken bargaining power. This should be avoided at all cost.

## WHO WILL SAVE US FROM BIASED JOURNALISM?

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*After watching a programme on e.tv about the Reed Dance, for which he blames the station for bad journalism, Mzizi wrote this article in The Observer in September 2005 to protest the misrepresentation of the Reed Dance Ceremony as something simply done for the Swazi King to choose a wife and for young girls to parade themselves in front of the King half dressed for a chance to be chosen as the King's wife. Mzizi starts by lamenting the emergence of bad journalism and then goes on to explain the Reed Dance Ceremony and what it stands for and its meaning, not only for the Swazi people, but for humanity and creation as a whole as it represents the importance of fertility and rain. This is one of the most educative articles he ever wrote about Swazi culture.*

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Never have I been so horrified and flabbergasted by a South African media house than I was by e.tv's evening news bulletin of Tuesday 30 August 2005. The station was purporting to report about our annual Reed Dance ritual, supposedly to an audience that has faint or no knowledge about Swazi culture and traditions. I happened to be in South Africa at the time, and was imagining what kind of damage such slant reporting was bound to create. A talk show on SABC3 on the same evening considered whether the audience or readers should believe everything they hear or read from the press. A Wits University Professor of Journalism observed on that show that the South African media was in deep crisis due to certain untruthful reporting, which inevitably results in the image of the media getting severely tarnished. Boy, didn't that remind me of home! The Reed Dance has been a subject of speculation, intrigue and fascination for a long time now. It would seem that each year the media has something very interesting, and at the same time negative, to report, but in most cases it is the negative comments that stick to the mind of the reader. Despite the fact that the Reed Dance was held in each year of King Sobhuza II's reign, and later continued by King Mswati III since 1986, the facts about this important ritual are grossly distorted and fabricated in ways beyond imagination.

E.tv's topic in the news item was that the Reed Dance is an annual event where Swazi maidens turn up to parade their bodies before the Swazi King, competing to be picked as the next Queen. The perks mentioned by the TV news item are: a plush palace and a BMW. The news then went to town about what critics say about the King's life style and the two plights facing

Swaziland, namely poverty and HIV/Aids. That was the report fed to millions of South Africans. The picture of the majestic marching with the Zulu Monarch, King Zwelithini, was played to create a certain attitude of two Kings on the prowl for young girls who are not so innocent themselves, because they go there with a motive. If I were to say that I was angry and surprised, it would be an understatement. I was horrified because I had always thought that professional journalism should balance stories up, avoiding as much as possible editorial comments or opinions in the process of reporting. The station failed to tell the South African audience in clear and succinct terms what the Reed Dance was from the point of view of informed Swazis. A TV journalist on assignment to Swaziland to cover the Reed Dance should have known that he or she was not asked to come and take pictures of the colourful event and then sniff around for those who oppose the ritual, even before getting an official comment from the major role players of the event. Granted that the reporter perhaps went about his duties professionally, it is the ultimate responsibility of the editor to ensure that news is not reported with a dangerous and offensive slant. A wise editor would have sent the reporters back to talk to adult people at our traditional headquarters before going on air with the story.

The Reed Dance is certainly not about girls competing for attention. If a perception has been created to this effect, then it's nothing more or less than merely a media perception. It just may be that our own local media is guilty as charged on this matter. I shall illustrate. The aftermath of the 2005 Miss Swaziland contest was a nightmare for the new Queen. Whereas we all wanted to hear what her dreams about the Swazi nation are and what she would do with the crown in the public interest, what loomed larger than life was the story about her virginity status. She was in the process portrayed as a temperamental and impulsive personality, qualities that are unfit for a beauty queen. As we wondered whether our new Queen would indeed be the lady with the class and manners Swaziland deserves, another story was building up about how she was looking forward to the Reed Dance because she wanted to meet the King. As we were digesting this and wondering whether we have a Miss Swaziland or an elephant in the house, boom! "Miss Swaziland loves the King." The picture of the jubilant beauty queen was on the right hand-side and that of the smiling King on the left. After reading the story carefully, my worry was to find out what the author was trying to tell us. If the Queen had indeed said our King was handsome, why was that news? Secondly, as a Queen, was she not entitled to her opinion? I thought the headline was a bit insensitive, and belittling to the image of the King and the good name of the new Miss Swaziland. But that was just how I felt. Others may have been impacted differently. If I was to defend my position, I would say that somehow I believe that kingship is a profound reality, far deeper and everlasting than King Mswati III. Our Monarch, who we rightly refer to as our Sovereign, represents a very deep consciousness, which we as Swazis only manage to express symbolically. When we say that he is the Lion and the Queen Mother is the She-Elephant, we are drawing from the animal kingdom, of which we are part, the most awesome, powerful and irresistible figures, whose presence has an electric effect.

Through the symbols of lion and elephant, we are trying to explain our deeper consciousness about a reality that holds us together as a nation. The Swazi King does not speak, but roars.

He does not have a hand with which he assents to laws, but has a powerful paw with which he performs these duties. Swazi tradition and customs are replete with symbols. This means that the Swazi monarch should always be extolled and held in high esteem, not for his own sake, but for the deeper reality he represents in time, space and eternity. To always drag the person of the King into some kind of tabloid journalism as the e.tv story did, is to hurt Swazis at the very core of their being.

The Reed Dance is a celebration of life, a prayer for the fertility of the land at the beginning of the spring season. The major role player may appear to be the King, but actually it is the Queen Mother who is also the traditional Rainmaker. When our girls dress revealingly, they are symbolically displaying the potential for the fertility of the land just coming out of a long dry and cold winter. The Reed is cut from swampy soil. They are saying soon the mountains and valleys will blossom, the rivers will flow with water once again and the lilies on the mountain sides will brighten the land, thus signalling hope and continuity of life. The girls who are partaking in the ritual thus need to understand that it is a serious and solemn moment because without good rains, the winter will tarry and the nation will die. In short, the chastity requirement at the Reed Dance neatly befits the profundity of the ritual. It is a fertility cult that celebrates the flora, the spring of life, in the context of our dominant national reality, namely, the traditional headquarters where the Queen Mother lives. The King will taste the first fruit around December during the main *Incwala* event. The two rituals complement one another. These are the facts that an average South African needs to be told about the Reed Dance. The hullabaloo about irrelevancies completely decontextualises the event from the real purpose and significance. Who has tested the nation that the tens of thousands of girls who attend the dance are there to gamble for anyone's attention? On the other hand, when the King chooses a maiden during this time, it is in line with the traditional demands of the ritual, namely, the promise of fertility and the continuity of the Swazi nation. The symbol is profound and fascinating and needs no distortion or reinterpretation by the media.

## **PART 6 – CHURCH AND STATE IN SWAZILAND IS SOMHLOLO'S DREAM A SCANDAL FOR SWAZI HEGEMONY?**

The Christian clause debate re-examined in the context of prospects for religious accommodation.<sup>17</sup> Evangelical scholars and some Zionist sentiments have declared Swaziland a Christian country. The ideological foundation of this ambitious call is King Somhlolo's dream on the coming of the white missionaries and settlers to Swaziland. This paper argues that

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17 J.B. Mzizi (2005). Is Somhlolo's dream a scandal for Swazi hegemony? The Christian clause debate re-examined in the context of prospects for religious accommodation. *Missionalia* 33(3):441-58.

the King's dream need not be subjected to a particular, monolithic interpretation. A literal interpretation of the dream has the potential of landing Swaziland in a religiously polarised scenario. This paper gives pointers to two alternative readings of the dream, while arguing that the dominant or popular interpretation seems unhelpful in the creation of community in the kingdom of Swaziland. The two alternative readings, on the other hand, should be encouraged and recognised for the sake of preserving Swazi hegemony in the context of diversity and difference. The recently settled debate on the Christian clause in the new Constitution indicated how religion can so easily polarise a nation to the extent of creating tensions between the Christian clergy and the Head of State. As the game of reading the dream proceeds, the Christian Church should not lose its calling by yielding to unhelpful right-wing intercourse with the state.

## INTRODUCTION

The most over-used jargon to describe the religious scene in Swaziland is that Swaziland is a Christian country (Nyawo, 1994; Mzizi, 1998; Vilakati, 1998). The popularisation of this notion is based on a questionable reading of Swazi history, which suggests that Christianity came to Swaziland first through royal revelation, and then through royal invitation (Matsebula, 1987:41-3; Kasenene, 1993:43-8). This interpretation of a complex set of events has been appropriately called *Somhloism* (Gamedze, 1990:48) because it is linked to a revelation, or dream, that appeared to King Somhlolo in the latter part of the 1830s.

In this essay, I shall argue that Somhlolo's dream was a rich metaphor rather than a cut-and-dried historical reality pointing to a divine sanction and dictation that only Christianity was good for the Swazis. Therefore, as a metaphor, Somhlolo's dream can be used as a vehicle for building a more inclusive society, tolerant of diversity and accommodative of difference. The reverse is not true. If the dream is taken as a historical panacea for the religious shape and consciousness of the Swazi, which is the thinking advanced by Nyawo and Gamedze. Nyawo (1994:28), as emphatically stated:

*Although Swaziland respects the freedom of conscience, she does not for one moment wish to vacillate on the theistic foundation upon which the nation was founded some 150 years ago. History has taught us that different and opposing religions, offered at the same time, to the same people, become divisive elements in society. Swaziland does not want to engage herself in bloody religious wars. This is not scepticism but it is a simple affirmation of the basic philosophy of the nation.*

Between May 2003, when the draft Constitution was released for public debate at the sanction of the King, to July 2005, Swaziland has been engaged in an uncoordinated public debate on the question of a "Christian clause" in the draft Constitution. This debate follows one that was held at the University of Swaziland under the auspices of the Religious Knowledge Panel on a multi-faith Curriculum for Swaziland schools. The debate on a multi-faith Curriculum was inspired by curricular developments that were going on in neighbouring South Africa in the pre- and post-1994 era when South Africa was coming to terms with the reality of creating a new and

open society that is tolerant and accommodative of difference. Both debates have revealed a strong tenacity by evangelical and Zionist Christians to adhere to a literal interpretation of the dream of King Somhlolo.

The literal interpretation, as shall be indicated below, has led some Christian leaders to reject the teaching of other faiths to school children in Swaziland and to express an implicit desire (through a “loud silence” on the matter) to ban other religions from operating in Swaziland. The attempt to have the Swazi Constitution enshrine Christianity as the official religion was the ultimate effort by the enthusiastic fundamentalist interpreters of Somhlolo’s dream to create an exclusive society receiving spiritual dictates only from the Christian religion. The negative consequences of this move, such as social and inter-religious conflict, seem to be deliberately overlooked by its proponents.

The incumbent Swazi monarch, while believing in the dream of his forefather, has had a mind shift about how it should be interpreted, as is explained below. Instead of seeing it as a simplistic constitutional declaration that Swaziland should be a Christian country, he suggests that the implications of the exclusive society it may create be examined in the light of the basic teachings of the Christian faith. The strategy of extolling Christianity above other religions was also followed in Zambia in recent years. When Frederick Chiluba assumed power after defeating Kenneth Kaunda at the polls, he engaged in the necessary path of constitutional reform. One of the proposals was a clause declaring Zambia a Christian nation. Although meeting with substantial opposition from within the Christian community itself, the clause was included in the Zambian Constitution. Chiluba and his deputy declared that they were “born again” Christians, hence their strong support for the clause. The main advocate at present for the retention of the clause in Zambia is the ousted Deputy President, Nevers Mumba, who has formed a political party to contest the next election. Mumba, like Chiluba and others who support this position, is a Pentecostal Christian who believes that having such a clause would translate into better morals for the Zambian nation as a whole.

A similar scenario occurred in Zimbabwe, where Pentecostal Christians pushed relentlessly for a clause in their Constitution that would declare Zimbabwe a Christian country. This effort has not been successful since the draft Constitution of 2000, in which such a clause was enshrined, was rejected by the Zimbabwean electorate. In both Zambia and Zimbabwe the major opponents of such a clause are Christians from the mainline and historical churches. Their central argument is that Christianity does not need any protection to thrive.

I propose in this essay that Somhlolo’s dream should be looked at as a metaphor, rather than as an angelic dictation from some celestial power affording mortals no choice to think or to contextualise the dream in the realities of their social location and existence. In order to explain the richness of this metaphor, I shall indicate three readings of the dream, which I have referred to elsewhere (Mzizi, 2003:12-8) as (i) popular (ii) secular; and (iii) religious. Briefly stated, the popular reading of the dream is the one that is promoted mainly by evangelical theologians like Nyawo and Gamedze, as well as some Zionist Christians, which, however, make no attempt to

conceptualise the dream theologically. This reading of the historical narration and interpretation of the dream is decidedly dogmatic. When Gamedze first advocated Somhloloism in the 1980s and developed it after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the Cold War there was no clue that Somhloloism would become a problem, as it did from 2003 to 2005 during the discussions of the Christian clause in the new Swazi Constitution. What clearly transpired during the course of that debate was that the kind of Somhloloism advanced by Nyawo and Gamedze had the potential of creating a closed and exclusive Christian society, perhaps with proclivities to dangerous radicalism, which could result in social disharmony and gross religious intolerance.

The secular reading of the dream, which is explained in more detail below, draws a lot from the historical context and times of King Somhlolo. The point is that the King would not have dreamt in a historical vacuum, hence the early interpreters of the dream should have known exactly what the dream meant in the context of the times.

Finally, the religious reading of the dream is what Paul F. Knitter (1998:23f) calls “an effort on the part of religious persons to be big-hearted, generous and to share with others what was given to them”. This reading is mainly evident in the pronouncement of members of the Baha’i community in Swaziland. The reasons for this community’s religious reading of the King’s dream are sometimes unfortunately enmeshed in the events of the 1840s, which bear some significance in the Baha’i faith’s revelation history as far as the ministry of the Bab was concerned. But we need not be detained by the Baha’i’s position here. It is the essence of their interpretation that is significant for the purposes of this discussion.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The argument that this essay advances is that, as a result of Somhlolo’s dream, the Christian religion has enjoyed a love-hate relationship with the Swazi state. There is no evidence in Swazi political history suggesting that the Swazi state has had a political agenda to control the church. But that does not mean that political authority has always been pleased with the church. There have been clashes from time to time (see Matsebula, 1987:39ff; Kasenene, 1987:65ff; 1993:45-8; Mzizi, 1995:273-83). What is remarkable, however, is that the church in Swaziland has over the years sought to legitimate its message by claiming a divine connection between the advent of Christianity and traditional authority. This is what Vilakati (1998:63) calls “royalist opportunism, i.e. the act of wanting to endear oneself to the monarchy in order to be awarded with high political positions by the King”.

For some reason the church leaders believe that by parading this relationship all bona fide Swazi citizens, including royalty itself, would choose to be Christians. In other words, the church is involved in an ideological game, playing the political trump card to garner religious support. This is the essence of Somhloloism. Taken to its logical conclusion, Somhloloism suggests a marriage of convenience between church and state, in which the Swazi church hopes for a

permanent religious monopoly within the Swazi state, with the state standing to benefit through assured blessings of all its activities and counting upon the support of the church at all times.

The Swazi state has over the years practised a tolerant attitude toward other religions:

*It is possible, therefore, that the royal family understood Somhlolo's vision in broader and more tolerant terms. And this is Kasenene's methodology in his phenomenological analysis of religion in Swaziland. A kind of tolerance of other religions and of other brands of Christianity can be found only in the institution of kingship, much to the disappointment of other competing and more pietistic Christian formations (Mzizi, 1998:52).*

Christian diversity and religious pluralism, therefore, are definitive terms of state policy. Unfortunately, the popular reading of the dream leads to the dishonest denial of religious pluralism in particular. This is the kind of tension Swaziland experienced as the debates on the Christian clause in the 2004 Constitution Bill progressed. Perhaps what the church in Swaziland wants to achieve by promoting Somhloloism and enshrining Christianity as the official religion is a Swazi cultural Christianity that would claim a large following and appeal on cultural impulses, but with hardly any traceable prophetic features, as is expected of the church as body of Christ. The dangers such a scenario poses for Christian ministry need not be over-emphasised. The Christian tradition is replete with examples of tensions, ambiguities and contestations for power when a marriage between church and state is sought.

Somhlolo's dream, therefore, has been used to bolster a powerful religio-cultural ideology in Swazi Christian history. This paper takes the position that Somhloloism, as an ideology, is the expression of a marriage of convenience between church and state in Swaziland. This ideology, emanating from historical foundations and operating through a highly selective reading of the dream of King Somhlolo, has resulted in the popular view that Swaziland is a Christian country – a political assertion with far-reaching consequences. Somhloloism makes definite assumptions about church-state relations in Swaziland and ends up, in turn, complicating those relations.

## THE DREAM REVISITED

King Somhlolo's dream has been celebrated in song and tale so many times in different contexts that there is no "objective" narration of what the King's dream was. This is perhaps not uncommon with any narration and eventual interpretation of a mystical experience. A mystical experience is translated and retranslated into words and symbols that are easier for its interpreters to understand or more conducive to their social and political interests.

There is general consensus, however, about the following: In a dream, King Somhlolo saw white-skinned people carrying two objects: a scroll (*umculu*) and a round object (*indilinga*). The white-skinned people had long hair hanging down their heads, resembling cattle tassels. The King was instructed in the dream to advise the Swazi people to do three things. Firstly, the white-skinned people were not to be hurt in any way. Secondly, the scroll was to be accepted. Lastly, the round object was to be rejected. On the surface, these instructions appear simple



and straightforward. The King then summoned his advisers and narrated the dream to them. The various accounts of the dream point out first and foremost that the dream had come to the King from divine origins. In the Swazi context, it was the national ancestors who had spoken to the King. This, in and of itself, legitimated the dream.

It is significant to note that the following questions were not asked:

1. Did the King just have a normal dream like any old person, or did he really have a vision, some form of mystical experience?
2. Was there another similar experience in Swazi royal history, which could have easily rendered the King's dream acceptable? Other curious issues relating to the content of the dream have not been questioned.
3. Why was it forbidden to hurt the white people?
4. What were the reasons for rejecting the coin but accepting the scroll?

Since it is impossible to reach back to the original narration of and responses to the dream, no definitive answers can be given to these questions. This has resulted in various interpretations being given to the dream, thus complicating church-state relations in Swaziland and heightening the tensions surrounding whom to admit into – or eject from – public religious space in Swaziland.

## **THE POPULAR READING OF THE DREAM**

The popular interpretation is common mainly among the evangelicals affiliated to the Swaziland Conference of Churches and the Zionists affiliated to the LACS. Some leading theologians in evangelical circles have over the years emphasised the importance of this dream. Within the Swaziland Conference of Churches there has emerged a strong cultural-evangelical wing championed by powerful leaders under the banner "The Somhlolo Festival of Praise". The original group of leaders started this festival during the commemoration of 150 years of Christianity in Swaziland in 1994. However, the story did not end there. Since 1994, there have been systematic attempts by the leaders of the Festival to get the celebrations included in the national calendar. The Somhlolo Festival of Praise normally climaxes on July 22, a public holiday in honour of King Sobhuza II's birthday. Sobhuza II occupies an important place in the modern history of Swaziland in that he was not only the longest ruling monarch to date, but was also influential in shaping the political and cultural philosophy on which post-independent Swaziland was founded. The Zionist Christians of Swaziland regard him as their "High Priest" because of the role he played in unifying them during the colonial days.

The Somhlolo Festival of Praise group is more concerned about the fact that Sobhuza II used the Bible when he took the oath of office as King on 6 September 1968. To them this was an indication that the national ethos and philosophy of the country should be founded on the Christian Bible. The Somhlolo Festival of Praise group has come up with a religio-cultural

justification of the celebration. In the programme for the main service they explain the reason for the annual celebration as follows:

*The Lord God Jehovah, Creator of Heaven and Earth, had mercy on Swaziland when He visited our founding King Somhlolo in a dream. In this dream God gave the nation a mandate "to choose the Umculu, the Word of God, the Holy Bible, and 'eat it' and if the nation would do so the nation would live. The Word of God is Jesus, the Light of the World, the Messiah, Wisdom and Life. In Leviticus, the children of Israel were called to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for eight days, the last of which is the day to give thanks and celebrate the Torah (Word of God) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month each year. By God's divine mercy the Government of Swaziland has set aside a national holiday on 22 July annually to honour King Sobhuza II, who declared that Swaziland would follow the Word of God, the Umculu, when he took the oath as Head of State. He lifted high and presented the Holy Bible to the nation because it contained the mysteries of how to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.*

*This Somhlolo Festival of Praise on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month is a Biblical Feast or Festival to give thanks to God in obedience to His Word in Philippians 4:6-7: 'In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving present your requests to God, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'" The Mini-Festivals throughout the country give us the opportunity (i) to remember God's mercy in visiting this nation and (ii) to give thanks that 'the Light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us' (Isaiah 60:1). What is this 'light'? It is the revelation of Jesus, the Son of God in the Holy Bible, who is the Light, the Way to the Father and the Truth, which bears liberty, healing, wisdom and eternal life. The National Events at Lobamba give opportunity to Praise God for His goodness and mercy through the Song and Music Festival; to thank God for His love and faithfulness through the Sunday Thanksgiving Service and to pray for the Prophetic Destiny of this 'small one that will become a mighty strong nation, in His time' (Isaiah 60:22); at the International Prayer Breakfast and the National Prayer Service. (Cited from the Somhlolo Festival of Praise programme of 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2005.)*

Rev. Dr A.B. Gamedze, a royalist and leading proponent of Somhloloism, believes that Swaziland was given the Bible by God for the purpose of building upon it its socio-economic and political philosophy. Gamedze (1990:29) has written:

*Christ revealed Himself to King Somhlolo in a vision. In that vision, Christ commanded that, for survival in this world of endless turmoil, the Kingdom of Swaziland should build its socio-economic and political philosophy upon the Bible ... In that divine initiative, Christ, as Head of the Church, by addressing an earthly Head of State ... was ... confirming the fundamental truth that unity in diversity of functions between church and state is ordained of God.*

Gamedze understands Somhloloism to have been functional basically at four levels, namely,

1. Teaching the Swazi the content of the Bible;
2. Teaching the Swazi literacy skills;
3. Building primary, secondary and high schools, as well as Bible Colleges and other tertiary institutions, e.g. the Nazarene Nursing College, Teacher Training and vocational institutions;
4. Embarking on community development and social welfare projects, e.g. fighting poverty, disease and caring for the physically challenged.

The purpose of missionary enterprise in Swaziland was realised when Swazis became “co-workers and co-partners of development and progress. It is now at the stage where Missionaries do not do things for the Swazis anymore, but work with the Swazis for the glory of God, honour of the King and development of the Swazi nation” (1990:31). According to Gamedze (1990:31), “applied Somhloloism” means that:

*... the State realised the good work done by Missionaries and, in response, started to assist and to co-operate with the church for the general development of Swaziland. That was the beginning of Government Aided Schools, Government Aided Hospitals and Clinics. There is even a closer cooperation today between church and state in such projects as fresh water supply for the rural communities, promotion of commercial handicrafts for the rural mothers, Co-operative Societies and Literacy Centres.*

Rev. Nicholas Nyawo (1994) supported Gamedze. Arguing for a Bible-centred Religious Knowledge Curriculum, Nyawo asserted that Swaziland’s educational philosophy should be built on the Bible:

*The centre and the circumference of the Bible is Christ. Swaziland's formal education, therefore, should be oriented to the Bible and should be Christ-centred. The inclusion of the Bible in curriculum from primary school to University is non-negotiable and non-debatable. This is the life and blood of the nation (Nyawo, 1994:27).*

According to Nyawo, Somhloloism is about how God instructed King Somhlolo to make the Bible the foundation of Swaziland’s socio-economic and political philosophy.

As argued above, the views articulated by Nyawo and Gamedze are representative of the popular reading of the dream. They are expressed with such evangelical passion that one tries in vain to sway the issue. Very little is said about the round object, which Gamedze summarily dismisses as socialist materialism, which led to the rise of communism, the Cold War and the rejection of the biblical God. The collapse of the Eastern bloc, according to Gamedze, represented the triumph of Somhloloism. Furthermore, the two scholars do not even begin to address the concerns raised by Vilakati (1998:63-5) on the essence of religious hegemony and Christian diversity, or the morality side of the coin if it could be successfully argued that Swaziland is a Christian country.

To conclude, four features characterise the popular reading of Somhlolo’s dream:

1. The scroll that the King saw was the Bible;
2. The Bible should provide the guiding principles for the Swazi world-view;
3. Swaziland is a Christian country;
4. No other religion should be allowed any space in Swaziland.

## A SECULAR OR HISTORICAL READING OF THE DREAM

The predominant view of this reading is that Somhlolo's dream can best be understood in the context of its times. For this reason one can safely call it a historical reading with no religious assumptions. As a great nation builder, King Somhlolo carefully crafted a strategy that he sold to his advisors, for the purpose of avoiding a possible bloodbath should the Swazis resist the encroachment of white people.

The backdrop against which Somhlolo's vision should be understood was the Zulu massacre at Encome (Blood River) on 16 December 1838. Julian Kunnie (1994) describes that massacre as a catastrophic event for the whole people of southern Africa. It was a key event in a war over the control of African land, with the Afrikaner settler colonialists hell-bent on lording it over African ancestral lands. The settlers interpreted their victory as divine intervention, hence the Voortrekker Monument that was later erected to symbolise the day when the Afrikaner God gave southern Africa to the whites.

A secular reading of Somhlolo's dream holds that the King did not see a vision after all. He had heard about the military prowess and political intentions of the whites from others (Matsebula, 1987:25f; Mzizi, 1995:272ff; 2001:137). Some Portuguese people had settled in neighbouring Mozambique and the story of the defeat of the Zulus at Encome had spread far and wide. Part of King Somhlolo's military strategy was never to do battle with a powerful enemy. That is why the King elected to establish cordial relations with the Zulus during the Mfecane wars. King Somhlolo's strategy, therefore, was that whites should be unconditionally welcomed in Swaziland. Resisting them could prove perilous to the nation. Welcoming them would ensure security on two fronts: firstly, their military power could be harnessed to protect the Swazis against invaders who may want to overturn the Swazi nation; secondly, their presence could preserve Swazi kingship, as the whites would protect and teach his young successor their secrets (Matsebula, 1987:39).

I have argued elsewhere (Mzizi, 2000:916f) that Christianity entered Swaziland in the heyday of the consolidation of the Swazi state by King Mswati II, Somhlolo's son. As mentioned above, King Somhlolo was an astute strategist-statesman. He was a generous and benevolent ruler who sought to accommodate foreign elements in a diplomatic fashion (Kuper, 1978; Booth, 1983; Matsebula, 1987). In this interpretation, the round object in the dream stood for the white man's bullet. The rejection of the bullet meant not only that the blood of the white settlers should not be spilled, but also that Swazis should live in harmony with them, hence ensuring the survival of the nation. In a wider sense the King was warning the nation to avoid war and always pursue peaceful co-existence with other people, especially foreigners. The scroll in this case represented the white man's knowledge – scientific and technological – which the Swazis should adapt and integrate for the sake of survival and prosperity. Briefly, then, the secular reading of the dream takes into account the existential political realities that King Somhlolo had to contend with in the late 1830s. The immediate objectives of the dream were survival and preservation of Swazi kingship. The long-term effects would be adapting to new situations and

challenges. Both the immediate and long-term objectives were difficult to achieve. Despite the enthusiasm of King Mswati II to invite white missionaries into the country the encounter was short lived. It was only a generation later that the proliferation of white missionaries and land exploiters was allowed.

## **A RELIGIOUS READING OF THE DREAM: TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH**

A religious reading of the dream is a conscious attempt to read the dream in terms that transcend both the parochialism of the popular reading and the elitism of the secular-historical reading. This reading suggests that King Somhlolo stood in time and space to announce that a new age had become manifest, an age of the unity of religions and of humankind. As a herald for peace, Somhlolo was not alone, for as Ben Dlamini (in Mzizi, 2001:11) explains:

*Christ confirmed the time and described the manner of his return; he said he would have a new name; and that the name would be Baha'u'llah, the glory of the Father. The place of his return was Iran, although he would end up in Akka, Israel. He said he would return in 1844. The Bab, the forerunner of Baha'u'llah, declared his mission on 23 May 1844. His mission was to awaken the people and announce the presence of Baha'u'llah, who already lived among them.*

The central message of the Bab in 1844 and of Baha'u'llah in 1863 was that the latter had come to fulfil all other prophecies which had been made since the beginning of the world:

*He (Baha'u'llah) brought to mankind the recognition of the oneness of God, the oneness of his messengers and the oneness of the human race. He brought to reality the ancient vision that humanity will at last be united in one universal common religion (Dlamini, in Mzizi, 2001:12).*

Paul Knitter (1998:24) explains the inclusive approach to interreligious relations, which recognises the value of other religions and identifies what is common to them all. In an inclusive approach, salvation is the common thread, expressed in Christological terms:

*What is common to all religions is the saving presence of Christ or of Christ's spirit. Christ, though present clearly and fully in Christianity, is not limited to Christianity; he is active, in camouflaged ways, throughout the 'cosmos', especially in the religions of the world. It is this Christ who gives the other religions their value (Knitter, 1998:24).*

Knitter and Dlamini may be using different words to express the same approach. The fact of the matter is that they use their personal experiences and religious contexts to describe the concepts they purport to espouse. This was also true of John Hick (1973; 1989) and Karl Rahner (1966; 1974), among others. Knitter admitted this difficulty when he observed that inclusivism has its own problems because you can only be nice to other religions by fencing them within the parameters of your own.

Peter Kasenene (1988:44ff) collapsed the popular and the secular readings of Somhlolo's dream into one. He concluded that Somhloloism was not only an ideology, but also a civil

religion in the sense that it sought to unite the Swazi people by appealing to a royal historical experience.

*That system establishes or maintains social cohesion and unites the people in that society. It is civil in so far as it deals with the basic public; institutions exercising power in a society, nation or other political units and religious in so far as it evolves commitment and, within an overall world-view, expresses a people's ultimate sense of worth, and destiny.*

Kasenene (1993:104ff) sees nothing wrong with civil religion per se. To be sure, he feels that the Swazi state's accommodation of other religions owes its inspiration to Somhloloism. He narrates the story of the royal encounter of members of the Baha'i faith: "The King graciously told them that anyone coming with the word of God was welcome in Swaziland. This was in accordance with Somhlolo's vision."

The religious reading of the dream, therefore, holds that Somhlolo's vision was about religious accommodation. The Baha'i view about the unity of all religions finds credence in the vision. Considering the fact that the Swazi state has allowed other faiths, including various Christian denominations and sects, to operate, and the reality that Swazi Traditional Religion is the cornerstone of Swazi hegemony, the religious reading of Somhlolo's dream does not contradict the secular reading. In fact, the two complement each other, while they remain distinguishable. The secular and religious readings of the dream thus stand in tension with the popular reading. I shall suggest some practical implications in my conclusion.

## **THE CHRISTIAN CLAUSE DEBATE**

The Christian clergy in Swaziland who espouse the popular reading of Somhlolo's dream were shocked to the marrow when the Christian clause declaring Christianity an official religion was removed from the Constitution Bill of 2004. The constitutional drafting process in Swaziland was set in motion in July 1996 when the Swazi king appointed a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) with the mandate to consult the entire nation and study other country's constitutions. The CRC was expected to present a draft to the King in two years' time. However, delays caused by internal and external constraints resulted in the granting of extensions to the CRC because it could not finish its work on time. The CRC presented a report in 2000, which recorded all the major submissions of the nation on what should be contained in Swaziland's new Constitution. The matter of an official religion had not been raised in any of the CRC's consultations, hence there was nothing recorded on religion in the official report.

A Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) was set up, following the CRC report. Instead of just concentrating on the documents it had received from the CRC, the CDC decided to allow time for more submissions, with the hope that even those groupings and individuals who had not submitted anything to the CRC would respond. It was during this time that members of the Swaziland Christian Churches United in Christ (SCCUC) took a resolution to submit a proposal to the CRC that Christianity should be enshrined in the Kingdom's Constitution as Swaziland's official religion. The SCCUC is a new ecumenical formation to unite Swaziland's three church

federations, namely the Swaziland Conference of Churches, the Council of Swaziland Churches and the League of African Churches. Rev. Dr Nicholas Nyawo, referred to above in the Somhlolo debate, is the founder chairperson of this body.

I investigated the reasons for the church leaders' resolution on this score and found that there was an implicit fear of an Islamic threat on royalty. This fear stemmed from the fact that the current government and the King's foreign policy seemed to be tilting towards Eastern Islamic countries. Swaziland has diplomatic ties with Qatar, Malaysia, Brunei and some Islamic states in the Middle East. In addition, the Swazi King appears to be friendly with some of the influential leaders of these Islamic countries. When he returned from Qatar in the latter part of 2002, he was clad in Islamic attire. The Christian community was shaken by this, thinking that the King had converted to Islam.

## **THE KING SUMMONS THE CHRISTIAN CLERGY**

At the height of the debate on the Christian clause, which involved not only members of the public through the public media, but also Parliament through the heavy lobbying of the Christian Pastors, the Swazi King summoned the entire Christian clergy to his palace on 6 July 2005. In his well-considered presentation, the King assured the Christian leaders that the country would not abandon the Christian heritage grounded in the Somhlolo dream. He admitted that he had made a personal study of two major faiths, Islam and Buddhism. His findings were that Christianity was unique because it was tolerant and accommodative of other faiths, even of non-believers. He had found the two religions he studied very legalistic and strict in many ways. Secondly, the King diplomatically asked the Christian leaders whether they were not, by advocating an official religion, employing the same ideology as Islamic states.

The King gave his reflections of the Christian faith, dwelling on the theme of non-violence and forgiveness. He cited the Gethsemane experience of Jesus Christ, which showed that violent zealotry – as had been demonstrated by Simon Peter when he cut off the ear of a Roman soldier with a sword – was not part of his mission. The King then allowed the church leaders to talk, and it transpired that very few of them had clearly understood what the King's intentions were, and why he wanted them to think deeper on the implications of the Christian clause.

The proposal to include a Christian clause in the Swazi Constitution, therefore, emanated from one section of the Christian community, under the leadership of the SCCUC. There is no evidence that each of the three church federations was consulted to make resolutions on the clause in their individual assemblies. There is also no evidence that a wide spectrum of Christians was consulted to contribute to the debate. Members of the SCCUC took their resolutions to the CDC under the guise that they were representing the entire Swazi church. A member of the CDC was asked on 7 July 2005 why they had proposed the Christian clause. He replied that the CDC felt that Christianity was the national ethos of Swaziland and also cited what obtains in Islamic states.

## SECTION 4 OF THE 2003 DRAFT CONSTITUTION

Section 4 of the Draft Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland (Swaziland Government, 2003:3) reads:

*4. The official religion*

*The official religion of Swaziland is Christianity.*

*(2) The provisions of subsection (1) shall not prevent the existence or practice of other religions.*

Section 24 of the Bill of Rights in the Draft Constitution (Swaziland Government, 2003:17) contains a comprehensive clause entitled "Protection of freedom of conscience or religion." Despite the characteristic claw-back clauses in the entire Bill, the provisions of Section 24 conform in significant ways to international law. There is the provision of freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the freedom to enjoy one's options in these matters, including the freedom to worship alone or in community and to change religion or belief; the freedom to establish a religious community that may pursue religious educational objectives. Religious freedom is curtailed when matters of defence, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, and the freedom of other persons, are at stake.

The debate that ensued as a result of Section 4 was on two levels. Firstly, the argument was that it was not possible to enshrine an official religion clause and at the same time allow for the free practice of other religions. What is the added value of having the official religion clause in the first place? Secondly, enshrining Christianity as the official religion grossly overlooked the presence and efficacy of Swazi traditional religion, the real ethos that has held the Swazi nation together under a kingship beyond the one hundred and sixty odd years, which is Christianity's life history in the Kingdom. If Christianity were to be made the official religion, would that not pose a danger to some traditional customs and practices that are known to be in tension with some teachings of certain churches?

As the public debate progressed, the SCCUC clergy were engaged in serious lobbying with members of both Houses of Parliament and the general public. It is not clear whether they were disclosing the real fears they had, viz. of an impending Islamic invasion in Swaziland. What is evident is that some of them had spiritualised the whole endeavour, in the same spirit as the Somhlolo Festival of Praise organisers. In October 2004 the Draft Constitution was taken to the National cattle Kraal for further debate, before being taken to Parliament. Much support was expressed there for the Christian clause, with little analysis being made of its ramifications or implications. However, pressure from the Swazi National Council Standing Committee (SN CSC) for the Christian clause to be removed prevailed in the end. The power of this body supersedes that of Parliament and the Executive in the sense that it advises the King on any matter deemed fit by the King.

