

A LOOK AT THE REASONS BEHIND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MOVEMENTS AIMED AT RESUSCITATING THE NDEBELE/MTHWAKAZI KINGDOM IN POST-COLONIAL ZIMBABWE

Njabulo B. Khumalo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6474-408X>

National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe

njabulobass@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The resuscitation of the Ndebele kingdom has been a topical issue in Zimbabwe. The Ndebele kingdom, which was established by king Mzilikazi ka MaShobana was destroyed by white settlers during the reign of his son Lobengula. The years following the colonisation of Zimbabwe saw a number of efforts being made to liberate the country. The liberation struggle came to an end in 1980 when Zimbabwe, a country which came to being as a result of nationalists was liberated and the black majority assumed power. However, there have been growing calls for the resuscitation of the Ndebele kingdom, which in some circles mean breaking away from Zimbabwe. One wonders what the reasons behind the call for the resuscitation of the Ndebele kingdom were: Is this move fuelled by poor service delivery in Zimbabwe? Are the Ndebele people unhappy with the current state of affairs in Zimbabwe? Is this another revolution waiting to happen? This study sought to establish the reasons behind calls to resuscitate the Ndebele kingdom in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research methodology was employed and interviews held with one of the heirs to the Ndebele throne, as well as the leader of one of the movements advocating for the resuscitation of the Ndebele or Mthwakazi kingdom.

Keywords: kingdom; Lobengula; Mzilikazi; Ndebele; resuscitation; Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is a country in southern Africa, which attained its independence in 1980, a period that was followed by a genocide. Like many African countries such as Rwanda,



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Zimbabwe has had its fair share of tribal challenges, which have escalated to a point where calls are being made for the cessation of Matabeleland, a region occupied by the Ndebele people, otherwise known as uMthwakazi. The word “Ndebele” is an umbrella term, which describes the composition of people from the historic Mthwakazi kingdoms of Mzilikazi and Lobengula who speak the following languages in their native regions in present-day Zimbabwe: Kalanga, Lozwi, Ndebele, Nanzwa, Tonga, Tsonga, Venda, Sotho (isiSuthu) Xhosa and Zulu (Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands 2000). Prior to colonisation Mthwakazi used to be a kingdom formed by Mzilikazi. Zimbabwe only came about as a result of the nationalists’ quest for independence. Moyo (2009) states that many have been called nationalists, but their record is that of a mixed tale of tribalism. Mombeshora (1990, 431) highlights that the seeds of ethnicity were derived from the pre-colonial past, but that the colonial era provided fertile soil for the ideology of tribalism to germinate, blossom, and to be further propagated. Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole (1979, 310) also highlights the attitudes and views of those who were tragically misled to believe that one tribe or one region can ever be the centre of politics in Zimbabwe.

The attainment of independence in 1980 brought about hopes for better service delivery, equality, equity, development and an end to the marginalisation of the black majority. However, 37 years into independence and the Matabeleland region is awash with politicians pressing for the cessation of Matabeleland from Zimbabwe.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Cessation has always been a topical issue in Matabeleland—yet the government and other stakeholders have not sought to establish the main reasons why Mthwakazi pressure groups and the people in general are calling for it.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study sought to establish reasons behind calls for the restoration of the Mthwakazi kingdom in Zimbabwe.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a constructivist research paradigm and a qualitative research methodology. A case study research design was employed and a combination of document analysis and interviews were used to collect the data. The case study targeted Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo, who was vocal in calling for the restoration of the Mthwakazi kingdom/monarchy. Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo was set to be coronated as the King of Mthwakazi on 12 September 2017. Therefore, an interview was held with Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo, who also provided the researcher with documents, which

