



**Midlands State University**  
Established 2000

*Our Hands, Our Minds, Our Destiny*

# **FACULTY OF ARTS**

## **DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

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**A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE UNDER CHIEF  
MALABA (MATOBO DISTRICT)  
1890-1980**

**BY**

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**BEING A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE**

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**HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**GWERU, ZIMBABWE**

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**Approval form**

The undersigned certify that they have supervised, read and recommend to the Midlands State University for the acceptance of dissertation entitled: A Social and Cultural History of the people under Chief Malaba: (Matobo District) 1890-1980. Submitted by Tumelo Nigel Moyo in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in History and International Studies.

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Signature of the Chairperson.....

Signature of the Examiner.....



## **Dedication**

To my mother Sheila Tshulu, I love you.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to my academic supervisor Professor V Z Nyawo for great assistance and the advice to make the dissertation a reality. I also acknowledge my lecturers who have taught me since level 1 in 2014 to this day namely, Mr. G T Ncube, Professor G Z Mararire, Dr T Mashingaidze also Dean of faculty of Arts, Dr G Tarugarira, Dr I Mazambane, Dr D Goredema, Mr. T Chisi and Mrs D King.

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## **Glossary of terms**

Amawosana – rain dancers.

Igalufu – (far more similar to umbuyiso) distribution of clothes of the dead /ceremony for bringing home the spirits of the dead.

Inkosana – lightning.

Itenela – picking of the bones meant for cleaning the environment before rain season begins.

Mwali – high God.

Njelele – rain shrine (kalanga name which symbolizes a hawk that fly in a circular manner continuous to signify imminent rain).

Umbuyiso – bringing home the spirit of the dead.

Umlisa – headmen.

Ukuzila – to abstain for religious beliefs.

Ukuthethela – appeasing and communicating with the ancestors and the dead.

Ukuchitha impahla – distribution of deceased property and clothes.

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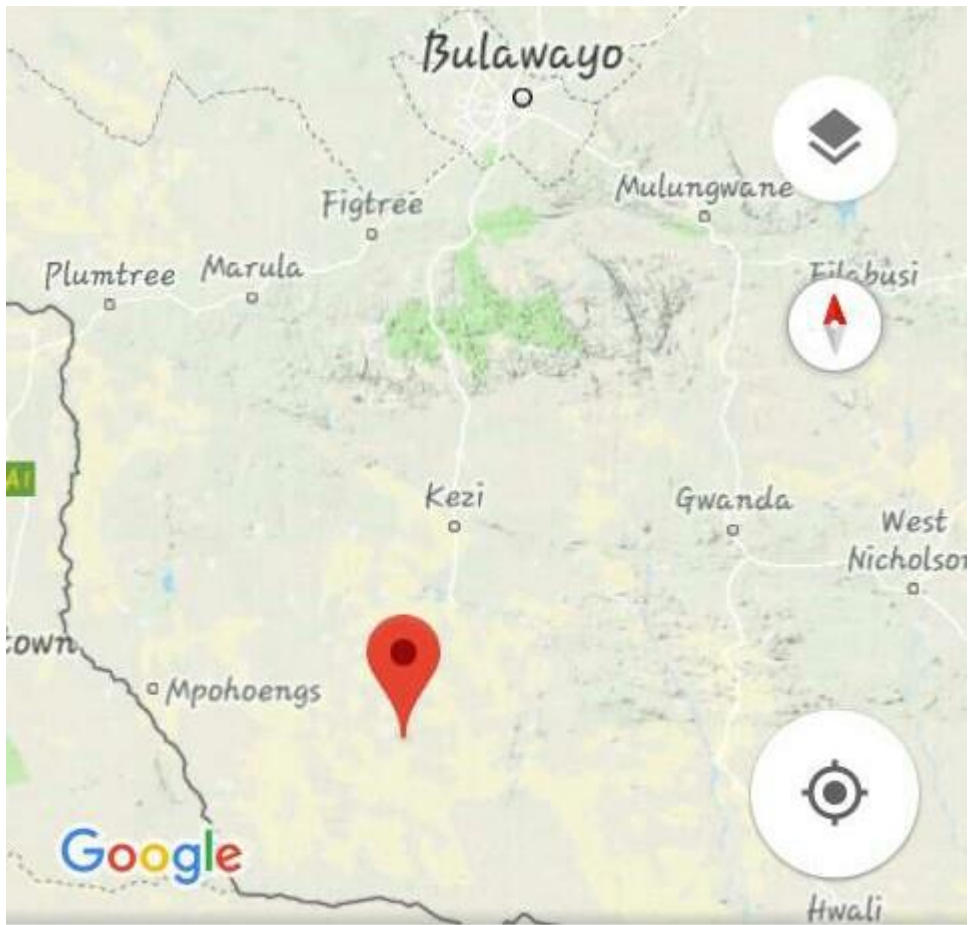
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*Nyashongwe*

Source; Google Maps

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## **Abstract**

*The setting of the research was confined to area under Chief Malaba in Matobo district, South-Western Zimbabwe. The Malaba were known because of their charms and magic. The research accounts for the history of the Malaba because they were once the chief doctors of the Ndebele kings both Mzilikazi and Lobengula respectively. As a result, the belief in Mwali cult was of utmost importance. The dissertation seeks to inform readers to understand the history of Malaba people, their chieftaincy and inhabitants under Chief Malaba. Their migrations to present day Zimbabwe from Venda were guided by Mwali cult and informed by a civil war that occurred. It explain how they changed their surname from Ndlovu to Malaba. Transcribed oral sources were consulted to account for the history of the different ethnic groups under Chief Malaba namely the Venda, Nyubi, Kalanga, Sotho and the Ndebele. The dissertation employed the theory cultural hybridity propounded by Homi Bhabha in showing how the colonial condition had a bearing in creating new identities. Again, it concurs to the notion that disputes culture as pure after colonialism. It unpacks the efforts of both the missionaries and colonial government in despising African way of life. The research acknowledges that some of the beliefs, norms and were family oriented and were easy influenced and informed people to negate the customs, norms and values.*

# Introductory chapter

## Introduction

The dissertation serves to give an account on the social and cultural history of the people under the Chief Malaba and Malaba history. Malaba dominion segments boundary with Chief Bango and Bidi. The jurisdiction of Chief Malaba, resides the Nyubi, Sotho, Kalanga, Ndebele and the people of Venda origin. The area under study is confined to wards 5-7 in Matobo District. The first people to settle in Matobo were Banyubi, but they later moved into the hills in fragments of people who were later caught up with the Ndebele system.<sup>1</sup> Ncube notes that, African societies were not consolidated powerful state as observed by European scholars.<sup>2</sup> They were decentralised and were led by clan chiefs. The main scope of the research is to show how Christian culture has impacted on religious beliefs and practises. The co-existence of both religions has compromised congruence. In other words, it bid to show how the influence and embracement of Whiteman's culture and religion affected the culture and beliefs of people under the guidance of Chief Malaba. The coming of colonialism enormously affected African culture. The research was informed by theory promulgated by Homi Bhabha of cultural hybridity. In other words, it disputes that culture is pure after colonialism.

The Malaba history was not recorded in the Masola Kumile manuscript because they came at a stage when they had been subdued by the Ndebele.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ntelela Malaba, the father of current Chief David Malaba, was assumed to have come under influence of missionaries. As a Christian he lost touch with Njelele consequently, he failed to supply names of Njelele priest who followed Njenje and Pinga.<sup>4</sup> It shows how the influence of Western culture tremendously affected the social life and culture of the people under his guidance. African traditional religion

was first studied by the explorers, missionaries and travellers who came to Africa. They were no temples nor bishops consequently, Africa was professed not to be religious. However, their temples were in people's hearts. The belief concerning Mwali was similarly based on the element of faith thus, equivalence of the old Hebraic beliefs and those concerning Mwali.<sup>5</sup> Jehovah was an imperceptible super natural being, ever-present and manifestation of nature. The research ventured on the history of Malaba people and inhabitants, and how they were guided by the Mwali cult leading to establishment of Njelele shrine. It accounts for the origins and centrality of Mwali cult associated with Malaba people, the change of social behaviours, norms and values due to influence and embracement of western culture particular, the Nyubi, Sotho, Kalanga and the Venda in area under study. People insights about both religions were investigated to identify the problems allied with penetration of western culture.

Early colonial administrators tended to present a complex ethnic picture of the Matopo area.<sup>6</sup> To the south lived Sotho, Venda and other people. By 1901 the Native Commissioner had projected that the whole district contained 25000. Two-thirds of the populaces were abaNyubi, a branch of the Kalanga. The Nyubi clan is a dialect under the Kalanga just like, Nyayi (Jawunda), Nambya, Rozwi, Talawunda, Lilima, Humbe (Makulukusa), Peri, Lemba, Twamamba, Lembethu and Pfumbi.<sup>7</sup> The research dwelled much on Kalanga and Venda traditions because the Venda and Nyubi were incorporated by Kalanga society. Therefore, they tended to adopt particular Kalanga later Ndebele norms, customs and values.

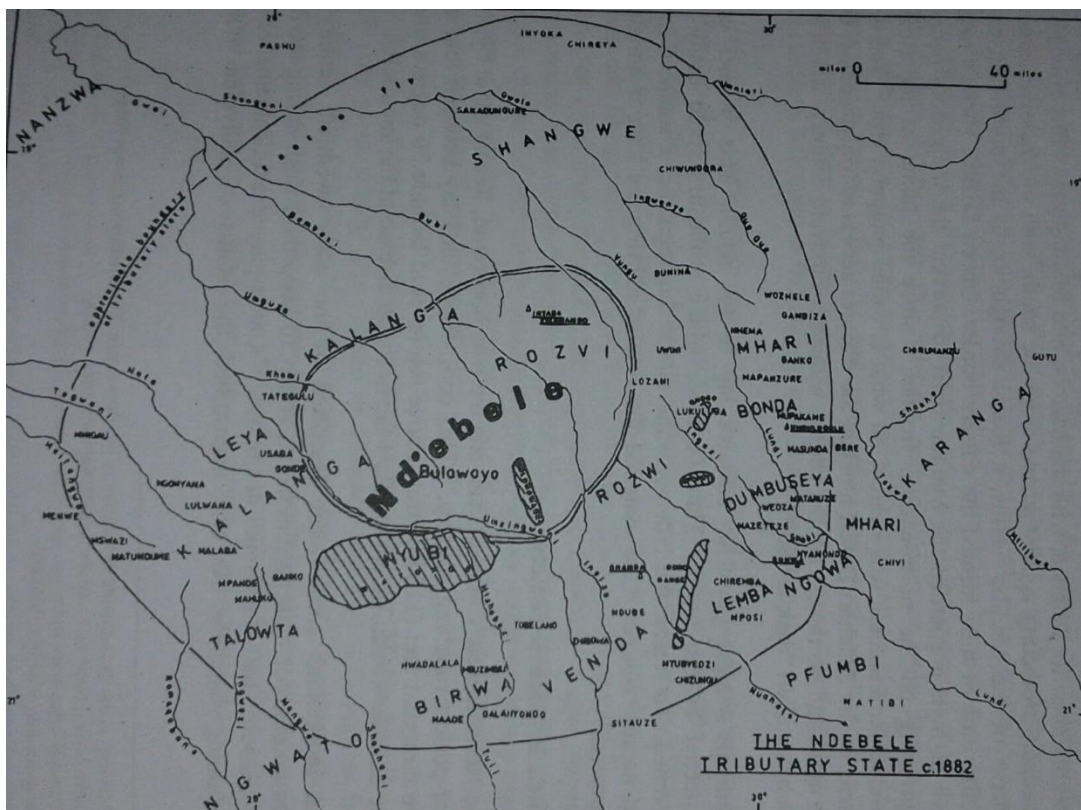
## **Historical background**

African culture and identity have malformed, if not apostatized through creation of new identities. Some aspects of human behaviour, norms and social practises such as culture are expressed, through other forms such as art, dance, music, ritual, religion and technologies such as tool usage, cooking, shelter and clothing have changed significantly and accommodated external cultures. In postcolonial discourse, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputable.<sup>8</sup> Colonialism vastly affected the social life and culture in African societies. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya validates, how colonialism through process of grouping and regrouping Africans, consequently attributed in the neglecting of other ethnic group cultures.<sup>9</sup> The social behaviours, norms and values of the Malaba people were also affected in that manner.

The Rhodesian colonial state and Christian missionaries were devoted to fulfil their ideology of Civilization and Christianity. Father O'Neil a Jesuit missionary based in Kalanga area was known for use of coercive force against Kalanga who continued to perform activities to the shumba cult.<sup>10</sup> Both institutions were on a mission and sort to rescind African culture by converting Africans into Christianity. The missionaries also dismissed such important occasions as the inxwala ceremonies and other rain-ceremonies as meaningless traditions and dreams of uncivilised people.<sup>11</sup> They thought women would responsively accept Christianity/Western culture as they considered them to be suffering under the yoke of polygamous marriages. They were erroneous to think the Hole whom they considered to be slaves in the Ndebele state were most likely to respond favourable to Christianity as a liberating religion.<sup>12</sup> However, it turned out that the same people were equally opposed to Christianity.