When the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Bill, 2004 was eventually taken to Parliament, Section 4 read simply: "Swaziland practices freedom of religion" (Swaziland Government,



2004). The SCCUC clergy then lobbied Parliament to restore the original clause. It was clear that they were on a collision course with the King. Whereas Parliament restored the clause without much debate or reflection, it was the King who had to assent to the Constitution for it to become law. The King's attempt to call the church leaders on 6 July 2005 was an indication that he had decided that the clause should be removed. There was much consternation amongst the clergy who still insisted that the Christian clause should be retained. One fundamentalist Christian pastor wrote in *The Weekend Observer* of 9 July 2005:

*When the pastors decided that Christianity should be the official religion, I knew there and then that those who will oppose it are destined for the grave. It cannot be otherwise. No one has ever opposed the agenda and counsel of Jehovah and continued to breathe. I am speaking this under the unction of the Holy Spirit and know for sure that because the Constitution has already been dedicated to God, by the Christians of Swaziland, who happen to represent the God of heaven, many are bound to fall because of this historic document. May those who have ears heed the warning of the Holy Spirit. It was the Finger of God, not man, that put in the clause that declares Christianity as the official religion. It is therefore the Finger of the same God, which will rise and destroy all the opponents of the clause ...*

The Constitution Bill was returned to Parliament to attend to about eight clauses with the purpose of effecting the changes the King and his council suggested. Parliament effected the changes and the King signed the constitution into law on 26 July 2005. The Christian clause had been removed. Preparing the disputing church leaders for this eventuality, the King preached a moving sermon at the occasion of the 2005 Somhlolo Festival of Praise on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. He stressed time and again that Christianity does not require any earthly protection for it is the power of God. The King observed that those who were calling for the official religion clause had entered the arena of politics. He thus put paid to a long and heart-rending debate.

## CONCLUSION

The thrust of the argument in this essay takes its orientation from Aloysius Pieris' views on the functional meaning of ideology. While in agreement with Peter C. Hodgson (1989:156), who holds that ideology is a "set of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting upon it either to change the world or to maintain it in its current state", Pieris (1988:29) maintains that all ideas, visions and spiritualities can only effect significant change in human history if they are "verbalised into an ideology or religion."

Advancing his view of ideology within the context of the liberation theology debate, Pieris posits that ideology is based on a five-point system, namely, a world-view; programmaticism; a this-worldly future to be realised; social analysis of the socio-political order; and a requirement that ideology be transcended by the truth it seeks to articulate. Pieris thus concludes that ideology is both a vision of a future – the memory of the future in the present and an impetus or mission to effect change in the present disorder to realise that future. To this end, Pieris maintains that ideological freedom of mind means choosing the right ideology, acquiring the right frame of mind and formulating the right questions, for indeed ideology is:

*... exclusively concerned with what it conceives to be a radical amelioration of the socio-political order with concomitant changes in the psycho-spiritual sphere ... Ideology compliments religion when it provides the institutions, strategies, and structures that religion uses to incarnate the Absolute Future. (Pieris, 1988:30)*

The argument of this essay has taken a critical view not of Somhloloism as an ideology in its own right, but of the evangelical attempt to use it to “change” the national consciousness of the Swazi. My view is that the evangelical position makes dishonest assertions that all that Swaziland has is based on a biblical philosophy of sorts. No attempt to delineate that philosophy is made by the populist interpreters of Somhlolo’s dream. The deliberate dishonesty in claiming that Swaziland is a Christian country, in my view, negates the spirit of community, accommodation and tolerance. On the other hand, Swazi state, while fully aware that the evangelical position. I conclude, therefore, that the popular reading of Somhlolo’s dream is not helpful at all. Should this reading be rejected forthrightly? Perhaps this is a choice that must be made by evangelicals themselves, for indeed wrong ideologies can never make anyone realise the “absolute future”.

But perhaps a middle-ground position can be considered. The secular and religious readings of the dream of Somhlolo can be used to enrich the evangelical position, and thus avoid an outright rejection of the popular reading, while both the secular and the religious may tap something from the evangelicals for the sake of creating a truly homogenous Swazi society. It should be the goal of all religions, and indeed all ideologies, to create community, not at the expense of individuality, but for the common good. I take Nzongola-Ntalaja (1997:11f) very seriously when he says:

*In African societies, the individual is conceptualised as a vital force, whose existence transcends the temporal body in which the person is objectified in his or her earthly life. This is the essential or more fundamental difference between humans and other living species, including animals. Hence the necessity of respecting the originality and the particularity of each person, respect of the latter’s individuality or individual human worth. This is the foundation on which Africans, like peoples elsewhere, base the idea of the inviolability of the human person and as well as his or her inalienable right to life and security.*

Nzongola-Ntalaja is not espousing a doctrine of individualism here, but, like all thinkers on an African world-view, he holds that the individual is only fully human through his or her dialectical and symbiotic relationship with society. Individuality has meaning in community, hence, “I am because we are, because we are, therefore, I am”. In the same vein, any ideological position which aims to destroy the spirit of community must be rejected. It is on this score that I conclude that King Somhlolo’s dream in 1838 was not meant to be a long nightmare for future generations in Swaziland.

## **CIVIL RELIGION AND THE BIBLE IN SWAZILAND**

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*In this article, Mzizi discusses the way the Bible has been used to justify the political system of the monarchy. He shares how it has been used to indoctrinate people not to think critically about the system so that they can see its disadvantages. He calls for a critical reading of the*

*Bible and the application of the hermeneutics of suspicion during its interpretation. To just accept it literally will perpetuate oppression.*

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In this column I would not have written about matters of religion today were it not for the formal launching of the siSwati Bible last Sunday at our national stadium. I thought I would write about Promise Msibi, the cop in the CRC who, not too long ago, condemned me to drown at the Lumphohlo Dam. My crime, according to Msibi, is that I am one of those who want to destroy the monarch. The cop literally charged me with the highest crime in the land – high treason. I couldn't believe it, especially because I have had a long relationship with Msibi and have spent a lot of time with him exchanging healthy views on Swazi governance. As a student of mine in 1977 he was a fine lad, owing of course to the strict Christian upbringing at his home and in the mission school where we met. I remember him paying me a courtesy visit at this very school nine years later where we talked about the politics of the time, the *Liqoqo* era. Msibi was generous with information on how the police PMU had frustrated an almost successful plot to kill the then Queen Regent, Dzeliwe Shongwe. Most of what Msibi said was repeated by former cop, Madoda Sibandze, in the interview with Sabelo Masuku several moons ago. All along, since 1977 I had deceived myself that if in some peoples' minds my patriotism and love for the monarch was in doubt; certainly it would not be so with Msibi. But he surprised me by not coming to me when he felt I was a danger to the state, instead electing to broadcast my ill intentions at Esandleni in an irrelevant forum and also in my absence.

I can only hope that all intelligent people simply ignored his remarks, as I am assured they will by Minister Themba Masuku who had hosted the meeting. In another development I have been reliably told that a former Cabinet minister confronted a colleague of mine and accused Dr Ben Dlamini and myself of "setting Swaziland on fire" – "*labafana bashisa live*". To say the least, my heart sank in utter disbelief when I heard this news. My biggest problem is that I love Swaziland too much to keep quiet when I see something wrong taking place. I know that some Swazis believe in keeping their mouths shut in the midst of trouble – *kubindvwa kubonwa*. At least other Swazis are not created that way. I happen to belong to this unfortunate lot. I believe that by talking and making my feelings and observations known, the chances of catastrophe would be reduced, or at best be minimised. Of course, in Swaziland we ignore the "troublesome" voices. I cannot defend my patriotism or loyalty to his Majesty even by a thousand words. Patriotism is a way of demonstrating your love for the state. It is not built on lies and false claims.

Those who love the State cannot go about pretending that all is well when in their heart of hearts they know that all is hell. When I say they cannot go about pretending, I mean that they do not have the ability to do so unless they forsake themselves and sell their souls. Vusi Ginindza has adequately called the act of changing one's principles the politics of the stomach. What a sad description. It is in the same vein that I always lament the position of the King. The Swazi King has many advisers; all chosen in good faith, but only a fraction are faithful to their calling. Most of them mix loyalty with conformity. They think that advising the King means telling the King the things that he wants to hear, and telling them in the words that would please His Majesty.

Instead of saying: “Your Majesty, the storm is around the corner and your nation is dying!” they politely and feebly advise:

*Oh, wise and excellent King, your ancestors are with you, and your nation will live forever. Do not mind these little storms in the distance. Only a few of your subjects will die to join the glorious land of your ancestors. Long live the King!*

Meanwhile the winds remove the rooftop of the palace, and His Majesty stares death in the face. Should the King continue to feel safe if he is surrounded by dishonest men? Where does that leave the entire Swazi nation? I wish I could persuade Qhawe Mamba to re-broadcast the sermon by Rev. Griffiths Dlamini, which he delivered at the palace before their Majesties. Rev. Dlamini was indeed the prophet God called him to be. Not the shy bootlickers who think heaven is too far once royal rewards are dangled in the air. Let me conclude by saying that royal advisers cannot expect to be paid for such a job because theirs cannot be evaluated in monetary terms.

It is a national service of the highest order based on principles that cannot be compromised. Once you pay the adviser, the package is called a bribe whether you like it or not, and then the devil is in the details. So, if one sounds to others disrespectful and unpatriotic when one advises the leaders of this nation, one feels one’s intentions are being deliberately compromised. Someone who is too short to be seen by a passing celebrity climbs a tree if Zaccheus taught us any wisdom. Zaccheus did not ride on the shoulders of another human being to be noticed by Jesus. Some shoulders are too busy to carry such cops as Promise Msibi only of a brief day of half-cooked ... whatever you may call it.

We should congratulate the team led by Rev. Barnabas Mndzebele on finally completing the siSwati translation of the Bible. It has been a long and tedious task. In fact, I had barely joined the University when I received certain extracts from the Bible that had been translated into siSwati. My comments were solicited. That was more than twenty years ago. It has indeed taken a lot of energy and time to arrive where we are, and I am sure the entire Christian fraternity appreciates the efforts put in bumpy and rocky times by the entire team. It has been an expensive exercise, which could be done only by selfless individuals who placed the value of the souls of all Swazis above everything else.

While it was fitting to launch the siSwati Bible in the presence of Their Majesties, one should warn against using the institution of kingship as a custodian of the Christian religion. The theme of the Somhlolo Festival of praise this year was “preserving our Christian heritage”. This was a nice theme in many respects, but upon closer reading it suggests that Swazis have a heritage, and that heritage is the Christian religion. To some people such a position should be emphasised, and to others it is really meaningless, if not too loaded with clandestine religious politics. The very name of the festival depicts a royal connection dating back to the 1830s when King Somhlolo had a dream about the coming of the evangel in Swaziland. It is not relevant to ask if the evangel would have come to Swaziland had Somhlolo not had a dream. The fact is that the King had a dream. What is always forgotten by interpreters of Somhlolo’s dream is,

that by accepting the *Umculu*, Somhlolo did not say Swazis should discard Swazi culture and customs. The evangel has existed for over one hundred and fifty years, save those nearly forty when there was no Christian witness in Swaziland following the clash between the Christians and the state at Mahamba Methodist Mission.

The marriage between Christianity and Swazi culture has not been without problems. For one thing Christianity came completely Europeanised and therefore hardly distinguishable from the heart of the messenger who is Jesus of Nazareth. It was like Jesus was a European invention of sorts. Christians wish with all their hearts that our royalty should be Christians. They would even go to the extent of saying that no other religion except Christianity should be practiced in the Kingdom. This is a holy but selfish wish, and its practice is extremely dangerous. The question is: should a Swazi king be a Christian in the popular meaning of the word? If he can be a Christian, what denomination should he embrace? If baptism is all that important in Christian sacraments, who can baptise the King? These are important questions, which have been asked since the turn of this century upon the advent of the fast proliferation of denominations in Swaziland. When Queen Mother Labotsibeni said she would never abandon the faith of the Zionists of Nkonyane after she had been healed of blindness, did she mean royalty should be Zionist? It seems to me that the Swazi King should receive in 1997 a siSwati version of the Bible with the same alacrity that he will receive a translation of the Koran in a few years time, or the holy writings of Baha'u'llah. The question is, will Christians be happy when the King accepts other holy books? If not, then my judgment is that Christianity is making itself a state religion, which the *status quo* will use to justify state sins, even to explain the origins of Swazis as having a divine history. That is civil religion. I am afraid; it is not Christianity.

## UNTANGLING THE RIDDLE OF SOMHLOLO'S VISION

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*At the centre of Christianity in Swaziland is the story of King Somhlolo's vision, which he is said to have had around 1834 when he received a command to look for missionaries and encourage his subjects to accept the book instead of the coin. The meaning of this vision has been that God brought Christianity to Swaziland and thus the church receives the superior place in the country, and then there was the struggle when it claimed superior position in the country compared to other religions. In this article Mzizi seeks to explain the vision and argues that it has been misused by both the monarchy and also the church, both of whom have used it to underpin their domination in the country.*

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A lot of guess work has been attempted on the meaning of King Somhlolo's vision. Whatever has been said about it by many religious people it leaves a lot to be desired. The vision itself may sound simple and comprehensible. The real problem lies with its interpretation. It is my perspective that the present religious climate in Swaziland owes it its colour and tone. The current climate is one of great intolerance and bigotry. No one wants to affirm the faith of others; no one believes that others who worship God in a fashion different from one's own are right. It is not exaggeration that within the same religion there are different strands of beliefs, some

conservative, others liberal, some rightwing, others leftwing. The Somhlolo vision was recently made current by Dr Ben Dlamini in his analysis especially of the era and time of its realisation. With no intention of decontextualising Dr Ben's argument, his point was that Somhlolo foresaw the coming of the Baha'i faith in Swaziland. There is something about the year 1844 which was a cause for concern for many religious the world over.

Dr Ben ably reminds us of similar visions occurring around the same time amongst the Xhosa people where the names of Ntsikana and Nongqawuse are still household property. What is sometimes forgotten by ethnographical researchers is to situate these Xhosa personages in the context of the trying colonial times of the area. The clash between the Boer trekkers and the Xhosa communities, where the latter were accused of stock-theft and plunders of Boer property, and thus became targets for torture in the name of the God of the Exodus during the Frontier Wars, often gets missed by interpreters of the roles played by Nongqawuse and others. The chief aim of these visionaries was to promise a life of renewal, a life free from colonial onslaught, a life where the eternal rule of God was expected, a time of peace, perfect peace where the lion and the lamb fed together. In the history of religions we refer to these movements as millennial. The coming of a new millennium is viewed always as a time of great promise and optimism. It is often held that after a thousand years there ought to appear a new dispensation, which would give people a new lease on life. The Seer in Revelation 20 describes the absence of the devil where the evil one would be tied and thrown into a bottomless pit for a thousand years. The devil-free earthly life promises fruitfulness and freedom to worship God Almighty without the hindrances of temptation. After the temporary disappearance of the devil for a thousand years, the Seer saw thrones, "and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed".

Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years ...

Although I do not encourage a literal approach to Rev. 20, what is exceedingly glaring is that the church was suffering under the tyrannical rule of Emperor Nero. Roman rule was considered anti-Christ and therefore the image of the beast, because it was demanding that the faithful in Christ should worship the Roman state and give God a second place, the so called Pax-Romana.

Anyone who dared to refuse was beheaded. John the Seer wrote to give a word of promise and hope to a rather hopeless people. The thousand years need not be a literal thousand years. But it may signify the longevity of suffering where it feels that it has been there forever while the ruthless oppressor may have just been a mere half-score or fewer years. It is a figure of speech much characteristic of all eschatological literature. How is this all related to the Somhlolo vision? Let us recall that on 16 December 1838 there was a catastrophic event that took place not very far from the borders of the then Swaziland. Professor Kunnie, a South African, describes the day as sombre for the whole South African region.

*Hundreds of black people were massacred on this day by the fire power of the Dutch settler colonialists in a fierce war to retain African ancestral lands ... The Afrikaner ... erected the Voortrekker Monument to celebrate the day and symbolise their gratitude to their God.*

This was their battle of the Blood River (*Impi yase Ncome*). I contend that King Somhlolo heard about that devastating Zulu defeat. He obviously had seen white skinned people with long hair. The word *Belumbi*, according to Kupper, means doers of esoteric deeds. Defeating a Zulu army was a tall order for the peoples of southern Africa in the aftermath of Shaka's *Um'fecane*. It may thus be argued that King Somhlolo's vision was precipitated by the fear of the white threat, yet at the same time seeking that Swazi protection could be better guaranteed by adopting an accommodative attitude rather than the Zulu militancy which has proved counter-productive in the final analysis. This view is supported by Rev. Allison's recording of the Swazi messengers from Mswati II. He wrote in his crude Zulu: "*Ne fimele o muntuana me omtlope, ota gu molondolota ne seve sakhe.*" (Look for a white man ... teacher, for my son. He will preserve him and his nation.)

Those who heard the vision of Somhlolo from the horse's mouth knew that the white man's blood was not to be spilled. The description above indicates that indeed trying to withstand the gun power of the white man would have been suicidal. But the white man can be used to provide protection for the Swazi state against the invaders of the time. Hence, Conrad Vermack was later given vast lands in southern Swaziland to serve as a buffer should a threat appear in the South, as was more than likely during that time. The vision of Somhlolo was thus a warning to be careful of the white threat, a warning indeed to be accommodative and adaptive. It is on points such as these that I have a problem with the view that the vision necessarily ushered in the Christian faith. I cannot accept Dr Ben's theory either that the vision meant Swaziland should accept the teachings of Baha'u'llah. To use the vision for such ideological purposes and decontextualising of the history within which the vision was first pronounced can lead to too many complications. First, the Christian community can feel the urge to claim that the Somhlolo vision meant that Swaziland was ordained by God to be a Christian country. I am sure some of your readers have heard this new nonsense spread by the evangelical rightists that Swaziland is the pulpit of Africa. Such narrow Romanisation of the King's vision, whether based on the events of the late 1940s or recent dreams-cum-prophecies, helps no one in settling the religious wars we are getting into the twenty-first century with.

Secondly, if the vision has been claimed by the Baha'is, as it appears to be so in the writings of Dr Ben, then an equally simmering war is in the offing. The current tensions are worrisome enough. Adding fuel to the fire is to me not expedient at all. My standpoint is clear on these matters. The writer of Acts tells us that after the Holy Spirit had come, they all began speaking in different tongues, praising God. They came from many corners of the world. If we accept this as a principle of praising God, why should it be difficult to coexist with those faiths I do not subscribe to? Who am I to judge? What are the criteria for my judgment? Postmodernists condemn the tendency to judge other cultures using values found in one's own. It's called ethnocentrism, and it's wrong methodologically. Moslems are not anonymous Christians, nor

is everyone born a Moslem. Let us thrive for the coexistence of religions. On this score I plead with the Swazi media to allow other faiths to propagate themselves. It's not competition. It is called praising God.

## THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN RELIGION

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*Drawing from a number of true stories and anecdotes Mzizi addresses the tensions between Christianity and culture in Swaziland. He commends Pastor Justice Dlamini for speaking out on the issues between culture and Christianity, but warns that there are risks in his courageous action. As a result of this article Pastor Justice hated Mzizi and soon after Mzizi's death he calmed to have prayed for him to die.*

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Pastor Justice Dlamini, founder of Mbabane Worship Centre, is again at the centre of a bitter religious storm with traditional authorities after treading on ground where even angels fear to tread. Dlamini is one kind of a preacher. Very daring, bold and always prepared to take the ultimate of religious risks. After he had failed to resurrect former *Times Sunday* editor, Vusie Ginindza, it was like Dlamini's world had crumbled to pieces right in front of his own eyes. He was, however, not the first Swazi preacher to have declared he was able to bring back to life a dead person. In the 1980s Pastor Bheki Gamedze, originally an evangelical preacher but theologically trained in a Pentecostal Seminary in Nigeria, made startling headlines. Like in Dlamini's case, the dead white man of Mbabane did not rise. After that embarrassing episode many questioned Gamedze's sanity. But he did not quit preaching. As a matter of fact, Gamedze is one of the youngest leading evangelists Swaziland has ever produced. He preaches in the manner of Pastor Griffiths Dlamini and Douglas Khumalo, both of whom were his classmates in Nigeria. These preachers are the Oral Roberts of our time. Listen to them to believe my assessment. I do not quite know where Justice trained. The little I know of him is from his writings in *The Weekend Observer* where he occasionally attempts to provide biblical positions on certain matters. His writings reflect a very rudimentary understanding of the Scriptures, a tendency not quite his alone in Swaziland. The late Pastor "Madevu" Fakudze, former religious columnist in the same newspaper, was also very literal and passionate with what the Bible said, without going through the rigmarole of biblical interpretation and exegesis. Fakudze had some training in the liberal arts, but not in biblical theology.

Let me declare a position here, that the Bible is not a book for children. It is not an easy set of material to grasp just at a glance and think you know what is being taught. One of the maladies of missionary Christianity was to teach the Bible to children in Sunday school as though it is a children's book. No, I do not mean to shoot down missionary efforts at spreading the Good News. But there was a lot of disservice to the Holy Book when sophisticated biblical stories were simplified for children in a manner that ended up distorting the biblical truth. What the missionaries taught, therefore, about what the Bible was and its central message, followed the path of infantile simplicity to the extent that when the true story about the Bible is taught



to adults who went through missionary Sunday school training, conflict arises in the mind of the adult learner. Pastor Justice hit the headlines previously when he criticised *Incwala*. That incident reminded me of Pastor Phil Dacre of the Rhema Church who was declared a prohibited immigrant in Swaziland in the 1980s following a pamphlet he had published negatively analysing the *Incwala*. Dacre was the father of the Rhema Churches in Swaziland, otherwise known as Christian Ministries or Fellowships in today's language. As Dacre went to trial, most Swazi pastors turned their backs on him. None was prepared to carry the cross with him. He left Swaziland without incident. His only sin was that he had judged *Incwala* using the Scriptures in a very literal and theologically insufficient manner. He had been very bold and daring to do so. Phil Dacre's trial took place during the sensitive days of the *Liqoqo*. I recall another incident in the 1980s that nearly put two respectable Bishops in prison.

The Bishop of Manzini, Ncamiso Ndlovu, and the Bishop of Swaziland, Bernard Mkhabela, wrote a pastoral letter to the Churches of Swaziland in which they condemned the human rights violations of the time. The two Bishops were harassed, but were never broken in their resolve to stand for the truth. Their letter was considered very seditious by the security forces and the regime they were serving. After several attempts to coerce the Bishops to withdraw the letter, the regime gave up. But it would take a long time indeed for the two Bishops to think of writing a similar pastoral letter in their lifetime. The silence of the church in the midst of gross social sins by the rulers is one of the greatest scandals of the Swazi church today. On the Judgment Day God, the Judge, will not ask just how many churches each pastor built; what were the annual gross takings for free offerings and tithes, how many converts did he or she baptise, how many young couples did he marry; or how many dead bodies did he or she bury? No! I firmly believe that "the Judge will want to know whether the Pastor stood on the side of truth when great social atrocities were committed by the rulers and the ruled."

The Judge will want to know what the church did to feed the hungry, to fight corruption in high places, to preach the message of the coming Kingdom in a world that has lost all hope. Pastor Justice teased Minister Lutfo to go for a public HIV testing in a Big-Bend crusade early this year. The reason for the public testing, according to Justice, was to encourage workers in the Kingdom to go for testing and not be blinded by the stigma, which is responsible for more deaths than necessary in our age. Lutfo was not quite amused, having just recuperated from a nasty illness that nearly saw him knocking on heaven's doors. Pastor Justice's silent indictment on the Minister made his call sound like a public provocation, i.e. using one's misfortune for personal glory. As a matter of fact, I did not quite fancy the call. This time around Justice has come head on with the King, implying that he is a dishonest, double-tongued leader. On the one hand the King claims to be a Christian, walking in the light, yet next to him is a crowd of *muti* men, doers of evil. According to Dlamini, and when accidents happen, read in the context of his utterances, the calamities, the horrendous road accidents we were suffering as a nation at the time of his call, are a visitation by God because our King has not done the right thing.

Our King has not walked the talk. Jim Gama, the strategic defender of traditionalism, came out spitting venom. But Justice could not be deterred. Are we going to say Pastor Justice is a mad man? Was Phil Dacre mad? Were the two Bishops mad? What do we mean by madness here? I offer no solution in these matters, but read the words of Professor of Law, Gamaliel (Acts 5: 35-39) seriously. False prophets die with their lies and their followers disperse as was the case with Theudasarose and Judas. If Pastor Justice is a true Prophet of our time, he will have to face up to the consequences of his mission. He will be persecuted according to the Scriptures. He may even be killed. But the truth he preaches will prevail. As Gamaliel said "... for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" Wise words indeed! The essence of Gamaliel's counsel is not that, in our case, Pastor Justice should seek trouble and brew the storms against him. It is not that he should go to Gama and tell him that he is holier than him because his God is in heavenly places and Gama's principals are on earth. The essence is in the message Justice preaches, the message he should stand firm on and be ready to defend to the point of death. Once he starts engaging in street fights with authorities, the integrity of his message will vanish, and the devil will be in the details.

## **SWAZI PREACHERS SHOULD NOT BE SILLY APOLOGISTS TO COLONIAL CHRISTIANITY**

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*As a result of the teaching of the evangelical churches, which tend to dismiss Swazi culture, most preachers still shun culture, especially traditional marriages and national ceremonies such as incwala, umhlanga and lusekwane and dismiss these as unchristian and evil. In this article Mzizi calls for Swazi preachers to be careful not to perpetuate the legacy of the missionaries and colonisation. He calls for them to be critical of Christianity which colonises people, and rather to bring about dialogue between the culture and religion.*

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Rev. John Zwane and company of the Fellowship Church caused a serious controversy by declaring that traditional marriages are satanic. Zwane is reported as having said that the scriptures condemn such marriages as due to rapist and loser tendencies. His co-pastor Samuel Dlamini emphatically said that traditional marriages are satanic, "and the people who like it (them) are being used by their father who is the devil." Rev. Dumisani Shongwe clearly said that Swazi marriages belong to the devil. According to Shongwe, "ancestors are demons" and as such they have no inkling of what is taking place on earth. Students who have studied anything on the spirit-world know that Shongwe's statement is self-contradictory and shallow for there is a vast difference between ancestors and demons. It is a shameful lack of knowledge to liken ancestors with demons. Knowing of course that both kinds of spirits exist and are recognised as such by the living, how can anyone say that since they are of dead people, they have no knowledge of what is taking place on earth?

The main problem about any discussion of the world of spirits is that it is difficult to prove in an empirical and scientific way that spirits exist. The death of the body does not mean the end of

life because every human being is believed to have a soul and spirit. The soul and spirit can only dwell in a living body. Once the body stops functioning, the two escape into a world, which the naked eye cannot see. Only metaphysics, i.e. theology and philosophy, may attempt to explain the world "over yonder". Jesus said to one of the fellows he was crucified with, "today I shall be with you in paradise!" What is paradise, and where is it located? Scientific inquiry, including NASA revolution, which only a week ago sent a mission to Mars, has not been able to identify paradise, or heaven. This is not because these places are imaginary and therefore non-existent. But it is because they cannot be reached or discerned using modern science or any of the principles of quantum physics.

Metaphysics by its nature presents religious models in highly symbolic language. Heaven may be explained as a beautiful city of pearly gates and golden streets. God may be defined as a tremendous being with the earth only as his or her footstool. Jesus may be described as an advocate of human kind pleading our case with the wrathful God, whose patience for sinful mankind constantly vacillates between imminent judgment and mercy. None of these descriptions are meant to be taken literally. They are simply human creations, which are meant to assist us in understanding certain forms of experience by projecting into our imaginations that which cannot be observed. For example, when the Law of Moses prohibits the creation of graven images, it not only rejects the worship of idols, i.e. gods created by human kind, but also teaches that God cannot be adequately represented in human visual imagery.

In the Science of critical realism, it is the sense of awe and wonder, the sense of finitude and mystery, which are associated with numinous experience in the bid to guard against a literalist interpretation of reality. To claim, therefore, that ancestors are demons is to confuse the existence of good and evil in the spirit world. It is a pity that African religions have been denigrated as primal and therefore very unsophisticated and undeveloped.

Unfortunately when the two received religions (Christianity and Islam) invaded Africa, they came by way of a European and Arab world already wrapped up in foreign costumes. The Christian explorers or missionaries had no idea about the religious sensibilities of Africans. It was thus easy and convenient to relegate African belief systems to the dark world of diabolical spirits. African customs received a similar condemnation. African religions were distorted by the new visitors even before they had the time to understand what Africans really believed. It is these early missionaries and their anthropologists who were first guilty of labelling African belief systems as satanic. What these three Reverend gentlemen were saying in Pigg's Peak was simply uncritically repeating what early missionaries said a long time ago. The missionary matrix of interpreting the Bible has unfortunately gained ground and persisted quite oblivious of the damaging effect of colonial and neo-colonial views on African reality. The said men of the cloth are examples of Africa's internal theological parrots with no sense of developing a meaningful hermeneutic relevant to post-colonial Swaziland. What the gentlemen said has caused such a storm that even the Minister of Justice has condemned them and asked for an apology. The Fellowship Christian Church has not responded publicly on this matter. In

fact, they are not likely to respond because having been aware of the hornet's nest they have troubled, not only should they avoid further damage, but they must protect their membership from unnecessary bashing and public harm.

The Swazi public is not the calm one of yesteryears. If you don't believe me, ask GALESWA Chief Mangosuthu Dlamini. Having said that, we should ask if these three ministers of religion overstepped their bounds by condemning traditional marriages. Were they wrong to teach their followers the doctrine of their church on these matters? Another question is how far should a church or religious group go in enjoying its freedom to propagate its own faith? Should it infringe on the principles and basic beliefs of another faith? To answer the last question first, I should point out that it is now a common thing for church ministers to condemn other religions. Pastor Phil Dacre of the Rhema Church wrote scathingly against *Incwala* several years ago. His matter was taken to court. He was found guilty and sentenced to a term and a fine of some five thousand Emalangeni. Later pastor Dacre was deported as per the recommendation of the High Court Judge. The Christian community did not support Dacre even though some of the things he said are always repeated by Swazi pastors in their sermons preached in private settings. I refer especially to the Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. Last year Swazi clergymen publicly castigated the Baha'i faith and Islam right at Lozitha royal residence. There was a loud outcry from the public regarding the utterances the clergymen had made. The leadership of the League of African Churches in Swaziland who had hosted the annual meeting did not respond, but went on this year to bash the homosexual community. It would appear therefore that there is something about religious people, a kind of sadistic element to condemn and judge other faiths using standards found in one's own faith. It is called relicentrism and has resulted in the so-called holy wars, or jihads; or even the Catholic-Protestant clash of Northern Ireland. Its other manifestations are the now popular slogans of ethnic cleansing which have reared their ugly heads in Bosnia, Rwanda and the former Zaire. Swaziland should take her lesson.

Religious freedom does not mean religious intolerance. The South African declaration on religious rights and responsibilities recognises that African people belong to diverse religious communities, and then calls upon the state to recognise and guarantee the autonomy of those communities. Freedom of conscience for the South Africans means "everyone should respect and practice tolerance towards other people, whatever their religious beliefs, provided that the expression of religion shall not violate the legal rights of others." The right to propagate the teachings of one's faith should be done with utmost sensitivity and respect "for people of other religious communities, without denigrating them or violating their legal rights."

The South African principles have drawn from other global experiences on the question of interfaith dialogue and the coexistence of faith communities. That Swaziland is religiously diverse is not in question. It is sheer demagoguery to argue that Swaziland is a Christian country. The most predominant religion in Swaziland is Swazi traditional religion. This religion has no church, temple or mosque. It does not pitch tents for purposes of proselytisation. But Swazis practice it as a matter of cultural process, consciously or unconsciously. To them ancestors are

the good spirits of family or national heroes who, while they were alive, lived wonderful and admirable lives, lives which were selfless and pro-people. Such spirits are never considered to die, but are always part of the community of the living-dead. These facts about Swazi religion irk many Christian minds. In order to understand what Swazi religion is, they then go to the Bible, instead of consulting what I call the “unwritten cultural text of the Swazis”. It is only in this text that Swazi religion can be properly understood. The Bible is a reference book for the Hebrew religion we call Judaism; and early Christianity, which saw itself as a continuation of the Judaic experience. It is blind pietism and in fact unpardonable imperialism to suggest that the Bible as a collection of specific cultural documents pretends to be intra-cultural, thus standing as a canon that judges all cultures.

If by these comments I have aroused your mental capacity to objectively desire to study matters of Swazi culture and religion, even as it regards to Christianity, then I would be very happy. But if I have aroused a spirit of anger in you, that is still alright. But please do not call me a Satanist. I am a Christian. I do not want my Christian religion to be irresponsibly used to castigate other religions practices it has no business meddling in. Just as much as the Christian religion has its negativisms, for no religion can claim perfection in all things, Swazi religion has its share of negative aspects. I subscribe that religions worth the name have self-correcting safety valves, otherwise they cease to be religions.

## **INDILINGA WAS THE BULLET WHILE UMCULU WAS LEARNING**

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*In this article, Mzizi gets into a debate with fellow intellectual Dr Ben Dlamini on the meaning of Somhlolo's dream which underpins both the religious and political foundations of Swaziland.*

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I hope that our discerning readers were able to tell just where Dr Ben and I part ways in so far as Somhlolo's vision is concerned. Last Sunday, co-incidentally, Dr Ben continued to advance his argument against the spirit of non-inclusivism prevalent in the hierarchy of the Christian fraternity. His point, as was mine, was that the spirit of pride and bigotry certainly does not represent the mind of Christ, and worse still, that any religious intolerance here in Swaziland negates the spirit of Somhlolo's vision. I strongly support Dr Ben's lonely crusade, and wish many more concerned individuals and groups were to join this noble struggle before the attitude of the church leaders deteriorates into callous anarchy and bitter intolerance.

Dr Ben and I hold irreconcilable views on what exactly Swaziland received in 1844. Was it Baha'u'llah or Christ? What attracts Dr Ben to the theory he holds is based on the noble teachings of Baha'u'llah, mainly that all religions are one. There is one God. All former prophets proclaimed a message about this God, and were speaking relevantly to their contemporary's divine messages for humanity at large. That is why Baha'is believe in Christ and Mohammad. So, do they believe in Moses, Zoroastria, including all the major prophets found in the traditions of the so-called major religions of the world? The claim that Baha'is make is that in

our era Baha'u'llah is the last prophet. Ironically Moslems make a similar claim that Prophet Mohammed was the last prophet. And what do Christians proclaim? Christ is the new and last revelation of God. Without Christ, no one can enter heaven. What is impressive in the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the concept of the unity of all religions. As stated above, all religions emanate and point to one deity, the Ground of Being. Dr Ben has attempted to show us that not even our traditional religions are exempt from this scenario. To me that is impressive indeed. I wish Christian missionaries of yesteryears had come to Africa with that understanding of the nature of religions. Unfortunately they adopted a dismissive attitude, and hence condemned African religions in the strongest terms available. Might I add that I am addicted to the radio lessons of Rev. Isaac Dlamini on Sunday evenings? He and Rev. Richard Dlamini are doing a fantastic job of making programmes that are mind-opening and less controversial. In recent weeks Rev. Isaac tackled the question of ancestor worship. Instead of seizing the opportunity to squirt deadly venom on ancestors as many a churchman has done, Dlamini said religion is about choice. People choose to follow a religion because of certain benefits that they gain from it. Here Dlamini dismissed the archaic notion that African religions should always be targeted for denial and condemnation.

The truth about all religious people is that no new religion can influence them as if they are hearing it for the first time. Robertson Smith came to these conclusions a long time ago after conducting extensive research amongst the Semites of the near east. He observed that any new religion must be built on already available sensibilities in order to make sense to the recipient. It is for this reason that when the Missionaries came to Africa, they did not invent for us the names of God. John Mbiti and his followers concluded that all the names of God were anthropomorphic. They were related to human ontological existence, and expressive of a God actively involved in human affairs. Mlentengamunye, for instance, walked the valleys and hills of Swaziland. There is therefore no need to condemn other religions. In fact, I find it a total waste of Egypt; there was blood everywhere. Blood of animals and human beings! I cannot reconcile that God with the one Jesus came to preach about. Jesus did not make much in terms of political liberation from the Roman tyranny of his time. He did not lead a revolution. Moses, on the other hand, would have said, "no" but the God who appeared to him at the veld of Median could not tolerate any oppression of his people. So, if the God of Judaism is the same as the God of Christianity, there are obvious gaps and chasms. Pure Jews of course look at the Christian attempt at finding strings of continuity between the two religions as nonsense. My thesis is that we should learn to accept other religions as they are.

