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Reading the Swazi reed dance (umhlanga) as a literary traditional performance art

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF *UMHLANGA*

1.0. Introduction

The Dlamini aristocracy has over time demonstrated its resilience in the face of historical and social forces. It demonstrated its resilience when it led the Swazi people to political independence from colonialism. To date Swaziland remains the last surviving absolute monarchy in Africa. At the same time, however, it is presently an unsettled absolutism. The major contributing factors to Swazi monarchial absolutism have been the "systematic process of the creation and resuscitation of tradition" (Richard Levin, 1997). Prominent among the resuscitated traditional activities has been the annual staging of the Reed Dance (*Umhlanga*). This ceremony draws the attention of locals, the media and visitors from all over the world. Subsequently, the contemporary image of the ritual reveals multiple 'voices'. Thus, what triggered my interest into the study of *Umhlanga* was its ever-changing nature and character. In fact, its (*Umhlanga*) multifaceted or multiple-layered nature begs for interrogation and elucidation.

The key aim of this thesis is to analyze *Umhlanga* ritual as a literary traditional performance that is better understood through dramatic spectacle that involves its contexts and settings, song and dance, symbols, performers and audience among others. The announcement about the commencement of the event is made over the national radio (at least 5 times a day) and TV (2 times). Emphasis is on the sequence to be followed by the girls' regiment (*Imbali)* during the 8 *Umhlanga* days (discussed in detail in the next chapter). A close examination of the event's structure and activities highlights the orality and symbolism nature of the event. It is remarkable to note that the event's settings and contexts vary from one scene to the next, articulating the performative aspect of the event. Thus, central to the thesis discussion and analysis is ascertaining how *Umhlanga* components such as songs (its content and context) and symbols articulate pertinent issues to Swazi society such as patriarchy and the ideology of traditionalism, virginity/or chastity, gender and human rights. The study observes/or suggests that *Umhlanga*

provide space and becomes a window through which the Swazi people's socio-economic and political situations can be viewed.

Another important area investigated in *Umhlanga* is the issue of the 'absolutism of the monarch and how it is perceived. It is argued that the staging of the event centers on the ritualisation of the monarch, an endeavor by the ruling Dlamini aristocracy to hold on to power and absolutism. In that regard, *iNgwenyama* together with the *Ndlovukati* are regarded as key custodians of Swazi tradition and culture. They are therefore, expected to 'pass on Swazi tradition' to the Swazi people as their predecessors did. It is for this reason that Ludzidzini, *iNdlovukati's* Royal Residence, represents the relevant settings and contexts for *Umhlanga* as she is its patron.

This study further interrogates how *Umhlanga* contends with modernity and globalization which are pervading the globe. For instance, forming part of the event's audiences are tourists, visitors and international media houses. The ritual space provides for the girls to question and challenge patriarchal roles embedded in Swazi society. This is because *Imbali* take centre stage in the event's performance. Examples drawn from my data illustrate a number of subversions and inversions that disrupt the seamless portrayal (also envisaged by traditionalists and organizers) of the event's structure. Subsequently, the thesis discusses and analysis how liberal ideas that include HIV/AIDS awareness, democracy, modernity and globalization are contested within the ritual's space. Finally, diverse 'voices' within *Umhlanga* space allows us to elucidate its multiple meanings. These include Swazis (pro-*Umhlanga* and anti-ritual groups discussed in Chapter Five).

Therefore my overall aim in this thesis was to investigate how *Umhlanga* can be interpreted as a literary traditional performance, given that its various elements (settings and contexts, song and dance, costume and symbols, performance, etc) neatly fit into presently accepted theoretical strands of (oral and traditional) literary studies. The study also takes into account the prevailing

political, social and economic realities in Swazi society. Therefore, the main objectives of the study are to:

(i) Interrogate the performance of the ceremony with regard to its settings and contexts, songs and dances, symbols and other traditional /oral forms.

(ii) Determine whether or not *Umhlanga* enhance perceptions about the 'Swazi way of life' or 'unique democracy', and the 'absolute monarch' enshrined in the *Tinkhundla* system of rule.