Bhabha sees colonialism as violate, ascendancy, straight forward repression and an episode of complex and varied cultural contact and interactions.<sup>13</sup> However, there are transnational proportions of cultural alteration such as migration movement and relocations.<sup>14</sup> For theorist like Gandhi, the concept of colonialism was sinister in its obligation to the conquest and occupation of cultures, selves and minds.<sup>15</sup> As a result, colonialism enabled a remarkable and unfriendly relationship between the colonised and coloniser. The definition of culture might seem straightforward however, yet complex in a closer look. Yet another definition, culture as shared values of a society. On the contrary, Hall, discredit this view of culture as list of categories, but as a process with the exchange of meanings, concerned with the production between members of a society.<sup>16</sup>

**Fig 1.1: Showing different ethnic groups and Ndebele tributary states**



Source; M F Clarke and P Nyathi, *Lozikheyi Dlodlo Queen of the Ndebele*, p.19.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The research has adopted theory proposed by Homi Bhabha of cultural hybridity. Bhabha advanced the idea of hybridity from a cultural and literary theory to describe the edifice of culture and identity within the conditions of colonial inequality.<sup>17</sup> He saw hybridity as a sign of the efficiency of colonial power and the calculated reversal of the process of domination through disavowal. For this reason, hybridity was reliant upon fixed and pure cultural localities and openly dismisses the concept of pure culture. Therefore, hybridity is within a space, embraces colonial conditions of identity and cultural difference. Efforts were made by colonial power to interpret the identity of the colonized within a singular collective framework. In Bhabha theory, nations and homelands are imagined histories; nations like narratives lose their origins in the myth of time.<sup>18</sup>

However, the theory lacks a lucid political approach. Dirlik points that, it is epistemological and psychic orientations of postcolonial intellects, which are morally ill-assorted with problems of social, political and cultural domination.<sup>19</sup> The approach is solely Marxist, to cultural discourse and people must free themselves from the sacralisation of the social as the only reality.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, in understanding Western culture and identity cannot be archived, until recognition of its dependency and predication against the colonised orientation as a contrasting image, personality, and experience or idea.<sup>21</sup> The power dynamics of colonial condition are contingent upon the assertion of cultural differences. The construction of colonial subjects according to Bhabha, demanded enunciations forms of difference while simultaneously, the enunciation of culture as authoritative.<sup>22</sup> However, he vindicated the construction of colonial identities, by ideas shared by Frantz Fanon. Fanon contends that, the Negro was enslaved by his inferiority and the white man enslaved by his superiority, behave in agreement to neurotic orientation.<sup>23</sup>



## **Statement of the problem**

Little has been recorded about the Malaba history because they were subdued by the Ndebele. Many scholars focused on the history of the Ndebele and mention the Malaba chieftaincy in passing. Among the communities under Malaba, there are always animosities in what actions to be taken in solving problems as a community. It often informs clashes between those who still uphold their traditional beliefs and Africans who have adopted Christian culture. This has divided the community as others are distinguished, regarded and labelled as “evil” for their resilience to African traditional religion and beliefs. African Traditional Religion and African culture are intertwined. It has become difficult for Christians to maintain some traditions. Moreover, the area is in region five, droughts are a common feature and when it comes to seeking of solutions people often divide. Others will opt for rituals to appease ancestors on the other hand, others seek divine intervention through prayer. This has affected harmony among the communities and others are reluctant to partake in traditional practices. With no doubt, the social life and culture in communities has been compromised by Christian culture and religious beliefs associated with it in particular. In recent years the area has witnessed so many misfortunes particular many people and livestock’s becoming victims of lightning, rain, droughts and strong winds destroying people’s homesteads. It is under the belief that ancestors are angry for desertion of traditional customs, norms and values. The research serves to shed light on how the imperialist forces despised and undermined African religion and beliefs in an attempt to glorify their interest in Africa based on the Social Darwinism theory.

## **Aim of the Study**

To account for the Malaba history and how Christian culture has affected their religious beliefs and practises.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To account for the history people under Malaba jurisdiction and how they were guided by the Mwali cult.
2. To trace origin, developments, centrality of Mwali cult and religious beliefs and customs.
3. Identify effects of Christian culture on religious beliefs and practises and outline challenges associated.

## **Research Questions**

1. Who are the Malaba and what influenced people of different ethnic background to settle in Malaba jurisdiction?
2. Of what meaning were the religious shrines and religious beliefs to the people?
3. In what ways has the Christian culture affect religious beliefs and practises?

## Literature Review

T O Ranger points out that, Banyubi people were one of the first to live in the hills and they migrated into fragments of all the people who were incorporated into the Ndebele state.<sup>24</sup> When the Jesuit missionaries came to Matobo in 1879 and were tasked to convey Christian culture into unredeemed and primitive nature and disregard the centrality of African beliefs. In other words, they wanted to free Africans from their miserable dependence on it. Missionaries even went a step further to term the High God oracular cult, as an “awful God”.<sup>25</sup> However, scholars are divided on the antiquity of the Mwali Cult, although suggestions argue the hills came 500 years ago. Cobbing proposes that, Mwali cult only came into Matobo from the Venda in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> Ranger also gratified on the Chisi rest day a traditional custom that is even visible even today. However, in case of Ranger he is mainly focus on religion in Matobo hills leaving a geographical gap on other communities in Matobo district. He does not dwell much about the history of the Venda and Sotho people in Matobo.

Ndlovu, in his book, Cultural complexity states that, the Malaba people are Kalanga original from Venda land.<sup>27</sup> The Malaba especially those from Lubimbi house were associated with the Mwali shrine in Matobo. The Kalanga word bulabi meant meat and is another word associated with Malaba’s given that part of their clan praises referring to Nkumbudzi wabanhu bemhuka.<sup>28</sup> He emphasized on the relationship between the Malaba and Makawule. He further affirms that, the Malaba original came from Venda land and Chief Ntelela Malaba once appointed Mdumuli Makawule (Mpamadzi) to be headman (uMlisa).<sup>29</sup> More so, he gave an explanation on the debate on rain making between the Malaba and Makawule people. Ndlovu, does not dwell much on effects of colonialism on the Nyubi and Kalanga culture mainly forced on the cultural complexity in marriage among the Ndebele and Kalanga. His main scope is on the Makawule he does not write much about the Njelele and Malaba history.

Cobbing accounts for tributary state of the Ndebele and the first people to settle in Matopo were the Nyubi had inhabited the Matopo valley for several generations. This was prior the coming of the Ndebele. He also remarks that, Malaba was one Kalanga chief who attempted to resist the penetration of the Ndebele on the Western part of Matopo into his community although, he later submitted and paid tribute to the Ndebele. The Ndebele were confronted by the Venda-Kalanga high God. He also interrogated the origin of the cult and they is not yet been a convincing answer yet. However, his first reference to the Mwali cult as far as 1860s due to the fact that they is an absence mention of the cult from the time of Changamire invasion of the western Highveld in the mid seventeenth century to the coming of the Ndebele.<sup>30</sup> The Venda were the ones who brought the cult in Matopo and it became an alternative means of acquiring rain and providing solutions to personal issues. Cobbing mainly focus is on Ndebele religious beliefs, customs and values not on the tributary state although he admit that the cult came with people of Venda origin.

Pathisa Nyathi, agrees that, the Nyubi as an ethnic group related to the Kalanga.<sup>31</sup> The Nyubi had occupied Matobo for several centuries and Matobo was an area closely related with the nature. The Nyubi just like Venda and Kalanga had several shrines particularly, the Njelele and the Dulako Mswabi shrines.<sup>32</sup> He also gives a justification on how the Nyubi were able to deal with rinderpest since the Nyubi kept a lot of cows. Nyathi does not account for the effects of the coming of the Ndebele and impacts of indigenous culture and only touches on the period when rinderpest was rife. The author does not account for the co-existence of both religions and the effect of it. Therefore, the research will attempt to fill the cavity left by the scholar.

Bhebe, indicates that, the Nyubi of Matopo lived in the area long before the arrival of the Ndebele, however the locals fell under Ndebele rule.<sup>33</sup> The indigenous people put resistance but eventually defeated. The Venda chiefdoms also migrated to the Ndebele area but the Nyubi were administered by their own people. The Nyubi, Kalanga and the Venda were well versed and acquainted with the climate and the soil of the country far surpassed their conquerors in the production of grain. The South-Western Zimbabwe societies had similar two tiered cosmologies a high god and lesser ancestral spirits. The coming of colonialism changed traditional practices such as, *ukuhlanziswa* (cleaning) and *ukubuyisa* (bringing home).<sup>34</sup> Some chiefs invited missionaries to open up institutions. Missionaries persuaded the government to reform African Marriages law, only discouraged *kuzwarira* which deemed girls their rights and freedom to choose their husband.<sup>35</sup> Bhebe, is mainly focused impact of missionary activities on the Ndebele society. He highlighted little on the Nyubi and other ethnic groups like Venda and Kalanga on how Christianity affected traditional religion. Also, the time gap has to be taken into consideration his research end on the early stages of colonialism.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, advances that, the Nyubi of Matopos fell under direct rule of the Ndebele and some of their chiefs were reduced to the status of *abalisa* (headmen) subordinate to Ndebele *izinduna* (chiefs).<sup>36</sup> He revealed how other indigenous like the Venda, Kalanga and Nyubi were incorporated and occupied the “Hole” class under Ndebele caste system. He does not dwell on the effects on contact with Ndebele on indigenous culture. Mazarire records that, most of Ndebele from the “Hole” class easily accepted missionaries and the opportunities given, through participation in the translation of the bible and mission education.<sup>37</sup> He gave a version on how the missionaries and colonialist activities affected African societies and the centrality of African religion.

Msindo asserts that, Malaba chieftaincy was accepted both by the colonialist and independent government of Zimbabwe. However, political changes have inclined Zimbabwean societies and culture, under the guise of reinforcing African traditions. They attempt to institutionalize chieftaincy and make chiefs functions as if they are organic, traditional leader when in reality some are reduced to colonial pawns without popular legitimacy.<sup>38</sup> During colonial era some chiefs were used and reduced to colonial pawns thus, izinduna zamakhiwa (white people's chiefs). Prior to the Rozvi occupation, the area had been under Tjibundule, a Kalanga chief of the Nyubi clan who had just died. The Rozvi conquest led to the incorporation of some Torwa and Kalanga sub rulers into the Rozvi state, meaning that, as a political identity. However, he did dwell much on the effects of political changes on African culture. Though, Vail model of creation of ethnicity through cultural brokers, African elites took part but not as originators of tribal stereotypes but as implementations of what had been formulated by various Europeans.<sup>39</sup> He dismissed the depiction of African as preys of these policies articulated without discussion or knowledge as a-historical. However, it was a matter of being citizen and subjects.

Rambe and Mawere, hints on the traditional leadership roles and social influence. They proclaims that, traditional leadership kraal heads, headmen and chiefs in the ancient times had noteworthy social and symbolic values in Africa.<sup>40</sup> In colonial period they were critical opinion makers for the masses and tactical advisors of both the colonial administrators and freedom fighters.<sup>41</sup> Most importantly traditional leaders continue to be closely associated with spirit mediums in rain making ceremonies. Traditional leaders were also molded as custodians of traditional religions, and that boosted cultural identity and pride in the face of challenging religious like Christians.<sup>42</sup> Polygamy was at the heart of most African societies but when missionaries came they presented it as an evil.

## **Sources and Methodology**

The research made use of qualitative approach. Qualitative approach tries to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the objective of developing an understanding of what is being observed and studied. Cohen points that,

Past complex social interfaces that are interpreting cannot simply be described through quantities, percentage and ratios. The real meaning will be derived from sustained contact research into local communities and their connection to the broader region, thus a diachronic multi scale approach.<sup>43</sup>

It focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences.

### **Primary sources**

The qualitative approach made use of various data collection methods analysis of primary sources that is, manuscripts and delineation reports of communities in Matabeleland South at the National Archives of Zimbabwe – Bulawayo. Primary sources are closest to the process or phenomenon that is described. However, these sources cannot be thoroughly objective source due to the fact that it does not consider other views and perspectives on the same events.

### **Transcribed interviews**

Transcribed interviews were accessed in gathering information for the research. Oral history a verbal statement told from the past that are within living memory. Oral sources consulted included, Chief Ndiweni, Chief Manguba, Chief Joseph Malaba, Bunyonyo Muloyi Ndlovu, Thenjiwe Lesabe were consulted. These were transcribed by former Bulawayo Archivist, Mr. Mark Ncube in the 1980s some with the help of T O Ranger and Pathisa Nyathi. They provided information about a topic that may lack documentation in written and archival records. On the other hand, one has to question the objectiveness of oral history. Memory of the informant is

fallible and can be biased and informant testimony may not be consistent from one interview to the next.

### **Interviews**

Interviews were consulted and made use of audio recording in conducting the research and critical analyzed them. Target people were mostly the elderly man and women in the society. In case of the interviews, both structured and non-structured approach in conducting the interviews was adopted. The research also targeted village heads, kraal heads and elderly who have lived in the society both in the colonial and post-colonial era.

### **Secondary sources**

Text studies, unpublished theses/dissertation, seminar papers and articles were consulted to compliment both the primary sources and oral interviews. The research made use of Newspaper articles on culture, particular Pathisa Nyathi articles on The Sunday News. However, the student had to consider the purpose of the source.

### **Limitations to the study**

1. Delineation reports of some the communities in the area under study are still yet to be printed although the complication of information has been completed and sent to National Archives in Harare for publishing.
2. Reactive effect – participants may have tried to please the researcher by giving what they presumed to be acceptable responses for the research, hiding their real insights.
3. Nature of the study – the nature of this study seemed to negate traditional values and culture.



## **Dissertation Layout**

### **Introductory Chapter**

The chapter gives detail on the historical background, aim of the study, objectives, statement of the problem, theoretical framework, literature review, research sources and methodology. The chapter will also elaborate on the limitations of the study.