No attempt should be made to change them into our image because that creates a lot of harm. While the historical roots of Islam, Christianity and the Baha'i faith can be traced somewhat to the old Jewish religion; there is no reason to fail to understand that the newer religions are new because something separated them from the mother religion. After all, the entire mother religion did not die. Roman Catholicism did not die after Martin Luther's reformation in the sixteenth century. Respect for other religions should therefore be the same as the respect we hold for other denominations. If we lack respect for the latter, then can we ever have hope for respecting other religions? Finally, what I did not state clearly in last week's article is what I

understand by the symbols Somhlolo saw in his vision. I tried, however, to situate the vision in the context of the unfolding events of the time.

The conclusion I wanted readers to draw was that the southern Africa region was engulfed by a dark cloud. The bloodbath at Encome led the Swazi King to think and dream. I called the precipitating event "the white threat". Somhlolo's strategy was different: Don't attempt to kill a powerful enemy. Instead you must learn from him. I conclude therefore by saying that the *indilinga* (or coin) symbolises the bullet, while the book (*umculu*) stands for learning. You learn the secrets of the white man so that you too may preserve yourself in future. When Queen Gwamile pioneered the education of Sobhuza II, she was living out the vision. And when we put our best efforts into improving our quality or education, even our knowledge of God from all scholastic angles, we would be living out the dream. But when wars and dissension and religious difference surface, it means we have received and are using the bullet, and the dream is lost forever, never to be found, never to have positive meaning for us.

## **MDLULI, ANTI-PAPISM: AN OLD-FASHIONED RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE**

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*In this article, Mzizi takes on Dan Mdluli, a leader in the Seventh Day Adventist Church who had preached an anti-papism sermon, labelling the Pope an anti-Christ. Mzizi takes him on arguing for religious tolerance between devout Protestants like Mdluli and Catholics.*

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It is seldom that I comment on religious issues these days. One of the reasons for my low profile in these matters is that religious debates have the tendency of degenerating into shouting matches. I like debates. But I strongly believe that every sphere of life has conventional rules, one of which is to stick to issues and avoid being attracted to irrelevant factors, e.g. foaming at the mouth about the personality of the person with whom one may have a difference. It is admittedly difficult for some to grow from what I call the cat-and-meat mentality. When a cat is keenly interested in a piece of meat, it sets its eyes on it. As you dip your hand into the meal, the cat watches you without a blink. The minute you lift the piece of meat, trouble sets in. The cat will madly spring into the air seeking to destroy the whole hand and everything around it in its desperate attempts to dispossess the hand that has the meat.

Once the mission is established, the cat will go on its way as though nothing ever happened. Meanwhile, you will be bleeding and cursing your mother for ever harbouring such a vicious animal in the house. My quarrel with this cat mentality is that the cat had made little or no effort to jump for the meat in the dish. Instead, it waited for you to slowly provoke its appetite and diminishing sense of patience. Perhaps some may argue that the cat actually counted on your generous hand. The more food went into your mouth the more the cat saw that its chances were getting slimmer. The cat had to use the last atom of its energy in order to survive. Well, we can argue its case on its merits. Dan Mdluli opened a can of worms last Sunday. In fact I thought that by the time I wrote this column, he would have been asked for a public apology by the Christian fraternity of this country. While I respect the personal views

of any religious person, it is essential to respect the human rights of other religious persons. In countries where the concept of religious freedom is clearly enshrined in the supreme law of the land, religious people know that no one has the right to insult or look down on another on account of their religious beliefs. This is a fundamental principal we find enshrined in many a constitution. Swaziland's Independence Constitution has a section under article 11 of chapter II titled, "Protection of freedom of conscience". In my view the rights contained therein are comprehensive. In fact the tortures of such religious groups as Jehovah's Witnesses in this country are contrary to the spirit of the 1968 Constitution. I hope that Prince Mangaliso will come up with an even more comprehensive document at the end of his doubtful mission.

It is therefore a pity that good Christian people like Mdluli can demonstrate such venomous hatred of the Catholic Church. He has boldly declared that the Roman Pope will be the antichrist following the vicious sponsorings by Washington. Mdluli has made these funny conclusions after reading the *Book of Revelation*. I know the Adventist drive in Mdluli's theology. To be sure, it is an archaic drive, as I shall attempt to indicate. Many thinkers today have outgrown such myopic thinking, and I may be tempted to argue as well that many former sects now have matured to see the complexity and richness of the Christian world. For Mdluli to hold on to original Adventist arguments about the Sabbath and Sunday sacredness, and the doctrine of the dead, is very embarrassing for both modernist and post-modernist theological discourse. If these issues are still central to the theology of the Adventist of this day and age, then I put blame on my colleagues in theology that perhaps we have done precious little to dialogue with sectarian thinking since the Middle Ages or even since post-Victorian times. Mdluli has a young mind, which still needs a lot of education. I can only advise him to step out of the Adventist cocoon and see and face facts four square. Mdluli, apart from his uncouth and disparaging spree on Roman Catholicism, accused the culture of human rights for sowing seeds of confusion. He did not elaborate on the nature of this confusion. This is what he said about women's rights:

*The feeble talk on women's rights is one of the deceptions of the end-time. From time immemorial, God has given his people inalienable rights. Nobody can rise up now to define anew the rights God gave to women, men and children.*

Oh really, Rev. Mdluli! But Mdluli did not end there: "Wife battering should stop, and if it comes to a push, women must force the state to make a law to protect them." What now reverend? But you just said there is no need for definitions. No need for "feeble talk". *Hawu Nkosi Yami!* Okay, go on Minister: "But if women's or children's rights are ends in themselves, then the whole point has been missed." What point good Rev.? "The Bible discusses two golden rules: The law to honour God, and the law to honour our fellow beings as one honours him-/herself." Interesting, sir! But the biblical golden rule is simply that you do unto others as you would that they do unto you. You find this rule in all the textual and most primal religions of the world. Why are you saying the golden rule lies in Jesus' summary of the Law of Moses? Strange! But let us listen to you Reverend, sir:

*... like I said previously, when the present confusion on rights reaches a crisis situation, the whole world will ask the head of the church to intervene. I have mentioned in the past that*



*the Pope [sic] will be given authority to reign head and shoulders above every conceivable world order.*

The United States of America will take a lead in making sure that this becomes a reality. Revelation 13 portrays America as a "lamb-like beast". The Revelator is very clear with the build-up to the point where Satan finally strips himself of the mask he now wears ... Come on Mfundisi, where do you get all this distorted theology from? But let me tell you that such theological nonsense is not new. A brief study of the idea of the antichrist would reveal two major dimensions. First, it is that the antichrist is a power or movement. Secondly, it is that the antichrist is a human who appears at the end of history. Sectarian thinking like that displayed by Mdluli holds onto the second notion. Adherents to this train of thought then become anxious about when the antichrist will make an appearance. That is why we talk of millenarianism movements in religious history. Millenarianism teaches about the dawn of new things at the turn of each century. I am sure the hype is now in the wind as we approach December 31 this year. A lot is already being said about the year 2000. Some believe the end-times are nigh, while others feel that the turn of century will mark a major break-through in such areas as medical science regarding the menacing incurable diseases. But do we know for sure? Literalists like Mdluli will point to the Bible and say the holy book tells them so. I am not sure about that. If I may return to the notion of the antichrist as a movement in history, those who hold this thought are constantly awaiting an immediate eschatological confrontation with the antichrist due to the existential imperatives in which they find themselves. What is therefore antichrist, is not a single individual or entity. It is rather a force that seeks to negate the proper exercise of the Christian faith, the freedom of the Christian, as Martin Luther and John Calvin.

When the reformers made their attack, of course the target was the Roman Pope, hence their discourse could be easily dismissed as essentially anti-papism. Luther, for example felt constrained by a lot of tensions, which we expect of any reformer since Jesus Christ, or even the Prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. The antichrist for Luther was not some distant futuristic figure to make an advent at the end times. The tensions were imminent. So the antichrist was actual in Luther's history as a force to be reckoned with.

John Calvin, on the other hand, with his strong evangelicalism, was weary of Rome's failure to embrace the evangelical doctrine. For this reason, Calvin easily identified the antichrist with an individual Pope of his time. Of course, we should not be blind to the pre-reformation notion of *a papa sit antichristus*, which essentially expressed lots of suspicions about the ecclesiastical powers of the Pope. But, at least for Luther, the papal problem, or shall I even say, the antichrist problem, took more eschatological lines. That is why such thinkers of Christian doctrine as Althaus gave Luther a great pat on the back for elevating antichristism to eschatology. This is the imminence-transcendence principle modern theologians talked about after the Eighteenth Century Renaissance. In these days of inter-religious dialogue, such people as Dan Mdluli are dangerous. We certainly have no reason to be anti-papal today. Vatican II indicated in the 1960s that Rome affirmed the existence of other faiths, not simply as *evangelico praepato*, but as legitimate life philosophies. Is Mdluli prepared to do the same? As for the religious smear

on America, perhaps Mdluli is using another translation of Revelation 13 I am not aware of. Meanwhile, cheer up good Reverend Gentleman. You will meet the Pope in Heaven!

## THE CONSTITUTION AND THE CHRISTIAN CLAUSE DEBATE

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*On 12 May 2005, Swaziland woke up to a historic march organised by church leaders to His Majesty to protest the exclusion of the Christian clause in the Constitution. Christians wanted the Constitution to give space to the supremacy of Christianity in the Constitution and to declare Swaziland a Christian state and the nation a Christian one. In this article, Mzizi writes in support of the church leaders. The march by the church leaders led to an uproar where they were criticised for marching by members of Parliament and other political leaders. They accused them of doing something that was unchristian and also for being political which was seen as contrary to the Christian faith by the Swazi population both Christian and unchristian. In this article, although Mzizi does not agree with the reason for their march, he supports their right to stand up and march when necessary.*

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His Majesty, the King and Prince David, arguably the only identifiable two significant drivers of the constitutional process to-date, must have had a rude awakening on 12 May 2005 when top Clerics belonging to the Council of Swaziland Churches took to the streets to denounce, in a peaceful manner, the constitutional process. I was amazed when I heard some known half-baked so-called pastors condemning the march, arguing from no theological premise that it has been overtaken by events. These detractors were later joined by the House of Assembly, which seemed to have completely missed the whole point as usual. There were ordinary Christians here and there who were also uncomfortable with the strategy adopted by the Council on grounds that it was not different from what the labour unions and the underground political movements have been doing when applying pressure on Swaziland's intransigent regime. What is not clear in this concern is whether it is unchristian to take to the streets to protest a matter of public concern. What I noted is that the Clerics had announced well ahead of time that theirs was going to be peaceful march. In other words, there would be no *toyi-toying* and singing of political songs. They stuck to their word, didn't they? The distinguishing feature of the march was that it was organised and attended mostly by Clerics. I have no reason to doubt the sanity of the Bishop of Manzini, His Lordship Ncamiso Ndlovu, and the Bishop of Swaziland, The Rt. Venerable Meshack Mabuza. They knew exactly what they were doing. As leaders theirs was to execute a mandate given by resolution at the last annual Conference of the Council of Swaziland Churches. I am dead sure that the issue was debated at length before a final resolution was taken.

Knowing the stature of the membership of the Council, and the fact that over 90 per cent of the clergy in this organisation are thoroughly trained in matters of ministry, it is foolhardy for anyone to rush to the media to denounce their action before appreciating the reasons at hand. On the morning of the march on the crack morning show dubbed "current affairs" and manned by Qedusizi Ndlovu and Mlilo, Bishop Mabuza explained a critical point about the

role of the church in society. He talked about the prophetic role of the church. Readers of the Bible are aware that the Hebrew Prophets arose to confront real social issues troubling the people of God. If these issues bordered on social injustice and economic deprivation of the masses, the Prophets spoke the word of the Lord of Israel against the maltreatment of God's people. If Israel was forgetting the principles of the covenant and exchanging Yahwism, i.e. Jewish faith, with the idolatrous gods of the heathens, the Prophets stood up and pointed at the right way Israel should follow. I am not going to even dignify the shallow point about wrong timing. What timing? Whose timing? As an evangelical Christian I have always believed that my God is the God of time. Yes, we may speculate that the Constitution Bill would have long become law had Parliament just rubber-stamped it. After all it was His Majesty's wish to have the Constitution passed before the end of 2004. But the God of heaven is greater than the King of Swaziland. If God delayed the building of the Tower of Babylon by confusing the builders with different tongues, what is the difference between that old biblical story and what the House of Assembly and Senate did at the close of 2004? They started quarrelling over trivial issues in the Constitution Bill. The Christian fraternity was also so deeply divided over the religious clause that no amount of explaining could convince the advocates of this clause that they were putting Swaziland in a dangerous light.

The Christians were speaking in different tongues and Parliament was a confused lot. The consequence of this confusion, coupled with the judicial application by four organisations challenging the constitutional process, has been further postponements of the passage of the Bill. This has led to further expensive appeals to the international community to accept Swazi gradual democracy and ignore the dissenting voices as spoilers of a good party pardoned by royalty. First, Prince David announced somewhere abroad that Swaziland's Constitution would be in place by July. Later and continuing the King has been telling envoys that it will be certainly ready before the end of 2005. Now, those of us who were alive in 2004 have heard that kind of talk before. The delay in passing this Bill lies in the essence of the message the Clerics had for the King. I am so glad that Prime Minister A.T. Dlamini, unlike the House of Assembly, has seen the light in that the letter was addressed to the King, and to the King it must go. The message, as far as I could decipher, is that should the Constitution be passed in its current form, difficult times await Swaziland. If His Majesty believes in the maxim that forewarned is forearmed, and if he is King of the people of Swaziland, he has to take a deep and sober breath, asking what exactly has been wrong with the process. This calls for the abandonment of all political and biased explanations of the *status quo*. Political opportunists would certainly rush to the King to convince him that the Priests are on a political agenda. Should they dare do this, I pray that the Lord should forgive them for they would not know what they are doing.

The King needs proper advice right now in order to get Swaziland out of the impending quagmire. Parliamentarians are reported to have vilified and ridiculed the action of the Council, stopping short of elevating themselves to a position above the King. They said the Priests should pray for peace and leave politics to them! How typical of all regimes with dictatorial tendencies! That is exactly what Robert Mugabe says when a moral voice tries to correct him.

Indeed that is what P.W. Botha said to Bishop Desmond Tutu and the South African Clergy in the 1980s when they tried to correct him at the height of apartheid. Where were these MPs? Wasn't S'gayoyo Magongo reading news and announcing soccer games at SBIS? P.W. Botha's main problem was that he was a Christian. He believed that apartheid was the will of God even well after it had been denounced as a heresy by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in the mid 1980s. I have no doubt that in the current Parliament there are MPs and Senators who believe that *Tinkhundla* is the will of God and, by deduction, the 1973 Decree and King's Proclamation to the Nation are the will of God. What rubbish! The major complaint we have raised since the Draft Constitution was taken to the National Kraal and subsequently to Parliament was that the document is written in a language far above what an average Swazi would understand. Prince David saw for himself that Swazis were allergic to reading the Draft Constitution. That is not to undermine the intelligence of Swazis. Let me illustrate. I am trained in English and in the Humanities. But I cannot take an Engineering textbook written in English and pretend that I am grasping every detail in it.

In my street talk with some MPs, I discover that they have no idea what the implications of most of the clauses in the Constitution Bill are. Most of them cannot see that actually the drafters of the Bill deviated markedly from the Independence Constitution, the Mahlalengangeni Report, and the CRC Report for that matter, to entrench in a subtle way the 1973 Decree. It is therefore not a myth that Swaziland is on a no-change path. But that would be acceptable if it was indeed the will of the Swazis themselves, not the few powerbrokers who shut the nation out at the Royal Villas and produce an engineered document in the name of the Swazi nation. I refuse to be part of that nation. That the process of crafting the Swazi Constitution was flawed from day one is not news at all. All Swazis who cared to listen heard those cries. They saw those boycotts, and they heard the reasons. That nothing was done about the cries does not mean that those who were supposed to do something about them were right to ignore them. I contend that His Majesty deserves to be advised accordingly even at this late hour. The intervention of the Clergy, in my opinion, represents the moral voice, which only a fool should not heed. The book of Proverbs teaches that: He, who ignores wise counsel, does so at his peril. And he who takes heed to wise counsel will be rewarded. The Council of Swaziland Churches, who have not been blind to the constitutional developments of this country since 1992, have indeed brought a voice of prophecy to the King of the Swazis. Let those who have ears listen!

## **PUBLIC PEACE RESULTS FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE, CHRISTIANS MUST ASK WHAT PEACE IS!**

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*On 31 March 1996, Mzizi had written an article calling for Christians to pray and work for peace to prevail in Swaziland. The following week the Rev. Cain Mngomezulu responded sharply to Mzizi's article. In this essay Mzizi was responding to Mngomezulu, clarifying his points on the type of peace that Christians must commit themselves in.*

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“Dissection” responds to Cain Mngomezulu’s letter titled: “Christians need not ask what peace is”, established in *The Swazi News* of 6 April 1996. While I respect reactions of any kind to the views I express in “Dissection”, I felt Mngomezulu could have done a little more justice to my article in *The Times of Swaziland* of 31 March 1996. What he wrote indicates an inadequate reading of what I wrote. Hence he has distorted my argument, and only to this I take exception. Whatever he may say about my views, which he has to be sure he fully understands, it is his opinion only which he is allowed to express. But to distort my argument in a bid to discredit my writing and theological orientation is unacceptable in the world of free exchange of ideas. Riding on my ideas for the sake of perpetuating himself is equally unacceptable. I shall attempt to give a few hints to understanding my article of 31 March 1996. I am not trying to insult the intelligence of my readers at large, but I hope the few, like Cain Mngomezulu, who misread what I wrote, could revisit the article so that they can benefit me with informed critical comments rather than rash and highly emotive and arrogant judgments.

First, the primary motif of my writing was to provide a social analysis of the impact of the Industrial Relations Act of 1996. The context of the analysis was the prayers for peace, which I traced from the *Liqoqo* era to the present time of industrial strife. The historical background I provided was meant to show that the article was meant to be hermeneutical, not exegetical, as Mngomezulu wants to press me. In the discipline of hermeneutics, the analysis of the problem is paramount and essential, and then theological sources are sought. Classical theological thought of the European school from the reformation to Karl Barth, placed theological sources above human experience, but this view has since shifted with the advent of the theology of the oppressed in the First and Third Worlds. This paradigm shift is now truly recognised, even by respected systematic theologians in the West who have begun to question traditional theology on such matters as authority; tradition and Scripture; revelation; human Being (and such sub-themes as human being as social being, teleology and temporality), to name but a few. I am aware that Mngomezulu takes exception to this understanding, but I wonder what he sees wrong with putting the human factor first before the God factor. As an evangelical theologian myself, I see nothing extra-biblical about this; I cannot see the sense of arguing that humanism is in this new paradigm superseding the doctrine of God.

It is rather an honest admission that God cannot be understood outside human experience. This is what I call Anthro-Cosmic Theism placed on a circular plane; as opposed to a hierarchical one Karl Barth would call God as subject, or the supremacy of theistic notions over anthropo-cosmic realities. Secondly, I intended to challenge the Christian fraternity to interest themselves with issues of cause and effect. Prayers for peace presuppose that there is no peace on the land. Before Christians pray for peace, they should ask why there is no peace. To quote from my article:

*... to strive for peace necessarily means that a peaceless situation was obtaining. The causes of peacelessness are always contrary to the common good.*

The context of peacelessness during the *Liqoqo* era is well known and need not be repeated here.

What then is the cause of the on-going tug-of-war between the state and the trade unions? In my opinion, such a climate has been reduced to writing in the Industrial Relations Act of 1996. But I argue that this law is written in ink. The real causes of the uncondusive climate are the human beings behind the law. In short, I am saying the law was passed in bad faith. To prove that it was passed in bad faith, SFTU and this leadership have already been arraigned to answer charges based on this law. This reminds one of the *Extraordinary Government Gazette* of August 1983 which was issued by the then Authorised Person decreeing that the High Court of Swaziland was not competent to issue judgment on whether Queen Dzeliwe's dismissal by the same Authorised Person was lawful or not. That decree compromised the independence of the judiciary in Swaziland, and then Queen Dzeliwe's lawyer, Mr Douglas Lukhele, was detained without charge, joining in the cells Mr Arthur Khoza, the man who had advised Dzeliwe never to transfer her powers as regent to the Authorised Person, and never to sign a statement of her dismissal. It is a pity when laws and decrees are promulgated just for the sake of dealing vindictively with certain elements in society.

Well, in 1993, Swaziland removed the detention without charge law of 1973, also contained in the establishment of Parliament of Swaziland Order of 1978. Although trade union activity has been allowed since the Industrial, Conciliation and Settlement Act of 1963 and the subsequent Trade Unions and Employers Organisation Act of 1966 and the Industrial Relations Act of 1980 which established an Industrial Court to listen to all industrial disputes, the Swazi Government has been hell bent on wanting to prescribe union activity, hence the presence of the Public Order Act of 1963, the retention of some draconian clauses of the 1973 Decree, and the promulgation of the Sedition and Non-bailable Laws since 1993. Responsible Christians need not fold their arms and say they know what peace is. Peace is not that simple, for its proper understanding calls for an honest social analysis, a thorough knowledge of events, so that those structures which have begotten chaos and anarchy are challenged to the core. If a country has passed a bad law, it is not for Christians to bless it just because it has been passed. A simple understanding of peace is the one Mngomezulu displays, which he defines as beginning "from the beginning at peace (on an individual basis) with the one who is the Prince of peace ... an internal peace within the Christian, deriving from an encounter with Christ." Mngomezulu then vaguely asserts that "this is the peace in the Christian; and the peace that the Christian would like to diffuse into society". How the process of diffusion occurs, Mngomezulu does not tell us. To me he sounds superstitious and magical. My theological orientation, however, calls for the Christians to be practical with what they believe. If there is an obstacle to peace which must be removed, it is to display an "infantile" characteristic to ask God to grant the peace regardless of the obstacle which, as God's steward on earth, you can remove. Christians, like Mngomezulu must convince us that they truly understand why Swaziland is in such perpetual chaos. They should not lay blame on the devil as if saying: "It is the entire devil's fault. The devil has entered the SFTU, and the Holy Spirit has brought on the 1996 Industrial Relations Act." Such a view would be naïve and irresponsible.

Thirdly, I attempted to argue in the article that peace is a product of justice. Mngomezulu should understand that I am talking about public peace, not the magical one, which spreads only through the process of diffusion, whatever Mngomezulu means by that. I am talking about public peace, which is sustained by public laws and institutions, all serving the purpose of God, which is good will towards all human beings. Justice, like peace, is earned. It is not a handout from a Father Christmas somewhere beyond the clouds. But we all earn it as per the just laws of the land whereby when our actions are tested against them, we are found innocent or guilty.

The laws must be fair and just first. The judiciary must be independent; according to UN General Assembly Resolutions 40/32 of 29 November 1985, and 40/146 of 13 December 1985,

*the judiciary shall decide matters before them impartially, on the basis of facts and in accordance with the law, without any restrictions, improper influences, inducements, pressures, threats or interferences, direct or indirect, from any quarter or for any reason.*

Is the judiciary free in Swaziland? But I stress that only unjust laws lead to social injustice and that only results in disorder and lawlessness. Every law must have a moral base derived from natural law or divine law. All positive law should be based on the law of nature, or what Sophocles called a long time ago, the laws of heaven. The road to peace must cross four rivers, which I outlined in the article as Confession, Repentance, Forgiveness and Reconciliation. I hope Mngomezulu read this portion of the article. But then I am not talking about private confession, private repentance, and private reconciliation. For public peace to be achieved, public confession up to public reconciliation is expected. The offender in this scenario does not merely go to God to ask for forgiveness and reconciliation, but rather God commands him or her to go and be reconciled to fellow human beings for the sake of the common good. That is why the evangelicals of South Africa said: "Justice can occur only if sin is eradicated in our society." Unjust laws are sinful because they are meant to oppress God's people, and God cannot sit by in compliance when God's people are suffering.

The eschatological peace, which I defined as peace in the midst of adversity, does not produce a complacent enjoyment of peace. No. The peaceful agent here says, "Since I know that beyond the clouds the sky is blue, I shall fight for the removal of the clouds. But such a fight is motivated by the peace which passeth all understanding." In other words, the subject of peace has the memory of the future in the present, the eschatological present, thus an empowering eschaton which calls for the subject to want to change the *status quo* in the name of the justice of God. Cain Mngomezulu, therefore, completely misunderstood me when he said I had called for the attainment of peace first before praying for it. What is astounding is how he could draw such a ridiculous conclusion from what I had written. I hope this explanation of my views, read together with the article, will elucidate and illumine certain points of theology, which Mngomezulu seriously stumbled on.

Finally, I do wish to invite Cain Mngomezulu for a discussion on these issues. Yes I am a liberation theologian, but my theology is not a theology of non-absolutes. I am the one who can tell Mngomezulu what it is. It does not have any claim to superiority, but admits that theological

enterprise is like the pieces of guilt. They are all unique, but together they make up a whole. My Liberation Theology is not the same as that of the founding fathers and mothers of the discipline nor is it the same as that of my contemporaries and age-mates. I have particular experiences here in Swaziland that shape my own thought and reading of the biblical text. I stand on hermeneutical grounds, which dictate that the text must speak to my experience, and I read the text only from the standpoint of my experience. I have no time for armchair traditional theology that emphasised Biblical exegesis following tools imposed by Western scholarship. I trust that when Mngomezulu responds to this treatise, he will not again decontextualise my argument and therefore render his own criticism an exercise in futility. Let him also have the courage to address our socio-political and cultural climate from a theological viewpoint.

## THEY CRY PEACE, WHEN THERE IS NO PEACE

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*In this article, Mzizi responds to a speech that had been made by King Mzwati III who had claimed that Swaziland was enjoying peace because of the legacy of dialogue inherited from the national ancestors. Mzizi argues that silence must not be equated to peace, meaning that in Swaziland it is not that there is peace, it is just that the people are silent.*

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It has been a considerable length of time since I heard people quibbling over what the King meant when he said this or that. It used to be common during the latter days of King Sobhuza II. The reason was that the old King was fond of speaking in parables most of the time. That he was an orator, there is no doubt. You would be glued to him, admiring the commanding tone and rolling siSwati idiom. But after the speech tongues would wag and wiggle: "Did you hear what the King said?" Things would get haywire as millions of explanations would fly around all pretending to tell it like it was. There is this famous story of the foot of Jesus. When thanking the clergy for the success of a Good Friday service, the Monarch admonished them to go and look for the foot of Jesus, as a follow up on some scriptural debate. I suspect that it was in one of those meetings when the Christian clergy stood up to castigate the Jehovah's Witnesses going so far as requesting the King to banish them from the Kingdom of Swaziland. Sobhuza II admonished them: "*Bafundisi hambani niyofuna lunyawo lwa Jesu.*" The message was taken literally. The poor men of the cloth were found scampering all over the mountains and valleys, river-banks and thickets, looking for the footprints of Jesus. Some claimed to have seen these imprints, which were possibly left by nature soon after the volcanic eruptions of yesteryears. All Sobhuza II meant was that true Christians should know the way of Jesus Christ. They should walk and talk like he did.

Then there is this other one of piercing the ear lobes of every Swazi. Addressing a traditional gathering, he warned: "*Onkhe e-maSwati kufanele aklekle lapha etindlebeni!*" The pronouncement was then taken literally. I was a young lad then and I remember how we were chased up and down the mountains by men who said they were carrying out the King's command. Some of these dangerous men had iron punches for drilling the ear lobes. They



were charging by the ear. Again, all the King meant was that the Swazis should listen carefully whenever someone made a submission. Or it could have been that Swazis should return to their age-old cherished custom of respect for authority and others. Little did the King think that some silly literalists would go about distorting his message! I think the reign of Mswati III is slowly taking that trend too. Just this quarter the King said he expects the CRC to be finished with their task by this year's end. The CRC chairman heard another thing and quickly responded by saying "Oh, we all know in Swaziland that a King's speech is written for him by other people! Eh! Eh! Eh! ... But I shall have to approach the King about this very soon!" That was Mangaliso's confusion. Instead of clearing this up soon thereafter, this confusion has powerfully pervaded the CRC since then. As 1999 ticks away, and they hear the King and Prime Minister confirm, without quivering, that the document is due this year, butterflies and wasps flood their stomachs, for the end of the road is near. It is clear to me that either the Mangaliso team finishes or it faces the big whip. If they were clever enough, I mean truly clever enough, to know that one cannot perform beyond one's capacity, God-given or by personal advancement, they should be tendering their resignation letters right now instead of hanging out their tongues salivating for the E30m the toothless Parliament is deliberating on.

On the occasion of his 31<sup>st</sup> birthday, King Mswati III said there was peace in Swaziland, thanks to the spirit of dialogue that prevails in the country. This spirit has come down to us as a legacy left by our national ancestors. The King further pointed out that the function of some of the national events like the Reed Dance and *Incwala* are for promoting national unity and cohesion. The King spoke also in the context of his day, that it had brought many Swazis together to focus on what unites them instead of belabouring on the differences all the time. (There I go too, with my own interpretation of the King's speech. If I should be accused of adulterating it, I make no apologies for this is what I heard!) The fact of the matter is that the King did not speak in parables as his father would have done. He was straightforward. He hit the major points and expanded on them just briefly, and then moved on to the next points. The speech was coherent, flowing and relevant to the occasion, in my opinion. However, the troubling question is what the King meant by dialogue in Swaziland. Does it ever exist? If it does, where and how? That is what was puzzling to me. I think Vusie Ginindza is dead right that here in Swaziland there is the cancerous notion of equating peace with silence, enforced silence to be sure. In fact, in all the definitions of peace that I know, none fits the Kingdom of Swaziland. I shall elaborate.

Peace is a sacred word. Many cultures since time immemorial have tended to ascribe peace to the deity, the God idea, the Great Spirit, which is responsible for all created existence, the sustenance of life and the good fortune that should belong to all merely because all are created as a consequence of the Great Spirit. At the King's birthday last Monday the Band played: "When peace like a river attendeth my soul. It is well with my soul!" That song talks of inner peace. In the Pauline tradition, that is the peace which passes all understanding. You feel this peace in your essence of being, in your soul, and you exude it for others because once it is in you it cannot be detained in your personal satisfaction. It has to go out and infect others for the joy of all and the glory of God. In this sense no Man or Woman can tell me that I have peace. I

know it when I have it, and I know it when I have lost it. It is disturbing to use this sacred notion for ideological purposes. One such statement I have heard so many times since my tender years is that Swazis are a peaceful nation.

Swaziland is a peaceful country! May I declare that I completely disagree? If I should say this and be hanged, so be it. Peace to me is not relative. It is absolute. It is either there or not there. If there are small pockets of it, they possibly are pretences to peace, thus signifying that the potential for existence of peace is there. That Swazis take long to act should not be interpreted otherwise to mean that they do not know when they are wronged, that they are therefore foolish and naïve. *Atsi emaSwati awulali Ngwane Kulala emehlo!* There is a lot of sense in that statement. To me it means that you cannot hoodwink Swazis with woolly ideology like they have peace when they know that there is no peace. Peace cannot dwell in a place where no justice is. The two are brothers and birds of the same feather.

The system of governance in Swaziland is a cause for concern for all of us. Even the King is aware that there is social discontent. Otherwise we would not be having the CRC and the Obeds and Jans of this land. Some Swazis have not experienced peace here. They are still searching for it. Unfortunately as they search, the elements of anarchy loom large and define for them the boundaries they should walk and encircle. I see a spirit of rebellion lurking in the horizon shouting like Isaiah: "They cry peace, peace, when there is no peace!" I see the judgment of God dealing heavily with Swaziland. But the chance is still there. All Swaziland needs to do is to confess her sins before God. Swaziland should admit that indeed the peace she is advocating and saying is there, in reality is not. *Tinkhundla* peace as an ideology is far different from the peace, perfect peace, which comes only by invoking the Prince of peace, Jesus Christ, to be the positive influence in our political community. We cannot have peace when such cops as the station commander of Manzini are always ready to unleash angry young lions on innocent protesters walking down the streets of Manzini. While I believe Agrippa Khumalo is a good person, for I have known him for a good number of years, I feel the Swazi state is wrong to use him to pounce on innocent citizens, and then hand him a king's award for his dirty job. This is wrong. What's right is to have peace coupled with justice.

## **THE CHURCH FAILED TO ADDRESS THE *STATUS QUO***

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*In an article, reflecting on the national prayer that had been hosted by the church, to pray for the nation, Mzizi criticises the church for not being prophetic.*

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Last Sunday's important national prayer has come and gone. The real issue is not that once upon a time in the aftermath of a devastating mass action, the King called the Christian fraternity to give thanks to God almighty for ending the strike on its seventh day. Neither is the issue that the prayer session was organised by Swaziland's three ecumenical church bodies, so hurrah! And we can now fold our arms or kick our heels in celebration. It was of course conspicuous in

last Sunday's meeting that our church leaders were afraid to call a spade by its proper name. Instead of delivering clear-cut prophecies of God, they tended to preach the obvious "Be Born Again" message. This in fact was ridiculous to say the least when we consider the fact that the King had called Christians for a specific reason. The gospel of salvation has its place in Christian witness, but messengers of God must discern what needs to be said and how, all depending on the situation and context at hand.

The King did not dilly-dally. He had called the prayer meeting because his Kingdom had experienced a shaking mass stay-away. During the stay-away investor interest in the Kingdom was affected; millions of Emalangenis were lost; there was tension resulting in casualty cases in the nation; so the whole national mix-up smacked of the devil's crafty hands. There is no question that the King's address was not an attempt at a logical and objective analysis of the situation. If it had been such an attempt, then the activities of Government, and in particular the labour Ministry under Mr Albert Shabangu, should have come under the spot light; and involvement of Parliament right up to the King's office on the question of the amendment of the Industrial Relations Bill. "Dissection" still finds it totally unpardonable that a Bill whose primary purpose should have been to harmonise the already falling industrial relations carries provisions that are totally anti-harmony. And especially that the major stakeholders in the names of the unions and the federation of employers' opposed the passage of the Bill in its current state, but nevertheless the Bill went through all the stages to become law.

These are the things the Christian fraternity should pray about. Why should we pass draconian laws in this era of reconciliation following the demise of the eastern bloc and the end of the Cold War; and more importantly for our region, the death of apartheid? If apartheid sowed seeds of racial strife in South Africa, seeds that spilled over the ethnic corridors, why should we even dream of dividing a small nation such as ours into two categories: the unionists who want to overthrow Government and the monarchy, and the loyalists who support the *status quo* without question simply because their King is part of the *status quo*. We should not forget that it was at the height of the industrial misunderstanding that royal assent to the Bill was granted. One, therefore, expects that an objective analysis of the problem, an analysis which should not be privy to Cabinet and SFTU, but to the public so that Christians may understand what exactly is going on, should have preceded the prayers. I think God expects his people to be properly informed about issues, not to resort to the old missionary style of relegating every problem, understood or misunderstood, at the door of heaven and expect God to take care of everything without knowing what everything is all about. A proper social analysis is necessary, for indeed Hosea was right that the lack of knowledge does indeed lead to the death of the people of God. It would be a pity, if not logical suicide, for the Christian fraternity to think that the King had called them in order to be spiritual supporters of the faction that is anti-SFTU. That is what we would expect from a clergy that is not called of God, but always ready to bless all social evils.

In this connection, the sermon of Rev. Andreas Sikhova Msibi must be accepted. Rev. Msibi emphasised that the nation should not just humble itself before civil authority at the expense

of speaking the truth. The rulers of this world must hear God's truth, and the clergy should not compromise the truth at the expense of evil devices by the state. As Rev. Msibi preached, I was reminded of Proverbs 20:25 where the wise writer said: "It is a snare for a man to say rashly, 'It is holy, and to reflect only after making his vows'." This saying calls upon all responsible prophets of God not to act rashly to bless or condemn situations before properly analysing them. In "Dissection" last week I observed that it is a rare occurrence for rulers to call upon true prophets of God to do the prophecy in their presence. While we commend the courage of His Majesty to summon the Christian fraternity to national prayers, we are not sure if the speakers are not censored and selected beforehand where they are briefed on what to say, or what not to say. If there is no formal censorship, then we may ask if self-censorship is not exercised by the speakers. Self-censorship involves speaking only those things that are bound to sound nice to the audience, and hence the popularity of the speaker is enhanced, and the prophet is nothing more than a stooge of the state as the case may be in Swaziland.