(iii) Investigate how challenges, tensions and contradictions surrounding *Umhlanga* in a rapidly changing society have impacted on Swaziland's socio-cultural, political and economic ways of life.

As already mentioned, prior to its dramatic enactment, announcements are made over radio, TV and print media. This is done in order to alert the entire Swazi nation about its commencement and its convergence at Ludzidzini, the traditional arena for all national (or royal) rituals. The announcement is given a fitting royal aura through the invitation call, *Uyezwa na!* (Do You Hear!), a phrase used only for royal commands. *Umhlanga* announcement (discussed in detail in the next chapter) is particularly directed to the regiment of young girls known as '*Libutfo le Mbali'* where *mbali* means flower, connoting a maiden or a virgin. The announcement continues, '*kuwo onkhe emagumbi lamane emhlaba'* (from all the four regions of the country). Traditionally, girls who had preserved their chastity responded to this royal call. The ceremony itself takes 8 days (fully discussed in the next chapter), whose highlights are the cutting and bringing in of the long reeds (*umhlanga*) and the actual spectacle or dance before their majesties, the nation and visitors. The royal command *Uyezwa na!* (Do you hear!) has other implications for the girls and their parents. According to tradition it is compulsory that parents release the girls or face the wrath of the chiefs.

At the same time, contemporary Swazi society comprises of educated and un-educated Swazis; rural and urban; traditionalists and modernists; conformists and nonconformists and so on. This constitutes one of the challenges to the envisaged viability of this ceremony as a necessary or compulsory forum for the upright upbringing of girls in the country which mainly centers on the

significance of chastity or virginity. Observations revealed that aspects of globalization contribute to the changing nature and character of the event. For instance, the advancement of global networks of communication has made it possible for information about *Umhlanga* to travel very fast to distant parts of the globe. This contradicts government control over information about royalty that are publicly performed such as *Umhlanga* are broadcast by media networks like BBC and American CNN. For instance, the story about the 'abduction' of the then *Liphovela* Zena Mahlangu by the King's emissaries, in 2003, made international headlines. As such, questions about the viability of traditionalism that is linked to the concepts of 'Swazi way of life' or 'Swazi unique democracy' are open to public debate as liberal movements in and outside the country call for the democratization of the economic and political system in the country. Subsequently, the study of *Umhlanga* is linked to the following broad themes:

- The circulation of the hegemonic ideology of traditionalism
- Performance of the monarch's power and patriarchy
- Virginity/ chastity and issues of HIV-AIDS
- Modernity and globalization
- Consumerist cultures
- Human rights, gender and democracy

This study therefore, is broadly framed by the model of oral and traditional literature that views traditional performance as social action-a means of ritual efficacy and re-creation of cultural values. This view seems to be supported in Barber who observes that: "The centralization of oral literature and anthropological exegesis is a thread leading into inner aspects of a society's imaginative life" (1991: 4). This approach enables us to examine *Umhlanga* ritual as a site where the Swazi people both at the communal and individual levels understand and interpret national traditional (or royal) ceremonies. As the oral and traditional literary framework denotes forms that express a complete way of life, it thus allows us to analyze *Umhlanga* songs, symbols, costumes, customs, beliefs, myths, norms and values, all pertinent to the ritual's performance.

Furthermore, the study is informed by the interpretative approach (ethnographic) which views cultural processes as "symbols in action" which can best be interpreted from the actor's point of

view, with particular emphasis on human events, and the social-cultural context. Scholars view ritual activity as an existential, cultural, and social performance in which the actor's world is fused with the prevailing ethos of the given culture (Finnegan 1992; Okpewho 1992; Comaroff 1985). Geertz's views; "In ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined…turn out to be the same world" (1973: 112). This observation can be extended to suggests that the social significance of *Umhlanga* performance as a ritual can best be understood/ or interpreted from the point of view of the subjective experiences and concerns of the Swazi people. The historical background of the Swazi society (discussed in the next section) is necessary as it sheds light to the 'origins' of *Umhlanga.*