### **Chapter one**

The chapter traces the history of inhabitants under jurisdiction of Chief Malaba and also particular Malaba chieftaincy. In that regard, it will also give explanations how the Malaba were able to become rulers and how they were guided by the Mwali cult. The chapter will also discuss the relations between Malaba and neighbouring communities.

### **Chapter two**

Main focus of the chapter is on the religion of inhabitants particular the beliefs related with religious shrines. It traces origins and development of Mwali cult particular the Njelele shrine at Matobo and functions of the Mwali cult. The chapter will also account for the relationship between Njelele and other shrines, priestly lineages, spirits associated with the cult and rain dances.

### **Chapter three**

The chapter looks at the impact Christian culture on African traditional religion, beliefs and practises. It discloses how both the missionaries and colonialist perceived African religion in Matobo. It reveals how the co-existence of both religions has affected and caused confusion among the societies. The chapter will look at people's perspectives about Western culture and African religion.

## End notes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo's Hill of Zimbabwe*, Harare, Baobab Books, 1999, p.4.
- <sup>2</sup> G T Ncube, *History of North West Zimbabwe 1850-1960*, Kadoma, Mond Books, 2004, p.15.
- <sup>3</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga Culture, Promotion society, 6/10/80-14/04/83, p.47.
- <sup>4</sup> J B Richards, "The Mlimo- Belief and Practise of Kalanga", *NADA*, Vol 19, 1942, p.52.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.
- <sup>6</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo's Hill of Zimbabwe*, p.99.
- <sup>7</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga Culture, pp.31-47.
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- <sup>9</sup> S J Ndlovu-Gatsheni and J Muzondidya, "Echoing Silence, Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe,1980-2007", *African Journal on Conflict resolution*, Vol 7, 2007, pp.5-6.
- <sup>10</sup> S J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Dynamics of Democracy and Human Rights among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe,1818-1934", DPhil, University of Zimbabwe, 2003, p.261.
- <sup>11</sup> T O Ranger, *African Voice*, in S J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Dynamics of Democracy and Human Rights among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe,1818-1934", p.187.
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# Chapter one

## The history of people under Chief Malaba and Malaba chieftaincy

### **Introduction**

This chapter accounts for the history of the Malaba people and inhabitants under Malaba chieftaincy. It is understood that Malaba people came up in the first quarter of the nineteenth century are known as Venda people who were closely associated with the Mwali shrine at Njelele.<sup>1</sup> This was during the time Nichasike (Nyai) was ruler of bukalinga. The area under study, integrates people of different ethnic origin, the Nyubi, Kalanga, Sotho, Ndebele, Venda and other ethnic groups. A number of reasons attributed for people of different ethnic background to settle in the area. Some comprise migrations, intermarriages and colonial government policies towards resettlements. However, the Malaba clan holds the title of ruler, the Lubimbi clan are said to have been the custodians of the Mwali cult and the Hobodo clan derived their name because they carried the bags of medicine and herbs.

### **Historical background of the inhabitants**

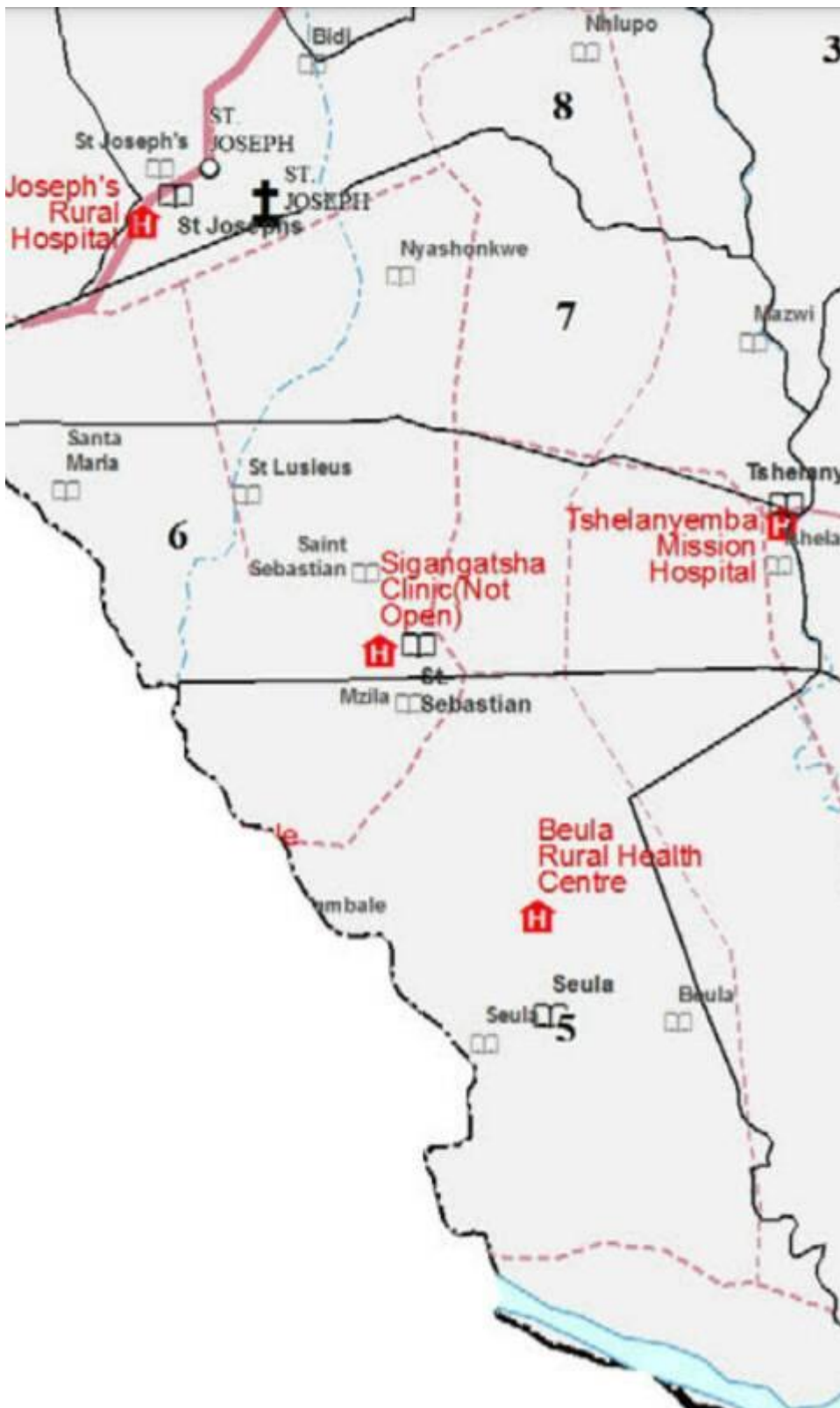
The area under Chief Malaba resides people of different ethnic background as stated in the introduction. Some of the villages include Sasani, Malundi, Beula, Seula, Tshelanyemba, Malaba, Singangatsha, Mfila and Mazwi.<sup>2</sup> Case of Mazwi has a total of 8 kraal heads and is dominated by the Birwa. They are people of Nyubi, Venda, Kalanga, Sotho, Ndebele and other ethnic groups. Intermarriages, resettlements and migration primarily informed these people to settle in the area. However, most of the people in Tshelanyemba village once lived areas around Matopo and near modern day Figtree. One correspondent, still recalls her father revealing the brutal treatment of people in Matobo by the whites.<sup>3</sup> When the whites came, they basically

created boundaries without discussion although, in most cases people were not chased away but lived with the whites as tenants.<sup>4</sup> She also notes that, one of the major motives for their families to flee Matobo was harsh treatment in the farms. Chief Wasi Ndiweni affirms the argument by stating the manner an African was treated irrespective of stature. He postulates that, they were ordered to move to the reserves by a land inspector.<sup>5</sup> He further points that,

The District Commissioner simply told us the land was for the whites and had to relocate to the reserves and maybe the land inspector was jealous that I had a car, tractor and cultivator. He even asked where I had acquired all these things, however my field was reduced from 10 acres to just 3 acres.<sup>6</sup>

These punitive treatment by whites informed many people to relocate to other areas mostly to reserves. The dominant languages under Malaba jurisdiction are isiNdebele and Kalanga. Most of the schools teach isiNdebele as indigenous language. The Nyubi descendants live in the area under study and are believed to be the first people to settle in Matobo hills before the coming of the Ndebele. Cobbing traced the origins of the Nyubi and argues that, they were Karanga people who had occupied the rugged Matopo for several generations.<sup>7</sup> Chief Manguba on the other hand, states that, when the Gombi clan arrived in Gwai and Zuzumba they found the Nyubi people but they was never a conflict as many groups were scattered by wars occurring in Fort Victoria.<sup>8</sup> The Nyubi in West of Matopo were brought into political relationship with Mathe of Mhlahlandlela and intermarried with the Ndebele. Chief Bango from the leading family of the Nyubi and had settled there long before the coming of Mzilikazi.<sup>9</sup> Chief Bango shares the boundary with Chief Malaba. During the Rozvi dynasty Bangojena was allowed to rule in the Western Matopo. During that period, the central Rozvi rule was dwindling and their chieftaincy assumed total independence.<sup>10</sup> Bango, Mpeba, Mahanda and Nigobe were of Kalanga ethnic group, Nyubi of the hills.<sup>11</sup> Bangonjena successor was Tshilise. However, he was killed by the Swazi during an invasion. The Bango and Malaba people have had strong ties from pre-colonial periods through intermarriages.

1.2: Map showing Malaba jurisdiction (ward 5-7)



A population of Venda and Sotho origins are occupants of the area under study. Malaba people are believed to have come from Venda to settle in the area. However, Joseph Ntelela Malaba the father of current Chief states that, he was born in Bulilima-Mangwe near Brunaperg, but his ancestors are from Venda.<sup>12</sup> Wenztel notes that, the origins of the Venda people must be mapped out on the background of the origin and migration of the whole Bantu language family.<sup>13</sup> They are found across Limpopo in South Africa and South Eastern Zimbabwe. Majority of the Venda and Sotho groups had migrated either to escape a civil war or to establish their own independent chiefdoms during the 1820s and 1830s propelled by the Mfecane.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Von Sicard notes that,

In case of the Sotho known as Birwa, migrated up to the Shashane, Tuli and Mzingwane River into a large area around Jahunda hills near modern day Gwanda. Makure Nyathi of Birwa was granted land in Tuli. As a result, they were amalgamated by local Kalanga and Venda people.<sup>15</sup>

To the Eastern parts of the Malaba jurisdiction particular Mazwi village, they are plenty of inhabitants of Sotho origin. One kraal head Nyathi eludes that, their descendants can be traced from settlement in the Khami ruins.<sup>16</sup> He further states that, clashes between the Sotho and the Ndebele pushed the people further south and even now some live in modern day Botswana.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, a mountain close to the chief's homestead, bears Sotho name Zvebakaka. The bakaka - milk was a Kalanga word and in that area people used to milk a lot of cattle.<sup>18</sup> Most of the rivers and places bears Sotho names. For instance, one river is called Lalatau because the area around the river used to sleep lions. Lalatau confluence with Shashane near Tshelanyemba Primary school and Shashane connects with Shashi close to Zimbabwe-Botswana border. On the contrary, the Venda tradition revealed that the Venda worshipped their High God Mwali while they had settled in Dhlodhlo. Venda society incorporated various ethnic grouping, however the original group was Lubimbi clan of the Mbedzi clan.<sup>19</sup> The clan origins was closely related to the Sotho, Nguni and Dziva-Hungwe.



The Malaba village is inhabited by Kalanga speaking people particularly in the western side of the chief's homestead in Nyashongwe. Sasani, Sigangatsha, Malaba, Malundi, Tshelanyemba and Halahumba villages has a population of Kalanga origins. Bulilima-Mangwe has a section of the Kalanga ethnic groups and are mainly the Lilima and the Nyubi of the hills.<sup>20</sup> The baNyai descendants of Nichasike are Kalanga speaking people. The Kalanga had already settled in the area centuries ago. The Kalanga have for many centuries occupied the dry areas of South-Western Zimbabwe. They are found in Matobo, Bulilima, Mangwe and Tsholotsho districts. It should be esteemed that their geographical area was more expansive before the arrival of the people who came from Great Zimbabwe to form the Togwa state based in Khami, the arrival of Lozwi, the Ndebele and finally the whites.<sup>21</sup> The Kalanga people were often referred indiscriminately by Europeans as Makalaka.<sup>22</sup> The Lindi, Humbe and Lilima occupied the watershed of Nata, Tegwani, Gwayi and Khami in the North.

The Kalanga also occupied Semukwe, Shashi, Ramaqabane and Linkwezi in the south and enormous area reaching as far the salt lakes of Makgadikgadi as indicated by Cobbing. Equally important, one has to make reference to Kalanga oral traditions of 1920s collected by Masola Kumile in his *Nau Dzabakalanga*. He saw the Kalanga as a "nation" not a tribe. He traces the origins of the Kalanga "nation", crossing Zambezi from North East guided by descendants of Chief Butwa. He argues that, the Kalanga spread out during the time of Mutapa state, the Jaunda, Venda, Talaunda went South East.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the Nyai, Nyubi and Humbe went down South West of Rhodesia. These were part of Venda, the Nyai whose ruler was Nichasike childhood name Tshilisamulu overthrew Tjibundule. The other Venda group that later come to settle in Bukalanga land were the Malaba clan, Lubimbi clan- (associated with Mwali cult) and Hobodo clan during reign of Nichasike.