Self-censorship is exercised by opportunistic speakers or preachers who may be vying for political favour at the expense of speaking the truth. The truth of God, on the other hand, is always harsh, always frank and forthright, always uncompromising. It is in this light that true prophets of God from Biblical times up to the present cannot be bed-fellows of the state. There is a neat distinction between their function and the expectation of the state, and the two somehow never meet. That is why the prophet of God should be unrelenting on the call for social justice. "Dissection", however, does not condone the religious bullying in matters of public policy we usually see in American democracy, especially the role of the religious majority in times of election, and on questions of morality in certain controversial matters. A Christian can speak the truth according to biblical imperatives, but avoid taking centre stage in the political process. The words of John F. Kennedy pronounced in 1960 are true indeed. He said:

*I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute – where no Catholic Prelate would tell the President, should he be a Catholic, how to act; and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.*

The quantitative difference between what Kennedy said and what I am arguing is that Kennedy wanted the state to be protected from denominational parochialism, which would further polarise the American society. I am arguing for the church's intervention in socio-political and economic issues strictly on non-denominational grounds; where the church is not concerned about running for political office, only preaching the truth according to God's word. This can be achieved through the marshalling of the Christian voice so that one body is given the mandate to express the voice of the church in society. I am in support of Bishop Mavimbela who called for a National Christian Council of Swaziland churches in 1990. Perhaps in 1996, when the three church bodies hold their general conferences, they will deliberate on this matter very responsibly. We are not calling for the dissolution of these bodies for they indeed have much to contribute in their various sectors of existence, but for their unity. Swazis should not go

from door to door looking for the voice of the church on certain critical areas. Apart from the evangelistic agenda of the church, is there no way of addressing socio-political concerns so that church members are better informed about their world? What is the role of the Christian church in our political community? I plead with the Conference and the League never to ignore these issues for the sake of holistic evangelism.

## CHURCH AND THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

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*In this essay, Mzizi criticises Pastor Justice Dlamini who had claimed to raise famous journalist Vusie Ginindza from the dead. Unfortunately, Vusie did not rise from the dead. In this essay, Mzizi looks at the issue of the church and false prophets. After Mzizi's death, Pastor Dlamini admitted to newspapers to have prayed for Mzizi's death and claimed that his death was caused by those prayers.*

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It has been a few months now since Bheki Makhubu, editor of this magazine, came hard on Pastor Justice Dlamini of Mbabane for the strange ways Dlamini seems to interpret the basic teachings of the Christian faith. I do not know if Makhubu's criticisms rang a bell in Dlamini or any of his many followers. As somebody who should know that he is a public figure out of his own personal choice, and made in his own personal image, he should have listened carefully, instead of dismissing Makhubu as yet another agent of Satan sent to derail the "perfect" Pastor from "true doctrine". Makhubu's most serious problem with Dlamini started when the latter publicly claimed that he would bring the late Vusie Ginindza back to life after he had died. The whole nation was taken aback, and while mourning the death of Vusie was on everyone's mind and spirit, people wondered who on earth was this Justice Dlamini? Was he on a publicity stunt, or simply just a mad preacher? The heart of the nation went out to the late Vusie's family and relatives who had to deal with the reality of the passing on of their loved one so early in life. Vusie had been ill for at least five months and Pastor Justice was well aware of this all the time. If God had wanted to heal Vusie, why couldn't it be done during those months?

The maddening talk of Vusie's resurrection by Pastor Justice at such an inopportune moment was hurtful to many a folk albeit that it bordered on extreme lunacy, to say the least. Something touched me in Makhubu's diatribe against Dlamini. He said something about how the late Vusie had written a cheque paying his tithes to Pastor Dlamini's Church and in the process forgot to append his signature obviously due to the state of health he was in. The Pastor is said to have rushed to Vusie, who was at that time bed-ridden, frail and in constant pain. Vusie had to correct that mistake so that Pastor Justice could smile all the way to the bank. Reading that sad account, I thought it was grossly immoral for any church minister to take the last penny from a dying man in the guise that it was God's money. We all know that banks are commercial institutions here on planet earth. There is no bank in heaven over yonder, except to some of our prosperity preachers when they try to be too metaphoric and highly imaginative during their fund-raising motivational sermons in church. Churches are supposed to be providers of life, not

deprivers in the name of the holy God of the little that believers have. The God of love knows that money collected in church is used to finance church programmes and projects.

One of the major projects of the church is to take care of the poor and the sick. Buying fancy cars and building state-of-the-art churches is not a priority of the church. At least the humble man of Galilee whose life inspired the founding of the church never bothered about material wealth and living a cosy lifestyle here on earth. When a church takes away from the poor and needy, especially at a desperate time when they are about to expire and leave behind orphans and widows, such a church makes the God of heaven a thief. I do not care how well such churches may theologially justify that action; it just completely misrepresents the God I know. Pastor Justice owns and runs a personal ministry dubbed "The Worship Centre" with its headquarters situated in Mbabane. Hardly ten years into the ministry, there have been serious breakaways, the major and perhaps the latest being the Nhlanguano branch of The Worship Centre. Breakaways are not uncommon to all the new churches found in Swaziland these days. The source of most disputes usually revolves around money and power relations in the ministry in question. Furthermore, doctrinal emphasis of these new innovations is markedly different from that of traditional denominational or historical churches. When all is said and done, the most outstanding feature of most of these new churches is the stature and position occupied by the founder leader of the ministry concerned.

In purely descriptive terms the leader exercises leadership akin to that of traditional chiefs. At the end of the day it is the word of the founder that must prevail. This voice unfortunately masquerades as some sort of theocracy in the sense that the view of the founder leader is taken as divine. It is all too easy for founders of ministries to parade the notion that God is on their side, and that what they believe and command is directly from God. A dissenter or anyone who may question such a command is easily shown the door before they have the time to pollute a lot of others and thus threaten the authority of the leader. While such a characterisation may not be entirely representative of all leaders of new churches, Pastor Justice, I am afraid, fits the bill in ways beyond dispute or measure. The evidence is in his own writings. He claims to write with such authority that many biblical scholars would dismiss as too literal, lacking the sophistication and energy the word of God has exuded over the past centuries.

In his column in *The Weekend Observer* of 9 July 2005, Dlamini made startling and telling statements all geared to supporting his personal view that Swaziland must adopt Christianity as its official religion. Quite aware and perhaps panicking that those who argue for Christianity to be adopted as the official religion of Swaziland are, realistically speaking, standing on shifting sands, he wrote the most bizarre statements I have read in modern times. If Dlamini was living in the middle ages, he would be facing the burning furnace to be burnt at the stake for uttering highly volatile, irresponsible and heretical statements, unfortunately misrepresenting the true message and spirit of the Christian faith in the process. He made the preposterous claim that it was his prayers with his kind that control the socio-political trends of Swaziland as proven by the composition of the current members of the Government, including the King's advisory

bodies. These are claims he obviously cannot prove, except that making such a claim in the writing was meant to somewhat bribe the country's authorities.

Pastor Justice wrote:

*When the Pastors decided that Christianity should be the official religion, I knew there and then that those who will oppose it are destined for the grave. It cannot be otherwise.*

*No one has ever opposed the agenda and counsel of Jehovah and continued to breathe. I am speaking this under the function of the Holy Spirit and know for sure that because the Constitution has already been dedicated to God, by the Christians of Swaziland, who happen to represent the God of heaven, many are bound to fall because of this historic document.*

*May those who have ears heed the warning of the Holy Spirit? It was the Finger of God, not man that put the clause that declares Christianity as the official religion. It is therefore the Finger of the same God, which will rise and destroy all the opponents of that clause ...*

What Pastor Justice is not aware of is that he does not own God. He cannot even pretend to tell us that the God of the Christians is so small as to fit into his own vessel of thought, that whosoever fails to conceptualise God in his manner is therefore doomed.

It is sobering and at the same time pathetic that Pastor Justice was present at Lozitha when King Mswati III spoke great words of counsel against religious bigotry and intolerance. The kind of extremism Dlamini displays is not fundamentally different from that of the Al Qaeda. Dlamini is speaking the language of death in the same manner as Islamic extremists do. What he needs to do now is to take action and start killing those who oppose the controversial clause in the Draft Constitution. My reading of events is that King Mswati III is not for the inclusion of this clause and that is why he has asked the clergy and the MPs to think carefully about this clause. According to Pastor Justice, our King is bound for the grave. This of course includes all of us who have tried to argue that Christianity needs no legislation for it is the religion of grace, free grace and God's power. If Paul preached so hard for the separation of the law from the Gospel, why should the likes of Pastor Justice nearly a thousand and fifty years later advocate for legalism, disregarding all historical events involving Christendom in the intervening years since the second century AD? I did not mind the views and misgivings of Ndvuna Dlamini in the same weekend edition of *The Observer*. Ndvuna is afraid of the cults and therefore thinks that the preference of a Christianity clause would solve that problem. Ndvuna would be the first to admit that his argument lacks a simple social analysis since, after all, the freedom of religion clause based on Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not without limitations, not in our Constitution Bill, not even in international law.

Dangerous religions which compromise the rights and freedoms of others, including the security of the state, cannot be allowed to practice under the guise of the freedom of religion clause. The UN Human Rights Committee has given eleven useful comments on the freedom of religion clause. I would advise Ndvuna to carefully read them as a student of social science. I am worried that Pastor Justice has turned into a loose cannon. I mean this in a literal sense. To speak the language of death so blatantly and be received with a deafening silence by the

Christian majority is to me not a small matter. To be sure, I was hoping that if this country has a vigilant security system he would have been called to answer somehow. He cannot use the Christian faith to promote his own ideas and claim to be God's prophet unless he has other ideas about himself. Some of us are aware of man-made gods and self-made gods, and we have heard this kind of talk before. Swaziland is warned!

## THE CHURCH HAS A ROLE IN THE MASS STAY-AWAY IN JANUARY

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*Drawing from the story of Martin Luther King, Mzizi challenges the church to participate in political marches.*

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The celebrations of the life, times and message of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. reached its highest peak last Monday in most American Universities, seminaries and churches. The presence of American Cultural Centres in most countries of the world ensures that more people than Americans take time to remember Dr King, and those that may not have heard anything about him are exposed to opportunities where they may learn about him. As I was reflecting about the message of Dr King, especially what it means for my theology and praxis, I recalled that when I first wrote about liberation theology in my column with *The Observer* titled "New Horizons", I managed to create more enemies than friends. Most of my critics were suddenly amazed, wondering if I had abandoned my Christian confession and opted for a political path instead. I was at pains trying to explain that Liberation Theology is an exactly biblical theme and there are no two ways about it. In fact when I first read materials and texts on Black Theology in the mid 1970s I wondered why the church had been so apathetic about socio-economic and political issues. It dawned on me as never before that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was concerned with the entire life of God's children. This God never elevated spiritual matters over physical or worldly matters, or vice versa. God was concerned with the full circle of human existence to the extent that no corner or portion of life was without God's attention. I recalled how it was in March 1990 when we assembled church leaders at the University to discuss a relevant theology for Swaziland. The very extreme evangelicals rejected the idea of a relevant theology claiming that Swaziland did not need a new theology. To be sure, no one had talked of a new theology.

The conference had pointed to the need for a relevant theology in the sense that what the church had believed and practiced heretofore needed a careful analysis in one light of the realities of life within the context of Swaziland. Following that conference we were branded as communists. The security forces worked round the clock to establish if we were connected with underground political activity. Their investigations and interrogations came to nought. But more interestingly, a women's Christian movement held a prayer meeting somewhere in the Mankayane sub-region. A prominent member of this movement asked the meeting to remember Mzizi in their prayers, for Mzizi was going about distorting the gospel under the guise of a relevant theology. This person had attended the University Conference. Meanwhile at the University, rumour had



it that some powerful individuals were uneasy with the March conference and the Liberation Theology course in particular. We took all these threats and open harassments as necessary tests in the path towards the embrace of the biblical theme of liberation.

It was not easy, for indeed no sane individual wants to always be on the notorious side of the national population. For one thing, one's chances of getting good employment become slimmer by the day; and one's favour with one's authorities just waxes cold the minute the authorities hear that one is becoming outspoken on some issue. This was our experience at the University. The conference had triggered the wagging of tongues in certain closets and, since the University community is so small, we got to hear that we had become undesirable elements in the community. It is painful for me to write about these things. In fact, I can be even graphic with detail and description. But then it occurred to me that there are people who are always allergic to change. These people reject the political aspect of the Bible and tend to spiritualise all the areas where God acted in truly political or military fashion. The blind spiritualisation of the Bible stories renders any meaningful interpretation historically and factually void. To be sure, such spiritualisation borders on stunting the growth of the church by spreading purely heretical matter, to be blunt.

There are, therefore, many Christians and erratic leaders who think Liberation Theologians are merely politicians who try to hide under the cloak of religion. If there are such theologians, I am glad I am not one of them. Our early critics spared us no punches in accusing us of being influenced by such perverted theologians as Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. The debates were fierce. But somehow it dawned on me that replying in the press may not be the best strategy. Those critics who identified themselves made life easier because we could meet and clarify issues with them. Such encounters were growing sessions for me because constructive criticism helps in shaping and re-shaping one's position, and also in the articulation of basic beliefs. Those who decided to remain anonymous robbed us and themselves of such golden opportunities. As we celebrate the life and message of Dr King, I really wonder how many Christians honestly believe that King was a Christian. If they have written him off as a Christian, I wonder what they think he was.

All leaders, I mean honest, outspoken and courageous leaders, constantly worry about false impressions and perceptions about who they really are. Jesus Christ worried about the same issue. We have read in the paper that some people have praised Mr Jan Sithole for being a Messiah for the workers. Some even see Jan as a potential non-Dlamini Prime Minister of a Swaziland under a constitutional arrangement. Yet there are some who view Sithole as a false Messiah, a rabble-rouser and dishonest man. Whatever they say about Mr Sithole goes a long way to strengthening him in his career. Only wise leaders survive hard criticism. And by survival here I don't just mean refusing to be destroyed by criticism. I mean continuing to love and do good even for your worst enemies and bitterest of critics. That is the message Dr King gave us. In his quest for a meaningful faith, King pondered over the best method that would deal a death-blow to evil in society. His primary influence was of course the social gospel movement

of which Walter Rauschenbusch and Harvey Cox were the earliest spokespeople. In this quest King realised, as if for the first time in his life as a Baptist member, that "The gospel at its best deals with the whole man, not only his soul but also his body, not only his spiritual well-being but also his material well-being."

*A religion that professes a concern for the souls of men and is not equally concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them, is a spiritually moribund religion.*

To King Christianity was not such a religion. We ask ourselves, therefore, that if Christianity is not exclusively concerned with the souls of humankind (I mean biblical Christianity), then who has the right to wedge a line of distinction between the spiritual and worldly function of the church? Such a dualism exists in Western thought and has origins in Greek paganism. Despite certain influences of Greek thought on Christianity, the Judaic idea of a God who is concerned with the whole man still prevails in classical biblical Christianity. Finally, "Dissection" wants to pose the following question: Is the impending chaos of the week we have just begun not a business for the church also? I feel it is. The church should have made a united effort to broker the talks of the defending parties, reminding each party of the responsibility it must have on society and all the people of God.

A mass stay-away is certainly a nightmare for all nationals, including our royalty and the top government officials and politicians. It is not wise to add fuel to the fire when already it is clear that we are approaching disaster of a high magnitude. The same case applies to the teachers' strike. Here we do not need fingers pointing here and there. All parties concerned should sit down and talk. This battle in the press smacks of some kind of competition about who has said a bad word against who, and does not help the nation. Perhaps it is time our King reviews his present Cabinet. His Majesty should know that this Government commands no respect. I do not know if they respect him. If His Majesty should think these strikes and threats of students are just a passing fad, then I would be disappointed. His Majesty needs to form a new Government of citizens with a political vision. I do not mean people like Waqunga whose excellence as a headmaster bears no correlation to political performance. I am talking of people with a proven political record of sorts. That is what His Majesty needs and the time is now. We do not need potential dictators, or people who would intimidate citizens into submission. But after all, this is Swaziland. Everything is possible here, even to ignore simmering problems. I rest my case.

## **SWAZI BISHOPS JUST TOO NICE TO THE PRIME MINISTER**

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*Mzizi continues to criticise the church leaders of Swaziland for not speaking truth to the Prime Minister as they should.*

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We are following with increased interest the positive economic developments the Prime Minister is launching, of course keeping his word, which he made in his Policy Speech of 16 August

1996. Mr Dlamini clearly stated that while the constitutional review process continues there will be focus on our ailing economy. This was a very insightful and intelligent submission, especially in times like these when Swaziland is at the brink of a cruel economic disaster. The Prime Minister is certainly the right person to address these issues in a professional manner, judging from his performance at Finance and the work experience in the World Bank. I therefore welcome the National Development Strategy, which the Prime Minister is trying to implement as one of the dreams of His Majesty, the King. The vision of NDS is futuristic and may not deliver desired short-term dividends. But government in years to come will have a guide policy as opposed to all our governments since April 1973. I only hope that the human rights agenda will be upheld throughout.

The recently launched Economic and Social Reform Agenda is yet another step in the right direction. It is an agenda pregnant with all possibilities and, like the well meaning but ambitious Policy Statement of 16 August, we can only hope that the Prime Minister's dreams will thrive. It needs a watertight team and climate if it should see the light of day. It is remarkable that our Prime Minister is a staunch Christian. This is of course unusual since we have had the likes of Princes Maphevu, Bhekimpi and Obed. I am not aware of the faiths of Mabandla and Sotsha, but I would not be surprised to learn that they too are Christians. In the Cabinet since 1993, most of the ministers are strong believers. I have in mind Rev. Absalom Dlamini, pastor of a dynamic Tabernacle Church in Manzini; Rev. Prince Mahlal'egangeni, Mr Themba Masuku, Prince Mbilini and others. While it is not for me to uphold Christian morality, as superior to other forms of morality, the least I can say is that it is gratifying to have a Christian Cabinet of God-fearing individuals. How they fear God is their business, but their public officer will certainly demand a good dose of their religious sensibilities.

The Prime Minister invited people of the cloth to grace the swearing-in ceremony. Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu and Bishop Zulu were present. At the launching of ESRA, again Bishop Ndlovu made a presentation and offered a prayer. Others who were present include Rev. Nyawo, the current leader of the Swaziland Council of Churches. What is the significance of all this? Let us also not forget that Rev. Sikhoya Msibi was asked to lead a prayer at the National Cattle Byre on the day of the announcement of the new Prime Minister and the Constitutional Review Commission. Is this an expression of national faith in Jesus Christ, or a Christianisation of our political and socio-economic process? Or is it another way of colonising the Swazi to accept willy-nilly programmes that have seemingly been blessed by the church? It is not new for states to want to control and use the church for political mileage.

The result in history has been the rise of Christendom and the rise of state-sponsored churches. Whatever can be said about this, it carries a host of negativism in the area of Christian witness. When one mixes church programmes with state ideologies, the result almost always is the compromising of the church ministry. While I do not quarrel with inviting the clergy to play at political meetings, it is important for the clergy not to compromise their calling as God's prophets to all humanity and governments by blessing certain ungodly things. It is an open

secret that the famous Rev. Billy Graham of the USA was once called by Washington's Pentagon to bless the Gulf-War. No matter how noble the war may have been in the eyes of George Bush and some Americans, Christians cannot justify and with a clean conscience bless a situation where God's people will die. It is theologically impossible to equate the love ethic of Jesus of Nazareth and military violence. I am however, aware of the just war theories, of the Covenant Code the Israelites developed as they were flouting the Ten Commandments. Jesus came to reform such a relaxation of the Mosaic Law. On the other hand, the Prime Minister should know that by involving church ministries in state programmes, other religious faiths might see this as a political ploy to privilege Christianity above the rest. This can lead to religious bickering and tension in the country.

The argument that Swaziland is Christian country is only sensible if it means that a majority of Swazis who are concerned with matters of religion are Christian. But it does not refute the tensions and divisions within the Christian community as a result of denominational affiliation and doctrine, nor the presence of other religions in the land. The Swazi church is a divided lot, despite visible efforts at cultivating the ecumenical spirit. To have a Christian Cabinet, therefore, has its strengths and drawbacks. Yet it remains for the present Cabinet to ask: To what extent can religious worship and confession be allowed in state and purely political meetings? The Christian clergy should likewise ask themselves if their being co-opted to pray for political meetings has no ulterior motives; motives damaging to both the clergy as prophets of God and the gullible public that might willy-nilly accept church blessed politics and programmes, thereby bordering on being spiritually blinded or brainwashed. I am fully aware than I am shaking a hornet's nest.

Many Christians will think that it is suitable and indeed reverent to God to ask the church to bless state programmes. But is it not equally true that once the church becomes an ally of the state the devil is in the details? Is it not true that there are millions of pastors out there who would not dare criticise the state because of a misreading of Romans 13 where Paul asserts that all authority is God ordained? Soon after the launching of ESRA, church leaders, mostly of the Council of Swaziland Churches, paid a courtesy call to the Prime Minister. Of course these calls have nothing to do with being polite to the Prime Minister. Most of the requests that groups have made so far are but repetitions of what we have been hearing all along. The PM has also learned to reply to the different groups with one answer, especially on the 1973 Decree. It has been a monotonous answer, which I doubt scores any political points for the PM. Once people make one and the same cry, as one in leadership, you are expected to say that this is an urgent request, which needs attention. To always say that the Constitutional Commission will review the 1973 Decree, which denies the citizens freedoms of speech, association and assembly, is to lack political innovation.

The terms of reference of the Commission, including the one on the denial of group submission to the Commission, are not written on stone. Neither did they ascend with angel Gabriel from heaven. They were written and canonised by humans, and as humans ourselves, we say they are

defective and urgently need revisiting before the start of the constitutional exercise. If the Prime Minister still doesn't get the message, then he may be accused of selfishness as he pushes his flamboyant economic programmes at the expense of public peace of mind and comfort. Listening to the church leaders talking to the Prime Minister was interesting indeed. The Catholic Bishop repeatedly said the church was willing to work with government. I thought to myself that the Bishop was being unnecessarily nice to the Prime Minister. Upon this background, the plea to move the 1973 Decree was placed on a soft foundation. That is why it was easy for him to dismiss the request in his usual way. He knew that he was in a church service where he had to listen to the submissions of the preacher not a political meeting. I expected the church leaders to tell the PM that it was against the will of God to enslave people with some outdated pieces of legislation, and that God would punish the Swazi state for continuing to suppress dissenting voices and torture school children who are trying hard to express themselves. I expected the clergy to tell the PM that they cannot in the name of God work in an evil state that denies voice to the people it purports to govern. The PM should have walked out of the meeting having heard the prophetic "word" of God. It is God who cannot condone differential treatment, whether sponsored by culture or custom. To treat women as lesser beings is inconsistent with the equality and integrity of creation. Rev. Dlamini of the Methodists should have told the Prime Minister that the church is now changing the mourning period in the name of God, and one can resist the will of God and live to tell. All I am saying is that prophets of God do not negotiate with mortals the will and word of God. It is prudent for the church to obey God, knowing that it is expected to be God's mouthpiece in society. No government, regime or state should be allowed to domesticate their church. Our bishops and clergy were with the head of government and I wondered what Prophet Jeremiah, Hosea, Zachariah, said if they witnessed the meeting. I wonder what Jesus said?

## **BETWEEN GOD AND CEASER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KING AND EARLY MISSIONARIES IN SWAZILAND**

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*In this essay, Mzizi looks at the interaction between the Swazi kings and the early missionaries and how this set the foundation for the interaction between church and politics in Swaziland.*

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The month of July is our "holy" month here in the Kingdom of Eswatini. There is Christian activity everywhere, of course, more than usual. This time around we are reminded of two former monarchs who played major roles in the advent and later establishment of the Christian religion in Swaziland. They are Somhlolo and Sobhuza II. It is important to mention that King Somhlolo is famous for the dream he had, and Sobhuza II is important because much of Christian proliferation took place during his era as both a minority and majority. While I continue to argue or quarrel with what I consider to be a farfetched interpretation of the dream attempted by Dr Ben Dlamini, I feel not much attention is paid to two other monarchs who played equally important roles in the early stages of the advent of Christianity. These are King Mswati II and Queen Regent Labotsibeni. Mswati II was crowned at a very tender age, something that readily

reminds us of the coronation during our times of our present King. He is said to have been a militant, no nonsense king, hot-tempered and difficult to manipulate or control. He was a man of his ideas, a brilliant statesman and an astute nation builder, all in one. What Christians need to know about Mswati II is that he both invited the first missionary crew under the banner of Methodism, and also caused the abandonment of missionary enterprise not too long after the ka-Dlovunga area had welcomed the settlement of the Methodists. It is the flight of those missionaries from this area that gave it its modern name – Mahamba – meaning those who fled. It is a sore historical reality which we must not downplay when we try to find out whence we cometh and whither we goeth.

The missionaries had to abandon work because they had clashed inadvertently with the *status quo*. They had provided refuge to royal traitors. I maintain that it was a Christian duty to take care of threatened people. What is admirable is the fact that the Methodist church had such an impact in society that people who felt helpless and endangered did not hesitate to run to the mission station for protection. Furthermore, the missionaries did not surrender the culprits, but continued to plead for peace and forgiveness, while the royal army rampaged around the mission station. Lives were lost at that battle of the Goat (*Imphi yembti*). The trauma was too unbearable for the missionaries to continue to abide. They fled with no less than 1,000 Swazis who had been converted. They are said to have scattered along the neighbouring land of the Zulus.

It is remarkable as well that for nearly forty years following that Mahamba saga there was no Christian activity in Swaziland. When two German missionaries tried to seek permission to evangelise, when Mswati II had established his headquarters at Northern Hhohho, they were asked who this new king of theirs was. When they mentioned the name of Jesus, the King of Kings, they were flatly told to pack and go for there was no other king greater than Mswati II. Swazis were not prepared to bow to another monarch. Mswati II's resilience is a fascination to academics. Like King Dingane of the Zulus, and Lobengula of the Ndebele, he was cautious about early colonial encroachment. What remains a mystery is whether he continued to cherish his father's dream after the Mahamba debacle. If not, what did he make of the invitation he had extended to the missionaries as a fulfilment of the dream? Answers to these questions are not easy to come by. It was not until about the early 1880s that the Anglicans made an attempt, which paid off, to come to witness in Swaziland. After that, the doors opened generously with many a denomination taking advantage of the situation.

The importance of Labotsibeni in Swazi modern history cannot be underestimated. Apart from her ingenuity to encourage education, and the emphasis that Crown Prince Mona should be educated first before he could rule his nation, the Queen Regent exercised much tolerance in admitting Christians of one stripe or another to a nation then as small as a village, demographically speaking. She did not complain about the fact that the many denominations would eventually confuse the Swazis. This stance is telling indeed, even more so now that we have different religions all competing for space in Swaziland. It seems that the Queen knew

that religion was about personal choice. Moreover, all that was good and virtuous could not be denied at the expense of public morality and sound spiritual values. It was during Queen Labotsibeni's time that South African Zionism spread to Swaziland through Daniel Nkonyane's Christian Catholic Holy Spirit Church in Zion. Historically, Daniel Nkonyane, is known as the father of Swazi Zionism. Interestingly, Zionism first gained favour in the royal family after a sister to Queen Mother Lomawa came to introduce it in the early part of this century. A little later, Zionism made its mark when the Queen Regent was cured of blindness, through a prayer by Nkonyane. It is reported that Labotsibeni declared: "Never will I abandon a church (or faith) that has helped me thus!" These historical contours are interesting. One cannot exhaust them in such a short discourse. But I hope that as we celebrate the coming of the evangel in Swaziland, we should be aware that it was not an easy affair.

Leading our celebrations this year, as before, is the pioneer Somhlolo festival of praise patroned by Dr Samuel Hynd. The contribution of the Hynds in the Christian cause in Swaziland is nothing short of a legacy, a wonderful legacy in many respects. The Hynds are essentially a family of medical doctors who also believe in the healing of the human soul. Over the years Dr Samuel Hynd has tried to convince me that he and his late father, Dr David Hynd, worked for the spiritual and physical welfare of the Swazis. I have always brooded on the ultimate emphasis, which for all evangelically oriented missionising churches is the human soul. Yet now I agree that the Hynds, and all other missionaries of their kind, worked equally well for the social welfare of the Swazis. Given this illustrious history, we have to ask the logical question; how long should Christianity remain married to royalty? This is a crucial question because an answer to it would naturally explain the extent of the independence of the church in Swaziland. Is the church in Swaziland freely carrying out its prophetic mission or are there serious distracting hangovers due to the historical legacies of the past? In other words, is the church bold enough to question the *status quo* when the state engages in unjust and corrupt activities? If it is bold all right, why is it silent?

Those who claim that they are free in Christ, where is their freedom when we have a corrupt and unreliable leadership that prospers in lies? When will the church question the exportation of Swazi money to foreign banks, there to be banked under personal bank accounts? What about investments? Are we happy to be luring investors who care less about the welfare of the Swazi worker, less about the lax labour laws of this country? The church should interest itself in how certain individuals enrich themselves, asking whether God is happy with money that is obtained through nefarious deeds. In other words, the church should champion public morality in this land, and not play the harlot with the state. My radical views on the activities of the church in Swaziland have earned me a label I thought I would never have in my lifetime. They call me an enemy of the church. Someone innocently thanked me for inviting his organisation to a round table meeting on the refugee crisis in Africa, "Thank you for inviting us ... To a great extent you indicate that you remember your roots ..." I thought the remark was made in good faith. But I had all the reason to be irked because I am an evangelical theologian. My views may not quite represent the conservative, and sometimes unthinking, stream in evangelicalism, but in no

way can I theologise in isolation from evangelicalism. I therefore do not remember my roots as though I am severed from them.

They are not in my memory of exploits of yesteryears. I have my roots, am sustained through them, and happen to see reality as a result of what these roots do for me on a day-to-day basis. How then do I differentiate a dead church from a living one? A crucial question, indeed! To me a dead church preaches a dead theology. Someone once said: "The church in South Africa is asleep. Unfortunately, it is talking in its sleep." This was during the devastating years of vicious apartheid when the Dutch Reformed Church was hell-bent to support apartheid as a biblical doctrine. To be sure, the moral pillars of apartheid were a biblical doctrine. To be sure, the moral pillars of apartheid were based on some twisted Calvinistic interpretation of the Bible. Other churches read Romans 13 and concluded that the South African state was God ordained. A living church would not judge a book by its cover. If a regime is corrupt, if a *status quo* has a problem accepting that good governance hinges on the rule of law, and not on the rule of men, that democracy and human rights have divine origins, hence they are indivisible, then that regime cannot be said to be ordained by God. May I be blunt here; the section of this society that thinks that the National Development Strategy should not address issues of governance and human rights should have their consciences and heads checked out. But still, where is the voice of the church in these matters?

## MY PASTOR IS A POLITICIAN ... DOES GOD STILL HAVE A SERVANT? (2)

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*Using a case study of Mr Alpheus Nxumalo, Mzizi looks at the contentious issue of the role of pastors in politics in Swaziland.*

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The People Get Ready Christian Ministry should be commended for staging a seminar on the controversial matter of church and politics. Mr Alpheus Nxumalo is a member of the Assemblies of God Church, and is currently pursuing some theological training at the Swaziland College of Theology. He is a politically-minded Christian who is not afraid to make his views known to all and sundry. Nxumalo is the founding leader of the People Get Ready Ministry. He is not afraid to declare that he stood for elections at the Kubuta Inkhundla in 1993 and was convincingly defeated by MP Vonya Dlamini. Nxumalo unfortunately has not publicly told his story of harassment during and after the election. It was an incredible tale, spine chilling and mind-boggling. When I met him in 1994 he was a scared man and had lots of stories about who was hunting him down. In one meeting at the Bhunu Mall in Manzini I was left totally convinced that Nxumalo might suffer a psychological disorder resulting from the constant feeling of insecurity being then overly suspicious even of his own friends. I connected Nxumalo's story with Senator Obed Dlamini's and concluded that not all was well with the *Tinkhundla* elections.

Apart from transport sabotages on the day of voting, Dlamini had received certain threats, which made him fear for his life. Dlamini's premiership has been the best in many years, as it



seemed he had a special art for handling the progressives and conservatives. He is believed to have candidly advised their Majesties about this country's political way forward, which inevitably is multi-party democracy. One can delay change, but change cannot be stopped. Such is the wisdom we can learn from history. Both Dlamini and Nxumalo are Christians. The former, who belongs to the evangelical church of Swaziland and worships at the Fairview Congregation under the Rev. Dr Charles Mahlangu, has recently declared that he is a member of the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress. He came under heavy attack from Ngwempisi MP Mgabhi Dlamini who accused him of being a political double-dealer, benefiting from the *Tinkhundla* system and biting the same system for political glory. Senator Obed Dlamini did not reply. When Senator Dlamini was appointed to Cabinet, he was a senior member in his church, in charge of various committees in the local church and in the larger evangelical denomination. I am reliably informed that Dlamini requested to be relieved from his church responsibilities. He may have done so because as head of Government he would have little time to do anything else, which was general routine for him prior to ascending to Capitol Hill. Or he just did not feel it was right for a top government minister to be involved in the decision-making processes of his church. However, Dlamini continued to attend church services, mainly in the Mbabane branch of the church for proximity reasons.

Mr Nxumalo's Get Ready Ministry is independent of the Assemblies of God. Although I am not aware of the official position of this church regarding Nxumalo's ministry, I would not be surprised to learn that it enjoys an indifferent or disquieting attitude. In January 1996 when Mr Nxumalo made remarks about the mass stay-away and the police brutality of the time, the Assemblies of God leadership swiftly dissociated itself from what he had said. It sounded vindictive because the church officials then did not tell us anything about the on-going social strife. Funny, Nxumalo was perceived, as a result, like a child out of control who could not keep his mouth shut. Many who followed the news were not impressed at all. Recently Nxumalo invited church leaders for a weekend seminar on a subject that means a lot to him: Church and state; or rather what the church's role is in an era of political dynamism. The seminar was obviously aimed at being a humble contribution by the Get Ready Ministry to the constitutional debates in the country. The media was there and some coverage of the seminar was provided, especially by the print media. The headlines came dangerously close to suggesting that another political rally disguised as a Christian ministry had condemned the current political system: "*Tinkhundla* are satanic; pastors must resign;" etc.

I could tell, of course, from the newspaper article that the whole story had not been well told. I have learned through dealing with the media that some reporters pick on the little side remarks carelessly made, and then blow them up as though they were the focus of the discussion. Soon after the sensational headlines, Nxumalo was seen running from one media house to the next trying to put the records straight. It was really tough for him because not all editors could easily believe his side of the story, or even think that it was newsworthy. Finally, the word went out that People Get Ready had apologised to Minister Absalom Dlamini who had wanted to know why the seminar had picked on him. Dlamini had responded that he would not resign. Rev. Sikhova

Msibi who had been cited at the seminar did not respond. There came a rebuttal from the African Alliance Evangelical Church written by Mr Henry Stewart, a lay preacher in this church who is also secretary of the church board. Mr Stewart's response seemed to dissociate the AEC from the comments allegedly made by one of their pastors at the seminar. The position of the AEC was that it is alright for a pastor or church leader to occupy political office because then, as a servant of God, he or she would be the light and example in Government. As I read the response of the AEC, I was convinced that the matter was being decontextualised, thus giving another reason for the bashing of the church by political enthusiasts.

Before we knew it, pastors were once again condemned to nought at CRC meetings. They were asked to pray for criminals, and leave politics to the politicians. This has unsettled Mr Alpheus Nxumalo who only recently invited the public to get a copy of the seminar proceedings and see for themselves what was discussed, and what resolutions were taken. The real bone of contention is not whether it is alright for a Christian to run for political office. Neither is it about the role of the church in the political community. The question is about holding a double role, a pastor of a local church on the one hand, and a Cabinet minister on the other. This is the crux of the matter. The church leaders at the seminar grappled with these issues, and I believe that when the names of Absalom Dlamini and Sikhova Msibi were mentioned, it was only to illustrate a point. The seminar participants were concerned about a deeper problem than the AEC could realise: the contradictions between Christian morality and political behaviour.

If, for instance, the head of state were to decide to kill half of the chiefs in this kingdom because they are always engaged in chieftaincy disputes, he would do so after having been advised by the Swaziland National Council and Pastor Sikhova Msibi would have been part of that decision. When blame is heaped on the King's advisers, the servant of God would lose credibility. Rev. Dr Magoba of South Africa could not be allowed by the Methodist Church to continue in the position of the president of the church and at the same time be the incumbent president of the Pan-Africa Congress. For one thing, not all Methodists are PAC followers. The majority is ANC, while others belong to the Inkatha Freedom Party. So, once a pastor, or church leader, declares support of a particular political system, that necessarily compromises his ministry, especially the freedom of choice of the laity, knowing as we do the amount of power church leaders have over their congregations. It is, therefore, fair and right to ask pastors Dlamini and Msibi, since they are top advisers to the King and Prime Minister, whether an ordinary church member in their congregations can criticise Government and hope to be buried with decency by his pastor.