1.1. BACKGROUND

According to the Annual Statistics Bulletin of 2006, the population of Swaziland is 1.162 million and about 77% of the people live in rural areas while 23 % reside in urban centers (*Swaziland Review* 2006: 10). At independence in 1968, Swaziland was divided into four regions namely: Hhohho (north), Manzini (middle-west), Lubombo (east) and Shiselweni (South), (see map in Figure 1). The regions of Hhohho and Shiselweni are named after old royal homesteads in these areas. Specifically, Hhohho was named after the capital of King Mswati II (1849-1865) who laid the foundation of the Swazi kingdom and after whom the Swazi people were named as *emaSwati* (Matsebula, 1988). Manzini is the name of Swaziland's largest town, while Lubombo is named after the flat-topped range of mountains that run from north to the Kingdom's eastern border (*Swaziland Discovery,* 2007/2008). Thus the practice of building *tigodlo* or royal residences throughout the country can be traced to King Mswati II. Currently there are six royal residences where national events are hosted (see Figure 1). There are however, a number of royal residences allocated to *eMakhosikati* or the Kings' wives that are not reflected in the map on Figure I.

The history of the Swazi people is traceable to a group of Nguni people known as the Dlamini, who during the mid-eighteenth century, migrated from the present-day Republic of Mozambique to Swaziland. According to historians (Philip Bonner 1983; James Matsebula, 1988; and Carolyn Hamilton, 1990 amongst others) this group of Dlamini people, led by Ngwane I conquered and incorporated some of the hitherto semi-autonomous clans of Zulu and Sotho ancestry they came

across. Prominent amongst these clans were the Maseko, Mamba and Magagula referred to as *emakhandza mbili* (those clans found ahead). In fact, Sobhuza I, also known as Somhlolo, is regarded as the founder of the Ngwane nation in the early nineteenth century (*c*1810-1838) (Carolyn Hamilton, 1990). It was however during the reign of Mswati II (1845-1865) that the kingdom of Swaziland was established as a formidable state as *emakhandza mbili* or 'clans found ahead' were defeated and brought under the political and economic control of the Dlamini dynasty. Also, it was during Mswati II's reign that social differentiation crystallized into two main social classes, the aristocrats and the commoners. This social distinction was and continues to be maintained largely through the centralized distribution of land, tribute, labor, arranged marriages, and the claim to ritual supremacy (Hebron Ndlovu, 1993).

1.1.1.Cosmology of the Swazi

The belief system of the Swazi people is characterized by a belief in a Supreme god known as *Mveli Nqanti* or the First in Existence, ancestral spirits and human agents with supernatural powers. The highly esteemed *Mveli Nqanti* is believed to have created everything (Ndlovu, 1993). He is believed to be the giver of life and is often times equated to the Biblical God, Jehovah. Ancestral spirits are highly esteemed as they are believed to be mediators between the living and *Mveli Nqanti* (Ndlovu, 1993). Swazi kings are in turn endowed with mystical powers and are believed to be representatives of ancestors, the departed kings. It is believed that ancestors communicate through kings, hence, the concept divine kinship described by Feeley-Harnik (1985) as used to denote the mysticism, and a sense of permanence that is attributed to the monarch. The Swazi monarch reinforces the element of divine kingship during *Incwala* sacred ceremony described by Kuper (1947a) as the 'doctoring of the king' and by Matsebula (1983) as a 'sacred national prayer centered on the king'. As such, in Swazi society, the institution of community life is structured through national rituals which are performed at the instruction of the monarchy. *Incwala* and *Umhlanga* are examples of the legacy of royal rituals that have been passed from one king to the next and one generation to the next, the latter discussed in the following section.