## Origins of Malaba

The Malaba people originated from buVenda land, modern day Beitbridge.<sup>24</sup> Recent reconstruction of Venda identity based on pottery assemblages associated with Ngona suggested that some Venda were descends of Mapungumbwe ancestors while others related to Sotho-Tswana origin.<sup>25</sup> Malaba denotes that, three brothers namely Lubimbi, Khole Tshevula and the other that he cannot recall left Venda because of war.<sup>26</sup> When they had settled in present area, they met Khwadalala (Birwa) who was the ruler (induna) and were incorporated into the community. It is believed that Kwadalala lost interest and gave away his title.<sup>27</sup> It was during this period when they changed their name from Ndlovu to Malaba.<sup>28</sup> It is noteworthy that,

When the Malaba forefathers came from buVenda, none of them had been a chief. Malaba had always been Honyedzapasi Malaba. They are not conscious where the so called “Ncube” came from, however the first chief was Mpangana. Lubimbi, Bhangwe –Tshimba and Malaba came from the same stomach. Malaba was the last born and their power grew because of medicine calabash.<sup>29</sup>

The Malaba people, particularly from Lubimbi house were associated with the Mwali shrines, of which the most popular was the Njelele shrine in Matobo.<sup>30</sup> The meaning of the word Malaba is derived from Venda word (laba) which meant to read. Tjibundule was one of the noticeable Kalanga chief of the Nyubi clan to have ruled in Matabeleland prior Rozvi occupation.<sup>31</sup> Malaba are type of people you can get all characters and all facial features characteristics. You can get the short tempered, sociable, hard smiled, Christians, non-Christians, nyanga’s among the Malaba’s.<sup>32</sup> Malaba was one Kalanga chief who succeeded at first to offer resistance to Ndebele penetration in the Western Matopo.<sup>33</sup> He later submitted and paid tribute and later moved further west towards Tegwani River although later developed cordial relations with Lobengula as a witch doctors.

The Malaba people did not necessarily belong to the Njelele, however they were guided by the Mwali cult. According to their traditions, the Malaba people left other shrines in Beitbridge on the road to South Africa and were directed to the new shrine which later became known as the Njelele.<sup>34</sup> It happened a long time ago and their ancestors were responsible for their movements and migrations. Malaba became king's witch doctors for Ndebele kings Mzilikazi and Lobengula. At the present moment, there are two prominent houses of Malaba. One holds the title of the Chief and the other became headmen Wobodo, the one of isatiyane. Wobodo was the headmen who later after several administrative changes became headmen of Tsitshi.<sup>35</sup> Most of the chiefs in Bukalanga were assumed names due to the actions. When the Malabas arrived at this part of Zimbabwe they brought with them Mwali we-dombo. Lubimbi who was in charge of Mwali's shrine.<sup>36</sup> Mambo Nitshasike openly accepted and respected Mwali and it was him who helped in the establishment of Mwali cult at Tshibale and later Njelele. Ncube of Tshibale is of the view that,

The Malaba, Mabuza, Nkatha and Tshibale are same people and little to differentiate them. The Kalanga simply wanted to marry each other just like the Khumalo and Siwela, they were said to be different because they came to Zimbabwe using two different routes. My forefathers once lived at Mount Tshibale in Kezi, however were forced to resettle by whites. Others went to Tsholotsho and we moved southward.<sup>37</sup>

However, the Lubimbi and the Tshimba-Bhangwa (sabhaswi) went independently from the Malaba's and their status weakened, while the Malaba statuses were growing stronger and stronger.<sup>38</sup> Late Vice President, Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo points that,

His father had cordial relations with Ntelela Malaba when he left Bango for Mbembeswane. The landscape of Malaba was not as flat and bushy as Mbembeswane. Directly south of Malaba village stood prominent lone hill, Nyashongwe. The chief even invited his family to settle in Nyashongwe.<sup>39</sup>

On the contrary, in pre-colonial era, rulers such as Humayenzwa, were also given a name by his subjects because of his actions. It became a common trend among the Kalanga rulers in

particular. Therefore, because of his actions thus, raiding people and kidnapping. His subjects and slaves termed him Muno-Unotapa.

### **Chiefs in pre-colonial period**

<b>Youth name</b>	<b>Reign Name</b>
1. Hamuyenazwa Moyo	Nkalanga
2. Malambo-dzibwa Moyo	Munumutapa
3. Mavula Moyo	Munumutapa
4. Madabhule/Madabhani Howu	Tshibundule
5. Tshilisamulu Moyo	Nitshasike
6. Mpangana Malaba	Hobhodo. <sup>40</sup>

Mpangana Malaba was first to be conferred with chieftom among the Honyedzapasi. He was a nyanga who had worked with Ngomane Gumbo and was one ruler whose name changed because of his actions. Ngomane Gumbo was a chief divine of Nichasike had powerful charms caused medicine calabash Tjibundule to lack strength leading to his downfall.<sup>41</sup> Mpangana was installed after the death of Nichasike Moyo who had been killed by the Swazi and during that time Mzilikazi was coming from the West when he had learnt that Bukalanga had no chief.<sup>42</sup> Despite of being of second house, he was the oldest member amongst the Malaba. His brothers had died few years after arriving from Bu-Venda on the South-East of the country. Dube proposes that, his grandfather Mpangana Malaba was the King's witchdoctor and he understood that the Kalanga came from the Nyubi of the hills.<sup>43</sup> Oral traditions from what he was told by his father, was that, Mpangana dealt with issues concerning magic spells-ukuphosa. He further claims that, when white waggons came from South Africa, they were unable to cross

Mangwe due to Mpangana's charms and magic.<sup>44</sup> On another incident, Mpangana had a rock granary some 4 kilometres away from his homestead where he kept his millet and rapoko. Whenever young boys from ibutho took millet, grind it and milked cattle. He would report them to the king. Malaba would go back home and fix magic spell whenever they tried stealing again. It was assumed when they prepared their meal with stolen millet their pots would overflow.<sup>45</sup> In this instance, he was trying to show how the charms of Mpangana were effective to such an extent.

The main motive Mpangana was named Hobodo (even today there is a place called Hobodo named after him) was because he went about carrying the nyanga's bags full of charms, witchcrafts and makona medicines.<sup>46</sup> The Ndebele called him Nqamu-ebukhali - sharp knife because it suited their language perfectly. He did not rule until the arrival of the whites and after the destruction of the Ndebele kingdom. He was conferred the chieftom by Lobengula few days he disappeared at the turf of the grass. During Mzilikazi's reign, Mpangana had cordial relations with Ndebele king. He had a strong medicine calabash (charms). Even during Lobengula's reign it is said that Mpangana was one of the elders who could persuade and soften his attitude and his rule. According to delineation report of Obodo community concurred that, until the time of occupation, Mpangana and his people were chief practitioners to the Ndebele kings.<sup>47</sup> It is against this backdrop their house was recognised as a chieftainship.

### **Shift of power from Mpangana to Tshidada around 1890**

Mpangana despite coming from lower house, he became chief of Malabas (see appendix 1). The death of his brother of the upper class left his widow Ba-Phuthi. He saw the need to follow the traditions and ask younger brother to look after his brother's widow. Tshoko was first

choice however, Mpangana changed his mind and appointed Kuyani to look after his brother's widow.<sup>48</sup> As a result, it led to the birth of Tshidada after several miscarriages. The birth of Tshidada was questioned as it was believed he was not Kuyani's son. Although, Mpangana was conferred chieftom he deemed himself not suitable for the chieftaincy because of coming from second class. Mpangana said he was not going to take Malaba chieftom while his brother's son Tshidada was alive.<sup>49</sup> However, Lobengula had ordained Mpangana and later completely varnished around 1890. During this time, Tshidada and Habanabe were serving in Lobengula's army but Mpangana sent his people to fetch him in Shangane.<sup>50</sup> Mpangana had taught them witchcraft ubu-nyanga which both practised till death. People who were sent were not aware of who was Tshidada, they brought Hhabanabe instead. He eventually went himself to fetch Tshidada and a ceremony to install Tshidada as Chief Malaba was held and chief ship conferred. At the ceremony Mpangana spread the lion's softened skin and Tshidada was left to sit on it. Mpangana then moved south from area close to present day Bulawayo. He ordered Tshidada and his brother to go straight towards Bhotela Mountains while Mpangana settled at Mhlotshana and Kuyani settled at Kwite.<sup>51</sup>

Hhoba inherited Mpangana chieftom which was ran simultaneous with Tshidada rule. It is believed that Hhoba was not Mpangana's first son but Tshada was.<sup>52</sup> It was against the backdrop that Tshada's mother had fallen in love with Mpangana whilst Hhoba's mother was given to him as a wife. He was succeeded by Mahango then Thela followed by Mossie. On the upper house, Tshidada was succeeded by Ntelela and he took over the chieftaincy. Later on Joseph Ntelela Malaba then current Chief is David Malaba. Chief Joseph Ntelela was born in 1911 and died at the age of 75 on 20 February 1986. He was born in Bulilima-Mangwe. He had served for ten years as a member of former BSA Police and a holder of Master Farmer Certificate.<sup>53</sup> He acted as a chief during his father reign from 1960 to 1971 when he was finally

installed as chief after his father died in 1969. He was soft spoken compared to his father and advocated for the chief council to allow a Kalanga chief to serve at the council. In an interview transcribed by Mark Ncube in 1984, Malaba maintains that, they are many sections within the Kalanga ethnic group and these included the Lilima and the Nyubi of the hills.<sup>54</sup> The name Ntelela was his father's name. Ntelela was son of Tshidada and Tshidada father was Malaba. After the death of Joseph Ntelela Malaba, his heir David Joseph Malaba was installed as the Chief (current Chief).

### **Present structure of Malaba in terms of succession**

#### **Upper house**

1. Tshidada
2. Ntelela
3. Joseph
4. David

#### **Lower house**

- Mpangana (succeeded by Hhoba)
- Mahango
- Thela
- Mossie Matsambani

During Ntelela and Mahango's rule they were frequent visits between the two rulers. Some of the cases of Mahango had to be prosecuted by Ntelela.<sup>55</sup> However, during Ntelela's reign the visits were infrequent.

## **Relations with the Bango (Nyubi)**

The Malaba people had cordial relations with the Nyubi. The Bango - the Nyubi's and Chief Bango shares a common boundary with Chief Malaba. Bango, Mpemba, Mathanda and Nigobe, are assumed to be the pure Kalanga. All their spirit mediums were from Ntwaba. The Bango people were not known in the part of the country. However, they came to be known after Mpangana Malaba gave his first daughter as Tshilale Bango's wife. He also played a role in an attempt to persuade the district commissioner to install Tshilale Bango as chief as he wanted his son in law to be a chief just like him.<sup>56</sup> Ntelela Malaba also gave his daughter to Jeremia Ngugama Bango as wife. The Malaba and Bango's had much intermarriages, such that you cannot tell who is who.<sup>57</sup> The Nyubi were the first people to settle in Matopo.

## **Conclusion**

The history of the Malaba people is intricate as it is mostly based on oral traditions. Efforts were made by Kumile Masola to reconstruct the history of the Kalanga. However, more focus was shifted to the Ndebele as the Nyubi, Kalanga, Venda and other ethnic groups were incorporated into the Ndebele society under caste system. Even if the Malaba had counterattacked the whites, it was doing to be down play. The chapter bid to account for history of the Malaba people focusing on the Venda/Kalanga traditions and showed how the Malaba obtained their power and their relations with the surrounding communities. The discussion also presented that the Lubimbi were the one's closely associated with the Mwali cult. The chapter also provided a detailed account on the history of different ethnic groups under chief Malaba jurisdiction. In recent times these people are generally accepted and perceived to be Kalanga, regardless of their different origin says otherwise.



## End notes

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<sup>1</sup> P Nyathi, *Zimbabwe Cultural Heritage*, Bulawayo, Amabooks Publishers, 2005, p.132.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with E Ndlovu, Headman, Sigangatsha Village, 15 February 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with N Sibanda-Tshulu, Resident, Mpopoma, 22 December 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 9, Interview with Chief W Ndiweni, Plumtree, 8 December 1981, p.20.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>7</sup> J R D Cobbing, "The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896", DPhil, University of Lancaster, 1976, p.120.

<sup>8</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 8, Interview with Chief Manguba, Ntoli, 9 December 1981, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo's Hill of Zimbabwe*, Harare, Baobab Books, 1999, p.121.

<sup>10</sup> J R D Cobbing, "The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896", p.121.

<sup>11</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, Kezi, 22 November 1984, p.9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> P J Wenzel, *The Relationship between Venda and Western Shona*, Vol III, Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 1986, p.151.

<sup>14</sup> J R D Cobbing, "The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896", p.125.

<sup>15</sup> H Von Sicard, "Rhodesian Sidelights on Bechuanaland History", *NADA*, Vol 32, 1954, pp.76-77.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with S Nyathi, Kraal head, Mazwi Village, 13 February 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> P Nyathi, *Zimbabwe Cultural Heritage*, p.131.

<sup>20</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, p.1.

<sup>21</sup> P Nyathi and K Chikomo, *Zimbabwe Traditional Dances; Woso*, Bulawayo, Amagugu Publishers, 2012, p.25.

<sup>22</sup> J R D Cobbing, “The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896”, p.127.

<sup>23</sup> P J Wentzel, *Naudzabakalanga: A history of the Kalanga*, Vol I, Pretoria, University of South Africa, 1983, p.29.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with T Malaba, Villager, Tshelanyemba Growth Point, 23 February 2018.