If this member questioned the very authority supported by these pastor-advisers, is he not likely to be a prayer item in the next deacon's meeting, something he otherwise wouldn't have been before his pastor was elevated to the position he holds? Let me remind readers of the wise words of Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu of the Catholic Church. On 17 March 1996, Ndlovu published his pastoral letter in the wake of the January strike and the stalling of talks between the SFTU and the Government:

*Some people may find it strange that a pastoral letter from their bishop deals with what they may regard as politics. They say the church should keep to the Gospel. But the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus is a Gospel about love and unity, justice and peace among people. Unity, justice and peace should be the aim of all political activity. It is the duty of church leaders to point this out and to promote its Gospel understanding of politics. It is not the church's responsibility to get involved in the exercise of political power. But the church has a duty to comment on how political power is exercised and on what is happening in the social and economic spheres.*

The role of the church is exactly intertwined with the role of a pastor in the political community simply because the spokesperson of the church is the pastor. Now, if the pastor has crossed the line and is a politician, who will be the voice of God in God's mission to right the wrongs in the political community? That is the question which poses theological challenges and is worth discussing without necessarily personalising issues. Let us recall that Samuel, who in the Jewish tradition was the prophet who ushered in Israelite kingship, was independent of political authority. His function was to ensure that God's rule prevailed, and the wayward behaviour of kings would not go unpunished. I hope you will think about these matters.

## **THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE IS BETTER THAN DIRECTION-LESS DEBATE**

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*In this article, Mzizi argues for theological engagement that will enrich the discussion around ecumenism and religious tolerance, rather than uniformed debate on these issues which does not lead to any radical action.*

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Theological debates can be interesting and sometimes very boring and annoying. The real cause of the problem is that each viewpoint can be substantially supported through the citation of certain authorities in the field. It is easy, for example, for a liberation theologian to cite the scriptures in support of a liberation motif, and then mouth the latest publications from renowned authorities in the field. On the other hand, those with particular problems with the discipline of liberation theology can likewise go to the very Bible for a thesis that is anti-liberation as classically understood. The truth is that we are all searchers for truth and meaning. We are primarily concerned about issues of life, the meaning of life, its vicissitudes and ambiguities; the possibility of lifelessness; the intervention and place of the divine in human history. Sociologists of religion tell us that it is mainly questions of death and the succession of life crisis that have lead mankind anywhere to appeal to religion. It is when mankind comes to grips with the reality of human finitude that the sensibility to think about a great spirit out there gets sharper and more urgent. How this Great Spirit is conceived and approached is a matter of communities, their cultures and customs. The fact remains, however, that searching for the truth is central in human behaviour.

"Dissection" preambles this edition by these few remarks because of what I read from Cain Mngomezulu last week. Despite the misleading headline that Mngomezulu was taking me on, I

found the article interesting, honest, and very well written. Rather than taking me on, I thought Mr Mngomezulu explained himself and exposed us to his theological world. He is a theologian in the tradition of St Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo. Thomas Aquinas was a great philosopher and scholar who, through his Summa Theology, influenced classical Christian doctrine. It is fair to observe that much of Catholic theology today is owed to this great theologian. St Thomas was a reader of Aristotle who held that all humans are by nature political animals. According to Thomas, human beings are endowed with reason, not instinct, by God, who is the originator of reason. It is this very God who has decreed that humans are political animals. The Hafner Library of Classics has published some representative selections of the political ideas of St Thomas Aquinas. In the context of the debate with Mngomezulu I find St Thomas' view of political order interesting. Political order is the rule of justice:

*The Prince is expected to govern by laws, and these laws must be just; that is, they cannot be the arbitrary expression of a will, either individuals or collective, but rather the national deduction from principles of justice imparted by God to men; the nature of their content conditions and their validity.*

Readers will recall that our bone of contention with Mngomezulu is the question of peace in Swaziland. I argued that Christians must interest themselves about the causes of ceaselessness in society. They should ask what public peace is from a theological view point. Mr Mngomezulu felt that this was a lame expectation because Christians already know what peace is. Mngomezulu's definition of peace is that one needs to receive Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and then through a process of diffusion this peace will spread to society. My thesis, however, is that peace is a consequence of justice. Hence, only visible practical steps towards justice can guarantee as the possibility of peace. I still hold to this position; yet, at the same time, I respect Mngomezulu's, which smacks of high Evangelical Theology of the Barthian school. I have noticed that Mngomezulu has a score to settle with Liberation Theology. Whereas it is true that following Vatican II the Latin American Catholic Priests sought to contextualise the decrees of Vatican II in the Latin American context, Liberation Theology has spread far and wide as a post-modernist approach to the meaning of the good news.

We now speak of Liberation theologies, amongst which are the following; Black Theology in the USA, Dalit Theology of India, Minjung Theology of Korea, Palestinian Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology and Womanist Theology, Black Theology in South Africa to name but a few. These theologies seek to address particular concerns ranging from poverty, oppression of women, the cast system, tribalism, and racial issues. The interlocutors of these theologies are oppressed themselves and have the hermeneutical privileges to read the text Bible in the light of their plight. As I have said, this is a post-modernist approach to hermeneutics. It is no longer in the tradition of St Augustine, Aristotle and St Thomas. If we appreciate that theological ideas evolve, and no theological ideas can claim a monopoly on truth, then we would have no problem with this understanding. Yes, I am the first one to admit that theologians in the world oversee reality in particular ways, and then fall into the trap of universalising that particularity. That is a selfish and narrow-minded approach to the search for the truth all human beings

should be free to do. In fact, it is a basic human right to search and find the truth without being indoctrinated or brain washed.

As an educator myself, my duty is to equip my students with the necessary skills for searching: we call this research here in our universities and colleges. The Vatican or Rome has been slow in embracing the basic propositions of Latin American Liberation Theology. In fact, some priests in Latin America have been theologically castigated by the Vatican for embracing this Theology, which can't find its proper place in the Thomistic and cumulative tradition of Roman Catholicism. But that is to be expected in Christian circles. When the fathers of the reformation, i.e. Martin Luther, Zwingli and John Calvin, championed their cause, Rome was not pleased. But Rome today is promoting the spirit of tolerance of other faith positions. Liberation theologies are therefore like the pieces of a quilt, all unique in colour, shape and the size, but together they make one beautiful whole. The theologians concerned are nothing but searchers of truth. Their mission is to theologically interpret the human condition, which is forever fluid. With these words I hope Mr Mngomezulu can see that it is not necessary for us to close our theological gap. We are both searchers and, for heaven's sake, let us respect one another. As St Thomas once observed: "An Angel is superior to a stone, but a universe of angels and stones is better than one made solely of angels." Having said this, "Dissection" wishes to bid goodbye to this Mzizi-Mngomezulu debate.

There are a lot more issues to be addressed by this column, which is founded upon the principles of commenting over fresh topical matters. It is appropriate to conclude this edition with the high court victory of the Jehovah's Witnesses case last Monday. The team of Advocate Patrick Flynn and Peter Dunseith did a splendid job proving beyond reasonable doubt that Chief Siphosile Dlamini was exercising religious discrimination by kicking out Jehovah's Witnesses in this area. His action was a gross violation of the freedom of worship, conscience and religious concepts all civilised societies have learnt to respect. To readers of "Dissection" I say Good Day. Let us pray for the good success of next Wednesday's meeting at the National Kraal. May the Almighty allow divine wisdom to prevail over the selfish tendencies of mortals!

## **ACCEPT OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THAT THEY ACCEPT YOU (1)**

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*The Baha'i faith is one of the smallest and most marginalised faiths in Swaziland. Having been invited to address the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i faith the previous day, Mzizi wrote an article arguing for the acceptance of this faith and calling for religious tolerance.*

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The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i faith in Swaziland yesterday celebrated a very important day in the contemporary history of the nations of the world. The theme of the celebration was religious tolerance in our global village. This is a very deep and involved theme. First, the world cannot rid itself of religion and religions. Religions are here to stay. They cannot be wished away. They are no longer matters of a past-time hobby like any sport or social club. Rather, they now as ever before determine our lives and social relationships. These

relationships are always very fragile, thus leading to religious wars within nation states or even across national boundaries. Secondly, the inbuilt mechanism in each religion to always take itself as containing the absolute truth is problematic, if not potentially explosive. Truth is a very elusive concept. Just when you think you have it, bouts of doubt hit you like a sledgehammer. In short, every thinking human being is always searching for the truth. Only those who are dead can be excused from this search. But then some who are living content themselves with whatever pieces of truth they may be holding onto and then make the mistake of universalising these pieces. In other words, it is either the world is defined through these pieces or there is no definition that may be attempted elsewhere and otherwise. This leads to unnecessary tensions and infightings.

The Law and Religion division of Emory University in Atlanta Georgia has just finished one of the most important worldwide surveys on matters of religious conflicts and human rights abuses as a result of religious intolerance. The study was manned by over 200 scholars, of one stripe or another, from across the world. It took Emory a total of three years to complete it. The theme was "Soul Wars: The Problem of Proselytism in the New World Order". There will be massive publications that will result from that project. The results of the study do not paint a good picture at all. Religious intolerance is the enemy number one affecting many communities, nations and the world over. I am sure that readers have been following the recent bashing of Muslims in our local newspapers. The bashing is promoted by certain Christian Pastors who suffer from an obsession with the pieces of scattered truth at their disposal. They label Moslems as pagans and without the light of Christ. The claim here is that all religious truth is found in Christianity and nowhere else. Of course, that is rubbish to people who have reasoned that all truth is relative. Professor John Witte Jr. who directed the Emory project recently commented as follows in his executive summary: "This exercise has required us to open difficult theoretical issues and to explore them in various cultural and religious contexts." In Christian theological terms, the dialectic is between the Great Commission and the Golden Rule: How does a person or community abide simultaneously with the callings to "Go forth into the world and make disciples of all nations" and to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"?

The matter Prof. Witte is raising is taken for granted by religious propagators. The position is that if my religion as perceived by myself tells me that it is privy to truth, then all others are false religions. It is therefore my God-ordained duty to forcefully oppose them, even up to the point of barbarically murdering their adherents. Sharia Law for example, sentences to death anyone who dares insult the prophet Mohammed and Allah. Whoever can kill the author of Satanic Verses would have done a righteous and noble act. But seriously, does the dialectic between the Great Commission and the Golden Rule not also hinge on the notion of rights? Individuals and communities have the right to practice, propagate, and celebrate their religion. This right is recognised in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with*

*others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

In other words, as John Witte asks, how does a community balance its own right to expand the faith, and another person or community's right to be left alone? It is interesting to note that Swaziland's Independence Constitution gave a detailed account of what freedom of conscience entails.

Chapter II, Section 11 states that freedom of conscience includes freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching practice and observance. In the Christian religion conversion is not compulsory. And backsliding is not prohibited. One can move in and out of the faith as he or she wishes. In Judaism conversion is difficult in and out. It is difficult and rigorous to convert into Judaism, let alone to recant the faith. Islam has an easy conversion into the faith, but it allows for no conversion out of it. A recent example of the latter is what is taking place right now in Iran. Members of the Baha'i faith are constantly tortured and persecuted. Even the Baha'i Open University in Iran is being threatened with closure. The classical case is that of two Baha'is who were sentenced to hang this week for converting a Muslim woman to the Baha'i faith. The Islamic Court of Iran exercises Sharia Law, which allows for such judicial action against what it considers as infidels. What the state of Iran and many others in the Islamic world is doing is infringing on the rights of individuals and communities to believe in whatever they want to believe in.

Another interesting story is what took place in Ghana prior to the independence celebrations of 1994. There was controversy over whether the traditional libation could be poured at the celebrations. The churches protested the proposal to pour libation. They boycotted the occasion. Clearly this has been the stand of many missionary churches, which saw the African belief systems as satanic. By adopting this stance the churches of Ghana blinded themselves to the reality that Ghana is a religiously plural nation. Traditional religionists should be respected on the same footing as any other adherents' particular faiths. An older issue in Ghana, which is going to be a thorn in flesh for us here in Swaziland as well, concerns the role of education and the right of the churches to run schools and hospitals. Kwame Nkrumah had taken the position that the education of the people was part and parcel of the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism. The churches were uncomfortable with this position. They held that Dr Nkrumah was introducing Leninist socialism using the platform of the church. When the Nkrumah government attempted to take over the mission schools there was much consternation in Ghana. The charge was that the Government was in a ploy to dispossess the churches of their right to spread the faith through social services and humanitarian engagement. Swaziland is yet to agree on a Bill of Rights. Controversies on religious rights for all citizens are bound to escalate and, judging from the outcome of the Emory global project, tensions will rise and soul enemies will abound. The question is: Is all this necessary? Is life not too short to carry unnecessary grudges? Why should the Themba Nhlekos of this world break the golden

rule at the expense of religious harmony in Swaziland? Why should they be allowed to do so? The fact of the matter is that freedom of religion carries within itself the responsibility to respect other religions. But perhaps we must start here: accept others as you would that they accept you. Affirm their convictions despite the fact that yours are different. To me, or even to great thinkers like Freud and Jung, religious tolerance is the highest level of spiritual development any religious individual can reach. It is not an ideal. It is a state, which can be reached. It is spirituality at its highest level. Those that have not reached it are central to the religious conflicts of our time.

## **ACCEPT OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THAT THEY ACCEPT YOU (2)**

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*In this article, Mzizi calls for the acceptance and fair treatment of the followers of Islam especially by Christians who are in the majority and have the temptation of not respecting and honouring other religions like Islam.*

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The symposium/debate on Islam, which was held at the Kwaluseni Campus of UNISWA just recently, was an eye opener to some and an ongoing learning experience for most of us. It is always fascinating to hear what people make of religion. There is always the tendency to assume that since we are all born religious in one sense or another, brought up religiously so to speak, we therefore should know what religion is when we come of age. Unfortunately, that is not usually the case. The problem is that we get locked up in our parochial religious schemes and then, standing there, we condemn every other religion we see out there even before we know what they are about. It is humankind's greatest temptation to be judgmental. The Holy Book teaches against the propensity to judge others because there is only one wise judge, the Creator of all being, the ground of being. Judge not so that you may not be judged! That is a profound statement but we hardly ever fathom its significance.

While I am not going to level any greater measure of blame on external influences, I do not think that we are free from the cultural enslaving manacles we inherited from our colonial past. The concept known as being Eurocentric means the practice by the European colonial masters to judge other cultures, customs and traditions using the lenses of the west. In other words, the determining standards were those of Western countries. In the context of Africa, nothing good was found amongst African people. The white colonial master gave himself the burden to civilise the savage African, no matter what it took. As they convinced themselves from time to time that the white man had a burden, a God ordained burden, to improve the lives of savages, the African people fell into the trap. Western civilisation became the thing and African value systems exited by the back door more slowly than quickly. What transpired was that everything African was diminished and trivialised. Our manner of dress was not spared during the onslaught. Being Christian meant to remove our traditional attire and cover our bodies with the white men's clothes, most of which were second hand and over-sized.



The colonial missionary would speak against pagan forms of dress as though they understood the entire geography and cultural make up of heaven. Before we knew it, it was a shame to be seen dressed in African attire. This did not mean that the African had accepted the Christ preached by the missionary. What had been drilled into the mind and consciousness of the African with amazing effort was shame and guilt, the basis of which was neither in rationality nor in the new religion. It was just a shame to be seen clinging to backward things, whatever that meant. The new value system the African was embracing had not been explained, but simply imposed and then taken for granted. Here are people who were new comers in Africa now telling us what was good and bad for us. Of course they came with the supremacy and might of gunpowder and the horse. African battles were fought with the long spear, mostly on bare chest and bare feet. African names were changed to suit the tongue of the European master. In Church, so-called Christian names were coined. Some Africans were called after such biblical figures as Pharaoh, Herod and Jezebel. A name found in the Bible was considered holy even though the biblical character had problems of sorts. By the same token which was used to despise and disparage our cultures and tradition, we are now denigrating other people's cultures, including religion.

It is an open secret that when the debate on the Christian clergy came out the occasion was used to bash the Moslem community in Swaziland. Islam was blamed for the confusion that had ensued. Having been in the thick of things myself, and knowing that I had never talked with any Moslem on the subject; I was simply just taken aback. There was no basis for the attack on Moslems, and I am not going to mention names. Suffice to say that Islam has been caricatured as a religion of stubborn people. This has been a rallying point for many Christian bigots the world over. Since there are Moslems who are extremists, all Moslems are extremists. What baloney! There are Christians fundamentalists as well. In fact, a majority of the Christian Clergy who were militantly for the Christian clause came close to qualifying as extremists. The language they were using was deplorable, bearing hardly any traces of the true Christian spirit. Were they representative of the Christian faith? I beg to differ. I am not sure how long it takes for one to come to the realisation that other religions are here to stay. They cannot be wished away. I illustrated during the big debate in this column last winter was that international Evangelist, Billy Graham, had finally seen the light at the twilight of his life. Rev. Graham had been preaching the Christian Gospel for over fifty years. In all these years he had absolutely no tolerance for other religions. Christ to him was the only saviour of the world and everybody had to listen to him. Being a Christian myself, Graham did not offend me. But the problem comes when we have to think about other men and women of faith who do not come to Church with us. We have to think how it feels to be told that your holy Book is, after all, not so holy.

How does it feel to be told that the God you are worshiping is the master of the evil empire? When George Bush and the American moral majority, including the Trinity Broadcasting Network of the controversial Pat Robinson, refer to the axis of evil, they have Moslem extremists in mind. When these Christians take up arms to hurt the Al-Qaida or Osama bin Laden, they think they are doing God a favour. The truth is that they are just as guilty of religious fanaticism

as the Moslem suicide bombers. There is no qualitative difference between Bush and Saddam Hussein in my personal book of records. Rather than enter into a war with other religions, why can't we try dialogue? That was the essence of the debate we held under the auspices of the Theology and Religious Studies Department of UNISWA. Dialogue means that I have to listen carefully to what the other person is telling me about him or herself. I also deserve to be listened to when my turn comes. Dialogue is a humbling experience if used correctly. I know I have faith in Swaziland, that we can be a model for religious tolerance in the whole world, now that we have a comprehensive religious freedom clause. The fantasy that Swaziland is the pulpit of Africa is a pipe dream of the spirit of intolerance, and religious bigotry continues to reign supreme.

## DUSHU MAGUGA ... YOU! YOU CAN BE A SHEMBE FOLLOWER!

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*Prince Maguga was the eldest son of the late King Sobhuza II. He had been very close to the throne, although he was not eligible to be made king. But he remained the most senior Prince (Lisokanchanti) and was a member of the Swazi National Council Liqoqo. In early 2000 the royal house imposed him as chief of two adjacent chiefdoms, KaMkhweli and Macetsheni, deposing the incumbents simply because they did not possess the royal blood. The chiefs had to run away to exile in South Africa and for a long time the community was involved in violence and instability, being divided over their chiefs and the Prince. A few years after, the frail Prince then joined the Shembe Church, also known as AmaNazaretha, founded by the Rev. Isaiah Shembe of Inanda KwaZulu-Natal in 1910. The church is known for bringing together religion and culture and that is what attracted the Prince. He could still be Swazi, traditional, chief and a Christian at the same time. Mzizi wrote an article about the way the senior Prince had treated the deposed chiefs and warned the chief that the Shembe is more progressive than the Prince thought, so it was a mistake for him to join it.*

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So, Prince Maguga is *UmNazaretha*! How nice indeed that after all those hardships, social dislocations and constitutional disarrays, and his ambition for becoming Chief of Macetsheni and KwaMkhweli, we learn that this controversial man has any scintilla of religious values. Well, I shouldn't rush to talk about values here as though I am not Swazi. Swazi Royalty is unapologetically traditional, with *Incwala* as the major constitutive element of Swazi religion. The tendency is that all other forms of faith are interpreted in terms of *Incwala* and the world-view this cultural event represents. Not long ago our born-again Minister of Home Affairs, and later Jim Gama, *Indvuna* of Ludzidzini, described *Incwala* as a prayer of the Swazis. I guess that when Maguga declared that he is a member of the Shembe faith, he did not mean in the traditional *Incwala* sense. But he scared me when he intimated that he would like members of the Jericho church to visit his place. I asked myself: "*Kantsi ngabe ukhuluma ngekutohlela umntfwanenkhosi?*" Is he impressed by the show of allegiance, more often than not totally blind allegiance?

I do not know what his public declaration evoked from members of the Shembe faith. Most of them, I imagine, know that he belongs to the faith. But due to the dirty chieftain squabbles in his place, they would wish he did not belong to the faith. Since he did nonetheless, then the only honourable thing to do is for him to keep his big mouth shut. From what I know, *amaNazaretha* are decidedly apolitical. Like the Leghanyane's ZCC. They do not involve themselves in the matters of secular power. Yet, because of their overwhelming membership in South Africa, no politician worth his salt can ignore them. *AmaNazaretha* and the ZCC combined boast of a membership almost greater than the population of the Swazi nation. What is the appeal? Why are blacks attracted to these forms of faith? First, it is the healing aspect. Unlike conventional missionary Churches that have to devise outreach strategies and pitch tents for evangelists' campaigns, *amaNazaretha* and ZCC just live and practice the faith. People flock in great numbers because of the healing benefits. Secondly, these are indigenous forms of faith. The Sotho and Zulu sensibilities evoke a sense of identity. The biblical sacred mountains and rivers have been brought home from the Middle East to Morija, Inhlangakazi and River Umthwalume. The places of holy pilgrimage are not Mecca or Jerusalem, but Ekuphakameni, near Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. Thirdly, these are African-founded and led movements. Colonial Christianity came with trappings of white imperialism that looked at the African as a white man's burden, a challenge to be civilised. When Shembe appeared in the South Africa of the segregationist era in 1911, many blacks were impressed. Here was a man who spoke their language, felt their pain, dressed in their lion skins, telling them about the mercies of Jehovah. The faith he preached was rooted in the traditional Zulu culture, a phenomenon that had been vigorously negated by the Missionaries.

Since there is nothing wrong with speculation, I reckon that Prince Maguga must have been converted to the Shembe faith as a little boy when he was growing up amongst the Mngomezulus, his maternal parent being Obonjeni. Legend tells us that Maguga was a stubborn young man, perhaps spoiled to bits by the fact that he was a product of a double royalty, and therefore a possible heir to the Swazi throne. Whatever the case, the original Shembe, Isaiah, must have had encounters with the Mngomezulus. Obonjeni has a sacred place for the Nazareth faith since the Ark of the Covenant Shembe built, which contains the deep secrets of the faith, is believed to be somewhere in the caves of the Ubombo Mountain range. I wondered as I was reading about the Prince's declaration whether he truly knows what it is to be *UmNazaretha*. Does he really know *UbuNazaretha*? I really have my doubts. The spiritual ethic of Isaiah Shembe was founded on tenets of non-violence. Born around 1865, Shembe must have heard about the terrible Frontier Wars, especially the 1838 Battle of Blood River that decimated a Zulu *impi*. As a young man he indeed witnessed the devastating effects of the South African War at the dawn of the twentieth century (the Anglo-Boer war) and the Zulu uprisings such as that of 1906 led by Bhambatha. He must have realised that there was no way a black person could withstand the power of the barrel of the gun. Yet what had happened to black South Africans clearly warranted violence. Shembe grew up in the white farmlands of Harrismith in the Orange Free State. So he knew what it meant to be landless and disinherited. He had suffered all the indignities of being a slave in the land of his birth. When he received his call in the lonely mountains of the Free State,

Shembe's mission was to the Zulu people, the children of Senzangakhona. His spirituality was shaped by the pain of the dispossession of his people, and Shembe felt duty-bound to revitalise Zulu society using the essence of pure religion, dedication to the laws of Jehovah and the best of Zulu customs and traditions.

He reworked the concept of the Sabbath and the Covenant to fit a Zulu spirituality. From his over two-hundred hymns, Shembe exudes a deep sense of nationhood and hope for the Zulu nation because the Great *Inkhosi* of Ekuphakameni had been manifested. In hymn 21 he laments about the reality of landlessness: "Our land is broken; Not a soul lives in our homesteads; we are widows and orphans; Oh Lord of the Sabbath; Why have you deserted us?" This is the Shembe of the true *amaNazaretha*, the Shembe who cared about the plight of his people during very difficult times indeed. I have said that he had a non-violent ethic. His economic ethic was based on hard work and true dedication to God. To be an *UmNazaretha* one had to dedicate his or her whole life to God and acknowledge the new teachings of God's servant of sorrows, Isaiah Shembe himself. If Maguga is a true *umNazaretha*, why has he allowed himself to be the cause of suffering and anguish to the people of Macetsheni and KaMkhweli? To be *umNazaretha* is not about paying allegiance. It is about service, living a selfless life all the time. Surely, no true *umNazaretha* can rejoice when there are people who are suffering in Diaspora, an exile orchestrated by disruptive tendencies of power, greed and avarice. Can the Prince sing hymn 21 with a clear heart? The pioneer of the Shembe faith in Swaziland, Reverend Majalimane Hlophe, perhaps knew the family of Makhuphula Thwala who died in exile and could not be afforded a decent funeral at his family's graveyard. His children still do not know where their next meal will come from. They are the ones who can sing hymn 21 with tears streaming down their cheeks because they cannot understand why Maguga has made them widows and orphans.

## **NOW IS THE TIME THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD UNITE AND EMBARK ON A PROPHETIC MINISTRY**

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*In this article, Mzizi emphasises the importance of church unity for the mission of the church, especially when it comes to engaging the state. He notes that this unity must be based on sound theology that takes into account not just the teaching about the pie-in-the-sky but issues of social justice. For this to happen he calls for the different church bodies in the country to work together and embark on engaging the political powers-that-be in a prophetic ministry.*

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His Majesty, King Mswati III hit the nail on the head when he urged the Christian community in Swaziland to be united. First the King warned church leaders to be wary of the spirit of division and hatred, which has so much characterised a lot of churches and congregations in Swaziland. While it is true that the spirit of division is corrosive and anti-biblical, no one seems to have an idea about how to circumvent division even if it has already reared its ugly head far on the horizon. For example, the story of the Fairview Evangelical Church has been around for quite

some time. This is the story of a congregation which had seen new light in terms of local church empowerment through the teachings of Rev. Dr Charles Mahlangu. The theology propounded by Dr Mahlangu is biblical, but not all that is denominational is necessarily Biblicist. And it does not mean that when something or a church practice is denominational and traditional about that church, it is therefore demonic and should be debunked. I am saying that it would be wrong for Rev. Mahlangu to hold that since his theology of the local church is based exactly on the Bible, then the practices and denominational structuralism of the larger Evangelical Church are anti-biblical and nonsensical. That view would unfortunately suggest a narrow view of the Bible, which in the final end destroys the very structures it seeks to build.

The painful thing about division is that the congregation gets torn in factions and in the end they walk their different ways. The kind of community spirit they had so tenaciously built through thick and thin waxes cold, much to the delight of the evil one. Let us face it; the devil does not mind a divided church. It pleases the evil one to see Christians breaking up, causing all manner of storms and tempests. To be sure, if there is anything that advances the cause of Satan, it is a divided church. Divisions occur through little solvable things, like the biblical understandings of a local church, which understanding is inimical to a denominational structure. All it takes is for the clergy to sit down at the table and talk. Such talk should be unemotional and realistic aiming only at preserving unity and promoting community and mutual respect. But once the talks break down, then the devil takes over. Sobhuza II once warned Christians in Swaziland that the devil has no church, but he occupies all of them. There is a great deal of truth in that observation. Mswati III is saying exactly that to the church in Swaziland on the eve of the new millennium. Dispersing the clergy at Engabezweni last Tuesday, the King urged the Christian fraternity to forge a united front thus filling in the chasm among the three ecumenical bodies: the League of African Churches, the Swaziland Conference of Churches and the Council of Swaziland Churches. The idea of the King is plausible if not long overdue. The question is whether the clergy themselves have the will to carry it out. How practical is the suggestion? Some related questions are: Why should the clergy be urged by the King to unite? Could they not have seen the need if the King had not pointed it out? The fact of the matter is that the three bodies are well established with the youngest of them boasting the age of twenty-three years this year.

The council of Swaziland Churches was founded in 1976 at the height of regional chaos when there was conflict in Angola, Mozambique and South Africa. There was a steady influx of displaced people into the Kingdom, a process that intensified in the aftermath of the June 1976 Soweto riots. Young people were fleeing their homes in search of peace, in search of life, away from the cruel brutalities of apartheid. Very few were interested in settling in Swaziland due to the country's proximity to South Africa. Many just needed the warm welcome of the Swazis as they planned to run up North, mainly to Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Some were bound for overseas countries for training in this and that. The Swaziland Council of Churches was faced with a catch-22 situation. Taking care of destitute people meant siding with South Africa's rebels whom the Boers wanted dead any minute. Leaving them unattended exposed them to the hovering South African threat. The yearly conference of 1976 debated the issue. The

clergy was divided. A minority felt that taking care of refugees was the business of the church. Others thought it would be meddling in political affairs, the thinking here being that the church should not involve itself in matters political. It is history now that the then Bishop of Manzini, Mandlenkhosi Zwane, Bishop of Swaziland Bernard Mkhabela, and the then dean of Swaziland, Rev. Mdziniso (Mrs Mary Mdziniso's husband), walked out of that 1976 Conference in protest to found there and then the Council of Swaziland Churches. The Council was then founded because the clergy could not agree on whether taking care of God's wandering people was a Christian responsibility or a political action.

The League of African Churches was founded around 1937 at the instigation of Sobhuza II who was protecting the African Christians from British religious bigotry. The white leaders of the missionary churches clubbed with the British local authority to have the Zionists banned in Swaziland because they worshiped at night, beat drums and danced in a strange witchlike frenzy. The white Christians saw this as not just a distortion of the true Gospel, but a deliberate bridge back to heathenism, which could not be allowed. Zionists were a society of witches, the whites charged. Because of the British policy of leaving all matters traditional with the traditional leaders, Marwick, then British resident commissioner in Swaziland, took the matter up with Sobhuza II. The matter was left in the hands of the King (known otherwise by the whites as the paramount chief). The League was thus founded as a separate entity from colonial Christianity. It involved both African Churches, better known as Zionist Churches, and the Ethiopian ones. The term "Ethiopian" means any church which has broken away from a historical church chiefly because of political reasons. The theological belief system of the new church is the same as the historical church. The difference lies in the leadership and the emphasis on nationalism as the empowerment of a hitherto despised people. In the League, Sobhuza II saw the opportunity to marshal Swazi Christians around himself, and the inevitable Swazi-ization of Christianity.

Zionist churches all over southern Africa are known for their unsuspecting embrace of matters cultural. In Swaziland Zionists in particular, especially during Good Friday, see themselves as a regiment of the King. Could that be the reason why for the first time this year the King bade farewell to the clergy at the very place where he closes the *Incwala* with a speech on patriotism and the essence of Swazi tradition and respect for authority? The Swaziland Conference of Churches is the oldest of these organisations, being a later version of the then Swaziland Missionary Council concerned only with interests of whites and colonialists. It is by nature a conservative body, which holds itself as the only bearer of the true light of the Gospel. The general belief is that the human soul is far superior to the body. Social concerns are addressed carefully with the view of ultimately winning souls for Christ. It was the Missionary Council, as pointed out above, which spearheaded the disparagement of Zionists in the 1920s. In a sense we can safely conclude that the League was formed because of the anti-Zionist spirit.

It is essential to be aware of this history whenever talks about the merger of these three organisations are begun. My guess is that a merger is possible but difficult. It is a tall order. In fact, it is a question of attitudes. Are members of the conference ready to accept Zionists – that

they too are children of God? Is the Conference of Churches ready to accept the fact that the church should be involved in matters political? Are Zionists ready to forego their warmth in the palace and forget the Marwick threat? These are the fundamental questions. The King's idea would have gone down well had it been delivered in a neutral spot, or had he specifically called the leadership of the three bodies ostensibly to launch the talk about a possible merger.

## PART 7 – CELEBRATING HEROES OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Mzizi was a proponent of the development and celebration of excellence in African leadership. As a result he wrote a number of articles on Africans who demonstrated excellence in their roles as leaders. This chapter is aimed at capturing the articles that he wrote so that we may learn something of and from those leaders.

### TRIBUTE TO VUSIE THWALA

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*In this article, Mzizi pays tribute to Vusie Thwala, a controversial but brilliant lawyer who died in a car accident. Thwala represented a number of brilliant Swazis whose lives were wasted either through the apartheid government security forces or premature deaths as unsung heroes or even the lack of opportunities in Swaziland for them to put their intelligence in practice.*

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The death of Ernest Vusie Thwala has reminded us once again that our lives on earth can be extinguished any time, no matter where we may be and what we may be doing. If we should stand at the threshold of time and count just how many of our dear ones have gone through road accidents, I am sure we would begin to have another look at these things we call convenient means of transport, our cars, buses and taxis. Mr Thwala was not the luckiest man on our roads as he missed death by inches so many times before his fateful day on Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of March. When I first met him in the early 1980s, he walked briskly and with normal balance in his characteristic short pants. It was a near fatal car accident on the same Mhlaleni-Nhlangano Highway where he almost lost his life. He was admitted at Hlathikhulu Government Hospital, a hopeless vegetable. For almost a year he was in a wheel chair, speaking with great effort, paralysed from the waist downwards. Miraculously, he made a steady recovery. Although lately he walked with a limp, a sad reminder of those wasteful long months in a hospital bed, Mr Thwala was lucky to be alive, lucky to at least do things for himself. It was as if he was living on borrowed time.

The story of why he failed to get the Motor Vehicle Accident compensation for his serious injuries sounds funny and like a soap opera that Thwala has vanished to his grave with. Before I met him, I had heard of him from a dear friend of mine who was his headmaster at Velebantfu High. Thwala had just returned from overseas where he had spent a good number of years. Initially when he left Swaziland sometime in the 60s, his goal was to pursue a medical degree in Mozambique. Due to problems in that country he had to abandon his studies and trek further north of the seas, ostensibly to pursue medicine. Disruptions after a succession of frustrations and problems in his life, coupled with the high life of the cities, must have made him abandon his studies once again. He eventually came back and claimed that he had pursued a couple



of degrees in the Sciences. It was on that score that he was engaged at Velebantfu, then New Haven High School.

When the students he was teaching started complaining that he was just incomprehensible, I am sure the first reaction of the Headmaster was that he indeed must be a brilliant and sophisticated Scientist who needed to be helped to come to the level of O' level learners. It was when students started punching holes in his Science that he was asked to produce his papers of qualification. That was the beginning of the end. Mr Thwala bad-mouthed my friend, the Headmaster, calling him all sorts of names under the sun. They had to part ways on that note of sour sorrow. It still remains a mystery just how lucky Thwala was to escape a charge of fraud. As fate would have it, Mr Thwala moved to live with his lover at Mankayane, very close to where I was teaching. When I learned that it was him who had given my friend a hell of a time a few months before, naturally I kept my safe distance. We greeted and talked about the weather and some such useless stuff. But little did I know that one day he would save my life, one day he would be such a positive catalyst in my magic moment. I must honestly admit that Thwala's movements in and out of Mankayane were a mystery of mysteries. We were clear then that the man did not have a job anywhere, but he was always on the road, most of the time crossing the Sicunusa Border into then apartheid South Africa, some of the time hitchhiking to and from the big towns of Swaziland.

I was away overseas in the mid-80s when something curious developed in my school, Mankayane High. As I understood it then, it was the youthful ambition of the temporary leaders I had left behind to run the school. It is an experience I seldom want to remember, let alone talk or write about. But the departure of Mr Thwala has conjured up those sad memories. Briefly, as the story of betrayal unfolded, it transpired that I had been sold to the South African Security Forces and it was to be the end of me. Sometime in early 1985 Mr Thwala was dumped by the South African Security Forces at the Sicunusa Boarder Gate. I am told that he looked tired and completely worn out. His story was that he had been taken for intensive interrogation at John Vorster Square in Johannesburg. I do not know how he talked himself out of trouble, for very few blacks went to that place and lived to tell the tale still in one piece. Most of them, we are told, were forced to dig their own graves, get into them and were buried alive. That was the ruthless South Africa of P.W. Botha, of the Eugene de Kock who killed with impunity anything black. The emaciated, unfocused Thwala asked the Sicunusa Police if they knew me. He then pleaded with them to tell me never to set my foot in South Africa because I was a wanted man. At John Vorster Square they had shown him my picture and the route to my house at the school compound. I was a followed man.