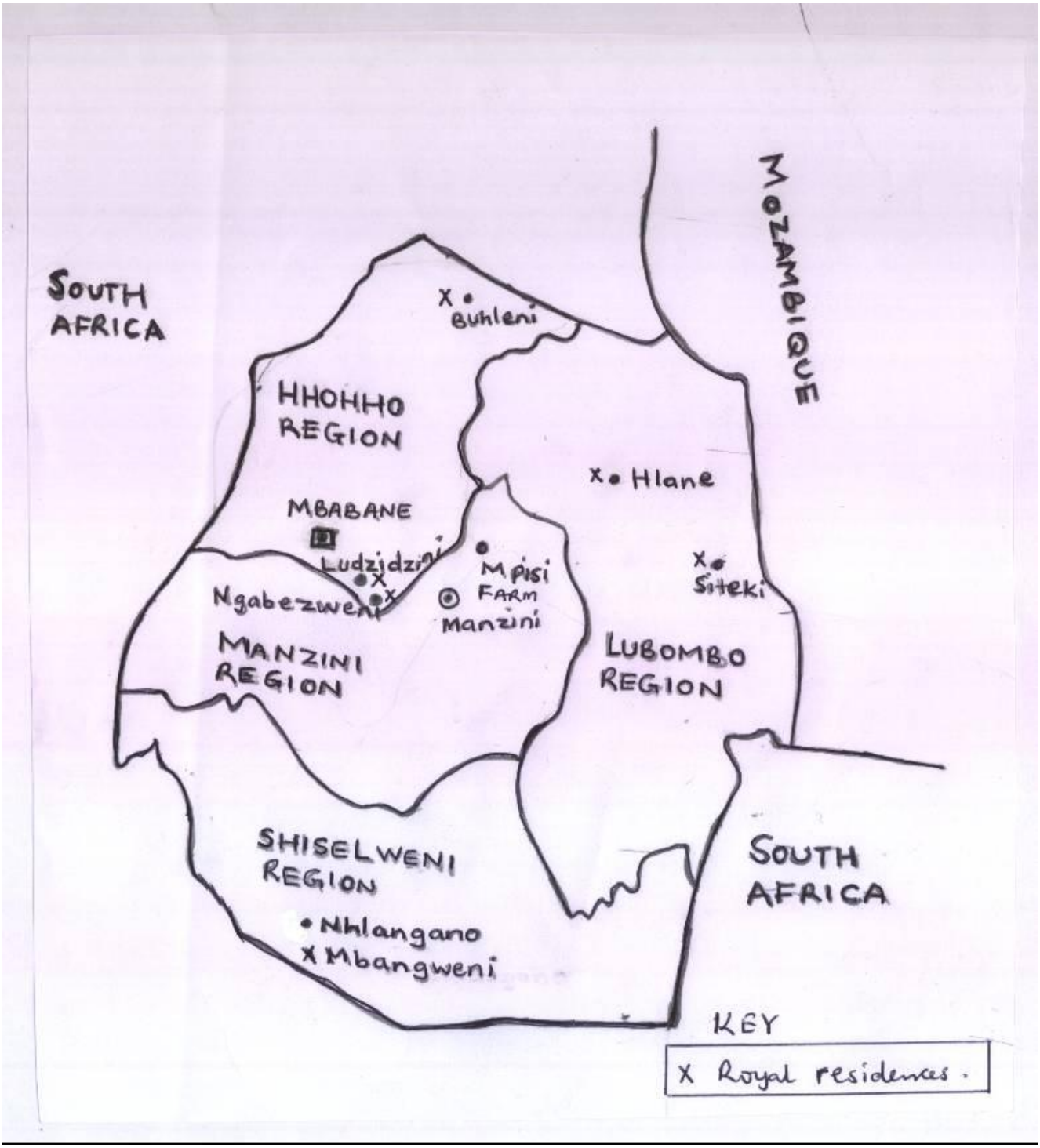


Figure I: Map showing the four regions and Royal Residences

1.1.2.*Umcwasho* and *Umhlanga* Rites

Matsebula (1983: 156) notes that Swazi traditional culture includes "…Swazi language and literature, national ceremonies, the institution of marriage…culture and dress". Responding to an interview question which asked: When did *umcwasho/Umhlanga* begin? Elderly members of society and area chiefs were adamant that Swazi tradition date back to the founding of the Ngwane or Dlamini Kings of the Swazi nation in the eighteenth century (see interview extract in Appendix J (ii)). Respondents explained that each Swazi King during his reign has the responsibility to involve the nation in practicing their tradition and to pass them to the next generation. This observation is also confirmed by historians such as Matsebula (1983), Balam Nyeko (1982); Thembi Vilakati (2005) to mention but a few. For instance Nyeko (1982:10) writes:

> By word of mouth and manner of behavior, what is naturally Swazi has been preserved and passed through generations…thanks to the elderly people who are regarded by Swazi society as custodians of culture, oral history and traditions.