detailed answers to questions raised in the interview guide. Document analysis became the major research method as most of the answers were documented. Documents belonging to Mthwakazi Liberation Front were also analysed and the data presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Zimbabwe's political landscape is constantly under threats emanating from the divide between the Ndebele and Shona people. Msindo (2006) highlights that in the 1929 Bulawayo Factional Fights, the Ndebele-Shona divide was manifest in at least five competitive social arenas: labour, sport, class, politics, and culture. This rift was also highlighted by Sithole (1984, 117–125), who maintains that the ZAPU-ZANU split in 1963 resulted in faction fights and violence in urban areas, which increasingly took ethnic dimensions. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) points out that Matabeleland is home to the minority Ndebele-speaking people who have since the 1980s been complaining about political and economic marginalisation. The growing discontentment of people from Matabeleland is further noted by Mkhwananzi (2010), who postulates that Zimbabwe as a new colonial power over Mthwakazi has abused the numerical advantage of its Shona people to effectively exclude Mthwakazi nationals from any meaningful participation in the country's political and economic affairs. Mkhwananzi (2010) also highlighted that the dominant Shona people in Zimbabwe have tended to impose their values, language, culture, and filth on Mthwakazi. Furthermore, the Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands (2000) is of the opinion that there has been no commitment on the part of the ZANU-PF regime of changing the already existing colonial socio-economic, political and cultural (master and servant) relations. Access to loans from the banking industry has benefitted only the Shona people, and thus enabled them to operate small enterprises throughout the whole of Matabeleland and Midlands (Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands 2000). Furthermore, Ncube (2013) notes that Matabeleland and Midlands provinces complain of the government's failure to allocate meaningful resources to Matabeleland and deliberately withholding information on opportunities to people in the region.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012, 526) also highlights that ZANU-PF might have succeeded in building the state, but that it has failed to build the nation as it deliberately fragmented people into settlers and natives on the one hand, and modelling the state and nation around the histories, memories and symbols of the Shona-speaking citizens, alienating the minority Ndebele-speaking people on the other hand. Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands (2000) highlights the emergence of a triumphalist Shona tribalism, which was imposed in Zimbabwe after it has gained independence in April 1980. Ncube (2013, 10) further points out that people of Matabeleland are aware of the Gukurahundi massacres as well as the government of Zimbabwe's failure to develop their region.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) also highlights the fact that the Ndebele community in Zimbabwe has sought justice over the Gukurahundi genocide, which was committed by the government of Zimbabwe to kill people in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. The failure by the ZANU-PF government to issue an apology to the families of those who died as a result of the genocide further incensed the Ndebele people, alienating them from the state that authorised the massacres (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008). The death of countless civilians has contributed to the consolidation of an Ndebele particularistic identity that stands in opposition to that of a Shona identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012).

Lindgren (2005) notes that the Gukurahundi genocide left Ndebele people more aware of their differences with the Shona people and also provoked radical Ndebele cultural nationalism and radical Ndebele politics, which have contested the idea of a unitary Zimbabwean state. Rwafa (2012, 315) argues that the Mugabe regime may consider the Gukurahundi issue buried, and may also refuse to engage in any open discussion. However, the wounds inflicted on the people of Matabeleland are far from being healed, and they are still in anguish. Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2013, 92) argues that reconciliation without justice is bound to fail as “silence and amnesia are the enemies of justice.” The people of Matabeleland have also complained about the fact that the Zimbabwean government has repeatedly concealed information regarding the 1980s massacres, denied its role or responsibility for the crimes, and even in May 2015, labelled the Gukurahundi a “Western conspiracy” theory (Maponga 2015).

Ncube’s (2013, 10) view that Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces are neglected by the Zimbabwean government has occupied significant space and attention in the media and political circles, with the key focus on why Matabeleland and Midlands provinces lag behind other provinces in terms of economic development. Musemwa (2006) also points to the politicisation of development as the reason why Matabeleland and Midlands provinces lag behind economically and argues that the ZANU-PF elite masterfully uses this deprivation of development to entrench its power and to “discipline” and isolate political opposition rooted in Matabeleland. Musemwa (2006) identifies water shortages as a weapon of control used by the government to garner votes in Matabeleland, and also suggests that water shortages in the region led to companies migrating to Harare. Ncube (2013, 10) is of the opinion that there is enduring perception that people in Matabeleland only hear about indigenisation and economic empowerment, but have not seen or benefited from it. Ncube (2013) highlights some challenges faced by the people of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, where the government deliberately marginalises them by excluding them in the development agenda. Ncube (2013) states further that the people of Harare however, claim that the Zimbabwean government has not marginalised the people of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, but that the latter lacks the initiative and wants the government to spoon-feed them.