Upon my return to Swaziland in August 1985, I received the message Thwala had left at the border gate. I immediately located him in the small town whereupon he gave me all the details like a trained detective and careful diplomat. At that point many things had started to fall into place with regards to the story of my betrayal, that it was someone amongst my staff members at Mankayane High that had sold me to the South African Police. An attempt to recall me from my

studies was blocked by then Minister of Education, Dabulumjiva Nhlabatsi, Liqoqo strongman Prince Mfanasibili Dlamini and Lawrence Zwane, father to SNC member Sandlane, who I was teaching at Mankayane High at the time. As they later related to me, if Commissioner Majaji Simelane, acting on instructions from Pretoria, had had his way, I would not have completed my programme overseas. The lie that was told about me was that I was an ANC Military Wing member who served as conduit for the guerrilla fighters from Mozambique. Pretoria believed it, and because of its overly reactionary disposition, I would have been killed in cold blood for absolutely nothing. For nearly ten years up to 1994, I was not supposed to travel to South Africa before obtaining a police clearance from Mbabane who would then clear me with Ermelo if I was travelling by road, or Pretoria if going by air. My movements in that country were closely monitored, all because of that Mankayane incident, the ambition of one man I nearly died for.

A few years later Thwala enrolled for a Law degree at Uniswa, and once again our casual contacts continued. We would from time to time talk about that Mankayane saga and wonder just how daring some folk could be. He would sometimes stop by at my office to either borrow cash, which he would make sure never to return, or discuss the Privy Council Appeal case of the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1924 between King Sobhuza II and Allister M. Miller and The Swaziland Corporation Ltd. This landmark case, which was lost with costs by the Swazi Monarch, was Sobhuza II's first attempt to bring back the land of the Swazis which had been systematically stolen by the British and Boers during the reign of King Mbandzeni. Thwala, as we discussed it, endeavoured to indicate just how biased and unfair the Privy Council had been. I thought he was going to make a devastating Constitutional lawyer. In our discussions he would show his wit and depth of study in Law generally and in matters of colonial legislation. He challenged my mind in so many ways.

It was him, Bekithemba Khumalo and "Didiza" Benedict Tsabedze whose student days I remember for some of the incisive and informal discussions they would initiate with me, coming as I did from a liberation perspective. Today Thwala is gone. He has left behind a trail of bad news, the pending disciplinary cases, the pending apology with the Law Society, the debts he left behind with such companies as *The Nation*, the daring troubles he caused for the Judges when he wrote a confidential letter to the King, the role he played as Special State Advocate at the time when the rule of law was collapsing.

Then there were the dramatic confrontations with Paul Shilubane, then President of the Law Society when Thwala threatened to abandon Court proceedings and go home to fetch a weapon for his protection. Somewhere at the shopping mall he again had a verbal showdown with then Chief Justice Sapire. No Judge would think of this man as safe and sound. But when he crossed paths with the Attorney General and his services were withdrawn, he cried as though breathing his last: "This time they have finished me!" Nevertheless, he still went to the same courts he had despised to pray for financial compensation. Judge Nderi Nduma heard his prayer and granted the wish according to Industrial Law. All his dramas, his litany of misfortunes ended up in the media. Certainly, no matter how you look at it, this man had his

life, a strange life if you like, full of turns and twists, mysteries and ambiguities. He had a killer sting, yes, an emotive disposition, but he also had a brilliant mind that would talk him out of trouble should he find himself in a mess. As for me, he had demonstrated life-saving heart. In the bosom of those distant Nhlanguano soils, there lies a giant many would quickly dismiss as a comical learned fellow.

## **PRIME MINISTER SIBUSISO: IS HE AFRICA'S DICTATOR OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION?**

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*In this article, Mzizi critically examines the leadership of the then Prime Minister on the violation of human rights in the country. He laments the PM's high-handedness especially to those who oppose the Government and concludes that the Premier has become a dictator.*

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In last week's "Dissection" I argued in the closing paragraphs that no vacuum worthy of any description would result if Decrees 11 and 12 of 1973 were to be amended or set aside. These decrees are the very ones that are costing Swaziland her peace and harmony. They are the ones that completely deny each one of us the fundamental rights and freedoms all civilised nations the world over are enjoying. It is these decrees that are setting the clock of progress ten decades back, back to the times of dictatorial and totalitarian regimes, which ruled with an iron fist completely oblivious of the sanctity of human rights.

Swazis, together with the whole international world, learned with shock that the police brutally quashed a demonstration against the 1973 Decree last weekend. It was shocking to learn that some of the victims of the wrath of the police were just passers-by who were doing their shopping. Why do Swaziland police look like blood-thirsty lions? Who really orders them to stoop so low in the latter days of the twentieth century to fight freedom living fellow citizens? These are really troublesome questions because, in reality, whoever issues such orders will answer some day. The days of freedom will dawn, and the truths of the present moment will have to be told. We have been reliably told of the nature and essence of the vacuum that would be created if the two decrees were to go. One school of thought holds that if the said decrees were to go, kingship would tumble. In fact, they say kingship would lose its grip and authority. Kingship so far enjoys limitless powers. The King can legislate by decree, remove at whim and appoint at will. This is called absolute authority in general political and legal language. Whereas such powers may seem glorious and desirable for an institution we all unflinchingly cherish, they have in-built mechanisms for abuse. To be sure, if you centralise power on a political authority, then you hurt the wheels of not only the legislature, but the judiciary as well. It is a known fact that the King and Queen Mother are above the law. That in itself means that no action of theirs, however grand or gross, can be attributable to their office as dual heads of state. But as persons or individuals, if a king were to walk out of his palace and be caught red handed stealing my chickens, I would have the right to legal redress. I would have the burden to prove that when the King was stealing my chickens, he was no longer acting in his capacity

as King. That would be a tall order indeed, because it involves putting a demarcation line between, say, a forest and a tree.

The argument therefore, is that Swazi kingship desires to be absolute. It cannot be absolute when Swazis have a Bill of Rights. It cannot enjoy limitless and unquestionable authority in the presence of political parties. Why should this be so? The reason is that once parties are allowed, then the powers of kingship should be trimmed. A king who is above politics can still be a king under a constitution. Now, that is what a real threat to royalists is. I use the term “royalists” advisedly because a king might not quite like the endless unlegislated groupings that emerge to advise him in times of crisis. He might be tired of the naked gossips that the so-called lovers of kingship bring to him from time to time. He might not take too kindly to the empty and bizarre threats that some of his subjects want to overthrow him from the throne. Such a king would then prefer to be advised by a cabinet on all matters of governance and leave traditional matters to an appointed council. When he so acts, he would be confining kingship to the dictates of the law, rather than to the air where anyone can say anything in the name of kingship. That I am for granting Swazis their right to voice is not in question. That I am disgusted with police brutality and annoyed with the manner Government is handling difference and opposition is clear to all my friends and critics. I want to ask the Prime Minister, Dr Sibusiso Dlamini, what he wants us to remember him by when he leaves Hospital Hill. Dlamini knows that the position of Prime Minister is not an inheritance in Swaziland. He is the eighth Prime Minister amongst five that are still alive. The ones that are gone can tell him volumes about the heat of the position, and he too knows that no matter how hard he may try, somewhere he will fall out and be an ordinary civilian like Mr Sotsha Dlamini. I should like to know how he expects or dreams us to remember him by. Let me be frank that the so-called ESRA programme may come and go, depending on the political climate. If a party wins the election, and has a different political philosophy and strategy, it will have a right to set aside ESRA because it will not be cast in stone.

ESRA in essence may be necessary since the *Imbokodvo* manifesto is no longer relevant, but the truth is that it will be seen as a *Tinkhundla* programme, politically speaking. It will be hard, if not impossible, for ESRA to disentangle itself from this clout. Then when all is well and gone, how should we remember Prime Minister Sibusiso Dlamini? Should we remember that during his time police brutality increased to unprecedented levels? Should we remember his legacy as the worst in so far as human rights are concerned? Should we remember him as a champion against drug abuse, a champion of moral integrity, yet a violator of human rights, someone who preferred economic development at the expense of a peoples' political and civil rights? The lie this Government is telling is that it cannot discuss politics because the Constitutional Review Commission has that mandate. All the Sibusiso Government is concerned with are matters of the ailing economy and “bad” governance in short term will be cured through upholding “law and order”. The maiden speech of the Prime Minister delivered on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1996 made no mention of a culture of human rights, social justice and participatory democracy. Instead, he concentrated on what he called accelerated economic growth, good governance, and improved welfare of the Swazis, and law and order. Law and order may sound like a desired

element in modern societies. But the question is if the laws are immoral and anti-human, and the order is disorder, why should a Prime Minister want to uphold these totalitarian notions? Apartheid in South Africa did not have a Ministry of Law and Order. You need law and order to preserve a rotten system, a system that seeks to perpetuate itself amidst public discontent and outcry. Surely, Dr Dlamini can do better than we are witnessing as head of the transition. If there is anything called tolerance, one would expect our top politicians to cultivate it right now. But a government that rejoices in enacting quick fix laws in order to deal high-handedly with the opposition; a government that owned media; a government that details police to madly pounce on peaceful demonstrators and innocent civilians, is not a government worthy of internal and international respect. Even its ESRA programme will land itself in sheer ridicule. Finally, may I say that if pillars of Swazi kingship are such that Swazis should be denied basic human rights and freedoms then this kind of kingship is not the ideal dream Swazis have. It is rather a nightmare in which the worst is yet to happen. "Dissection" upholds the virtues of freedom and the sanctity of human worth and dignity.

## **ARTHUR KHOZA THE PILGRIM: WHAT WOULD NKUMAH THINK OF THIS MAN?**

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*The late Arthur Khoza was one of the most respected politicians in Swaziland. Having started as a member of the Ngwane Liberation Congress, which opposed King Sobhuza's Imbokodvo, he had a stint in Ghana to learn politics under Nkrumah but when he came back he joined Sobhuza's ruling party. He rose up through the ranks starting as private Secretary to Their Majesties until he became the Deputy Prime Minister. In this article, Mzizi pays tribute to Khoza's shining political career but questions his lack of support for the opposition groups in the country whose concerns were genuine.*

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The Republic of China on Taiwan has honoured Arthur Khoza, the DPM, for an outstanding political career. While I applaud him for his latest recognition, I wish to remind readers that this man's sterling political character was moulded in his youth as a university student in the early sixties. Those were the days of struggle against colonialism in Africa. Khoza, as a Pan-Africanist, was initiated into the politics of liberation ostensibly because of his belief in the ability of the African to rule his or her kind. The days of British imperialism were over, and Africa had to stand up on her own feet and determine her destiny. There were a handful of mentors then, but leading the parade was Dr Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who said on Independence Day in 1957 that the liberation of his country was meaningless if it did not tie in with the total liberation of Africa. That was Nkrumah, the visionary and the father of Pan-Africanism. This side of Nyerere, Kaunda, Banda, Kenyatta and Lumumba the message was the same: Africa must unite!

Khoza, as the candidate of the Ngwane Liberatory Congress under Dr Ambrose Zwane, was seconded to Ghana, there to learn and practice politics at the feet of the Master, Nkrumah. To align with Nkrumah basically meant three things. It meant to align with the struggle against colonialism. Nkrumah was not just a useless empty bucket rhetorician. His vision of a truly liberated Africa was based on well thought out political theory and practice. It was not merely

the war, the human sacrifice attendant to any struggle that Nkrumah was concerned with. He was mindful about the personnel that would administer Africa's affairs after Uhuru. It was on this premise that he founded the Kwameh Nkrumah Ideological Institute where African potential leaders were trained, and strategies of the various struggles were carefully mapped out. Secondly, to align with Nkrumah meant to declare a threat to all colonial structures and its trappings. Nkrumah was no friend of the west as he advanced his idea of an African socialism. The Western world was at war with anything that threatened the survival of capitalism and its distorted and relative form of democracy and human rights.

The winds of change found obstinate regimes in southern Africa. Apartheid in South Africa and in South West Africa, together with the Portuguese hold in Mozambique and Angola, were difficult to crack. In addition, the developments of events in Rhodesia were further complicated by the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of Ian Smith in 1965. A new colonial animal was being created in Zimbabwe. In effect the Western world backed up some of these processes both for economic reasons and for an ideological Cold War syndrome. Arthur Khoza was schooled politically in that context of his times. Thirdly, in the political superstructure, to align with Nkrumah meant to prefer democratic leadership to traditional non-elective authority. Things were happening so fast that in most of Africa traditional authority was overtaken by events. African traditional leaders had to accept that fact that the emerging African leader need not have been born to lead; He had to have earned the vote. King Sobhuza II and Swazi National Council had a problem with this kind of arrangement. It was for this reason that Sobhuza II's most hated devil was the one-man, one-vote principle, which he saw as a threat to traditional authority.

To align with Nkrumah, therefore, meant to be on Sobhuzas blacklist. The mushrooming of political parties in Swaziland, following the fragmentation of J.J. Nqukul Progressive Party, polarised Swazi society into two camps: the King's followers and the party demagogues. When circumstances forced Khoza and others such as Albert Shabangu to quit Ghana around the middle of the 1960s, they found Zwane's Congress party experiencing internal problems, and that King Sobhuza's recruitment machinery was as efficient as ever. Khoza deemed it fit to cross floors, thus further weakening the opposition at that time. Khoza, with his education, brilliance and natural eloquence, was an ace find in the King's party, the *Imbokodvo* National Movement. The King used him in various capacities. It is not clear whether Khoza adopted Sobhuzas suspicious attitude towards political parties, or he just wanted to be a faithful defender of the system. In this role Khoza never displayed traits of a fanatic. He remained a careful and calculating intellectual. He was appointed Secretary to the first constitutional commission whose findings formed the basis for the *Tinkhundla* System of Government put in place in 1978. As a defender of royalty, Khoza went through hard times in 1982/83 when the *Liqoqo*, the Supreme Council of State, came to power. He was Queen Regent Dzeliwe's confidante. I am sure that in his memoirs Khoza will record for the progeny the role he played those days. It is safe to say that he was the force within royalty that tried to fight off the nefarious intentions of the *Liqoqo*. When the Council forwarded laws to the Queen for royal assent, Khoza was there to read and interpret the law for the Queen. It is history that when the *Liqoqo* reached the highest

point of their frustration with the Queen Regent, they disposed of her in a style that nearly led to a bloodbath.

Khoza found himself on the wrong side of the stick. He lost his job in the civil service and was one of the victims of the draconian detention law operative in those days. His political pilgrimage took him and his family through untold suffering, even up to when he had to go on economic self-exile, leaving his wife and three children behind, struggling to put food on the table. Khoza, no doubt, has a wealth of experience second to none. I agree with Meshack Shongwe that he was the best kind of politician, not one made through our so-called *bull* system. Having gone through thick and thin, I would be lying to say that I ever heard any scintilla of corruption perpetrated by Khoza, although he has served with immoral characters in Government. What I want to know though is what stand he takes when dirty things are done right in his face. I want to know what he tells Sibusiso's Cabinet regarding the implications of adulterating the rule of law; and generally on change and political expediency as the call for participatory democracy are made. Khoza cannot pretend to say that he does not understand the groans and grumbles of the opposition. He fully understands that those who call for a multi-party dispensation are not unpatriotic dissidents and unprincipled opponents. They are citizens of this country, indeed His Majesty's subjects who are saying they love this country too much to see it sink in the sea of political corruption and blind nepotism. They are praying for the day when the King's powers will be restored to him in full. I am talking about the day when the King will realise that all along he had been made a pawn by his sly and cowardly praise-singers, who have no love for the truth and righteousness.

## THE WISE WORDS OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

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*Mzizi was an astute proponent of American civil rights leader, Dr Martin Luther King Jr. In this article he is calling for Africans to commemorate MLK's life by remembering his work and commitment to democracy. After discussing the history of the African-American struggle and the African's struggle against colonisation he contextualises King's message to the situation in Swaziland. He calls for those involved in the struggle for a democratic Swaziland to learn from Dr King's philosophy of non-violence.*

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America and the world remember Dr Martin Luther King Jr. in January of every year. The celebrations are soon followed by the black history month in which African-Americans remember black history, or to be precise, the history of African-Americans from Africa to the Diaspora. It is a grim history from the period when white colonialists set their feet on African soil in search of raw material and mineral deposits in order to boost Western capital and affluence. The white masters found what they thought to be virgin lands blessed with a litany of resources including a human labour market. Thus, as goldmines were exploited, silver and diamonds extracted from African soil, Africans as people were viewed from the colonialists' standpoint as worthy of auction sale. There was no difference between mineral deposits and human life, all could be lumped together in goods ships and transported over the seas.

The sad part of colonial and slavery history is that the white exploiters, who called themselves explorers and merchants or patricians, sincerely believed that the continent of Africa was God's gift to the white race. Christianity and the Protestant ethic engulfed the social fibre of Europe and the Americas to the extent that they saw the Dark Continent, the continent of Africa, as a "white man's burden". The burden was of course to spread civilisation, and bring the "light" to the dark shadows of a people whose way of life needed the generous help of the matured big brother over the seas. But it must be pointed out that whatever was called the "light" by these so-called civilisers was relative. Black Africans would not be given enough light to equal that of the white race. For example, in the spread of Christianity there was a debate on whether baptised African Christians were equal before God with white Christians. The popular answer was that since the image of God was that of a white person, whites were thus closer to God than the black race. And so it was that the history of slavery was intertwined with capitalism and exploitation of African labour, and everything was said to have been willed by God the creator. It is hard to accept that the white colonialists were Christian. It is difficult to believe that the slave masters with their human cruelty were Christians who thought that they were doing the will of God by enslaving and "domesticating" Africans. But that is exactly how the Christian culture of the West adulterated the gospel's view of human. According to this view, humanity was divided into distinct racial pockets. The lightness of your skin indicated your degree of status before the one who created you, and thus consequently had implications on how you were to be treated; as a beast of burden if you were darker, or as a prince or princess if you were lighter.

The plucking of Africans for slavery to be sold across the Atlantic was very sorrowful indeed. People in their homes and familiar communities were, without notice, rounded up and mercilessly uprooted from their homes. The Atlantic Ocean experience, historically called the "Middle Passage", was nothing to write home about. The sad slaves were packed in ships like sardines without any toilet facilities or dietary considerations. Many died from different diseases; many died from suffocation; many were thrown into the sea to be food for the aquatic carnivores. The accounts also record slaves who committed suicide by jumping into the sea because death to them was better than a life of humiliation and dehumanisation. In this sense, we can safely conclude that the slaves who finally landed in the Carolinas and the Caribbean were actually survivors of the ordeal started somewhere in West Africa, or further south several months earlier. Across the seas, the life of an African was not any better. Africans on the continent of Africa were not better either since the stings of European expansion were bitterer than the poison of a thousand wasps. It was as though God had turned his back on the black race for no reason known to blacks, but some reason known to whites. It was a sad historical epoch, sadder than sadness and crueller than cruelty. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. is a later generation son of former slave great-grandparents. The parents must have remained in the South even after the American Civil War of the 1860s that was resisting the freedom of slaves. Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, thus freeing over four million black slaves in late 1862. The proclamation was to come into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1863. This is why it is known as the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. Yet we know that in the British Commonwealth and colonies, slavery was outlawed by the 50<sup>th</sup> Ordinance of 1828. The American settlers did



not heed the ordinance possibly because in 1776 they had technically, and by the war of independence, declared themselves independent from Britain.

In Africa we know of a similar move by Ian Smith's Rhodesia, which passed its Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. From 1965 Smith could run the affairs of Rhodesia with some freedom from the colonial office and Privy Council in London. Despite the signing of the proclamation, and the passage of the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution declaring slavery completely unconstitutional, the legacy of slavery remained in America. Whites, who were the major stakeholders in American society, did not allow blacks certain sacral privileges and rights, including the right to vote, and indeed the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. You would expect African-Americans, then known as Negroes, to wage a full-scale war against white Americans. You would expect them to take revenge for the dehumanisation and senseless killing and treatment of their forefathers and mothers. You would expect them to avenge their lost sisters and brothers who drowned in the Atlantic. In terms of military prowess, of course such a war would be unthinkable, even considering the numerical strength of whites versus the black population in America and the Islands. But the determination to fight for justice does not care whether weapons are there or not, neither do numbers. It is a moral decision to say no to injustice; it is an ethical attitude to decide to lay down your life for the sake of justice and sacral equity. Negro history is replete with leaders of insurrections, some of whom, like Nat Turner, felt led by the spirit of God to murder whites and avenge the plight of black people in the plantation.

Martin Luther King Jr. emerged in earnest in 1955, then only twenty-six years old, during the bus boycott which lasted for a year in Montgomery, Alabama. He preached the gospel of non-violence in the face of white brutality, bombings and jailing of black people. He inspired the black population in the states to say "No" to injustice in the same manner and spirit as the forty-two year old Rosa Parks had done in a bus on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1955. Ms Parks simply refused to give up her seat to a white man, as was expected by the municipal and state laws of Alabama. The inspiration of Dr King was captured by one journalist who described the determination of the blacks thus: "They were on fire for freedom!" While space does not allow me to get deep into King's philosophy that non-violence is not cowardice or sheepish resignation. It is not compliance or conformity. Non-violence means one is waging a struggle but using methods that will not result in bloodshed or death of anyone on either side of the struggle. Non-violence respects life for life's own sake, and hates the demon of racism and oppression which must be vigorously exorcised from those it had possessed. Before he was brutally assassinated by a senseless sniper's bullet, Martin said we should remember him for being a drum-major for peace, a drum-major for justice and freedom. He engaged in the war against injustice with a vision for a bright tomorrow of a people settled finally in the land of promise where they would sing in concert; "Free at last, Free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last!" To those involved in the struggle for justice in Swaziland, I wonder what their vision of a truly liberated Swaziland is? Are the methods for achieving this vision justifiable and respectful of the sacredness of human life? Would we all agree with King that actually

the question is not between violence and non-violence, but between non-violence and non-existence? How I wish that when Swaziland considers the multiparty option, citizens may learn from the wise words of Dr King, and then think of politics as a selfless opportunity to serve humanity, not the privileged few.

## REMEMBERING CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER, MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SUNDAY

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*On the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1999, during the Martin Luther King celebrations, Mzizi wrote another article in honour of the African-American civil rights leader. In this article Mzizi focuses on King's contribution to the struggle of his people. Then he condemns the domination of the world by America and Britain, especially their attack on Iraq. He calls for Swaziland to take sides with victims of these superpowers, whilst at the same time challenging these superpowers to challenge Swaziland's violation of human rights. For Mzizi these are lessons to be learned from Martin Luther King's legacy.*

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This week America and the whole world commemorates Martin King's day. The America cultural centre has organised a film show, which will be followed by discussion time at the Manzini Library on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, beginning at 3.30pm. This event is usually excellent and provides a lot of information about the man once described by one of his compatriots at the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1963 march on Washington for jobs and freedom as the "moral leader of our nation". Indeed, Martin was a moral leader during very trying times in history. Many will, of course, recall that the 1950s and 60s were years of turmoil and revolution the world over. The colonial states were demanding self-rule, and most of the third world was full of revolutionary strategies and upheavals of sorts since the chains of colonialism were not ready to break that easily.

It was therefore one of those divine interventions in history when God raised someone to tell the already troubled societies that there is power in love and non-violence. Killing God's people is like launching an attack on heaven itself. His own country at the time was going through crisis after crisis. The black people of America were not free despite the 1863 Abraham Lincoln Emancipation Proclamation. Negroes were still disenfranchised and discriminated against in ways reminiscent of South Africa's apartheid. Black people in America over the centuries had not taken the evils of slavery lying down. They had protested, marched and insurrected. The life stories of such epic heroes as Nat Turner and Sojourner speak for themselves among others. They prayed and sang the spirituals, looking forward to the coming of the chariot which would take them home. They were tired of the double-tongued sweet talk of white America, which preached a blond and blue-eyed Jesus who could not identify with the blacks. White religion was at the core of slavery, justifying it and giving it credence. White religion had for too long preached the doctrine that blacks were created to be drawers of water and hewers of wood; while it was the white men's burden to civilise and baptise these poor dark skinned good-for-nothing nobodies.

Politically, America was facing the rising wave of the Civil Rights Movement, which had received a fresh baptism in 1955 following the Rosa Parks incident in Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa Parks had refused to give up her seat to a white man who was demanding it as per the municipal bus laws of that Southern state. That innocent incident sparked off a year-long bus boycott which only ended when the laws were changed to treat all people who ride city buses as human beings. Rosa Parks is still affectionately referred to as the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement. Out of that Montgomery debacle was to emerge one of the greatest prophets of peace this world has ever seen, after Jesus of Nazareth and Mahatma Ghandi. Martin was at that time a young and enthusiastic co-pastor with his own father at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He went to Montgomery to help in the boycott as a representative of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Yet little did he know that it was his time to emerge with a unique message to America and the world. In his essay titled "Pilgrimage to non-violence", King tells us:

*The experience in Montgomery did more to clarify my thinking in regard to the question of non-violence than all the books I had read. As the days unfolded, I became more and more convinced of the power of non-violence. Non-violence became more than a method to which I gave an intellectual assent; it became a commitment to a way of life. Many issues I had not cleared up intellectually concerning violence were now resolved within the sphere of practical action.*

Space does not allow me to map out the intellectual journey of the young King from the early Christian upbringing at the local Baptist Church; his journey through the local Morehouse Boy's College up to Boston University where he graduated with a PhD at the tender age of twenty-six. It does suffice to mention that Martin was a prodigious reader of classical and modern philosophy, not for its own sake, but for its immediate application in his troubled continent.

Martin's dream was not inspired by a deep meaninglessness or ignorant long slumber. Rather, he had read much in the theory of non-violence. Jesus Christ had taught him the power of love, while Mahatma Ghandi had inspired him with his love-force. This is a significant fact for all who aspire to be leaders. They should read and shape their ideas after great thinkers of our time. Failure to read leads to lack of vision especially when the going gets tough. Internationally, America was involved in the Vietnam War, while the Fidel Castro threat next door troubled the Kennedy regime. The Cuban Revolution had signalled the communist threat in ways that would send capitalist America and Europe mad and helter-skelter. Martin Luther King Jr. was opposed to the involvement of America in Vietnam, perhaps much more so than Cassius Clay (later Mohammed Ali), who refused to be drafted into the war on grounds of conscience. The Eastern threat was equally obnoxious to King because it meant an unnecessary accumulation of weapons of mass destruction at the expense of peace.

The Cold War was an expensive war, perhaps not by how many lives it took, but by the vast military spending when God's people continued to starve. The world heard Martin coming down hard on America for meddling in Vietnam. America went on anyhow. That greatest democracy on earth was too blood-thirsty to listen to "rabble-rousers" like King. Yes, that is

how white America perceived Dr King. He was arrested so many times. Threats on Martin's life were countless, not because he was black, but because of his convictions, what he called a "faith commitment" he had derived from Jesus and Ghandi. King's detractors were many also in the black community. Some felt that he was a white man's stooge who preached gradualism instead of revolution now. In fact it was these people who contributed to the non-effectiveness of Civil Rights after 1963. The Black Panthers, an angry and militant zealot group, were convinced that for the black struggle to succeed, King should be eliminated. He was nearly assassinated by a black woman who caught him signing some autographs. Although King later described this woman as demon-possessed, the fact of the matter is that not everyone can understand the ways of a leader. Even Jesus was misunderstood so many times by his own followers. Another life threat to King's civil rights was the Black Power Movement, which was inspired by Islamic militancy and separatism. While civil rights stood for non-violence and integration, Black Power called for overrunning of white America by *any* means necessary. The figure that loomed larger than life here was Malcolm Little (later Malcolm X, because he could not identify with a slave name). Although there is clear evidence that after his pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm X came closer to King, white America still perceives him as an advocate of hate and violence.

I do not know what more Spike Lee can do to portray the true picture of this man. It is doubtful if any American President can agree to sign a Malcolm X day. That is like wishing for the John Vorster Square to be turned into a Pope's Cathedral. It was Ronald Reagan who endorsed the Martin Luther King Jr. day. I regard Reagan as one of the worst presidents in America on the question of human rights. After playing bed-fellows with the Botha regime in South Africa, it was surprising that he could agree to a Congress resolution to honour a black man. I am not belittling the honour, for it was well overdue. I only wish Jimmy Carter had done it. So much for spilled milk, but was it not a contrast of contrasts that soon after Reagan, George Bush came to the stage and waved a fist of iron against Iraq? That was Desert Storm. Despite Desert Storm, America's blood-thirstiness still continues now under a Democrat president. While I find no sense at all in attempting to impeach Bill Clinton, he and Tony Blair should account for the souls which were killed last December during Desert Fox.

It is utterly amazing that the Swazi Government, which is always quick to point out irregularities when its foreign policy is infringed upon, now decided to keep quiet. The fact of the matter is that America and England have collaborated in murder, without even the slightest blessing of the Security Council, and John Doble and Alan Mckee should know it from us Swazis. Why can't we send a delegation to Saddam Hussein to take His Majesty's condolences to the people of Iraq who have lost kith and kin through the bullying disposition of only two of the victors of World War II? (But if it's a Lady Diana that has died ...) You will tell me that we have a moral obligation to agree with our major donor community even when they are wrong, and this is the Swazi way? I say rubbish! Acts of aggression are acts of aggression. They cannot be Christianised or white washed. We cannot bask in the glory of blood money while some of our fellow human beings are living under British and American threat in the Gulf region.

What is the United Nations for? What is the Security Council doing? Can Kofi Annan control the situation? Never, when it involves America, which apparently is one of the greatest debtors at the United Nations. I do not mean any ill feelings here with my British and American friends. I am still going to commemorate Martin's day. But such commemorations should carry meaning. Martin was a practical man. He believed in action. Lyndon Johnson did not sign the 1964 Civil Rights Act out of the goodness of his heart. He had to do it because pressure was exerted. Civil rights do not look at personal interests. I am saying that America, if she heard the voice of Martin very well, should not allow Swaziland to remain undemocratic. America should not say Swaziland is strategically insignificant. Swazis are human beings too. Is this wishful thinking after Desert Fox? I hope not.

## **BISHOP NCAMISO NDLOVU: THE PROPHETIC VOICE**

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*Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu of the Catholic Church in Swaziland has been the main critic of the Swazi Government and an ardent supporter of the progressive movements in Swaziland. He has welcomed refugees of the state, made statements that criticised Government where necessary and has led marches to the royal Kraal. In this article, Mzizi pays tribute to Bishop Ndlovu for his prophetic ministry. In doing this, Mzizi starts by reminding his readers of the pioneering work of Bishop Ndlovu's predecessor, Bishop Mandlenkosi Zwane, the first Catholic Bishop of Swaziland. He argues that Ndlovu is following in the footsteps of this great prophetic figure. Bishop Ndlovu had made remarks that criticised the Swazi Government and this was followed by criticisms of Ndlovu's statements by politicians who felt that he was meddling in politics which was not right for him to do as a church leader.*

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Recently Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu came under fire from some minor officers in Government and our parliamentary set up so that one wonders if these officers were "their master's voice", or had seized an opportunity to please their masters. I take the Bishop of Manzini as a highly respected person not only in the Kingdom but outside our borders as well. He has led the regional Catholic Bishop Conference for a good number of years and has handled his office with dignity since he was appointed Bishop following the untimely demise of Bishop Mandlenkosi Zwane. Bishop Zwane had pioneered as an important voice of the church during his time as Bishop. His church, like the Lutheran Church and Anglican Churches, was under the Swaziland Conference of Churches all by accident of history. It came to pass that in the mid 1970s Swaziland was caught up between two wars, the war in Mozambique waged by the Frelimo Party, and the anti-apartheid guerilla style warfare in South Africa. Refugees from both countries ran to neighbouring countries not only for shelter but also to develop new strategies to use in toppling the oppressive regimes. Other revolutionary wars were fought in Angola and Zimbabwe. So the sub-region was bleeding in all directions because the African people in these countries were not contented with being ruled by foreigners from Portugal, England and the Netherlands or Holland. There was therefore a massive displacement of people, especially young people who flocked in their great numbers into trouble-free countries like the Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland sister states.

When the South Africans came to Swaziland, our Government dilly-dallied about affording them full refugee status because the big brother in Pretoria might find out and unleash his anger. Swaziland's foreign policy and local procedures during the era of Sobhuza was pathetic and disgraceful. It of course never improved from such a status, as we are now aware of dire atrocities committed by our state law enforcement agents seeking to please big brother across the fence. The whole deal was properly sealed off during the premiership of Bhekimpi Dlamini of Enkhaba who signed the Komati Accord. Anyhow, this is the story of the truth commission, which Swaziland must set up if reconciliation could be seen in regional terms. Prof. John Daniels wrote several publications about the inhumane state cooperation with the apartheid regime when the latter was cracking down on ANC and PAC freedom fighters. His contribution to the text *Beggar your neighbours* has been on the market for some time now. It was during those dark days when Bishop Zwane decided that the most Christian thing to do was to take care of all the displaced persons, regardless of their creed or national origin.

The church had to be morally bound to side with the victims of society, and in doing this function the church needed God's approval, not the approval of the state. The Swaziland Conference of Churches was a very conservative body, which hardly challenged the state on matters of social justice. It is unfortunate that up to this day this body is still imbued with the kind of apoliticalness, the kind of conservatism, a pathetic silence when basic rights and freedom are infringed upon by the state. A majority of churches under this organisation prefer support for those in authority rather than to confront them with God's truth for the sake of social justice. I guess a lot of theological education is needed on the role of the prophets in the Bible and implications for the church in society today. A majority of the members of the conference felt that taking care of refugees was meddling in the duties of government. It was getting into politics, yet the church was not for the kingdoms of the world, but for God's Kingdom up in the skies. A minority felt that it was the business of the church to take care of God's people, especially the displaced and destitute. This led to a bitter theological confrontation at the Annual General Meeting of the conference in 1976. The clerics did not see eye to eye. When it was clear that points of compromise were remote, if not impossible to reach, Bishop Zwane, followed by Dean Hosea Mdziniso of the Lutherans and Bishop Barnabas Mkhabela of the Anglicans, seceded to found the Council of Swaziland Churches, which now boasts over twenty denominational affiliates. Since 1976 social concerns have been top of the agenda for the council. The inspiration of Bishop Zwane could not be mistaken. The following words from Zwane tell us about the kind of theologian he was and how he understood mission:

*As a Christian I believe that it is in Jesus of Nazareth that man becomes once again the key to peace in the world because in him man's authenticity is restored, and in him is found the fullness of humanity, according to the scriptures. In a society where injustice is legalised, evil customs made sacred, religious practices oppressive, statutes defied, Jesus is uncompromising. 'Man', He says, 'is more important than his institutions and their practices: laws are made for man, customs are made for man, and even the Sabbath is made for man'.*

This is an example of Zwane's theological anthropology. Bishop Ndlovu's major contribution appeared during the dark days of the *Liqoqo* regime here in Swaziland. The period between

1982 and 1986 was when the violation of human rights was the *modus operandi* of the regime. Some of the worst demonstrations led by militant university students took place during this time, and police harassment and brutality reached its zenith. Apart from the assassinations of ANC cadres in the country where some Swazi's lost their lives, inquests were never instituted. Who killed Shiba in Mbabane around this time? There was also a rumour of a soldier who died mysteriously in a police cell after he had been locked in for allegedly shooting in the foot a prominent politician of the time who had been found trespassing at Embilani where King Sobhuza II was buried. The local press was as mum as ever, but the late Stan Motjwadi of *Drum* magazine did his homework thoroughly and published these scandals. This earned *Drum* a ban imposed by *Liqoqo*. During this time Bishop Ndlovu and Mkhabela wrote a pastoral letter to their churches and the people of God in Swaziland. The letter was calling upon the Swazi state to respect the rights and dignities of the people of God. Detention without charge, which had become so fashionable during those days, was condemned by the bishops for being inconsistent with one's right to a fair trial, and the doctrine of presumption of innocent before being proven guilty. Following this letter, the bishops were harassed by the state authorities. They were summoned to appear before the *Liqoqo* stalwarts who demanded that the bishops should apologise.

The bishops refused. But between 1985 and 1993, the voice of the church was absent in Swaziland. These are the days when we can say there was no prophecy in as far as local socio-political matters were concerned. No one within church structures stood up for social justice proclaiming the righteousness of God when basic freedoms of the people were infringed by the state. Of course the routine praying for the state authorities continued unabated amongst evangelical churches. In March 1996 this newspaper published an insight based on Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu.

The title was: "Peace is the fruit of justice." The bishop held that the gospel proclaimed by Jesus is a gospel about love and unity, justice and peace among people. Unity, justice and peace should be the aim of all political activity. It is the duty of the church leaders to point this out and to promote this gospel understanding of politics. It is not the church's responsibility to get involved in the exercise of political power. But the church has the duty to comment on how political power is exercised and on what is happening in the social and economic spheres. The bishop furthermore gave an insight about party politics in Swaziland. He said that the examples of Zimbabwe and Mozambique cannot be ignored: "The present authorities will not be able to put this issue off indefinitely." The bishop urged the state authorities never to make empty promises on the matter because Swazi people deserve and are owed crystal clear "commitment on the part of the authorities to the establishment of a truly democratic form of government within the foreseeable future".