The significance attached to Swazi traditions and customs is highlighted in a seminar which, according to Matsebula (1983: 156), was held at the Luyengo University Campus in 1969 soon after independence. Swaziland's first Prime Minister, Prince Makhosini Dlamini, had this to say:

> Swazi law and custom has always meant one thing to the Swazi-the traits, practices, and activities which constitute the Swazi way of life, or simply the aggregate of those behavioral patterns which distinguish the Swazi from other social groups.

The regimental system for girls is traceable to *umcwasho* rite. Describing the purpose of this rite Matsebula (1983: 123) observed that:

> *Umcwasho*: is a ceremony which takes place every now and then to commemorate special occasions. The term also refers to the wool the girls wear…Once the girls have been ordered to observe *umcwasho* ceremony they are given a set of rules they must comply with for the full two years.

> These include: they may not have sexual intercourse, they may not get pregnant, they may not marry, those who do not have boyfriends may not have one, and they may not be touched by any male. Those who break the rules are fined.

What is remarkable about *umcwasho* rite is that it embodies traditional morality inculcated in girls through regular lessons. Such lessons are described by Kuper (1978: 109) as:

> The Swazi respect for sex, their recognition that the physical desires of the young were natural and healthy, and that fertility was the theme song of the universe; and together with this went the deep belief that because the power of sex was both creative and regenerative, it should be channeled by custom, associated with growth in ways that were good and beneficial to the nation.

Kuper points out the paradox in the conflict between the missionaries' system of education (and their puritanical concepts) that viewed "sex [as] a torment and a temptation [and] it is the devil we must fight" (1978: 109) and the reverence that the Swazis attributed to sex. Kuper (Ibid: 109) further explains how the missionaries' approach to sex presented a major obstacle to Sobhuza II's efforts to introduce a national educational policy in the 1920s and 1930s. The specific content of the policy was expressed through age regiments or *emabutfo* of the boys and *umcwasho* for the girls[1]. Sobhuza II realized that in order to avert moral decline *emabutfo* system should be reinvigorated. By introducing *emabutfo* age system into schools, Sobhuza II was already beginning to formulate the ideas which later became his explicit national policy recorded by Kuper (Ibid: 105) thus:

> Choose the good from the custom of others and join it with the good which is in our own traditions. In order to do this you must know your own customs and start out from there. True education is more than book learning, wisdom is greater than knowledge[2].

[1] It should be noted that *emabutfo* system dates back to Mswati II. Sobhuza II's endeavor to reinvent *emabutfo* system in the 1920s and 1930s was an attempt for the Swazi to hold fast on to their traditions and culture in the face of colonialism.

[2] In most of Sobhuza II's public speeches, some recorded by Information Services which are usually broadcast on Sobhuza II's day, a holiday that marks his birthday, he emphasizes the above policy and goes on to give examples of the danger in abandoning ones' cultural roots in favour of 'alien' practices. Matsebula (1983 and 1978) describes at length the same policy.

It is important to note that Sobhuza II was not against change. Instead he advocated for change that was not disruptive. Therefore, from 1933 boys were not supposed to marry before receiving permission from the King and breach of this code was met with heavy punishment (Kuper, 1978: 108). Similar complementary values were inculcated into the girls, "the wives and mothers of the future". Describing the 1935 *umcwasho* ceremony Kuper (1978: 108) pointed out that:

> […] five of [Sobhuza II's] daughters were mature, it was appropriate that *umcwasho* be held on a national scale. He sent runners to chiefs in the country and in March 1935 teams of maidens, each under a local princess or chief's daughter, arrived at Lobamba. The leading princess was Sobhuza's oldest daughter Betfusile, then 16 years of age, and she was assisted by two girls appointed as her *tindvuna* [female guards].