Alexander (1998) also bemoans the fact that ZANU-PF and ZANLA are valorised as authentic liberators, while disparaging ZAPU, ZIPRA and its supporters as

constituting a distinct ethnic group, and as villains. The closure/relocation of more than 60 companies to Harare resulted in about 20 000 people losing their jobs (Ncube 2013, 11). Sibanda (2004) argues that [ZAPU] party's resistance of intimidation and violence for more than five years helped foster a climate of political pluralism in the country.

The people of Matabeleland have from time to time established pressure groups and other movements aimed at empowering the region and even calling for the restoration of the Mthwakazi state:

- In 1914 Prince Nyamande kaLobhengula formed the Matebele National Home Society. The movement openly advocated for the restoration of the Mthwakazi state (Mthwakazi Liberation Front (LMF) 2014).
- The highlight of Mthwakazi Home Society's achievements was its resolve to challenge the company rule over Mthwakazi kingdom before the Privy Council of the House of Lords in Britain (Mthwakazi Liberation Front 2014).
- In 1943 an attempt by the people of Mthwakazi, with the assistance of the British Crown to revive the Mthwakazi monarchy under Prince Nguboentsha kaLobhengula was foiled by the white colonial settlers (Mthwakazi Liberation Front 2014).
- In 1997 Matabeleland students and former ZAPU supporters formed the Imbovane Yamahlabezulu pressure group to lobby support against the Mugabe regime on the various issues affecting the people of Matabeleland, otherwise known as the Matabeleland question.
- The 1990s saw the formation of numerous Ndebele pressure groups, which focused on the revival of particularistic Ndebele culture. These groups included Vukani Mahlabezulu and Imbovane Yamahlabezulu (Chikuhwa 2004, 93).
- The resuscitation of ZAPU in 2000 meant the creation of a federal state in which provinces would retain greater economic and political autonomy.
- The Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, as well as Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC) were also formed with the aim of forcing the government to take accountability for Gukurahundi (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003).
- Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces as well as Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC) called for the self-determination of the Ndebele people and the establishment of an autonomous Ndebele state (United Mthwakazi Republic) (Mthwakazi Action Group 2006).
- Secessionists such as Mthwakazi have also added their views to the debate with a rather extreme project of separating the provinces from the country to form a separate state. Last and most importantly, the push for the inclusion of the decentralisation model in the constitution-making process came from representations from the region (Ncube 2013, 11).

- A radical political formation, the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), was launched in December 2015 and openly declared its political objective of fighting for an autonomous state of Mthwakazi by advocating for the incorporation of Matabeleland and the Midlands region (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012; Muponde 2010).
- The public burning of the Zimbabwean national flag on 18 April 2011 by members of the MLF in South Africa during their peaceful march in Johannesburg coincided with annual celebrations of the day Zimbabwe attained political independence (Magagula 2011).
- The house of Lobengula highlights intentions to restore the Mthwakazi monarchy.
- An open letter dated 24 February 2011 was written to President Robert Mugabe informing him of the Mthwakazi people's demand to exercise their right to "self-determination as a free, independent and sovereign state of Republic of Mthwakazi" and their proposal for a "peaceful and negotiated partition of present-day Zimbabwe into the New Republic of Mthwakazi and what will remain as the Republic of Zimbabwe" (Open Letter to President Robert Mugabe, 24 February 2011).
- Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo from the house of Hlangabeza (Mzilikazi's son) called for the restoration of the Mthwakazi kingdom/monarchy led by him as the king.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study adopted document analysis and interviews as a method to establish reasons leading to calls for the restoration of the Matabeleland kingdom or monarchy. The results of the document analysis conducted in this study revealed that MLF complained over empty promises and lip service by the government of Zimbabwe, which MLF said is hell-bent on the total destruction of the Mthwakazi Nation (MLF 2014). MLF also highlighted that the people of Mthwakazi have been living under inhumane conditions of slavery for 121 years—87 years under European colonial rule and 34 years under the Shona colonialists (MLF 2014). Another major cause for concern highlighted by MLF (2014) was that the Shona Grand Plan, which was crafted in 1979 led to the existing social-spatial structure, the present day position and life changes of the people of Mthwakazi in the socio-economic, political and cultural systems in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. MLF further articulated that the ZANU-PF government has a tendency of importing civil servants into the Matabeleland regions from Mashonaland to propagate Shona at the expense of Mthwakazi languages. To MLF, this forces Ndebele grandmothers and grandfathers *to learn an oppressive Shona language* very late in their lives. An analysis of the MLF's document also revealed that another reason which prompted the people of Matabeleland to call for cessation was the fact that teachers' colleges were denying learners from Mthwakazi entry into the institutions, while accepting those from Mashonaland. This resulted in the *training and deployment*

of more Shona teachers into ALL Matabeleland schools from Grade 0 to Form 6. MLF also pointed to marginalisation and discrimination as some of the problems faced by people of Matabeleland.