<sup>25</sup> G C Mazarire, “Reflections on Pre-colonial Zimbabwe c. 850-1880s”, in B Raftopoulous and A S Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from Pre-colonial period to 2008*, Harare, Weaver Press, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with T Malaba.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with P Moyo, Villager, Tshelanyemba Hospital, 27 February 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with S Ncube-Malaba, Villager, Tshelanyemba Hospital, 27 February 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga culture, Promotion society, 6/10/80-14/04/83, pp.45-46.

<sup>30</sup> I Ndlovu, *Cultural Complexity in Marriage and Family in the Light of Faith among the Kalanga and the Ndebele, an overview history of Makawule clan*, Plumtree, Ilizwi publication, 2016, p.14.

<sup>31</sup> E Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: Transformations in the Kalanga and Ndebele societies, 1860-1990*, New York, University of Rochester, 2012, p.35.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with T Malaba.

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- <sup>33</sup> J R D Cobbing, “The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896”, p.120.
- <sup>34</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, p.9.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.9.
- <sup>36</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga culture, p.45.
- <sup>37</sup> Interview with D Ncube, Villager, Tshelanyemba Tshelanyemba Growth Point, 23 February 2018,
- <sup>38</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga culture, p.44.
- <sup>39</sup> J Nkomo, *Nkomo the story of my life*, London, Methuen, 1984, p.18.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid, p.44.
- <sup>41</sup> P J Wentzel, *Naudzabakalanga: A history of the Kalanga*, Vol I, p.175.
- <sup>42</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga Culture, p.46.
- <sup>43</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, p.4.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.4.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.4.
- <sup>46</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga Culture, p.45.
- <sup>47</sup> Delineation report of Tela Obodo Community, p.55.
- <sup>48</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga Culture, pp.46-47.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.47.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid, p.47.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.47.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.47.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.44.
- <sup>54</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, p.1.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.48.
- <sup>56</sup> Bukalanga Mukakwedza Kalanga Culture, p.57.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.57.

# Chapter two

## The centrality of Mwali cult amongst people under Chief Malaba

### **Introduction**

The chapter provides a background on the Mwali cult particular on the parent shrine the Njelele in Matobo and to find out the linkage between the shrine and the Malaba people. The chapter dwells much on the history and the establishment of the shrine, priestly lineage and perception about the Njelele. It attempts to reveal the significance of the Mwali cult in African traditional religion, functions of the cult, although little is known about functions of the Mwali cult until 1830s, spirits associated with the cult, the relationship between the Njelele and other shrines like Dula and the Manyangwa.

### **The historical background of the Njelele shrine**

The Malaba people left Venda and other shrines as they were guided by Mwali leading to the establishment of the Njelele.<sup>1</sup> The Njelele is situated in Western Matopo between Hovi and Mwewe Rivers. The rivers have turned out to be known as Hovi and Mwewe because, case of Hovi a Kalanga was killed by the Ndebele during a raid near Gwisi Ndomvi River however, the Ndebele failed to pronounce it later became known as Hovi.<sup>2</sup> Mwewe River became Mwewe because a Kalanga was drowning in the river being swept by water and people were crying saying “mwewe wedu” meaning one of us.<sup>3</sup> The founders of the shrine are understood to be Jenjema and Pinga from Venda. Malaba points out that, Khole Tshevula was the one sent to Njelele.<sup>4</sup> Tshevula meant cloud of rain. So far there is no genealogical study of the priestly family from Njelele yet.<sup>5</sup> Firm date for the origins and establishment is between 1830 and 1850s. There is heated debate on the origins of the Mwali cult. Scholars do not agree on the

origins, other scholars consider it was introduced by the Kalanga of Venda origin and other schools of thought argued that, it originated at Great Zimbabwe with the Mhondoro (ancestral spirit). Beach and Huffman have also made known that there is no evidence of Mwari cult and Zimbabwe undoubtedly never had a chiefly religious function at all.<sup>6</sup> Major questions on the cult originated and with what particular people have not yet been persuasively answered.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the worship of Mwali in the history of African religion is not a new phenomenon and can be traced probably during the Mapungumbwe Empire.<sup>8</sup> The word Njelele probably came from Njejema the founding priest of Njelele cult. Malaba postulates that, the Njelele was a Kalanga name that symbolised a type of hawk thought to symbolize imminent rain and fly in a circular manner continuously.<sup>9</sup> According to Venda traditions, the cult came from Venda land bought by the Lubimbi/Malaba clan. Njenjema was of Wudo- Lubimbi/Malaba clan. The clan indicated that baboons/monkeys were a taboo to eat. On the contrary, Sitwanyana, though of Venda/ Kalanga origin, came to develop a version of a cult history much more favourable to Lobengula than established orthodoxy.<sup>10</sup> Thenjiwe Lesabe also advanced a version of Ndebele history which provided a central distinction to Njelele. Although, such arguments has been put forth, the Venda origins holds more ground comparatively speaking because when Mzilikazi came he embrace the worship of Mwali.

There is no proper understanding of the functions of the Mwali cult prior to the coming of the Ndebele in the 1830's and its origin has been a cradle of debate among scholars.<sup>11</sup> Other schools of thought consider that the purposes can be seen at Great Zimbabwe together with the Mhondoro spirit. The Shona cult with Mhondoro spirits included, Nehanda, Chaminuka, Karuva and Dzivaguru.<sup>12</sup> It integrated ancestral elements after it moved to the Matopo shrine. Ranger notes that, the Rozvi imported some of the practices from the Venda cult at Raluvhimba.<sup>13</sup> Mwali was much closer to Raluvhimba, the secretive, monotheistic deity of the Venda. As a result, it is not surprising that one of the names of Mwali Thovela is still used in

present day. Consequently, the Mwali cult in the Matobo reached its mature growth during the period of Nechasiwe of the Rozvi state as indicated by Ranger. The cult is assumed to have been acquainted with migrants from Venda land of the Dziva totem and was later advanced by the people of the Shoko totem.

There is no uncertainty that, the Makalanga high god was founded in the Matobo therefore, the first people to settle in the hills were the Nyubi people. However, the Ndebele subjugated the Kalanga and amalgamated the Mwali cult. Dube asserts that, scholars like Gann seemed not to be aware that the Mwali cult had Venda origins than Kalanga.<sup>14</sup> They considered that the Mwali cult was introduced to the Zimbabwean plateau by the Kalanga. With that noted, the Njelele shrine was for the whole nation except the Ndebele.<sup>15</sup> The Ndebele came and found the shrine belonging to the Kalanga people and had to accept it that way. The Mwali could appreciate all African languages apart from English.<sup>16</sup> Scholars and traditions are also divided on the origins on the Mwali cult however, there is no doubt that the cult unified people from different ethnic groups. The Njelele was known for peace and the cult was universal meaning anyone could partake. Therefore, the cult was a mainstay religion of people associated with the cult. It was God of fertility who controlled the growth of crops and human production. There is clear indication that with the coming of the Ndebele they also adopted the Mwali cult, but however the same cannot be altered on the side of the Whites who despised the traditional practices of the Africans as evil and barbaric.

The Mwali cult seemed to have played a vibrant role in the socio-political and economic lives of the Matobo people. Mazarire concurs that, prior to the coming of Ndebele in the 1830's there was no official facts of the functions of Mwali cult.<sup>17</sup> It only became dominant in southern parts of the country as an oracular crusade and it merged ancestral elements after it moved to the Matobo shrines. Mwali was approached by the people of Malaba jurisdiction (Kalanga) in

times of drought or for thanksgiving and this was done by amawosana, the Mwali messengers were women.<sup>18</sup> They possessed spirits, these spirits were known as izihumba. The spirits could only inhabit the Kalanga women, but not men. It is worth to note that the Kalanga established various shrines which represented the Mwali cult in Bulilima-Mangwe, which served to uphold the high god of the Matopos.<sup>19</sup> Such shrines are still functioning up to today and these include Manyangwa in the Northern parts of Bulilima-Mangwe district and Neyile and Ntogwa in the South. In Sasani village, under Headman Ndlovu, the Ncubes and Moyos were precise people in the community liable with the issue to do with the rainmaking ceremonies. The Mwali cult was not related to ancestral spirits but their main functions were for rain making and the cleaning of the air ceremonies. Communities could find solutions to their respective problems.

In the case of Karivara rain cult, the Gutu-Rufura people sent messengers to the Matopo hills annually to consult the oracular voice of Mwali.<sup>20</sup> These were mainly on matters to do with succession, to plead for good rains and seek spiritual guidance on issues to do with drought. Ndlovu concurs that, the Njelele was not only meant for rain making ceremonies.<sup>21</sup> However, diseases related with ancestral spirits were addressed at Njelele. This had nothing to do with rain spirits (ukucela amazolo). Many people with various diseases, those troubled by ancestral spirits came for their path to be cleared. Several traditional healers went to Njelele to seek guidance from the ancestral spirits. The cult in a nutshell, seemed to have been an alternative means of acquiring rain and providing solutions to prevailing personal problems to people.

## **The relationship between Njelele and other religious shrines**

The Njelele in Matopo was seen as the mother shrine however, there were other shrines like Dula, Zhilo and Manyangwa. Njelele shrine was used for rain making ceremonies and other shrines like, amadaka, koMavumbuka Ncube, Kumbudzi, koDabha Ncube or Magubu and Dondoriya were also intense on rain making ceremonies.<sup>22</sup> According to oral traditions, the shrines were made-up for guiding and directing those from Manyangwa who came to the parent shrine.<sup>23</sup> The relationship had been weak because of disturbances. All powers came from the Njelele and all rain spirits were worshiped at Njelele and were given water calabash - inkezo. The priest of minor shrines endeavoured to claim independent powers for the shrines. However, a careful analysis of their statements revealed that with the exception of the Dula shrine, original powers emanated from Njelele.<sup>24</sup> Dula was located at the upper Mtshabezi River to the south. A Venda, Mafukwa crossed the Transvaal into Gwanda around 1840s and established a shrine at Gwenugwe before moving to Dula.<sup>25</sup> The Dula represented Mwali as a male figure yet on the other hand Dzilo as a female one.<sup>26</sup> Muloyi's argument on the cult points that, rain making ceremonies in the Kalanga society in Dula, eDuleni or the leading shrine Njelele was brought by two Venda brothers and was a taboo for women to visit the shrine (See appendix 2).<sup>27</sup>

Bunyonyo dismisses the view of Venda origins, but also acknowledges the other version of the two Venda brothers for the establishment of the cult. He notes that, the cult was of Nyai origin who spoke Kalanga dialect and the spirit was surrogated to Manyangwa.<sup>28</sup> The coming of Zwangendaba, Njenjema is supposed to have sort refugee near Victoria Falls but later returned and established another shrine in Tokwana.<sup>29</sup> Manyangwa's mother is also thought to have possessed most powerful spirit medium. It is worth to note that, whenever there was no rain, Thomas the Native Commissioner around 1911, asked Manyangwa and Njenjema to perform



the rain ceremony.<sup>30</sup> The rain medium would not return before the rain fell. The Kalanga have continued to worship the Mwali particular in Manyangwa during the colonial period. Ntogwa and Manyangwa were the most well-known shrine on the parts of Bulilima-Mangwe district. The Manyangwa shrine is said to have been consulted during the 1967 and 1972 drought and amawosana were sent to plead for rain due to drought.<sup>31</sup> Chief Mpini was responsible for sending the Mwali messengers during that period.

### **Shrine priests**

The Mwali was worshipped by members of the priestly family. These functioned in the Matopo hills and interceded with Mwali who manifested himself vocally from a cave or a rock.<sup>32</sup> The priest required gifts in form of black cloth, small stock, beer, grain and from the twentieth century in form of money.<sup>33</sup> The priests of Mwali were all of Venda stock and not Kalanga as stated by other schools of thought and authorities.<sup>34</sup> The Mwali cult was no doubt established in Matobo hills during the Mambo dynasty prior Swazi forays. The rain making shrine was later dispersed under the guiding spirit of Njenjema, the founding priest of the current Njelele.<sup>35</sup> Chief Manguba accept as true that, Njenjema belonged to the Nleya clan of Nilikawu.<sup>36</sup> The priestly families controlled an organization of praise singers and amawosana. Other shrines like Manyangwa were established by Njenjema. Lubimbi clan was responsible for the Mwali cult which had rain-making shrines located at Njelele, Dula and Wililani in the Matopo hills of Zimbabwe. Wenzel concurs that, it was during the rule of Nichasike when the ethnic group of Lubimbi arrived coming from Venda, they were the ones who came with Mwali (God of the Shona and Venda) into the country.<sup>37</sup> Most importantly, there is also reference to Luvhimbi in Venda traditions as being associated with the rain.

Lesabe brought a different interpretation on how the shrine priests were chosen and it was not according to blood relationship. The shrine could choose (ukuqoma) meant anyone.<sup>38</sup> Lesabe argues that, Sipula (Nguni) was a religious leader possessed by a Njelele spirit. Someone with Nguni origin could be possessed and become Tovele.<sup>39</sup> It did not necessarily mean that you were supposed to be born to priestly lineage of the Njelele.<sup>40</sup> However, people who were normally possessed with those powers were the Venda people. Lozwi ethnic group, Moyo were people who worshipped at Njelele. She affirms that, the rain makers were people of Venda and that's where the Njelele came from. The indigenous people prior to the coming of Mzilikazi used to sacrifice human beings especially children. Mzilikazi is understood to have stopped it instead offered cattle to the Njelele.