I have said Bishop Ndlovu is a respected church leader in our region. In the Council of Swaziland Churches he has served for a good number of years as its president. In fact, he and Mrs Eunice Sowazi deserve gold medals for shaping up important policies of the Council, not forgetting

the only other founder member that is still alive, Bishop Ishmael Mkhabela, who is retired at Siteki. The University of Swaziland should consider honouring these men and women for their splendid contribution with relevant *honors causa* in theology, either Doctors of Divinity (DD) or Doctors of Theology (DTh). It is expected that those who listen to the Bishop's submission would ask themselves why the cleric made the observations he made. I admit that Bishops are human too, like kings and politicians, they can err as well. But it should take a certain measure of respect to tell a cleric that he has erred. In fact, if the subject was politics, one would expect politicians to search their hearts and call the man of God for spiritual counselling, rather than just dismiss his views as though he was speaking or meddling in politics. It is not my duty to encourage Bishop Ndlovu to continue in his call as prophet. He owes this to his God and his obligation to humanity. But he should know that prophets are never accepted in their own countries. Prophecy, nevertheless, must continue.





# SECTION FOUR

## J.B. MZIZI: AS SEEN AND HEARD BY OTHERS

**A**lthough Mzizi received a lot of criticism and, ultimately, rejection from both the church and political circles, there were a number of people who appreciated his work and contribution to the struggle for liberation in Swaziland. Amongst those were his colleagues and friends in the academy, in politics, in the NGO movement and former students. Most of these were people who admired his pronouncements and saw him as a prophet and intellectual-activist whose pen gave hope to the future of the country. This section of the book comprises a few tributes that were paid by some of those who knew him. Some were written soon after his death, others were delivered at the Dr J.B. Mzizi Inaugural Lecture, December 2007. The reason for including these in this collection is to confirm that “dead he may be, but he still speaks through those who saw and heard him whilst he was alive”.

### PART 1 – A PROPHET AND LIBERATOR OF MODERN SWAZILAND | BY COMFORT MABUZA<sup>1</sup>

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*Comfort Mabuza was a very close friend and fellow activist of Dr Mzizi. He delivered this paper during the Dr J.B. Mzizi Memorial Inaugural Lecture. This paper was his presentation, where he summarises Mzizi's legacy from his perspective.*

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1 Comfort Mabuza is the National Director of MISA – activist, cross-cultural communicator and theologian.

Whence, then, this pronounced humanity – this passion for social justice, and sensitivity to human wrongs? There is but one answer commensurate with stubborn historical truth. It derived from a new social conscience. And if that social conscience, admittedly, was the offspring of one progenitor, it nonetheless was mothered and nurtured by evangelical revival of vital, practical Christianity ... which directed heart, soul and mind, towards the establishment of the Kingdom of righteousness on earth (Wirt, 1982:19).

Throughout history and in every generation God raises up a prophet and liberator for humankind. Unfortunately such people are never popular and loved by the regimes of the day, and they are always tormented and hunted by enemies of peace. Their lives are never appreciated, but it is only when they are gone that we then hear echoes of celebration that they were indeed good people. Christian scholars and liberation theologians are all agreed that God does not leave any nation or generation under the sun without a prophet, who are often the voice of God and reason at a given time. They labour for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in their lifetime as if there is no better future.

We gathered here tonight to celebrate a life that to me was God's gift to our country. He was not an ordained minister of the gospel, yet he possessed all the credentials. He was not elevated to any political office or recognised by the *status quo*. He was not loved by the enemies of peace, justice and righteousness and yet he stood his ground and advocated for the freedom and liberation of the Swazi people who were prisoners of their own freedom obtained in 1968 but brutally killed by the 1973 Decree. He was not worth an honour in his own country, but the world over has recognised his work. He was from the southern part of Swaziland (KuMagele-KaHlatsi) and it has become a norm that liberators of this nation tend to come from Shiselweni (*Yitha'abantu* – We are the real people).

## **MZIZI THE STUDENT**

The life of Dr Joshua Mzizi should be understood within the context of his formative years at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS). It was during his student days that he lived a life that has become synonymous with his name "Joshua the Liberator". It was while at University that he was instrumental in the formation and enhancement of the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Together with Mr S.M. Mkhombe,<sup>2</sup> another Southerner from eNsongweni, they laid a good foundation that attests to the fact that you can be a Christian and a good intelligent person for that matter. The Christian faith should never be viewed as a religion of dull people who cannot add any value to matters of social concern.

Dr Mzizi and Mkhombe created a haven of hope for the Christian students, and ensured that their faith remained intact in the midst of a secular world at university. There are many Christian leaders today who owe their success at university and beyond to the positive foundation and

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2 S.M. Mkhombe – A friend of Mzizi and presently political advisor to His Majesty the King, Mswati III.

legacy of the SCM. Dr Mzizi and Mkhombe might have advanced and pursued different interests but surely their contributions, as students at UBLS, should not go unrecognised.

## **MZIZI THE TEACHER**

Joshua Mzizi was a teacher who endeared himself very much to his students. Lunga Masuku, who is a journalist and publisher of *Youth Connexion* magazine, attests to the fact that Mzizi was a wonderful teacher. Anson Zwane, who is also a media person and now with WHO, remembers Dr Mzizi as a compassionate person who could be equated to Mother Theresa of India. It was through the help and intervention of Dr Mzizi that Anson finished his high school at Mankayane. So many others who have been taught by him cannot stop admiring this life for the command of the Queen's language and love for religious knowledge. Dr Mzizi endeared himself to his students and inculcated a life of "life-long" learning.

## **MZIZI THE SCHOLAR – THEOLOGIAN**

What is the use of acquiring education and conducting research without applying the same in one's context? True scholarly work should be seen as exemplary and making a person become a servant of his people. Education that is blind to issues of the day is no education at all. The University of Swaziland owes us an apology for not rising up to the political, economic and social ills the nation is faced with. With due respect, academics at this respectful institution should be ashamed of themselves for failing to help, lead and guide this nation in its transition phase. How I wish there could be more like Dr Joshua Mzizi and Bekithemba Khumalo who married their education with social concern. There are times when Dr Mzizi's scholarly work and approach raised storms and doubts as to whether he was still "born again".

I remember that the Alliance Evangelical Church (AEC) in Mankayane was not comfortable to have him continue as its headmaster or principal because he challenged the white missionaries' approach to doing missions in Swaziland. The missionaries and sadly some fellow Christian brothers subsequently blacklisted him. No wonder that some of Dr Mzizi's scholarly work has been in the area of Liberation Theology. I personally had wars with him because I pursued the missiological dimension. When Dr Mzizi returned from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago USA, people started to wonder what had befallen this humble boy from Hlatikhulu. In my own formative years as a Christian leader and theological journey, there were cries that Dr Mzizi backslid *uwile*. We, as young evangelists, once decided to go lay hands on him in the mid-1980s and cast out the demons that had entered this brother. We were shocked to be challenged by Dr Mzizi on what we were doing about the plight of the oppressed people of Swaziland and the social agenda.

Dr Mzizi tended to be aggressive and at times I felt his prophetic reasoning was too much for the *status quo* and that he was exposing himself to danger. He did not even care whether the security forces were following him and tracking his movements. He was very critical of Swazi

culture and the powers of kingship. Here is what he said in his PhD thesis called *Voices of the voiceless* that I found quite amazing: “Kingship not only defines their (Swazis) national aspiration, but cements human relationships within the circle of existence.”

We had an argument with him when he returned from Vanderbilt University. This time I was pursuing my postgraduate studies at UNISA. I still felt he should have concerned himself with the gospel message and not mix it with politics, and we had a wrestling game, and he shaped my theology and I think now some of my convictions were shaped by Dr Mzizi, as true Christianity should not be blind to issues of cultural context, norms and values of a given people. Swazis are a religious people and are shaped entirely by their cultural heritage.

Dr Mzizi still felt there was a role for Swazi culture and kingship, but that it must be removed from politics and democratic order. He felt the institution of monarchy is good for identity purposes and nationhood, but surely it cannot be allowed to manipulate and control the political order and direction of Swaziland. Dr Mzizi wanted to bring that liberation to our country.

## **MZIZI, THE ADVOCATE AND ACTIVIST FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

*“Woe unto those who call evil Good,” Isaiah 5:20.*

*“It is exceedingly strange that any followers of Jesus Christ should ever have needed to ask whether social involvement was their concern, and that controversy should have blown up over the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility” (Stott, 1984).*

I think Dr Mzizi was a born advocate for freedom and human rights. The human rights dispensation in Swaziland cannot be told without mentioning Dr Mzizi. It was again Dr Mzizi and Mkhombe who crafted the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS) agenda, this was during the difficult times of *Liqoqo*<sup>3</sup> and when the monarchy was under threat. They rose with a message of hope for Swaziland. He died when he was advocating for changing HUMARAS to Human Rights and Democracy Institute of Swaziland (HURIDISWA) because he was convinced human rights must also address democratic order in Swaziland. How can we forget their desire to see the church becoming part and parcel of the struggle? They felt we needed an apolitical organisation that would embrace international recognised charters and freedoms. Though others blame Dr Mzizi for not supporting a known political formation, I guess that what human rights activists should do is advocate for change without being aligned with any other political formation.

## **MZIZI THE COMMUNICATOR AND SOCIAL COMMENTATOR**

Dr Mzizi attempted to put his thoughts on paper. He wrote so well when he penned former DPM Albert Shabangu: *Man of conscience*. In this write-up, he was trying to say that in the present

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3 The Supreme National Council that was running the affairs of the nation and advising the Queen during the dark years after the demise of King Sobhuza II.

Swaziland there are people of reason who are able to stand their ground and not give in to any regime that wants to muzzle the masses. In this work, Dr Mzizi's theological issues got over him when he wrote about Shabangu's views about missionaries:

*The dishonesty and hypocrisy in the mission station (Mhlosheni); as a Christian young boy he preferred Kraal visitation on Sundays to sharing life with fellow Christians on campus. It was in 1966 when Albert met his former headmaster, Rev. Pagard, next to the Manzini Post Office. He greeted Albert but the latter did not respond, for there was nothing good in that morning. Rev. Pagard offered a handshake, but Albert tucked his hands into his pockets. The two gentlemen blindly stared at each other as if they were both riding a memory train into the events of 1963-1964. As if they had told each other, they walked away from the explosive silence, away into guilt, grudge, self-justification, or simply away into oblivion (Mzizi, 1990).*

Dr Mzizi has written so well for both daily newspapers (*Times of Swaziland* and *Swazi Observer*) under columns titled "New Horizons", "JB Dissection" and "Speaking in Different Tongues". He also wrote for the *Nation* magazine, not to even mention some of his work in international journals and human rights works. Dr Mzizi was not blind to societal ills and illusions and always felt a Christian message should always address the issues people are faced with daily.

Bheki Makhubu<sup>4</sup> has observed:

*Dr Mzizi had risen above such triviality and was not put down by criticism he received. I am quite sure, had he lived on, he would have written more books and probably, eventually penned that best seller to be appreciated among international audiences.*

What a sobering observation from Bheki. Dr Mzizi died planning to publish his PhD dissertation because he felt so strongly that Swaziland needed to enrich herself. How many UNISWA scholars are prepared to even share their academic work and reason for the sake of the next generation? We cannot afford to allow these researched works to collect dust on the shelves of UNISWA library ... let us hear your voices, you learned friends.

## **MZIZI THE CHRISTIAN**

In all honesty, Dr Mzizi was a Christian. As to how he lived his life, that is not mine to judge, but I appreciated his commitment to the ideals of the Christian faith. As was his usual trademark, he had a run in with pastors and their sermons. One such man of the cloth is the well-known Pastor Justice Dlamini. Dr Mzizi, as a typical theologian, analysed the sermons and Dlamini's beliefs. Using his evangelical and scholarly work, he started to question why were people following this man. It is now history that Dlamini claims to have prayed for Dr Mzizi to die. This is yet another concern; what kind of a gospel is this when we have been warned to pray for our enemies. Dr Mzizi was right when he prophesied and said true Christianity is evaluated by the fruits that we bear, and we will only know who is a true Christian by their fruits. This is indeed a fruit of a Christian, and I do not doubt that he was genuine about what he believed in.

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4 Bheki Makhubu is the editor of *The Nation* magazine and was editor at *The Times of Swaziland* when Mzizi wrote his opinion pages, "New Horizons".

Dr Mzizi died not angry with all those who were opposed to his beliefs, and advocated for a multi-faith in Swaziland where all religions should be allowed to operate freely. He advocated for freedom of religion and indeed that would show a good Christian spirit, for he still maintained that the Gospel is *Insimbi edlezinye*,<sup>5</sup> and there was no need to be fearful of other religions.

## MZIZI THE FAMILY MAN

In his private life, Dr Mzizi had a family and he always spoke highly of Thalala, his wife, and his “club” of children. He asked me how many children I had and I told him three girls and he said, “So it’s over with the Mabuza surname” and then we laughed. He told me I should never stop trying, and I don’t know whether I should father again in my late forties. He also spoke highly of his mother, about whom, when I met him in Nhlngano and Hlatikulu, he would say, “*Ey Comf’ ... ngisayomunya kumake yemfo*” and that was also a great indication that Dr Mzizi’s convictions and theological training did not destroy his resolve to be a family person. This is commendable to us that in our pursuit for justice and righteousness we should never neglect our families. After all is said and done, at the end of our journey it is only our family that will embrace us, and that at the graveyard they will be there. It was with such a feeling last October when we laid Dr J.B. Mzizi the liberator and prophet below Hlatikulu with his ancestors. Yet if truth be told, his spirit, ideals and convictions remain alive today more than ever.

Yes, Mavukutfu and Mtsambama<sup>6</sup> are echoing a chorus; here lies Joshua Mzizi the prophet and liberator of post-colonial and modern Swaziland. Here lies the man of reason and indeed the son of the soil ... *Kufa izinsizwa kusale izinothongwane* ... May the spirit of J.B. Mzizi live on as we attempt to bring about a culture of human rights in Swaziland and make the Bill of Rights work as enshrined in the present Constitution.

May I be allowed to share this poem by Maya Angelou that somehow summarises J.B.’s Christian life, and so that we can better understand his life dreams and indeed its struggles:

*Christians – By Maya Angelou*

*When I say ... “I am a Christian”  
I’m not shouting “I’m clean livin’.”  
I’m whispering “I was lost,  
now I’m found and forgiven.”*

*When I say ... “I am a Christian”  
I don’t speak of this with pride.  
I’m confessing that I stumble  
and need Christ to be my guide.*

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5 The Gospel is a religion that can withstand any other force, and it cannot be wished away.

6 Twin Mountains in Hlatikhulu. They are famous for an old idiom that says, “It is better to trust a mountain that cannot be easily moved or shaken than mere mortal people.”

*When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not trying to be strong.  
I'm professing that I'm weak  
and need His strength to carry on.*

*When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not bragging of success.  
I'm admitting I have failed  
And need God to clean my mess.*

*When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not claiming to be perfect.  
My flaws are far too visible  
but, God believes I am worth it.*

*When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I still feel the sting of pain.  
I have my share of heartaches  
so I call upon His name.*

*When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not holier than thou.  
I'm just a simple sinner  
who received God's good grace, somehow!*

Long live Dr J.B. Mzizi's spirit, long live! Let us celebrate his life not forgetting that Swaziland is presently in crisis and we need to combine our efforts and leave a legacy for the next generation. Let us see another army of God that will challenge the *status quo* till we are all free and enjoy the freedoms the likes of Dr Mzizi were fighting for. We need a Kingdom of God to be established so that righteousness and justice will flow like an endless river till we all swim in newness and freshness of freedom, justice and righteousness. We need these ideals in Swaziland, a wisdom that will help usher in a new order with hope, of which King Solomon said:

*By me Kings reign and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly (Proverbs 8:15-6).*

## **PART 2 – THE HUMAN SIDE OF AN AFRICAN POLITICAL THEOLOGIAN | BY NONHLANHLA JOYCE VILAKATI**

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*Nonhlanhla Joyce Vilakati was a colleague of Dr Mzizi as a lecturer and a very close friend at the University of Swaziland, where they worked as theologians. She wrote this tribute for The Nation on 29 January 2006. Later she became a key player in the development of the Joshua Mzizi Memorial Inaugural Lecture.*

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I thought I knew Joshua well enough not to expect any surprises from him. Evidently I was painfully wrong. Joshua surprised me on his departure from this world. He left all too suddenly without any signal. How uncharacteristic and sad. There are very few things I want to talk about in so far as the professional side of Joshua's life is concerned. I have a very specific reason for my reluctance, no, decision not to say much about that aspect of his life. What I choose to remember of Joshua is his humanity and not his Albert Einstein qualities. And so the few observations I wish to share of his professional life are restricted to generalities.

Joshua was a Christian theologian trained in Systematic Theology. This involves critical reflection on classic and contemporary Christian doctrine, belief and practice. I have always perceived from my reading of journalistic sources in the country that many people – for a reason I have never been able to establish – thought Joshua was a biblical scholar. Not that the distinction mattered anyway in the lay world in which he lived as a public personality. But in strict academic terms that distinction between systematic theology and biblical hermeneutics does matter. In true academic practice, then, his focused contribution to the creation of knowledge in this area was the primary criterion for measuring his professional standing.

Within this area, there are several orientations. His was a political approach to analytic Christian theological reflection. This is why, as an organic intellectual and a citizen of this country, he participated in public debates on such issues as human rights, church-state relations, constitutionalism and parliamentary democracy. In doing so Joshua held passionately to the intellectual tradition which correctly posits that all theological construction is inscribed with a political agenda irrespective of whether or not any theologian may be conscious of the fact. Based on such a theoretical premise, all of Joshua's professional work was a meaningful contribution – an academic legacy well worth leaving behind and transmitting to posterity. I am most at home in reminiscing about my friendship with Joshua. This is the side of every person's life that those who know only the legendary aspect are not privy to. Doubtlessly, there are people who have known Joshua for a much longer time than I have. But every friendship is unique and so its duration is not an issue at all.

Outside our profession, it was almost inevitable to share our humanity. I could write an entire book of memoirs capturing countless unforgettable episodes of my taste of Joshua's ordinary life. For instance, we compared notes on parenting skills and very often many of our anecdotes of self-identified failures on that front ended with belly laughs. Joshua knew times he would get frustrated if I was not there to pick up the phone when he called me at any weekend to tell me a funny story which he knew I would spontaneously join him in laughing about. "*Ye wena ... yini kansti irelationship yakho nalolucingo lwakho, ngishayele phela sitohleka nayindzaba ya*" (what are your issues with your phone, please phone me, I have some news to share with you) is one of several messages Joshua would leave on my phone and it communicated a very down-to-earth desire to do something so ordinary and yet so characteristically human.

That was Joshua at his best behaviour! I dearly miss those off-stage unmasked performances of his life. On one occasion, Joshua was due to attend a conference outside the country. He

had to drop some work-related item at my house before his departure and I was not there myself. When he arrived at my house he found my octogenarian mother and they apparently had a conversation, which left an indelible mark on Joshua. On his return later, he told me how he felt blessed to have met my mother. What was fascinating to Joshua about that ordinary old woman, I quipped? Well, it transpired that my mother had sombrely wished Joshua a safe trip after telling him about the agony she repeatedly went through each time I would be on a similar trip. Joshua had a fierce reverence for the elderly people and he was profoundly touched to discover a strong emotional bond between me and my mother. That is why among his heroines he counted his own mother of whom I got to hear many stories of female courage and resilience.

But again, being the person that always saw the lighter side of things, he came back to report to me that he had met a great theologian in my mother. Joshua's statement was based on my mother having said to him:

*... asati bantwabami kutsi Somandla singambongangani ngekuniphephisa kuletindlela lenitihambayo ngemsebenti. Umbonga ngani nje yena lonako konkhe ngoba kube unjengami ngabe ngitsi ngalelinye lilanga ngitamtsengela luswayi? (We do not know, my children, how we can thank God for protecting you in these work-related trips that you have to take now and again. How do you show gratitude to the one who has everything, because if he/she was like me, one day I would give him/her salt to express my gratitude?)*

I was a little embarrassed by this but being the person he was, Joshua saw in it something worth cherishing. As if reading my mind, Joshua sternly said, "Mfo, we should be thankful for our parents." I would not have told the entire story of my friend's human side if I did not let those who did not have the privilege to discover this. Joshua was a mischief-maker! And trust me he was good at it! I speak as one who was sometimes at the receiving end of some of it. As an intelligent person, he knew when he was in trouble and he wiggled his way out of the tightest of corners and came out laughing on the other side. This was Joshua downsized to the small boy inside of his towering physical stature. He was very playful and witty to such an extent one would at times consider picking up a wet stick to spank the child-like truancy out of him. Many times, I told him this and he always responded with delirious laughter. At Joshua's funeral my youngest brother, who was a pupil at Mankayane High School when Joshua was head teacher there, told me about a humorous incident that occurred between the two of them.

Mandla admits he had done something wrong and Joshua wanted to have the issue discussed with the parents of the culprit. Knowing that he would be in huge trouble at home, Mandla said he let down all his defences and remorsefully begged the head teacher to punish him without involving his parents. Joshua was disarmed by Mandla's sincere remorse and the incident ended between the two of them! I am not surprised by this story. Clearly, Joshua saw his own truant behaviour in whatever my little brother had done and found it in his heart to forgive one of his kind even though Joshua by then was the older boy. For Mandla to have hidden the story from me until now that Joshua is no longer around shows how he learned something from Joshua that made him admire his teacher for the rest of his life. It appears that it was out

of a deep sense of loyalty that Mandela kept this a secret for this long. How I wish for a chance in the next life to ask Joshua why he left without notice just to get that response laced with calculated humour.

For now, I can only console myself with patiently wishing Joshua a restful sleep.

*Lala uphumule Nkumane.*

## PART 3 – HE WAS A MAN OF HONOUR | BY BHEKI MAKHUBU<sup>7</sup>

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*Bheki Makhubu was the editor of The Nation magazine, which covered issues on the social, economic and political issues on Swaziland. He had worked with Mzizi for a number of years through the articles that Mzizi wrote for his magazine. In preparation for the Inaugural Lecture he wrote two articles. This is one of them:*

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One of Dr Joshua Mzizi's virtues in his lifetime was that, despite all the problems this country is faced with, he believed there was hope for the future: that the authorities of this country would wake up one day and see the light. Some of us are not so optimistic for the simple reason that those who run this country know exactly what they are doing and would be hard pressed to start caring for the ordinary people simply because they cannot see it would reward them. Dr Mzizi once wrote, "I am an optimist by nature; otherwise I would have long ago hanged myself." This statement on its own tells you how strongly Dr Mzizi felt about the good future of this country and, until his death, held strongly to the belief that one day things would improve. In his over-optimistic virtue, Dr Mzizi was the only teacher in Swaziland who coaxed and cajoled his former teacher colleague, a man he most admired, Albert Shabangu (then Deputy Prime Minister), to always remember the teachers after he became a politician and Cabinet minister.<sup>8</sup> I have yet to meet a teacher in Swaziland who never felt betrayed by Shabangu when he joined Cabinet and seemingly forgot about them. No, he turned against them.

Dr Mzizi would, from time to time, engage Shabangu in his columns in the press, mainly to try and find that once great leader of SNAT who had led the teachers through hard times in the '70s and '80s and had delivered them from the Biblical bondage of Egypt. Just before Shabangu crossed the floor and became a politician, Dr Mzizi wrote a book about Shabangu's life entitled

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<sup>7</sup> *The Times of Swaziland*, 9 November 2007

<sup>8</sup> Albert Heshane Shabangu started his career as a teacher until he rose to the position of President of the Swaziland National Teacher's Association, an organisation he built to one of the most powerful in the country representing teachers. He was then appointed by the King to a cabinet position and later became the Deputy Prime Minister of the country. Teachers in the country turned against Shabangu, accusing him of having betrayed them when he joined Government and forgot their struggle. Mzizi had been Shabangu's student and idolised him to a point of writing Shabangu's biography.

*Man of Conscience*. It wasn't the greatest work ever produced, but it crystallised his own beliefs in the former SNAT leader. Dr Mzizi sought to immortalise Shabangu through the book and to thank him for all that he had done for teachers throughout the years. Frankly, I do not think Dr Mzizi made any money from that book. I don't believe he did it for financial gain either.

I had the privilege of interacting with both men at different times because they both wrote for the publications I edited. I found that Shabangu, and I am sorry to say this, did not seem to appreciate Dr Mzizi's admiration for him. But the reasons for that are not difficult to discern. When Shabangu became a politician, he moved to a higher plain: He was now serving King Mswati III and, like all those who sit by the King's side, could not be bothered by lesser mortals like Dr Mzizi. I remember discussing the book with Shabangu and pointing out that it could have been done better and that there was a need to improve it. He responded by giving me the impression that he had never wanted that book written in the first place and, therefore, did not want anything to do with it.

Now, that is breath-taking arrogance. I say this because ever since I publicised that I was writing a book about Prince Mfanasibili I have found that many people, even those who have nothing to offer history, would like their lives to be immortalised in a book. In other words, Shabangu could not have honestly disowned that book but for my criticism of it and that his was now a life far removed from his days as a teacher where, he conveniently forgot, his roots were firmly based. But, that is what this system does to great minds.

I never told Dr Mzizi about this conversation for obvious reasons, and bring it up today to demonstrate the humble, good-natured man this doctor of theology was. I bring this up, too, to show that, despite the fact that teachers had come to bury Shabangu – to bastardise William Shakespeare's famous saying – Dr Mzizi came to praise him. For, I know had I told him what Shabangu had said, Dr Mzizi would naturally have been hurt, but would have taken it in his stride and hoped Shabangu would come to appreciate what teachers had done for him in his lifetime. When all teachers had washed their hands of Shabangu, Dr Mzizi, ever the optimist, never gave up on him. There are other writings that Dr Mzizi engaged in during his lifetime. Just before he passed on, he published a booklet, which had been seriously attacked by roving columnist Dr Ben Dlamini, and now by weekend editor, Alec Lushaba of *The Swazi Observer*. Dr Mzizi sent me an email to suggest that I rebut these attacks on him in the magazine I work for. I never got round to do that because, until he died, I had not properly read what he had written or made up my own mind about it.

This, most importantly, demonstrates how Dr Mzizi appreciated the importance of freezing history by recording it. Our society, despite the high level of education of the people among us, does not believe that the written word is the most important vehicle for progress. Those who do write are denigrated, thus discouraging all others from pursuing this most important assignment in life. Dr Mzizi, I am happy to say, had risen above such triviality and was not put down by criticism he received. I am quite sure, had he lived on, he would have written more books and, probably, eventually penned that bestseller to be appreciated among international audiences.

At least, organisations such as Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO) and the Council of Swaziland Churches (CSC) have come to appreciate his contribution in society. This is why they will be hosting the International Human Rights Day in his honour tomorrow evening. How many of us get to receive such an honour? How many will be dead and forgotten as soon as they hit the ground, simply because they had nothing to offer history.

## PART 4 – HE STOOD FOR THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS | BY BHEKI MAKHUBU<sup>9</sup>

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*This is the second article written in honour of Dr J.B. Mzizi by Bheki Makhubu.*

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In my many interactions with Dr Joshua Mzizi, the one aspect of his life that always fascinated me, yet which I never clearly understood, was his standing on matters religious. The confusion in my mind was not difficult to understand; we live in a country of religious zealots, where Christian fads have made millions of *Emalangenis* either seeking or offering religious redemption. Dr Mzizi never seemed to show any interest in this phenomenon that has gripped this country and made millionaires out of otherwise nobodies. Yet, he was a doctor of Theology. The answer to this I only got after his death when a colleague of his, Nonhlanhla Vilakati, wrote a moving tribute to him in *The Nation* magazine. Vilakati wrote, “Joshua was a Christian Theologian trained in Systematics. This involves critical reflection on classic and contemporary Christian doctrine, belief and practice.” Whether this makes sense to our overnight pastors, reverends, prophets and bishops, I do not care to know. Vilakati then noted that from what she has read from people who debated with Dr Mzizi in the newspapers, there was a perception that he was a biblical scholar.

She then wrote, “Not that the distinction mattered anyway in the lay world in which he lived as a public personality. But in strict academic terms that distinction between Systematic Theology and the Biblical Hermeneutics does matter.” One has to disagree with Vilakati, an academic in her own right, who is a lecturer at the University of Swaziland, on the irrelevance of Dr Mzizi’s academic qualification. The reason is this: one of the biggest problems Dr Mzizi had to contend with was to reconcile his scholarly understanding of religion and the audience he had to debate with, which was mainly comprised of lay preachers. Those who claim to understand religion in this country resented him for bringing religion into politics yet, as Vilakati claims; they did not understand which part of the religious perspective he came from.

So when, in May 2005, the Council of Swaziland Churches organised a march to the Prime Minister’s office, led by the Bishop of Manzini, His Lordship Ncamiso Ndlovu and the Bishop

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9 *The Times of Swaziland*, 9 December 2007

of Swaziland, the Right Venerable Meshack Mabuza, Dr Mzizi supported them; this, when just about everyone else claiming to understand Christianity, including Parliament, condemned the march. Mzizi wrote:

*I was amazed when I heard some known half-baked so-called pastors condemning the march, arguing from no theological basis, having completely missed the point as usual (2005: 445).*

Dr Mzizi then proceeded to remind his readers of the Hebrew prophets who rose to confront real issues troubling the people of God. His colleague, Vilakati, pointed out regarding Dr Mzizi:

*His was a political approach to analytic Christian theological reflection. In doing so, Joshua held passionately to the intellectual tradition which correctly posits that all theological construction is inscribed with a political agenda irrespective of whether or not any theologian may be conscious of that fact (2006:16).*

Yet, if you were to ask why Dr Mzizi may seem not to have made any breakthrough in the minds and hearts of Christians who live in this country, the answer lies in a very silly Christian way of doing things that he who speaks outside the parameters prescribed by one's pastor should not be listened to.

## THE LITERAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLE

There is a strongly held belief in Swazi Christianity that when it was said God wrote the Bible it is meant in the literal sense. None of these believers would tell you, though, whether the Almighty is left handed or right handed. Those who claim that he was working through writers of the gospels completely ignore the circumstances in which such writings were done. Understanding the context of the lives of the Israelites at the time, I believe, is important in unpacking the Bible. Dr Mzizi believed that too, hence his political bias in matters theological. During the heated debate among Christians over whether Christianity should be adopted as the official religion in the Constitution, Dr Mzizi reminded his readers that:

*Dangerous religions which compromise the rights of others, including the security of the state, cannot be allowed to practice under the guise of a freedom of religion clause (2005:442).*

Dr Mzizi was clearly opposed to Christianity being made the official religion under the Constitution as he pointed out:

*If Paul preached so hard for the separation of the law from the Gospel, why should [we], nearly a thousand and fifty years later, advocate for legalism, disregarding all historical events involving Christendom in the intervening years since the second century AD? (2005:446).*

If you walk down the street in the country's major towns, wherever you find two people chatting, they are most likely analysing a verse in the Bible. It is often interesting to listen to the depths they will go to unpack a verse. The intellectual insight into matters biblical is one to marvel at. Yet, these very same people refuse to use their intellectualism to look into the lives they live and decide whether it is just.

Those societies, known to hold very deep religious beliefs, tend to be ones where the people are suffering, living in bondage under a dictatorial leadership that has for too long subjugated them. We see this in the lives of slaves who, once they had come to terms with their fate, turned to God for salvation. Is this not what is happening in a country where the national radio broadcaster plays more religious music than anything else on air? But, our circumstances are clearly different from those of slaves. If anything, we only choose to live under such conditions. While he did not pretend to be a Martin Luther King Jr., who used his church pulpit to launch a massive campaign for the granting of civil rights of all African-Americans in the United States, Dr Mzizi did believe that all matters dealing with God had to start here on this earth before one enters the gates of Heaven.

Today's Christian teaching in Swaziland is that one should ignore the happenings on earth and prepare for the life yonder, when the pearly gates of Heaven will be opened and those living in the Lord shall march in with grace and live eternally. If that is true, then why did God put us here? Yes, to worship and serve him. But he also put us here to pursue, as I said last weekend, our own happiness. Why do we deprive ourselves of chance to live in a just society where all are equal before him? I strongly believe that it was His intention to have us here. His is, after all, the only mouth incapable of telling lies. I challenge anyone to disagree.

Nobody, not even those who claim to be prophets and to see yonder while fast asleep, knows what happens in the afterlife. But I often wonder whether God will accept those so-called born-again people who conveniently ignore their own suffering and that of others under the pretext that theirs is only to prepare for heaven. What then are they doing here? I think God will lock them out on judgement day for they will have nothing to answer with regard to their sojourn on earth. They will be condemned to eternal hell. But then, like I said, nobody knows what happens yonder. And that's a fact. I am no exception.

## **PART 5 – HE WAS A TEACHER AND ROLE MODEL FOR ALL ASPIRING ACTIVIST-INTELLECTUALS | BY SIKELELA DLAMINI<sup>10</sup>**

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*Sikelela Dlamini had been a student of Dr Mzizi during his high school days at Mankayane High School. He had been motivated and mentored by Mzizi until he became an intellectual in his own right. In this article he pays tribute to his "Boss" as they usually called the principal during their high school days.*

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10 *The Nation*, January 2006

Yes, it's over a month since Baba Joshua Bheki Mzizi proceeded up yonder. There have certainly been enough heartrending tributes in celebration of a life of fearless integrity. Many have had their say since the death of Dr Joshua Mzizi. As a student of his, and him being the one who taught me much of what I know today, I would also like to pay my tribute to a dedicated teacher and erudite intellectual whose influence in Swazi politics is well documented. Still, allow me to bid my teacher farewell "my way". I felt his departure very personally.

Ironically, my father, teacher, mentor and role model died just shy of a year after I publicly acknowledged his contribution to my life. It's equally ironic that I abandoned a death-related article midway to pay tribute to my suddenly departed hero. I must have a special connection with the theme of death that I'm yet to fathom. As my teacher, Dr Mzizi empowered me with impeccable English writing skills through exacting independent book reviews, which he graded conscientiously and objectively – a rare attribute in a schooling context where teacher-student relations were often crafted along Christianity/non-Christianity lines. As my "father", Mzizi always saw the broader picture or, if you like, the brighter side of me, amidst a groundswell of pressure for my dismissal. Not only was I among the worst behaved, but my fees were always notoriously late. My forthcoming PhD graduation is surely in his honour. As my mentor, he taught me to attend meticulously to grammatical accuracy. Thanks to him, I can never utter or pen such bad English as "I wanted to find out how it's like ..." that characterises both our print and electronic media.

Needless to say, I've extended this training to other aspects of my general life-world. Mzizi's insightful critiquing of *Tinkhundlacracy* (as he called it) saved me a lot of painstaking bootstrapping as it provided a model to follow. He was my role model in that he was pro-education, had a functional family (as far as I know), stood up for the social underdog, and stood by his principles right down to the grave. He taught me how to live an honourable life as well as how to die likewise. He can rest assured that I'll use the peaceful weapon he gave me to defend social justice to the hilt. When the lure of immediate socio-economic rewards eroded morals and caused enlightened contemporary Swazis to look the other way, Dr Mzizi stood up for the truth. He was, in my book, perhaps the only lecturer (in the absence of Dr S. Mkhonza), who exercised academic freedom in a work environment where "yes-humanism" is rewarded. Curiously, Mzizi succumbed to a high blood pressure related ailment just over a month after lamenting work-related stress and recreational inactivity for UNISWA's overworked but underpaid academics. Swaziland bleeds at the loss of yet another of her few *bona fide* sons, one who told the authorities his mind in a carefully measured, mature, unemotional, but forthright way when they were wrong.

Marianne Thamm says, "The only ritual in which we are afforded the same status as men is at our funeral" (in Stewart, 2005). Dr Mzizi's humble passing at the Mbabane Government Hospital symbolised death as an equalising factor. Isn't it amazing that humanity elected to bury their dead to mark their end as nocturnal stillness gives way to nature's awakening cry, and as a fresh breeze welcomes a new dawn full of expectation? The timing of burials signifies a break



for the departed from this manic existence to embark on an unperturbed solitary journey back to God. Dr Mzizi had, like Vusi Ginindza, clearly turned the corner in terms of his political outlook.