MLF also highlighted that Mthwakazi has always been a separate state from Zimbabwe—hence the need for a cessation from Zimbabwe. MLF also bemoaned the fact that the provisions of ZANU-PF policy has had little to do with granting Ndebele people political rights, freedom and justice. Any form of complaint against the Mugabe regime sparked the deployment of the dreaded security organs of the state to further instil fear reminiscent of the Gukurahundi era (MLF 2014). For the MLF since 1979, the 34 years of independence in Zimbabwe have been nothing but a succession of deliberate measures aimed at not only annihilating the Ndebele people from the face of the earth, but also denying them their perceived social, economic, political and cultural aspirations. MLF (2014) observed that since the conquest of their kingdom in 1893 by the British Imperialists, in alliance with Shona interests, the Mthwakazi nation has experienced one of the worst forms of political orphanage and colonialism. According to MLF (2014) countless pressure groups, political organisations and civic organisations have been formed to voice out the grievances of the Mthwakazi people. These groups have not only been silenced or ignored, but have been subjected to arrests, rape, killings, disappearances, torture and indeed assassinations.

MLF also pointed out that ZANU-PF has turned Zimbabwe into a country for Shona people only, and has ridden the country of any other group speaking a different language other than Shona. MLF has labelled this move a savage callousness for human values of respect and appreciation of other national and ethnic groups, notably the Ndebele people. MLF further noted that in December 1993 a top Matabeleland legislator, the late Sydney Malunga, Matabeleland North Provincial Governor the late Welshman Mabhena, as well as the then Mayor of the City of Bulawayo Joshua Malinga publicly made statements denouncing discrimination in jobs and training institutions against the people of Matabeleland. They also pointed out that Mashonaland nationals in the ZANU-PF party have denied Matabeleland nationals equal participation in economic activities, and that all economic empowerment programmes were designed to benefit Mashona nationals only. MLF further articulated that the people of Matabeleland have been forced into exile in neighbouring countries and elsewhere in the world, while thousands are languishing in prisons, and hundreds of thousands more continue to silently suffer punishment and torture from a regime that has trampled on human rights and justice with alarming impunity and arrogance. MLF (2014) also highlights that even in the mainstream political developments in Zimbabwe, where the supposed Government of National Unity (2009–2013) had been formed, and where global attention has been achieved, the plight and historical predicament of the Mthwakazi victims of genocide and survivors of ethnic cleansing had not, at any time in point, been included in the economic development agenda.

AN ANALYSIS OF MR STANLEY RAPHAEL KHUMALO'S REASONS FOR ADVOCATING FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE MTHWAKAZI KINGDOM

Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo (Mzilikazi II), whose coronation as King of the Mthwakazi kingdom was on 12 September 2017 was also interviewed. He also provided this researcher with documents highlighting the major reasons behind calls to separate Mthwakazi kingdom from Zimbabwe. Mr SR Khumalo claimed that he was commissioned by God to deliver the people of Mthwakazi from the oppression by the government of Zimbabwe. He further claimed that he had visions twice while in the United Kingdom where God told him that he had made him king of the Mthwakazi people.

On 5 November 2016 Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo highlighted that the Mthwakazi people had endured 121 painful years of oppression under white minority rule and eventually under Shona dominance and oppression. Furthermore, Khumalo highlighted that the Shona Grand Plan was just another instrument, which was aimed at oppressing, destroying, impoverishing and marginalising the Ndebele people. To him, the Grand Plan had successfully disenfranchised the Ndebele people. It was while Khumalo was at Gadade on 5 November 2016, during the commemorations of between 800 to 1000 Ndebele soldiers who were killed by white settlers, that he noted that the Mthwakazi people were no longer coping with the rule by conquest, the forced unholy unions, the Grand Plans, genocides, poverty and the disenfranchisement programmes.