### **Customs and dances**

The wosana were rain dancers who wore black cloth which was a distinct colour for them. The wosanas were only prohibited to eat certain foods if their ancestral spirits had animals that were a taboo. It was assumed that after dance ceremonies the rains would fall. There was a myth surrounding the Mwali cult that lions would appear and these lions might have served as Mwali's guard dogs. Amawosana played firm roles related to the traditional practises. Richards states that, belief concerning Mwali is similarly based on the element of faith.<sup>41</sup> In appeasing the spirits, a black ox was killed for the occasion killed at the spot, skinned and taken by the amawosana into the cave where rituals were performed. Amawosana divided the meat and sent it out to the people who would be dancing and singing Mwali praises some little distance away.

On the contrary, when bad drought befell no suitable ox could be found. It was replaced by a black sheep. Again, if it falls too, a hunt and people assemble to find some meat to (thethela)

the Mwali. When a rock hare or klipspringer would suffice, it would be killed and carried to Mwali's place and skin dealt with like the ox.<sup>42</sup> Klipspringer was the common animal and under specific orders it was not supposed to be killed.<sup>43</sup> Should company kill a baboon it would be brought back and burnt before the cave, it was believed that the smoke of the sacrifice rising would make clouds and bring down rain.<sup>44</sup> Ashes were supposed to remain and be washed away by the rain. Beer was brewed and brought along each family represented and a few (amaqhaga) would be taken by the elderly (abadala) and presented to Mwali at the entrance of the cave. Amaqhaga were not moved but Mwali consumed a portion of each or several of them and it would have been a sign that their oblation had been accepted.<sup>45</sup> The beer that was brewed was taken to the shrine for three days. On the fourth day it was drunk. August - September were active months and people from all over the country brought corn and beer which was brewed. The drums were put on leg-rattles and were called (ezamabhiza).

The indigenous people performed rain dances in the hills and sometimes long before the establishment of Mwali shrine.<sup>46</sup> The Nyubi regarded many hills in the Matopo as rain dance hill. The dancers were young girls and old women. They danced to drum beat and clapped their hands although whistles were prohibited. The rain dancers of pre-pubertal and post-menopausal baNyubi women continued into twentieth century with more elaborated rituals of the Mwali cult.<sup>47</sup> African traditional dances derived a meaning and message that they communicated as eluded by Pathisa Nyathi.<sup>48</sup> The two distinct dances were hosanna and hosho. During September-November elders from various parts transverse to Njelele went to deliver offering to the priest and asked for rain. The two dances were performed. Prior to the performance the people went to the shrine keeper with gifts that were to be presented at the shrine. Both dances were drum based and these dances were associated with rain making were of Kalanga origin.<sup>49</sup> Among the

baNyubi within Matobo hills the drum was referred to as Mandobo. These dances and drum playing were said to have evoked the rain to fall.

### **Beliefs and spirits associated with the cult**

The spirits associated with the cult were very old. The Mwali cult was not related to ancestral spirits but connected to rain spirits and cleaning the air.<sup>50</sup> These included zanuse, mashabi and matshomane. Others spirits were included later stages. The mantshomane was a very old spirit, however the main spirits were the shumba – humba.<sup>51</sup> There were substantial ones especially when the ancestors were being appeased. For this reason, the main spirits associated with the Kalanga was humba. It was believed that, there was a class of ancestral spirits - izihumba who wandered in the air seeking to enter into or take possession of female member of a clan or family to which they belonged to while on earth.<sup>52</sup> In a scenario were a boy was possessed with the spirit. It was transferred to a girl. In execution the ancestral spirit ceremony, there were usually three stones that symbolised, one for the father, the other the mother and the third one for the living head of the family.<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, the Habe clan were also rain spirit mediums and they used to enter the caves in Tokwana and listen to the sound of thunder.<sup>54</sup> They could also tell people not to burn heaps of rubbish from the field. In short, in understanding African world view, one has to take into account the Cosmo vision trinity. When the whites heard about the Njelele they despised it and said it was insignificant.

## **Mwali praise totems**

Tobela

Mbedzi

Mazebuta

Matanhanti netiko

Zebe dzakakwakwatila

Imwi bakaMwali nkulu

Imwi munahhamu lon'ompela

Lino n'wiwa ne tjabatjose

Mbuluki wenzilikadzi nesiyan'wa

Baka lunji gusipfume ngubo

Gosimila pfuma pasi

Mbedzi bankwakwa usiwome

Unodliwanebana muhhihha netjilimo

Bhibhanyi wahongwe.<sup>55</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The chapter bid to shade light on the establishment of the cult and the debate on the origins of Mwali cult. It presented how the Mwali influenced the Malaba to move to this part of the country leaving their settlement in Venda. The African traditional religion is not a new phenomenon and the Mwali cult can be probably be placed at Mapungubwe state. In case of the Njelele and the Mwali cult with no reasonable doubt, was brought forth by Njenjema and its origins being linked with Venda traditions is more apt. The most striking feature about both the African religion and Christianity is that, both conceive Mwali /Jehovah as an invisible super natural being, omnipresent, manifestation of nature. On the other hand, they is similarity between the two religions, in the colonial period, the missionaries and the colonialist despised the African religion and painted a bad picture about African traditional practises and did not spare their religion. The African religion has continued to strive even after colonialism although the significance of the religion is no longer embraced compared to pre-colonial area. The cult continued to unify Africans as the Njelele was known as place of peace. Despite the influence of Christianity the traditional religious shrines are still consulted. The Western and Christian culture and African traditional religion have continued to co-exist. Some of practises associated with Njelele include amadaka, ukuthethela and tenela.

## End notes

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<sup>1</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, Kezi, 22 November 1984, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with R Nyathi, Villager, Toloki, 27 February 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with R Moyo, Villager, Toloki, 27 February 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with T Malaba, Villager, Tshelanyemba Growth point, 23 February 2018.

<sup>5</sup> J R D Cobbing, "The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896", DPhil, University of Lancaster, 1976, p.240.

<sup>6</sup> D N Beach, "Great Zimbabwe as a Mwari Cult Centre" in J R D Cobbing, "The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896", DPhil, University of Lancaster, 1976, p.238.

<sup>7</sup> J R D Cobbing, "The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896", p.238.

<sup>8</sup> T T Malaba, "Mwali of the Njelele and the Story of Bukalanga", Paper Prepared for Research and Intellectual Expo, February 2011, p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo's Hill of Zimbabwe*, Harare, Baobab Books, 1999, p.221.

<sup>11</sup> T Dube, "Shifting Identities and Transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, 1946-2005", DPhil, University of Witwatersrand, 2015, pp.52-53.

<sup>12</sup> M Gelfand, *An African's religion, The Spirit of Nyajena*, in J R D Cobbing, "The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896", DPhil, University of Lancaster, 1976, p.237.

<sup>13</sup> T O Ranger, "The meaning of Mwari", *The Journal of the Central African Historical Association*, Vol 5, 1974, p.13.

<sup>14</sup> T Dube, "Shifting Identities and Transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, 1946-2005", p.53.

<sup>15</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.7.

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- <sup>17</sup> G C Mazarire, “A Social and Political History of Chisanga: South-Central Zimbabwe c.1750-2000”, DPhil, University of Zimbabwe, 2009, p.43.
- <sup>18</sup> Interview with P Ncube, Villager, Mazwi Village, 23 February 2018.
- <sup>19</sup> T Dube, “Shifting Identities and Transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, 1946-2005”, p.54.
- <sup>20</sup> J Mujere, “The Marumbi Rain cult: Gender and the interface between rainmaking and the politics of water in Gutu”, Paper Presented at the Power of Water, Landscape and the State in Southern and Eastern Africa Conference, University of Edinburgh, 28-29 March 2007, p.3.
- <sup>21</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 30, Interview with D Mayabo, A Ndlovu, Nsingo and MaMoyo, Njelele, 23 November 1988, p.4.
- <sup>22</sup> P Nyathi, *Zimbabwe Cultural Heritage*, Bulawayo, Amabooks publishers, 2005, p.110.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.5.
- <sup>24</sup> I G Cockcroft, “The Mlimo cult”, *NADA*, Vol 10, 1972, p.83.
- <sup>25</sup> I G Cockcroft, “The Mlimo cult”, in J R D Cobbing, “The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896”, DPhil, University of Lancaster, 1976, p.242.
- <sup>26</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo’s Hill of Zimbabwe*, p.24.
- <sup>27</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 7, Interview with B Muloyi 9 December 1981, pp. 13-16.
- <sup>28</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 10, Interview with B M Ndlovu, Plumtree, 9 December 1981, p.13.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.13.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid, p.14.
- <sup>31</sup> T Dube, “Shifting Identities and Transformation of the Kalanga People of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, 1946-2005”, p.156.
- <sup>32</sup> J R D Cobbing, “The Ndebele under the Khumalo, 1820-1896”, p.236.



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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.236.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.83.

<sup>35</sup> T T Malaba, “Mwali of the Njelele and the Story of Bukalanga”, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 8, Interview with Chief Manguba, Ntoli, 9 December 1981, p.14.

<sup>37</sup> P J Wentzel, *NauDzabakalanga: A history of the Kalanga*, Vol I, Pretoria, University of South Africa, 1983, p.77.

<sup>38</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, p.8.

<sup>39</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 23, Interview with T Lesabe, July 24 1988, p.2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>41</sup> J B Richards, “The Mlimo- Belief and Practise of Kalanga”, *NADA*, Vol 19, 1942, p.51.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pp.52-53.

<sup>43</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 10, Interview with B M Ndlovu, p.15.

<sup>44</sup> J B Richards, “The Mlimo- Belief and Practise of Kalanga”, pp.52-53.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.53.

<sup>46</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo’s Hill of Zimbabwe*, p.20.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>48</sup> P Nyathi, “Rain dances symbolism associated with the Njelele Shrine”, *The Sunday News*, 20 April 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 9, Interview Chief W Ndiweni, Plumtree, 8 December 1981, p.18.

<sup>51</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, p.11.

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<sup>52</sup> N Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859 -1924*, London, Longman, 1979, p.123.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>54</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 8, Interview with Chief Manguba, Ntoli, p.14.

<sup>55</sup> T T Malaba, “Mwali of the Njelele and the Story of Bukalanga”, pp.3-4.

# Chapter three

## The impact of Christian culture on religious beliefs and practises amongst Malaba jurisdiction

### **Introduction**

African traditional religion and customs are no longer being followed today because many people have become Christians; as a result our ancestral spirits are angry.<sup>1</sup> The chapter focuses on how the western culture influence has affected the social behaviours norms and values on Malaba societies. In the colonial period it has seen that the Western culture surpasses and dominates indigenous culture. Both the colonial administrators and the missionaries' undermined African traditional religion and beliefs at all cost. The coming of the whites to Africa was termed as a civilization mission as they reckoned Africa as a "Dark Continent". The statement was first altered by Henry Stanley in 1878 because Africa was poorly known. For this reason, it was the mandate of the whites to civilize the uncivil people of African. The whites simply wanted to justify the theory of Social Darwinism that stipulated that white race was superior to other races. Hence, the activities of both the colonialist and the missionaries in colonial Zimbabwe tremendously affected the African religion and traditional practises. Consequently, it informed changes in social behaviour, norms and values on African societies. Therefore, the chapter will show how religious beliefs, customs and cultural practises of Africans were affect particular in the area under study. Legislations were passed to undermine Africans way of life such as the Native Marriage Ordinance of 1901 and Native Tax Ordinance 1904.

## **Christian culture penetration and influence**

The establishment of mission stations and schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first at Inyathi and later at Hope Fountain by the London Mission Society had an undesirable impact on the African traditional religion, beliefs and values. Vail quoted by Msindo, argues that, the cultural brokers (missionaries) carefully constructed their ethnic philosophy in order to delimit the natural characteristic of members of various ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> The missionaries wanted to create a new way of thinking, so that Africans could easily be converted to Christianity. In short, the colonial administrators and the missionaries tried by all means to despise the African beliefs so as to facilitate the spread of Christian culture into African societies. Most of the African elites and rulers embraced the Western culture so as to preserve their political power. For instance, in case of the Ndebele state, they had already incorporated the Mwali cult into their religion. Lobengula tried to engross aspects of Christianity in realization that he could not excite the disapproval of the religious institutions without losing much of his power and prestige.<sup>3</sup> It clearly indicates that, not only the ordinary people in the society were swayed to embrace Western culture. Even the rulers themselves accepted it through mission education. Chief Malaba stated emphatically that, his father had come to Rhodesia as a youth and that wosana Njenje and Pinga were accountable for the founding of Njelele shrine.<sup>4</sup> However, Malaba also came under influence of missionaries and became a Christian. As a result, he lost touch with Njelele and could not recall names of Njelele priest who followed Njenje and Pinga.

The aftermath of the 1<sup>st</sup> Umvukela/Chimurenga, Native commissioners in Matopo had declared that, the trace of Mwali shrine activity was invisible. This might have ensued because most of the Mwali adepts were arrested and some were even taken to prison.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, since Rhodes had been buried there, Matopo became whites play ground as suggested by Ranger.<sup>6</sup> Chief Manguba laments that, we still had rain ceremonies even today, in 1982 there were no rains

and before the whites came, a voice could be heard from the caves where people gathered.<sup>7</sup> Although such an episode occurred, the Mwali adept's resisted Christian entrepreneurship and display of contempt for the shrine as they could.<sup>8</sup> The Njelele had once been fundamental and the headquarters of an old cult.<sup>9</sup> As a result of colonial conquest it ended all. The Christian entrepreneurship by the Brethren in Christ in Matopo was antagonised and defied the Mwali cult. By 1905 the shrines were already in decline and people no longer had answers from the caves.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the Mwali nature and power was incomprehensive, vague and loathsome according his opinion.