Remarkable are the similarities between the above ceremony and the 2005 *umcwasho* that was held seven decades later on behalf of *Nkhosatana* Sikhanyiso, King Mswati III's daughter and first born child. Similar to Sobhuza II's daughter princess Betfusile's *umcwasho*, throngs of *Imbali* (girls) led by princess Sikhanyiso together with her siblings, arrived at Ludzidzini (formerly Lobamba) on 26th August 2005[3]. The *Sibhimbi* performed on the following day was succinctly captured in the *Swazi Observer* (September/2005) as a historical and colourful ceremony that will go down in the history of the Swazi people where for the first time His Majesty King Mswati III joined his daughters in *iSibhimbi* dance shown in the picture on Plate II.

Richard Patricks (2006) observes that *Umhlanga* ceremony for the girls emanates from *umcwasho* custom. Patricks notes:

> Today's Reed Dance is not an ancient ceremony, but developed out of the old '*umcwasho'* custom…After a number of years, when the girls had reached a marriageable age, they would perform labour service for the Queen Mother, ending with dancing and feasting.

[3] There were four *umcwasho* celebrations held during Sobhuza II's reign. The first was in 1935 when his eldest daughter Betfusile reached puberty and the second was in 1947 in honour of the Swazi soldiers who returned from the Second World War. The third was to celebrate the coming of independence in 1969. The last one was in 1982, in honour of King Sobhuza's Diamond Jubilee. The girls wore specially made wool ornaments as their insignia or badge to show publicly that they were in *umcwasho* season.