His “punchiness” had latterly subtly softened as he became more accommodating and objective. He had, after all, won many tough battles and was duly handing over to young lions still eager to make a name for themselves in the print media. He increasingly began to see the promising side of Swazi politics, learned to appreciate the right-leaning politico-theological discourse of an adversarial Reverend, and brought Muslims and Christians to a mutually respectful coexisting mode. In the process, he saved us a repeat of those “holy” slurs of the Christianity clause debate. That this was his last contribution exhorts those of us who shared and respected his vision to be more tolerant in this fragile political transition. When I shook his hand at Matsapha’s S and B Restaurant and he proudly congratulated me on a near-complete PhD programme early this year, it could never have occurred to me that that was to be our parting physical contact. He will always be my teacher. His sudden death reminded me to live everyday as though it was indeed my last in case tomorrow never comes.

The early 1980s’ male students at Mankayane High School hostel would have said, “*Lala kahle, Boss!*” (Rest in peace, Boss!).

## **PART 6 – J.B. MZIZI: THE FACE AND SPIRIT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF SWAZILAND | BY VELAPHI MAMBA<sup>11</sup>**

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*Velaphi Mamba had been a student of Dr Mzizi at the University of Swaziland, who also supervised his postgraduate project. He delivered this short tribute at the Dr J.B. Mzizi Inaugural Lecture on behalf of all the University students.*

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I take great pleasure in the opportunity given to me at this historic gathering to pay tribute to my teacher, my leader and idol. I find myself quite overwhelmed at being afforded such an opportunity to speak about a character as great and gifted as Dr Joshua Mzizi. Perhaps I need to mention that I was probably one of the last students to talk to Dr Mzizi a few days before he passed away. I recall that sometime in late November 2005 he came to the University just to give me my project proposal, which I had submitted for his comments and guidance, as he was my supervisor. As the title of this brief presentation reflects, you will all agree with me that in life Dr Mzizi succeeded in becoming the Force of the Human Rights Movement in Swaziland. Today, I state with confidence that in death he has become the Spirit and Force of the Movement. This is the reason why we are gathered here today; we all recognise the invaluable and immeasurable

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11 10 December 2007

contribution he made to this country: today we speak of a Constitution with a Bill of Rights and a country that has embraced religious freedom which he untiringly fought for and advocated. Indeed, we need to celebrate this man whose life has touched thousands while he was alive, and is still to touch millions of our generations to come even in death.

It is a fact that few are born into this world to lead, direct and guide the rest of us; few are born with the natural insight and instinct to assess both people and situations. Dr Mzizi was one of those few; when you were with him, you could not help but feel that strong magnetic force that we call charisma flowing through him. In fact, those of you who have had the experience of working with him will agree with me that he was no ordinary character. He had this incredible ability to see through people; to discern between myth and historical fact, culture and manipulation, pastor and conman, churches and business schemes – he saw through them all and spoke in different tongues against those practices he considered evil.

When Dr Mzizi vehemently opposed the entrenchment of Christianity as the official religion of Swaziland into the Swazi Constitution, many failed to understand him, particularly some church leaders who, for reasons I fail to fathom, accused him of bigotry, blasphemy and apostasy. For obvious reasons, I think we all agree today that including Christianity as an official religion of the country would have been the blunder of the millennium – a great hypocrisy, especially on the part of the church. We should all realise that our deep-seated national cultural practices and Christianity are worlds apart, unless we want to be guilty of religious syncretism or to wish this glaring fact away. The challenge that Dr Mzizi posed to this nation is: “Are Christianity and Swazi Culture reconciled to the extent that we can safely declare the country officially Christian?” Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that as a country we should interrogate the theological problems posed by the interplay between our culture and the Christian religion. We should be careful lest we find ourselves taking giant strides backward when other nations are moving forward.

I wish to say to this gathering today that the time has come for each and every Swazi to think carefully about the question of culture. We need to scrutinise it to discern whether it still protects the collective interests of the whole nation. We need to interrogate it to find out whether or not the necessary checks and balances that every system must have to protect its weak and vulnerable are still intact. Dr Mzizi would have preferred us to do this in a peaceful way for he was a principled pacifist. We have all seen or heard of how cultural practices have been flagrantly violated in this country to render some people homeless, nameless and without dignity. We need to revisit the way we, as a nation, respond to overt and covert abuse of our cultural heritage for the benefit of a few at the expense of the nation.

Before I digress, I should emphasise that the theme that underpinned the life of Dr Joshua Mzizi is the liberation and democratisation of the Swazi state. Today is a day when we can look back and assess our progress or lack thereof in these areas. I believe that I speak for the majority of Dr Mzizi's former students when I say that because of his death many prospective theologians have lost the chance to be moulded by a strict workaholic whose driving ethos was work, work

and work! And, by work I mean a lot of reading and writing. On the other side of this gamut, I suppose that lazy students got off the proverbial hook. While Dr Mzizi was strict when it came to work, he still found time for humour; his laughter was not difficult to solicit, as he would genuinely joke with his students, regardless of his age.

May I end my tribute by expressing my concern that today we have a Swaziland where former champions of human rights have become cruel executors of injustice; we live in a Swaziland where some pastors pray for other people to die, while others have firmly chosen the coin as opposed to the mission. At this point, I would like to challenge the Nation to stand up for human rights. The Nation should learn from the Spirit and Force of the Human Rights Movement in Swaziland. We can do this by first recognising that Dr Joshua Mzizi was in practice a professor, therefore, I call upon the relevant authorities to posthumously make him one before we can move on to build monuments and institutions in honour of him.



# SECTION FIVE

# THE LEGACY OF A POSTCOLONIAL SWAZILAND

**T**he aim of this chapter is to provide a concluding analysis of what has been discussed in this book first by the pieces I have written and also from the articles written by Mzizi. I highlight key themes and lessons from Mzizi's works that can be of value for those concerned about issues around church and politics in Swaziland and Africa as a whole. This chapter then concludes the book.<sup>1</sup>

## INTELLECTUAL-ACTIVIST

Joshua Bhekinkosi Mzizi was both an intellectual and human rights activist; although maybe the latter describes him best (Nhleko, 30 November 2005:4). He was involved in the Swaziland Concerned Civic Organisations (SCCO), the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Swaziland chapter, contributed to the Swaziland Action Group against Abuse (SWAGAA), and last but not least, was an avid supporter of the Law Society in Swaziland. His contribution to the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and its partner, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) is also well documented (Mutasah, 30 November 2005:7). Mzizi is also said to have been the "brains behind the formation of HURIDISWA, a human rights watchdog" in Swaziland (Dlamini, 30 November 2005:2). The list goes on. One of Mzizi's students, Nonhlanhla Vilakati (January 2006:33) makes an interesting observation when she states that

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1 Large parts of this section were published in *Studia Historae*.

Mzizi's activism "became more accommodating and objective" as he became more engaged with the authorities and royal household.

A question however remains: Why would an intellectual, who enjoyed all the accoutrements that a University can offer, including job security, privilege, elitism etc., involve himself in the struggle for democracy? The answer is found in Mzizi's belief that the University is not an ivory tower detached from the poor and disadvantaged, but should rather be connected to communities and reflects on the issues that affect them. His intellectual activities were therefore very much informed by his engagement in activist work; there being a clear connection between his work as an academic and his involvement with the struggle for freedom at the local level. Therefore, his theology was a socially engaged one, emanated from the lived experiences of the people in a real African context. It was by no means abstract, that is why it was critical of those in power. For him intellectuals were activists and have the responsibility of taking the academy to the people and the people to the academy, so that an African University is no longer an Ivory Tower nor the preserve of the few, but an integral part of the community. As we shall see in what follows, Mzizi's work epitomised this kind of intellectual engagement.

## THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Mzizi's body of work inevitably forces us to look at the role the University played in the development of a country such as Swaziland, be it economic or political. This question was first addressed by the late Bishop Mandlenkholi Zwane, the first indigenious bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in Swaziland who Mzizi regarded as a personal hero. Zwane observed that a university has to produce knowledge that enables a country to develop. It is also important to ask what type of knowledge must be produced. One of the pillars of a university is its emphasis on academic freedom which means freedom of research and dissemination of information. This comes from the awareness that the University might generate subversive knowledge, one that is against the *status quo*. It does not need to be hindered from coming up with such knowledge, or to practice it. Mzizi's work as an intellectual-cum-activist brings to our attention the fact that the University should be a "site of struggle". Universities are not removed from the heartbeat of society, but are the very laboratories where what happens in society is analysed, reflected upon, and tested.

Mzizi's experience has taught us – through his juggling between work at the University and with various civil society groups – that it was not simply for the benefit of the individual or for serving the *status quo*, but was to assist those who lived on the margins of society to think. He was convinced that the work of democratising a country cannot be left in the hands of political formations and politicians. Instead, intellectuals must also join in the struggle using their skills to enrich the struggle, activities, and processes of democratisation. Hence, it was with much courage and fortitude that Mzizi undertook such a risky venture in Swaziland, where

the Monarch had absolute control over the University.<sup>2</sup> As with everything, Mzizi approached this task with passion and relentless determination.

## **LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A TOOL IN THE HANDS OF THE CHURCH**

Mzizi defined and understood himself as a liberation theologian. For him, such theology enabled the church to best respond to the contextual challenges facing the people of Swaziland. Motivating for admission to the doctoral programme at Vanderbilt University, Mzizi (1995:2) wrote the following about Liberation Theology:

*I have in the last three years been reading extensively good literature related to the Theology of Liberation. I should like to enrich myself in this area basically because more and more it has dawned on me that this kind of theology is not just for the classroom, but it is for the people. The greatest challenge lies in simplifying this theology so that it can be understood and appropriated by any believer regardless of status, creed, level of education and denominational background. In this sense, the Theology of Liberation would become a practical theology as various Christian communities contextualise it as they deem fit.*

The question may be asked: What is Liberation Theology? Liberation Theology is understood to be that branch of theology that concerns itself with the liberation of God's people from all forms of oppression, be it political, religious, or material. This includes all those systems and forces which hinder people living out their lives to its fullness; a life characterised by human dignity, freedom, justice and equality. He saw the need for theology to draw from a variety of sources if it was to make a difference in the lives of people in a pluralistic community such as Swaziland. To be effective in such a context, Liberation Theology needs to draw from such sacred texts of religion as the Bible, Qur'an and the Bhagavad-Gita Gita, as well as from other religious traditions such as Baha'i, and traditional Swazi culture, or what Mzizi (13 July 1997:9) rightly called the "unwritten cultural text". For him, the sacred texts of each of these religious and cultural traditions possess liberating values and principles from which the people of Swaziland could draw.

In a pro-Evangelical faith society such as Swaziland, Mzizi's approach to theology was of such a radical nature that it was close to being dismissed as non-Christian. Linked to this was his emphasis on the interaction between Liberation Theology and African Traditional Religion which he understood could produce new and contextually relevant systems of monarchical rule in Swaziland which were neither secular nor oppressive. It can be said without any reservation that by proposing a multi-religious approach to Liberation Theology, Mzizi was breaking new ground by mobilising the pluralist religious community of Swaziland to collaborate in the struggle against oppression by the monarchy.

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2 In Swaziland, the reigning monarch is the Chancellor of the University and a senior Prince is chairman of the Council.

## **LIBERATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS GO TOGETHER**

Another contribution that Mzizi made was his emphasis that Liberation Theology and human rights go together in the struggle for the democratisation of a society. This is a very important insight in Africa where politicians championed the liberation of their people from the colonial powers, but are violators of the rights of their citizens' basic human rights. Mzizi embodied this congruence by his work both as a Liberation Theologian and General Secretary of HURUDISWA. Here it is important to explore the theological underpinnings of his theology for human rights. For Mzizi, the two cannot be separated, but instead complement each other. This connectivity was explained well in his PhD dissertation:

*In the evolution of ideas on the concept of human rights, religion has always played a major role. From the source of religion, natural law and positive law draw their philosophical formulations. Whereas religion defines the relationship between the divine and the human subject, it defines as well the relationship between human and human, and between human and the created order (Mzizi, 1995:2).*

By combining Liberation Theology and human rights in a creative dialogue, Mzizi made a valuable contribution to the struggle for Swaziland's liberation. In a country where over 96 per cent of the population is deemed religious, a theological perspective on the struggle against oppression had a big constituency. At the same time, the progressive movements in the country, whose membership is predominantly drawn from the religious community, easily identified with Mzizi's fight for human rights. While he spoke to the issues that were on their agenda, he was not simply talking about theological issues that are concerned with so-called "spiritual mysteries" from beyond. Instead, he applied his theology to the context of real-life issues where people experience oppression and poverty as a result of a dysfunctional and oppressive political system. It is thus not surprising that his contributions were noticed and often became topics of discussions in public places e.g. market places, bus ranks and shebeens (beer halls).

## **ON CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS**

In his final published academic article before his untimely death, Mzizi (2005:442) raised the central questions that underpinned his prophetic theology:

*If Swaziland is such a Christian country, where everything stops on Sunday because people are in church, what was the role of Christianity in the political development of the country? If it is true that Swaziland was chosen by God, a God who revealed Godself to King Mswati I and ordered him to get missionaries and Umculu (book), why is the country in such a socio-economic and political mess?*

To answer these important questions, Mzizi identified three approaches to church/state relations in Swaziland, namely Zionist, Evangelical and mainline churches. While at times these appeared incoherent and sometimes in collision thus leading the polarisation of the Christian community from becoming a prophetic voice, for Mzizi they were of supreme importance.



## ON AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS AND AFRICA INITIATED CHURCH'S VIEWS ON POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

For Mzizi, the Zionist approach to church/state relations provided the theological justification for the King to be seen as being appointed and ordained by God. Affiliated to the League of African Churches in Swaziland (LACS) the Zionists are thus seen as special churches that are close to the Monarchy and the Royal House. This of course is not surprising when it is realised that the late King Sobhuza II had a lot to do with their establishment and registration as an official state-registered church. As Mzizi (10 September 1996:9) notes:

*Earlier before 1935, Sobhuza II had suggested the founding of a Swazi Christian church in the same fashion as British Anglicanism, German, Lutheranism, and Italy's Roman Catholic Church to consolidate all believing Christians less than one banner. The League was a result of such an effort.*

The Zionists hold their Easter celebrations at the National Church where they are joined by the King and Queen. Their sermons and prayers tend to focus on showering blessings upon royalty and are completely oblivious of the dissatisfaction that citizens have with the monarchical system. Indeed, Zionists regard the ruling Monarch as their "High Priest" because of the role the King played in unifying them during the colonial period (Mzizi, 2005a:446). Mzizi (1991:64) thus identified four disadvantages of the alliance between the Zionists and the Royal House:

*(1) The Zionists monopoly in counselling the Royalty may be resented by other churches. (2) The Zionists may find themselves blessings every cultural institution, sometimes compromising the message of the Bible. (3) The Zionists may be manipulated by the State to always pray for peace instead of realistically addressing the causes of instability. (4) The leadership may find it difficult to distinguish between doing God's work and doing the King's work. There may be a conflict of spiritual allegiances in this respect.*

In such a context as Swaziland, Zionist theology draws its inspiration from the book of Samuel where Israel asked for a King. God ends up giving in to their demands and allows them to choose a King for themselves, although this is not without warning what a monarchical system could do to them. Such theologising however does not go into the consequences that God warned against, such as power, greed and exploitation that comes with such a monarchical system. Mzizi thus contended that such theology was dangerous not only for its adherents, but for the nation as a whole.

## THE EVANGELICAL APPROACH TO CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

For Mzizi, Evangelical theology as espoused by the affiliates of the Swaziland Conference of Churches (SCC) concerns itself with the maintenance of the church, its mission, existence, power, and structures, doctrines and good relationship with the State.<sup>3</sup> With regard to its attitude towards the State, Evangelical theology does not differ that much from Zionist theology. It is not at all critical of royalty, but instead favours the Kingship as long as it emphasises what is termed

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3 It is significant to note that Mzizi grew up and was educated in Evangelical schools.

“Somhloism”. As long as the Royal House continues to create an environment that regards Swaziland as a Christian country, and gives Christianity a supreme place compared to other religions it is happy. In a limited, guarded and often cautious way, such theology emphasises the authority of God and salvation above earthly kings. It tends not to be critical of the system of government. Its criticism, if anything, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the “signs of the times”, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Church tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to the situation of the country.

Evangelical theology, as practiced by the affiliates of the SCC draws from the text and traditions that seek for the continuity and maintenance of the *status quo* within and outside the church. It views God’s mission as the presence of the church from one generation to the next, of providing worship, the formation of Christian community and the performance of Christian service, such as works of charity and preparing people for heaven. Discipleship in this theology is without cost and challenge (Bonhoeffer, 1959:36) Most of the churches that align themselves as Evangelical are satisfied by the presence and existence of the church as a worshipping, healing and saving community. There is a view of preparing people for another world, namely heaven; in the meantime, people should not worry about poverty, exploitation and the consequences of bad governance. For adherents of this theology, religion acts as the “opiate of the masses” thereby allowing the believer to go forward in life, blind to its real challenges, all in the name of a better world than this. Karl Marx (1964:64) in his critic of religion once said that:

*Man has found in the fantastic reality of heaven, where he sought a supernatural being, only his own reflection ... Religious suffering [of the oppressed] is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, and the soul of the soulless conditions. Religion is the opium of the people.*

While the Zionists use Easter to pray for the Swazi Royal family, the Evangelicals have developed a cultural-Evangelical wing which introduced the “Somhlolo Festival of Praise” a prayer service held for the monarchy and the nation at the Somhlolo National Stadium in Lobamba on July 22 of each year, this being a national holiday in celebration of the birth of King Sobhuza II. Mzizi (2005a:447) therefore notes the emphasis Evangelicals place on the Oath of Office which King Sobhuza II took in 1921 when he used the Bible, which for them signifies the “national ethos and philosophy of the country should be founded on the Christian Bible.”

Evangelical theology is based on dichotomising the world between that which is secular and that which is religious. For Evangelicals, because of Adam’s fall, the world is sinful, corrupt and will be ultimately destroyed. On the other hand, heaven is a place filled with the presence of God, where God reigns together with the angels, its streets are paved with gold and eternal bliss is the lot of all its redeemed inhabitants. This comes from an uncritical and domesticated hermeneutical reading of Bible texts such as John 14:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; and the entire book of Revelation.

Evangelical religion as practiced by the SCC goes further and draws on such spiritual songs as *ngingumfokazi lapha emhlabeni ngifuni Zulu ikhaya*, (I am a sojourner in this world looking for heaven my home) *ikhaya lami alikho lisezulwini* (this world is not my home, my home is in heaven) *singabahambayo thina kulomhlaba* (we are passing in this world to our home in heaven) etc. Hence, it was against this background of “church theology” that Karl Marx and communism drew their criticism and ultimate rejection of organised religion, especially Christianity, because it made the proletariat fail to appreciate the world of contradictions as it was and embark on addressing them. Instead, they choose to leave the world as it was, hoping for a better one in the next eschaton. Mzizi (6 October 1996:10) was opposed to this type of theology to such an extent that by the time of his death he had long stopped attending church services. Instead, he lamented the church’s attitude:

*It is unfortunate that up to this day this body is imbued with the kind of apolitical ness, the kind of conservatism, and the pathetic silence when basic rights and freedoms are infringed upon the state.*

Referring to Mzizi’s criticism of Evangelical theology, his old friend, Pastor Comfort Mabuza remembers that he and his fellow Evangelical friends made an attempt to preach to Mzizi so that he could regain his Evangelical faith and zeal again. This was to prove an impossible task, as Mzizi detested any religious faith that was oblivious to the suffering of the poor (Mabuza, 2008:3).

Mzizi’s churches, first the Swedish Mission and later the International Tabernacle were evangelicals and so they belonged to the SCC. Mzizi himself was an evangelical Christian till his death. It must be noted that his relationship with his church was a site of struggle between the apolitical doctrine of his church and his commitment to the social gospel expressed through liberation theology which he held dearly. As a result, Mzizi’s faith, theology and ecclesial home were in constant tension.

## **THE MAINLINE CHURCH’S APPROACH TO CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS**

Mzizi contended that the mainline churches were different from the Zionists and the Evangelicals when it came to their relationship with the State. He found his cue for this understanding in the veteran founders of the Council of Swaziland Churches such as Dean H. Mdziniso, Bishop Mkhabela and Bishop M. Zwane who adopted a rather critical view of the State. For these leaders and their respective churches, it was no longer sufficient to rehearse generalised Christian principles; rather what was needed was a theology that asks questions about the socio-economic and political situations in which people find themselves.

This is where theology asks the question of God’s mind and will for God’s people and creation as a whole. It seeks to ask the following questions:

- What is God's dream for God's people?
- What was God's purpose in creating the world?
- What is God's mind towards the way people organise themselves and run their political affairs?

The points of departure of such a theology are the experiences of the poor and oppressed. If they are not experiencing justice, equality and human dignity such a theology understands that God takes sides with the oppressed and calls upon the church to participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. This is a challenge for us to examine ourselves. It thus raises some added questions:

- What role does our faith or religion play in entrenching the status quo in the name of God?
- What role should faith play in seeking to create a new world where all of God's people can experience life in all its fullness?

From Mzizi we learn that theology must be a tool in the hands of the church to analyse religion so that instead of adding to the experience of oppression, it leads to human rights and human liberation. He thus commended those church leaders who adopted this approach, including Bishop Mandlenkosi Zwane and Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu of the Roman Catholic Church who practiced progressive and contextual forms of theology that responded to the issues of the day by assisting victims of the State:

*The church had to be morally bound to side with the victims of society, and in doing this function the church needed God's approval not the approval of the State (Mzizi, 10 October 1996:10).*

Elsewhere, Mzizi (12 March 1996:12) noted that the ideal would be for all the churches to provide a prophetic voice that would reflect on the political situation in Swaziland:

*I am arguing for the church's intervention in socio-political and economic issues strictly on non-denominational grounds, where the church is not concerned about the running for political office, only preaching the truth according to God's word. This can be achieved through the marshalling of the Christian voice so that one body is given the mandate to express the voice of the church in society.*

Had Swaziland's church leaders listened to Mzizi, there would have been other prophetic voices speaking out against the unjust system of rule.

## **ON SOMHLOLOISM IN A DEMOCRATIC PLURALISTIC SOCIETY**

Another key contribution that Mzizi (2002:170) made was his observation that just as the political landscape in Swaziland could not be divorced from the tradition of the monarchy, so too the religious landscape. He saw the same scenario playing itself out in the form of Christian coalitions that uncritically accepted the political *status quo*. The church (especially

the Evangelical churches and the Zionist movements) thus sought to perpetuate the *status quo* through a naïve interpretation of Somhlolo's dream or prophecy (Mzizi, 2005a:441-58).

King Mswati I (d. 1836), popularly known as Somhlolo (Father of Mysteries), left the Swazi Nation a great legacy in the form of a prophecy that has over the intervening years greatly influenced the basis of Swazi life and philosophy. According to received tradition, the King was sleeping when he saw a group of white people coming out of the sea. In their one hand they had a black book (*umculu*), and in their other, they had a coin (*indilinga*). The King then saw his aunt who instructed him not to hurt the white people, or accept the coin, but instead receive their book. In his critique of this prophecy or dream, Mzizi (2005a:441) begins by challenging the intimations of some that Swaziland should be declared a Christian nation based on Somhlolo's dream. Mzizi notes that the problem with this view – which had a host of subscribers in different churches – is that it failed to take into consideration other conflicting interpretations of the dream.

Identifying two conflicting interpretations in particular, Mzizi sought to reinterpret the dream. The first interpretation of the dream is what Mzizi called the “popular interpretation” (Mzizi, 2005a:446). This was an interpretation preferred by the Evangelical churches (i.e., those from Mzizi's own denominational background) and the Zionist churches. The advocates of Somhloloism – as this dream-philosophy was called – understood that “Swaziland was given a Bible by God for the purpose of building upon it its socio-economic and political philosophy” (Mzizi, 2005a:446). This interpretation, Mzizi (2005a:448), continues, sees Somhloloism enabling the teaching of the Bible to Swazi people, as well as literacy, building schools, Bible schools and tertiary colleges and other vocational training institutions. The main philosophy here was that the educational system should be Bible-based and hence the entire fabric of society, as instructed to King Sobhuza I in his dream. This would ensure prosperity and peace for the country. By deduction, this meant that Swaziland would be known as a Christian country and no other religion would be allowed “any space in Swaziland” (Mzizi, 2005a:448-9). This is one interpretation and a dominant one, but that does not mean it is perfect and unquestionable.

On the other side of the argument was what Mzizi called the “secular or historical reading of the dream” (Mzizi, 2005a:449). This interpretation claimed that the dream of King Sobhuza I should be understood in its historical context. In other words, King Sobhuza I only dreamt concerning the issues that were affecting the Swazi people of the time and hence the dream should not be taken as an unquestionable instruction as to how the Swazi of all times should live their lives. King Sobhuza I was not the only one who had the same dream. Mission history is replete with stories of a number of other traditional African leaders who claimed to have received similar prophecies. King Shaka of the Zulus (1787-1828) and Ntsikana ka Gaba, a Xhosa prophet are also said to have also received the same dream or prophecy.

Mzizi was correct in reminding us that in its historical location, the dream should be understood in the context of the 1838 Zulu massacre at *Encombe* (Blood River) which informed King Sobhuza I to find creative ways of avoiding a conflict with the coming white-skinned invaders. A similar

peace-making strategy had been used by King Sobhuza I during the Mfecane wars where the King was going to find peace with the white invaders whom he heard were well-armed (Mzizi, 2005a:449). In this interpretation, the round object in King Sobhuza I's dream is none other than the "white man's bullet" which could be avoided if the Swazi people would welcome the white people with kindness (Mzizi, 2005a:450). This would preserve the nation and allow the accommodation of outsiders easily and with tolerance. While avoiding the white-man's bullet they could benefit from the white man's book (*umculu*) by acquiring education and religion from it.

Mzizi believed that a religious reading of the dream would result in a balanced interpretation. A religious reading should thus "transcend both the parochialism of the popular reading and the elitism of the secular-historical reading" (Mzizi, 2005a:450). In such an exercise, Mzizi (2005a:450) saw the pronouncement of the "unity of religions and of humankind." An inter-religious reading of the dream would help identify the religious features that are common to all religions. In Mzizi's (2005a:451) view, apart from Christianity, there is a "civil religion in the sense that it sought to unite the Swazi people by appealing to a royal historical experience." Importantly, the monarchy had actually deviated from the instructions of the original dream not to choose the coin (money) since they had actually chosen to monopolise state-owned resources and had as a result become excessively wealthy at the expense of the ordinary citizens of Swaziland. The implications of this reading according to Mzizi would be relevant in dealing with contemporary issues such as the Christian clause debate in the Swaziland Constitution. Mzizi's grand vision was not only to see churches relate with one another in a spirit of unity, but also to play an important role in being the conscience of the State by holding the Government accountable as to how it exercised power and distributed economic resources in the country (Mzizi, 1990c:22-3). Mzizi (17 March 1990:10) could thus state:

*In matters political, I do not advocate for the church to take a leading role. But I feel safe in calling for the church to preach social justice, democracy, and political accountability. All political systems in God's world have to exercise the ethical standards God expects. In such situations, the church should be a conscience of society, yes a conscience of government.*

In locating the contemporary debate as regards the church/state, Mzizi asked whether it was legitimate that Swaziland calls itself a Christian country. He was afraid that privileging Christianity over other religions would create religious conflict and intolerance in the country, making the drive towards democracy insurmountable. Mzizi offered this challenge in order to show how religious people should relate to one another in a common society. In fact, what Mzizi is echoing is in line with those sentiments echoed by the King to the church leaders when they went to see him. The King advised the clergy that:

*Christianity was unique because it was tolerant and accommodative of other faiths, even non-believers (Mzizi, 2005a:453).*

In this case, the King was correct in his advice to the church leaders and it is an indictment on their part that they needed to be advised by him on a matter that they should have known more about.

## THE IMPERATIVE OF COLLABORATION ACROSS THE RELIGIOUS SPECTRUM

In his opening speech to the *First National Seminar for a Relevant Theology for Swaziland* held in 1990, Mzizi (1990c:10) urged that for the church to be “successful” in its ministry, it “must learn to live the kind of gospel which Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles preached, namely, that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female.” As there were many religions in Swaziland other than Christianity, what was of particular importance to Mzizi was interfaith dialogue (Mzizi, 1990c:24). For Mzizi (11 October 1998a:3), “religious tolerance is the highest level of spiritual development any religious individual can reach.” The unity of religions in the Baha’i appealed to Mzizi as the best reading of this vision. In a 1998 article in *The Times of Swaziland*, he demonstrated the need for religious tolerance from the New Testament and other sources in current research. While he pointed out the obvious that religion was here to stay, he warned of the spectre of conflict as a result of the claims to absolute truth made by various religions (Mzizi, 11 October 1998a:3). He particularly pointed at Christianity and Islam as major culprits in this area, illustrating his position with the persecution of members of the Baha’i faith in Iran. His challenge to such treatment was to call upon all counties to recognise Article #18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

Pervading Mzizi’s life and work was his passion for tolerance in both the religious and political economy of Swaziland. For him, tolerance was not a pacifistic resignation into the cocoon of political philosophising or religious spiritualising; rather it was involvement in solving the real challenges that lay at the heart of Swaziland’s national tensions with a spirit of dialogue and listening to the “other” even if they did not hold the same beliefs. As Mzizi (11 October 1998b:4ff) was to admit:

*To me, or even to great thinkers like Freud and Jung, religious tolerance is the highest level of spiritual development any religious individual can reach. It is a state that can be reached. It is spirituality at its highest level.*

In other words, Mzizi proposes that we need to make ourselves and our faith vulnerable, talk to one another across religious barriers and find a point of common ground that will help us chart a way forward. This can only happen if dialogue and open discussion, accompanied by religious tolerance is allowed.

## REACTIONS TO MZIZI'S RELIGIO-POLITICAL WORK

Mzizi was hailed by the freedom-loving people of Swaziland as a leader who untiringly advocated for liberation and democracy. Most of the people who belonged to the political organisations and civil society groups saw him as a champion for liberation and supported his ideas. Progressive media houses such as *The Times of Swaziland* and *New Nation* published his writings. However, he was not appreciated by everyone, especially those in power. One of his students at the Inaugural J.B. Mzizi Memorial Lecture in 2007 spoke with emotion about Mzizi being an excellent teacher, fine academic and engaged activist. Indeed, I even called upon the Council of the University of Swaziland to confer on him posthumously a professorship because they did not do that while he was alive" (Mamba, 2007). His reputation extended beyond the borders of Swaziland. This was testified by a colleague at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I asked him if he knew Mzizi, to which he replied:

*Yes I do know him. I never read anything that he wrote, but I heard him speak and he was the first – though I hope not the last – liberation theologian I heard from Swaziland. I had heard no-one before him and no-one during his time who articulated the struggles of the people of Swaziland from a theological perspective. Like most liberation theologians, he spoke with conviction and without fear. For him theology was a weapon to fight the poverty and pain faced by his people.<sup>4</sup>*

For the present author, this was an important statement about who Mzizi was and represented, both in his country of birth, and to his audience outside. Theological reflection is very important for this country because, as with all of continental Africa, it is a very religious country. It is therefore important to do the analysis of how people of faith respond to their socio-economic and political experiences.

The majority of people unfairly criticise Mzizi and label his ideas as being unchristian. His opponents were divided into two groups although they were all united by the fact that they each supported the *status quo*. The first group were those who benefitted from the system who saw his criticism as an unnecessary "rocking of the boat". Advocates of the system hated him so much so that "security forces were following him and tracking his movements" (Mabuza, 2008:3). The second groups were Christians who did not understand his theology either because they were untrained theologically, or because they espoused an apolitical Evangelical theology which they genuinely believed to be correct. While most of his critics were vicious and life threatening, Mzizi continued with his intellectual work of unpacking the corrupt and oppressive system of the monarchy which was underpinned by an incorrect reading of the Bible.

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4 Interview with Rev. Radikobo Ntsimane at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa on 21 November 2007.



## **UNCRITICAL ACCEPTANCE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

Mzizi was to emerge at a period Africans were seeking to promote the good values found in their culture as a reaction against modernism and the Western attitude of denigrating everything that was African, including African culture, African forms of leadership, and African monarchical systems. His conviction that Africa could make a contribution to the development of the world meant that he was not entirely critical of African culture and the system of the Swazi monarchy.

## **EXCLUSION OF WOMEN'S ISSUES IN THE STRUGGLE**

An apparent weakness in Mzizi's legacy is that he did not seem to appreciate the oppression suffered by Swazi women, nor the contribution they had made in the development of Africa. Indeed, throughout all his writings, there is neither specific mention nor appreciation of the oppressive situation of Swazi women. This is in spite of the fact that there were Swazi women with impeccable credentials (some of whom worked with him at the University), who stood up to challenge the system. Sadly, Mzizi and his colleagues were trapped in the patriarchal tendencies of an African culture which not only ignored women's experience of triple-oppression, but was unable to see the importance contribution women made in the liberation of African people. It can be said that Mzizi was a child of his own time when it comes to issues of gender equality.

## **CONCLUSION**

In spite of the mistakes that Mzizi might have made during his career, this book has sought to demonstrate that he made a tremendous contribution to the struggle for liberation in Swaziland. It has sought to capture his ideas, which focused not only on Swazi society, but on the African Continent and the world as a whole. This book has presented in a nutshell, what Mzizi envisioned and worked towards as an educator, theologian, and intellectual-activist. He drew from the tradition of Liberation Theology as well as African, Islam, Baha'i and Kairos theologies in order to analyse and interpret the situation in Swaziland and propose a way forward that must be charted if the country is to be freed from its political, cultural and religious entrapments. Its book has also tried to emphasise that Mzizi was often a lone prophetic voice that spoke out against the oppression of the Swazi people by its own system of governance which is meant to help them. He was the first to construct a theological and socio-political map of the country, including an analysis of the dream of King Somhlolo which has continued to inform the religious orientation of Swaziland. His untimely demise at the age of fifty was not only a loss to the academic community but to civil society as a whole, both in Swaziland and the SADC region. In one of his last articles, he made a prophetic call for transformation by saying:

*I conclude by suggesting that unless adjustments are made to both the traditional and the modern political structures, Swaziland will continue to be a security risk in the southern Africa region (Mzizi, 2004:94-119).*

To him we can only be grateful for the work he did during his lifetime, and say *kwandza kwaliwa batsakatsi, uyibekile indvuku ebandla* (only the evil ones do not appreciate goodness, you have made your admirable contribution). This sense of gratitude must be coupled with the words he penned, lamenting the lack of prophets in Swaziland:

*We are faced with principalities in the air. Hence, we need prayer and action as we fight on. Prayer alone would be of fear and cowardice. Where are the prophets of God in Swaziland? (Mzizi, 2 November 1997:7).*

Having discussed Mzizi's work and his call for the religious community's involvement in the struggle to develop Swaziland into a fully-matured democracy, and seen the resistance to his message by people of faith, we have been exposed to the complex role that is played by religion in shaping society's political destiny. First, we saw how King Sobhuza II used religion to build a firm foundation for the absolute monarchy, which has remained in power more than any other monarchy anywhere in the world. Its hold on power has not been a result of the military but it's built its base by justifying its existence through religious statements, networks and partnerships. So religion can be a dangerous obstacle to people in need of democracy, freedom and self-determination. We have also seen how Mzizi used religion (liberation theology) to embark on a one men's campaign for political development and democracy in the same country. He was a product of religion both traditional and Christian. Religion restored his health at an early age when he was faced with life-threatening illnesses. A combination of herbs, ancestor veneration, spirits of Zionists and moving evangelical prayers restored him to good health. He was educated in mission schools, whose education curriculum is accompanied by a dose of religious teaching and indoctrination. He himself began to be an active leader of the Christian movement and his religious commitments influenced him to specialise in theological studies even though taking into account his intellectual capabilities he could have easily pursued any field of study including science. His religious commitment saw him teaching in top mission schools in the country St Christopher's and New Heaven, both highly respected institutions of the Evangelical Church. His religious knowledge grew with him studying in Theological Schools in the US and coming back to serve the University of Swaziland in the Department of Religious Studies. He was freed by religion and worked to free his fellow Swazis from an oppressive system of government but on religious foundations. He used religion to free his country's political system from religious trappings. When religion interfaces with politics it can either oppress or liberate the difference on the type of religion that one has or holds. From this book, we have learned that conservative religion combined with politics can be a lethal weapon against democracy and freedom but Christianity built on the firm foundation of liberation theology and progressive politics is a mustard seed for the collapse of oppressive political systems. That is what Mzizi's teaching has been to the system in Swaziland.

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R. Simangaliso Kumalo offers a candid reflection on the interface between politics and religion in Swaziland by reflecting on the works of Joshua Mzizi. The strength of the book is not just the fact that it is written by a Public Theologian but on his ability to reflect on the particular, which is Joshua Mzizi and Swaziland, in order to reveal insights to the bigger story which is the interface between Politics and Religion in Africa.

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