The traditional leaders were also cultural brokers as they implemented policies formulated by missionaries and colonialist. The Kalanga people tended to remain inimical from Christian influences. However, they encouraged young people to learn from missionaries by the leaders. The chiefs namely Mpini, Tjingababili and Malaba were assumed to have invited missionaries to open up schools, build churches and even urged their people to desist from working on Sundays in their areas.<sup>11</sup> It is worth to note, among the Kalanga chiefs, Chief Tshitshi stands out as a traditionalist who dreaded the effects of Christianity. Under Chief Tshitshi, one of the Malaba's Wobodo became headman. The confrontation to Christianity was evidenced by the shumba cult. Father O'Neil of Jesuit, openly shunned the humba cult and religious beliefs. These particular ancestral beliefs proved to be difficult to uproot and missionaries admitted on that.<sup>12</sup> The people of South-West part of the country doomed Christian culture to penetrate into their societies. The fact that the rulers encompassed the western education they were slowly giving away their cultural values.

Closely allied to the above notion, in case of Jesuit mission based in Kalanga speaking people were culturally arrogant and purposely blind to the positive aspects of African traditional religion. They often resorted to violence against Africans who continued to visit and perform activities related to the humba cult. People who sustained the religious beliefs were even threatened with a jail term. Bhebe notes that, they even used dogs to disband a group of humba adherents.<sup>13</sup> In addition, in 1911 another incident was witnessed where a village of people who were holding the cult ceremony, an old woman was beaten and lashed pitilessly.<sup>14</sup> In general and in particular, the colonial government and the Christian missionaries were fully committed to promote the ideology of Christianity and Civilization.

Even the Ndebele practice of *inxwala* was regarded as a meaningless tradition of uncivilized people. In Empandeni community intensive methods were adopted to transform people. Influential priests were driven away for instance, *Nina kaPanzi*. In 1912-1913 recorded little or no rain and drought occurred in that period but the rest of the country had received good rains. It turned out to be a clear demonstration to the traditionalists of the feebleness of missionary God and the power of *Mwali*.<sup>15</sup> The exiled priest called for the Empandeni community to revert to traditional way of life. Ranger dubbed the co-existence of western and African culture as an ideological warfare. This was war between spokesmen for broad-minded Christianity and the *Mwali* shrine adepts. Brethren in *Mtshabezi*, South of *Matopo* went a step further and opened a refuge for girls escaping from forced marriages and developed it into a boarding school.<sup>16</sup> The Rhodesian government in 1926 proclaimed 224 000 acres of land of *Matopo*.<sup>17</sup> It was for the purposes of National Parks and Game reserves. By 1940 people living in the hills seemed to be a threat to the environment.

## **Impact of Christian culture on religious beliefs and practises**

The Mwali cult was not spared from criticism by the missionaries and colonialist. The Mwali cult was central religion of Africans particular the Nyubi, Kalanga, Sotho, Venda and later the Ndebele. It was important for the people under Chief Malaba due to their geographical location. The area is in region 5 hence, rain was important for socio-economic development. However, the coming of missionaries and the yoke of colonialism impacted negatively on African societies. They undermined and despised the African traditional religion, practises and beliefs. When the Jesuit missionaries entered Matopo, they were tasked to bring Christian culture into unredeemed and primitive nature.<sup>18</sup> According to their perspectives, they wanted to free Africans from the abject reliance on it thus, Njelele. They further on termed the High God oracular cult as abysmal God.<sup>19</sup> N Bhebe and T O Ranger quoted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni states that, missionaries claimed to be liberating African men and women so that they could realize that God had given them control over nature and they owed no obedience to their ancestors but were themselves individually accountable before God.<sup>20</sup> The western religion was forced on African societies it was not a matter of choice but forced initiation to western norms and values. However, one aspect of African culture that strongly defended jealously was their religious beliefs. The Kalanga men were not pleased by the way missionaries perceived their traditional customs and practices which were often referred to as pagan and barbaric.<sup>21</sup> As a result, one Kalanga man procured his wife's clothes which she had been given by the missionaries and scorched them. On the other hand, Mazarire argues otherwise that, the "Hole" class were friendly to western culture through translations of the bible and mission education.<sup>22</sup>

On the contrary, tenela - picking of bones has continued to be practised in the colonial period and even to present day's society in the area under research. The community met at an open space, later went to the bush. The practise was closely associated with Njelele.<sup>23</sup> The custom was done under the belief that rain won't fall on a dirty environment and when the inkosana thus, lightning strikes livestock or a tree. It was thought that, the inkosana would leave seeds for the same incident to occur. For this reason, the picking of dead animal bones, burning of trees struck by lightning and livestock will cleanse the area and prevent such cases. Nyathi termed the practise the cleaning or the sweeping of the ground.<sup>24</sup> Sibanda further supports the argument that,

When we're growing up we never witnessed such incidents were by people, trees and livestock were struck and killed by lightning. We could stay under a tree, herding cattle whilst it was raining however, same cannot be altered in modern day rural societies. Civilization has killed our customs and values hence, we are being punished by our ancestors.<sup>25</sup>

Closely associated with the custom, elderly women would also perform their own ritual known as amadaka. Women would go into the bush in a sacred area and dance to appease ancestors and ask for rain. Men were not allowed and at a particular age, a woman was be allowed to partake in the dance ceremony. Christianity really affected our social lives; particular our beliefs although nowadays in a close examination it is now mixed Christianity with elements of traditional beliefs one correspondent mentioned.<sup>26</sup> The communities were unenthusiastic to this practise although, it has surpassed several generations. Such norms and values have been affected by the introduction of civilization and Christianity. Nyathi concludes that, instead of following our traditions people opt to pray for rain, our norms have faded away with the introduction of western culture.<sup>27</sup> The coming of colonialism had a bearing and the co-existence continued to negate beliefs, norms and values of the people as western culture continue to



dominate in our societies. This is evidenced by a remark made by a converted Christian Maphosa that, in partaking in such customs is like doing community service.<sup>28</sup>

The belief in ancestral spirits and in the Mwali cult was principal as a religious activity among the Malaba people. Particular people in the community were liable for upholding such customs. However, Hleza points that,

The co-existence has seen Christianity influence dominates in our communities and one classical and clear example, in our funerals and weddings the priests from churches are given the platform in these ceremonies whether one is a Christian or adept of traditional beliefs it does not matter.<sup>29</sup>

People assumed and still believe that after the death of a person their spirit will continue living. In terms of Christianity, the spirit lives the body of the deceased and wanders in the realm for the second coming of Jesus. Moyo postulates that, amadlozi were powerful and they took an active interest in the well-being of the living relatives and descendants.<sup>30</sup> They afforded protection to the living against misfortunes and controlled good fortunes. On one scenario a cow (ukhulu) was chosen, worshipped and given a name. Depending on the leader of the family whether male or female the cow was chosen according to sex and the cow was given a set of commandment and installed.<sup>31</sup> The rites were usually done between July and September. The rites of cleansing and umbuyiso were important in the society. It was key that soon after dead a ritual was performed to cleanse the living relatives. A cow or ox was sacrificed and a priest prayed to the spirits. Umbuyiso was not done for someone who did not leave children, to someone who had committed suicide and to one deemed a witch or wizard.<sup>32</sup> The reason for denying witch craft was based on the belief that the evil influence would disseminate among the children.<sup>33</sup> In contact with missionaries, the Kalanga responded to missionary enterprise in a complicated way. They exhibited stubborn resistance to Christian influences to an extent of exercising violence on converts and accused them of witchcraft.<sup>34</sup> It was the identical strategy used by the Ndebele chiefs who labelled converts as witchcrafts.

Igalufu was a custom analogous to umbuyiso. In an attempt to show the difference, Ndlovu is of the opinion that, it was a ceremony of sending away the spirits of the dead and was a common custom among the Kalanga.<sup>35</sup> Maphosa saw it as a custom of ukuchitha impahla.<sup>36</sup> The word is joined liga meant dropping and lufu on the other hand meant death. The main reason behind the custom was to liberate one from the load or burden of death.<sup>37</sup> Ndlovu also argues that, Christianity has to consider the concept of life after death and explore the possibility of acculturating igalufu and umbuyiso in a wider sense.<sup>38</sup> Such customs of umbuyiso and igalufu were problematic to Christian faith and were demonised by the missionaries.

The appeasing of ancestral spirits is no longer a common practise. Most importantly, umbuyiso and ukuthethela were by nature family oriented. This has declined since the arrival of the whites. Chief Malaba ascertains that, blood was the main food for the ancestors although, the Malaba were identified to be herbalist.<sup>39</sup> A certain place was identified for ukuthethela. Headman Ndlovu asserts that, ingalani yomthethelo was a place where the leading member of the family performed rituals for appeasing the ancestral spirit.<sup>40</sup> Though, a few people now follow the practises, most members of families are reluctant and tend to overlook ukuthethela. In appeasing the ancestors for rainmaking certain rituals were performed, beer brewed and produce from the field was sent to Njelele for thanksgiving.<sup>41</sup> In case of the Sasani, Sigangatsha, Halawubha, Malundi, Tshelanyemba village the people who are responsible rainmaking are people of Ncube and Moyo descent. However, during the colonial rule people were no longer active participate asking for rain due to western influences.

The co-existence of both religions has compromised the traditional beliefs, norms and values. Ukuzila was a common practise and it was evidenced by affected member of the family by wearing a black or blue mourning cloth. Leaders of the community in case a family member passed on, bazila ngenhliziyo thus, mourned by heart. Initial it took a year however, after the realization of many deaths ukuzila has been compromised people do it for 3-6 months.<sup>42</sup> Ukuzila was not only practised when a funeral occurred. However, in case of people under Malaba jurisdiction when the moon is “dead”, lightning strikes a tree or hail storms occurred people observed the following day by not entering the field. However, with the coming of Christianity and civilisation has seen people overlooking such customs. Wednesday according to traditional religion is a day that has been set aside for people not to plough or enter in the field. Ranger states that, the Chisi was a practise directly linked with the Njelele beliefs.<sup>43</sup> If anyone breaks the veto, even today people are punished or sent to the chief. Traditional religion and Christianity have clashed earnestly. The Bantu Mirror December 27, 1958 quoted by Nyathi, carried a report that shrine messenger stated that Wednesday should be observed as a day which prayers directed to gods of rain.<sup>44</sup> The introduction of Christian culture has meant that most of the villagers in Matabeleland to observe both Wednesdays and Sundays.

In case of iNsiza, Wednesday was also observed because it was assumed that the goddess of Matopo hills had ordered them not to plough or cultivate on Wednesday. Subsequently, they would offend the gods as a result she will not send rain. Some chiefs had made it a rule. However, Mhlanga declared that it was against the ten commandment and uneducated chiefs are a danger to African community because they do not know how to read the bible. They is one God/Jehova not Ngwali.<sup>45</sup>

As a result, losing two days of economic production is disastrous. It shows that both Christianity and traditional religion co-existence has had negative impact economically.

Most important, custom observed by both men and women were for an individual to visit the Njelele shrine to have slept with someone. It was a serious offence and it was accompanied by a punishable heavy fine. The spirits would accuse the offender as a prostitute.<sup>46</sup> Equally important, one could be fined a cow and when a person failed to obey orders not to kill a klipspringer-igogo.<sup>47</sup> The offender was summoned to the shrine and the mediums were given powers to trial and fine the culprit. However, the cow was kept by the individual and if the cow dies, the offender was supposed to report the matter. For this particular custom, it difficult to tell how the degree co-existence has affected it.

Throughout African societies men were known for having many wives. Polygamy was a common feature. Prominent leaders in Malaba jurisdiction like Sigangatsha and Ntumasi had five and fifteen wives respectively.<sup>48</sup> When the Missionaries came to Matabeleland they felt to appreciate the practise. Polygamy had been practised since time immemorial and it was at the heart of most African societies. With no reasonable doubt, Christian missionaries were leading western cultural brokers who were later followed by the colonialists.<sup>49</sup> Both institutions worked hand in hand demonising African culture. Polygamy was regarded as evil that the people had to forsake it if they were to worship God. As a result, this was bound to create confusion among societies which most of the marriages were polygamous, leading to possibility of divorces.<sup>50</sup> However, missionaries were believed to be too radical to be accepted. They thought it would be easy to convert women as they thought they were liberating them from the yoke of polygamous marriages that deprived them their rights. Missionaries persuaded the colonial government to reform African marriages law. Although, the administration was reluctant, through the Native Marriage Ordinance 1901 and the Native Tax Ordinance 1904 which discouraged kunzwarira.<sup>51</sup> It deemed girls their natural right and freedom to choose their husband. Taxing the polygamist, made economic sense because colonialist wanted to maximise

profit in the mining sector at all cost. They wanted full attention of men in the mining of mineral.

The practise of *nholo we mwizana* had survived long period of time. It was a Kalanga cultural practise, were approval by the family took the form of the father in law having sexual intercourse with the daughter in law.<sup>52</sup> It was again when a girl was preferred a person who to marry by the family. The relationship was engaged on the first night following the arrival of the daughter in law. The practise was widely accepted by the communities and it served the initiation into the family. Bhutshe quoted by Nyathi argues that, the practise was not virginity testing and if the daughter in law's had already lost of virginity was not a stigma.<sup>53</sup> Hence, with or without virginity the daughter in law would partake *nholo we mwizana*. However, other Kalanga groups such as the Lilima regarded as a taboo. Like many African practises *nholo we mwizana* also fell into disuse under the onslaught of Christianity and modernisation.<sup>54</sup> Pockets of resistance still exist until to date.