This study also established that Khumalo stated on 5 November 2016 at Gadade that the Gukurahundi massacre was one barbaric occurrence that has left a trail of blood, fear, tears, loss and sorrow among the Ndebele people. The respondent also highlighted that too many people from Matabeleland were dying mysteriously. Khumalo also highlighted on that day that the Mthwakazi people were losing land, property, resources and wealth, and that they were powerless.

Khumalo indicated in an interview with Iso LoKhozi that the need to restore the Mthwakazi kingdom include reasons such as “abusive regimes that have ruled over the Mthwakazi people.” Khumalo also highlighted that Mthwakazi must be a sovereign state, free from the unholy union of 1923, which destroyed the sovereignty of Matabeleland by merging it with Mashonaland into the then crown colony of Rhodesia and subsequently Zimbabwe. He went on to highlight that this merger was a source of oppression and suppression. Khumalo also noted that economic activity in Matabeleland contributes more than 75 per cent of Zimbabwe’s fiscal revenue, yet the people of Matabeleland were not enjoying this benefit. He went on to highlight that engaging the government of Zimbabwe on such issues was a waste of time. Khumalo also highlighted that unemployment is another cause for concern, as most people, especially from Matabeleland were trekking to neighbouring countries in search of jobs. Khumalo also highlighted that hordes of people, especially from Matabeleland lost their lives trying to cross the Limpopo River into neighbouring South Africa in search of jobs.

MR STANLEY RAPHAEL KHUMALO'S ACTION PLAN

In an interview with Iso Lokhozi Stanley Raphael Khumalo again highlighted the need for the restoration of Mthwakazi and its freedom. He further stated that he had revoked agreements he made with Mthwakazi Republic as part of the State of Zimbabwe. Khumalo also pointed out that he had sent communication to Robert Gabriel Mugabe, the then President of Zimbabwe, the British monarchy, the United Nations, the African Union, as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other governments through their embassies—this communication highlighted the Mthwakazi restoration agenda to the named parties. This interview however, revealed that he (Stanley Raphael Khumalo) had not received any direct responses. He also highlighted that the Mthwakazi restoration issue had sparked a lot of interest. The respondents also highlighted that engaging the government of Zimbabwe was a waste of time. Khumalo stated that as a King he was not in a position to operate in a manner that pressure groups operate, but was going to his territory as ruler.

Some political parties have been advocating for cessation and/or the revival of the Mthwakazi kingdom. This researcher sought to establish what Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo's views are on these political parties. He responded that these political parties played a huge role in creating an awareness of the plight of the Mthwakazi people, as well as did the groundwork for the restoration agenda. He further highlighted that he was grateful for the work that political parties have done, as well as the courage they displayed, and that he regarded them as heroes.

On 5 November 2016 at Gadade, Mr Stanley Raphael Khumalo revoked every agreement entered into verbally or in writing on behalf of the Matabele kingdom after 2 November 1893 as illegal, as long as they were not signed by king Mzilikazi, king Lobengula and himself. Such agreements included the rule by conquest of Matabeleland Order in Council of 1894, the forced union of Matabeleland with Mashonaland by Britain in 1923, the handing over of Matabeleland as a union or annex of Mashonaland at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979, the Grand Plan of 1979 and its reviews, and the Unity Accord of 1987. Furthermore, Khumalo also nullified all land rights, mining and hunting rights, as well as the rights to operate businesses and own properties.

CONCLUSION

This study established a number of reasons behind the calls for seceding Mthwakazi kingdom from Zimbabwe. These reasons included, among other things, the marginalisation of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces by the Zimbabwean government. Furthermore, this study established that the people of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, whose relatives died as a result of the Gukurahundi genocide had been denied the opportunity to get closure and justice, as the government of Zimbabwe continued to refuse to take accountability for the genocide. Some of the reasons for calls to secede Matabeleland from Zimbabwe included poverty, unemployment and

the deliberate de-industrialisation of Matabeleland by the Zimbabwean government. Moreover, the respondents highlighted that Mthwakazi kingdom had been colonised by both the British settlers and ZANU-PF, and thus had to get its own independence. Some of the grievances raised by the respondents included tribalism and the domination of the Matabele people by the Shona tribe, inter alia.

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