## **Conclusion**

The co-existence of western and African culture has no doubt comprised congruence on African societies. The conflict that has arise due to co-existence is mild and a not like the ones in the Middle East although, clashes are evidenced. The change of behaviours towards traditional beliefs and practises have been informed by the influence of western culture. The missionaries and colonialist thought it was going to be easy to convert the Nyubi, Kalanga and the Venda who were incorporated into Ndebele state under caste system. Surprisingly, they did not favoured Christianity and openly resisted it in the early days of colonialism. These institutions sought to destroy cherished African culture by introducing the Western culture and Christianity under the guise of Civilization. The discussed influence and effects of Western culture, it is clear that in most of the cases brute force was used for Africans to embrace Christianity and the Legislation that was passed by the colonial state. One has to also question the Civilization synopsis in explaining the activities of the colonialist and the missionaries on African soil. All in all, with no reasonable doubt a number of contributing factors has informed people to despise and overlook the beliefs. These include element of colonization at large.

## End notes

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with S Nyathi, Kraal head, Mazwi Village, 13 February 2018.

<sup>2</sup> L Vail, *Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History*, in E Msindo, “Remaking Ndebele and Kalanga, Language and Ethnicity in Matabeleland 1860-1960”, MPhil, Cambridge University, 2002, p.9.

<sup>3</sup> S J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Dynamics of Democracy and Human Rights among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, 1818-1934”, DPhil, University of Zimbabwe, 2003, p.187.

<sup>4</sup> I G Cockcroft, “The Mlimo cult”, *NADA*, Vol 10, 1972, p.84.

<sup>5</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo’s Hill of Zimbabwe*, Harare, Baobab Books, 1999, p.45.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.45.

<sup>7</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 8, Interview with Chief Manguba, Ntoli, 9 December 1981, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo’s Hill of Zimbabwe*, p.52.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.61.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.52.

<sup>11</sup> N Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859 -1924*, London, Longman, 1979, p.120.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.122.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp.123-124.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.261.

<sup>15</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo’s Hill of Zimbabwe*, p.53.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.53.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.62.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>20</sup> N Bhebe and T O Ranger, *The Historical Dimensions of Democracy and Human Rights*, in S J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Dynamics of Democracy and Human Rights Among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, 1818-1934”, DPhil, University of Zimbabwe, 2003, p.279.

<sup>21</sup> C J M Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe*, in T Dube, “Shifting Identities and Transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, 1946-2005”, p.67.

<sup>22</sup> G C Mazarire, “Who are the Ndebele and the Kalanga in Zimbabwe”, Paper Prepared for Konrad Adnuer Foundation Project, November 2003, p.9.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with P Ncube, Villager, Mazwi Village, 25 February 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with S Nyathi, Kraal head, Mazwi Village, 13 February 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with N Sibanda, Resident, Mpopoma, 22 December 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with S Nyathi.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with O Maphosa, Villager, Bhebe Village, 27 February 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with E S K Hleza, School Head, Tshelanyemba High School, 14 February 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with R Moyo, Villager, Toloki, 10 February 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with S Nyathi.

<sup>32</sup> I Ndlovu, *Culture and Christianity: Death and burial among the Kalanga and the Ndebele today*, Plumtree, Ilizwi Publication, 2013, p.123.

<sup>33</sup> P Nyathi, *Traditional Ceremonies of the AmaNdebele*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 2001, p.134.

<sup>34</sup> N Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859 -1924*, p.119.

<sup>35</sup> I Ndlovu, *Culture and Christianity: Death and burial among the Kalanga and the Ndebele today*, p.119.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with O Maphosa, Villager, Mazwi Village, 27 February 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 16, Interview with Chief J N Malaba and G Dube, Kezi, 22 November 1984, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with E Ndlovu, Headman, Sigangatsha Village, 15 February 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo's Hill of Zimbabwe*, p.24.

<sup>44</sup> P Nyathi, *Zimbabwe Cultural Heritage*, p.124.

<sup>45</sup> T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks Nature, Culture and History in the Matopo's Hill of Zimbabwe*, p.224.

<sup>46</sup> NAZ, Bulawayo Oral History 10, Interview with B M Ndlovu, Plumtree, 9 December 1981, p.15.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> S J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Dynamics of Democracy and Human Rights among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, 1818-1934", p.171.

<sup>50</sup> E Msindo, "Remaking Ndebele and Kalanga, Language and Ethnicity in Matabeleland 1860-1960", MPhil, Cambridge University, 2002, p.55.

<sup>51</sup> N Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859 -1924*, p.112.

<sup>52</sup> P Nyathi, *Zimbabwe Cultural Heritage*, Bulawayo, Amabooks Publishers, 2005, p.118.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.119.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p.121.

## Conclusion

The research discussed a number of aspects. It looked at the origins of the Malaba and their history. The research argues that, the history of the Malaba has been neglected. The Malaba were known for charms and were witch doctors of Ndebele kings both Mzilikazi and Lobengula. The religious beliefs and practises amongst the Malaba was also affected during colonial period. The whites perceived and misjudged African Traditional Religion. People worshipped God as a spirit and whom they interceded through their ancestors. There were minimal activities pertaining traditional practices in the Malaba jurisdiction and with no doubt their culture has accommodated the Western norms in a substantial way. The research concluded that, conflict has aroused due to co-existence is not the same as evidenced in the Islamic world and in some cases there has been consensus in working together as a community. In this regard, the Christian culture has continued to dominate in African societies. As a result, customs, norms, values and beliefs has been compromised to accommodate external cultures particular Western culture that has slew the religious beliefs associated with our ancestors. The beliefs and practices have tended to have faded away with the coming of colonization. However, in some instance other practices especially that a family oriented clashes over inkezo can also affect traditional norms and values. This has nothing to do with co-existence of both religions. The colonial conditions favoured cultural hybridity and to stipulate that culture is pure after colonization is a-historical. Whenever they are contacts between two different cultures, the outcome is a give and take. Hence, the concept of cultural hybridity. However, depending on the conditions, one tends to dominate the other.

The first chapter traced the history of numerous people with different ethnic background and established how it came about for such magnitude to settle in the area under study. People of different ethnic background have lived in area over long period of time. Depending on each

village under Chief Malaba resides the Nyubi, Kalanga, Sotho, Venda, Ndebele and other ethnic groups. The research learned that in some cases people are mixed within the same village. Though, the Malaba clan holds the title of rulers and Lubimbi were believed to be the custodians of the Mwali cult. Even today the Ncube and Moyo lineage are accorded with rain spirits and have the responsibility over the rain making ceremonies. Precise people were responsible over it not just anyone in the community. On Malaba chieftaincy, the research displayed that prior Mpangana none of the Malaba were chiefs. Their movement from Venda to settle present area was guided by Mwali as suggested by Chief Malaba.

The study focused on the centrality of the Mwali cult as the pillar of traditional practices and beliefs. The rain shrine in Matobo played a significant role in the livelihood of people under Chief Malaba. The geographical proximity of the area informed people to partake in such customs. The research dwelled much on the controversy surrounding the origin of the Mwali cult and highlighted the scholarly view on the matter. However, on the origin of the Njelele, the Venda tradition demonstrated how the Njelele came about. After a consultation of various sources including archival sources, oral tradition and books. Njejema (Lubimbi) is believed to have established the shrine. The high god of the people South-Western Zimbabwe was based in Matopo. It was God of fertility, growth of crops and controlled human production. Most important, the shrine was consulted for rain and Ranger did much research on the history of Matopo and titled one of his books “Voices from the Rocks”. Oral traditions and history affirmed such a claim that voices could be heard. Most of customs aligned with the cult included amadaka, tenela and ukuthethela. Christian culture had tremendously affected such practices and the manner or the magnitude in believing in such has been compromised significantly.

The research tried to show how the coming of colonialism pretentious affected the African culture. The research acknowledged that, not only Christianity had a bearing on African societies but also civilization and modernization during colonial rule. The manner how both religions were introduced in the societies differs in the sense that, the missionaries and the colonial administrators used brute force and whatever means to spread Christian influence. Various laws were passed and trickery was also used as a strategy, despised the Njelele and other religious beliefs and practices related to African norms and values. African religion depended on what a family or lineage believed in. There were both based on the super natural being, element of faith and an analogy of the old Hebraic beliefs and those concerning Mwali. All in all, the whites will always come up with any means to justify the theory of Social Darwinism thus, the superiority of white man race. There is place of African Traditional Religion in modern rural societies.

## **Appendix 1 (a)**

### **Malaba houses/ descendants**

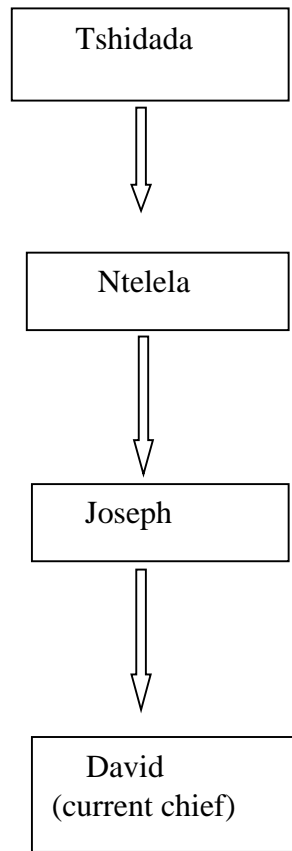
#### **Upper house of Malaba**

- Tategulu Tshidada
- Kuyani (Sungulwani)
- Hhadlezi
- Tshangana
- Velaphi
- Hubhata
- Tshoko
- Tsheha.

#### **Lower House of Malaba**

- Tategulu Mpangana (Nqamu-Ebukhali)
- Tshedu
- Mukhubazi
- Bhule Muruthe

**(b) Malaba Upper house succession**



**(c) Lower house succession**

Mpangana



Hhoba



Mahango



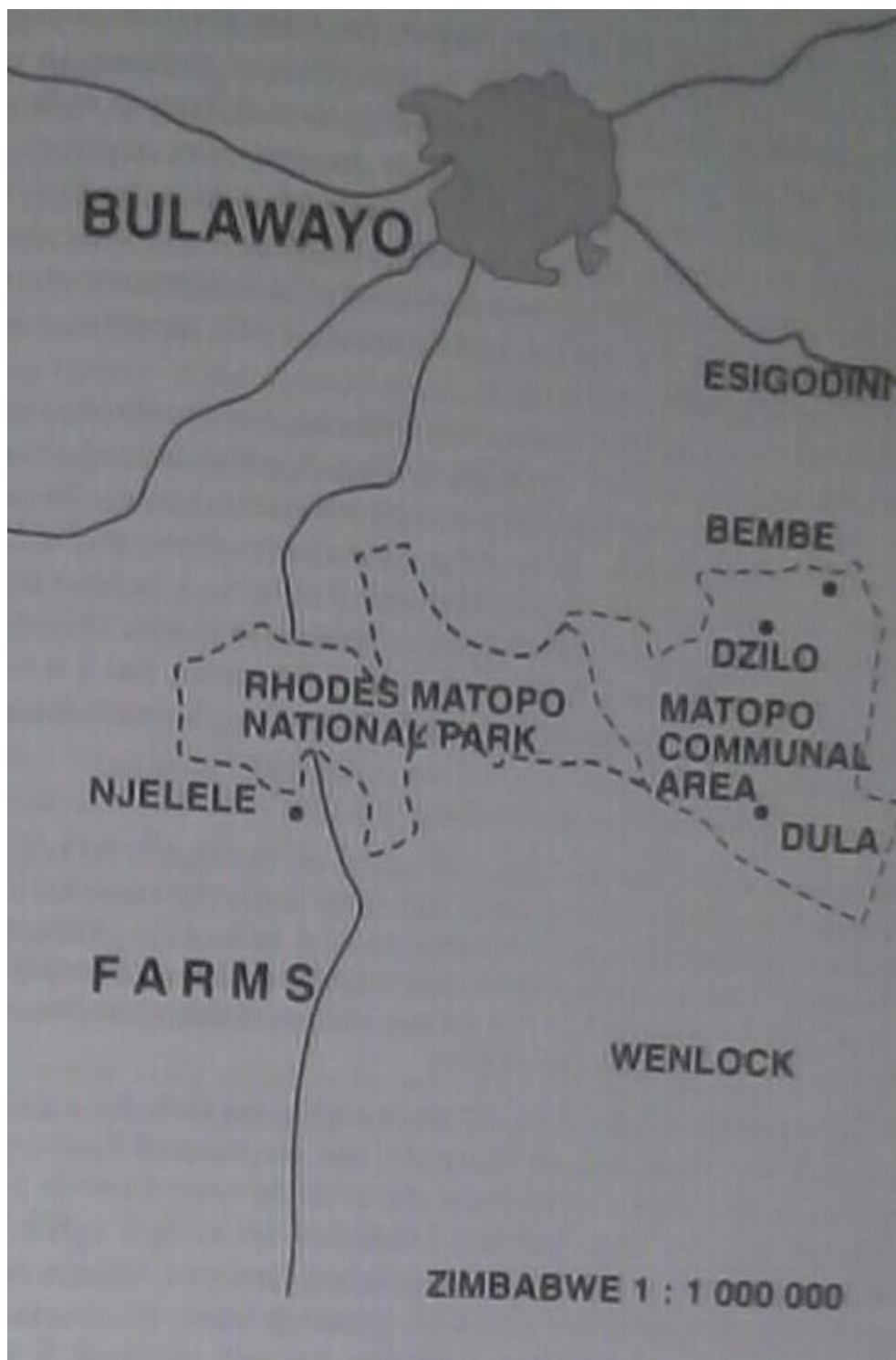
Thela



Mossie

## Appendix 2

### Location of Njelele, Dula and Dzilo



Source; T O Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks*, p. 21



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