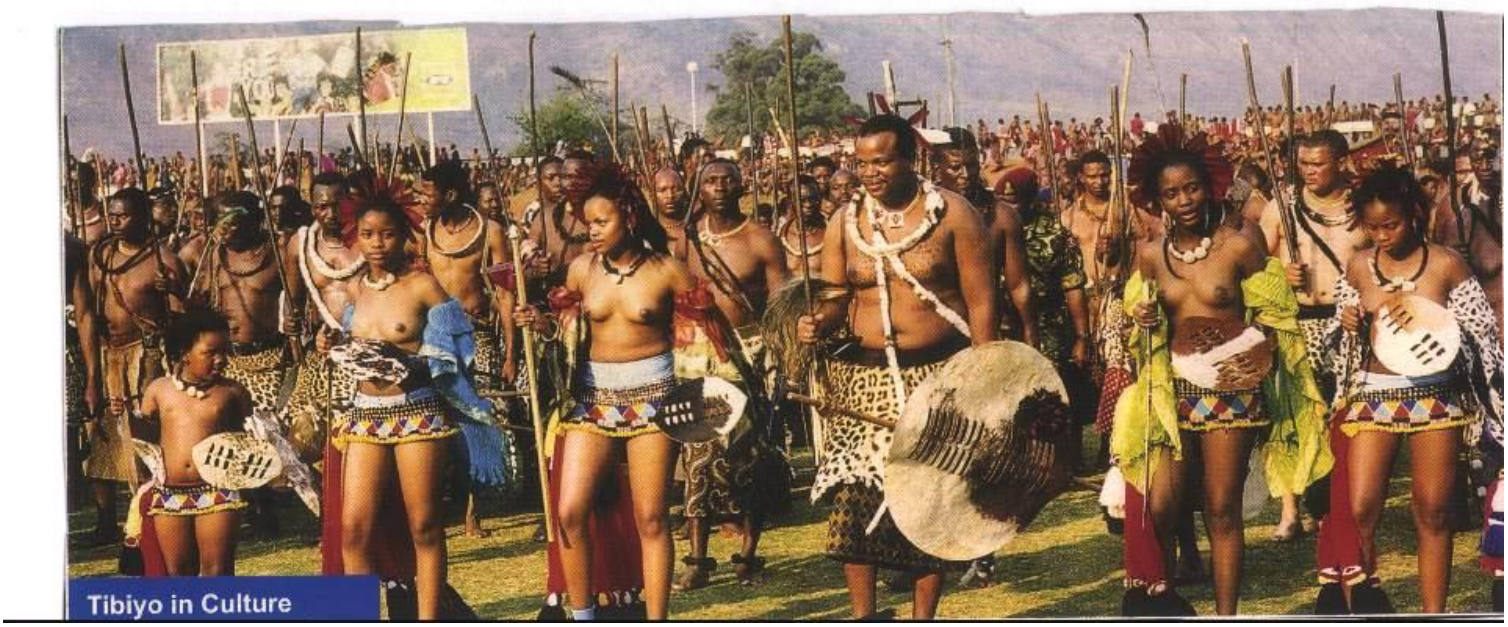


Plate II: King Mswati III dancing his first *Sibhimbhi* with his daughters on 27th August 2005. (Photograph from *The Swazi Observer*).

The *umcwasho, Sibhimbi* and *Umhlanga* ceremonies involve Swazi concepts that pertain to the upright upbringing of girls wherein moral behavioural and value patterns are instilled[4]. The major difference between the girls (*Imbali*) *Umhlanga* and women (*Lutsango*) reed dance is that the cutting of reeds by girls not only marks their loyalty to the royal order but is a celebration of their chastity. Matsebula (1983:122) describes the girls' *Umhlanga* as: "A special ceremony performed by girls who have never had a child, with the purpose of paying special homage to the Queen Mother". The purpose of the cutting of reeds by married and unmarried women is to perform tribute labour showing loyalty to the *Ngwenyama* and *Ndlovukati.* It can also be interpreted as a strategy by royalty to strengthen its stronghold on the political system as *Lutsango* is a regimental name given to women who participate in the royal duties. Again, *Lutsango* reed dance which takes four days is led by the King's wives or *eMakhosikati.*

It should further be noted that the use of reeds to construct *emaguma* or windbreakers around the *Ndlovukati*'s huts is an old tradition. The custom of using reeds in the construction of

[4]In July, prior to *Umhlanga* for *Imbali* there is Umhlanga for *Lutsango* regiment (made up of married women).

windbreakers around the home had been practiced long before the invention of barbed wire and corrugated fence.

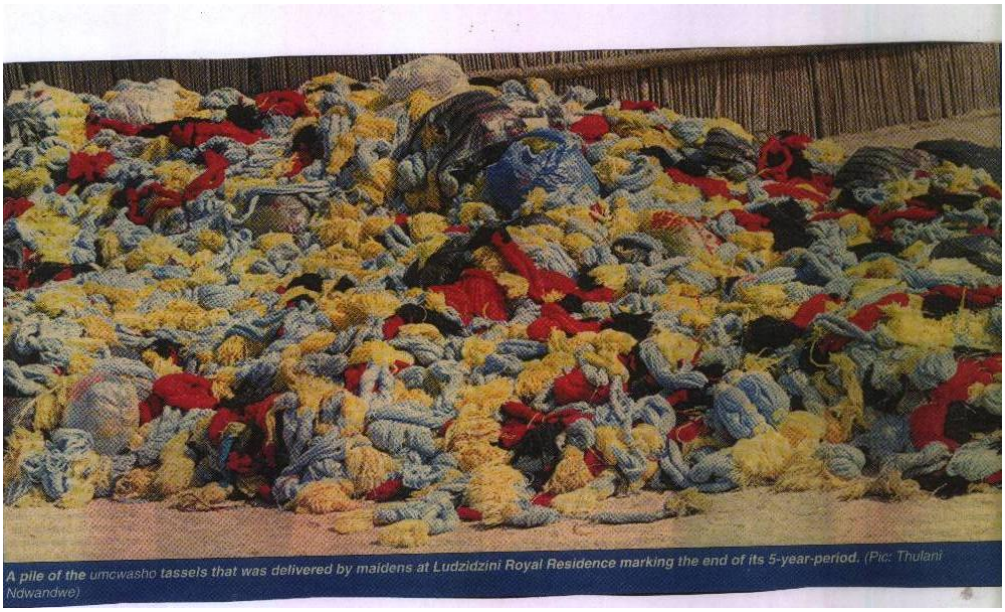


Plate III: *umcwasho* discarded by Imbali regiment at Ludzidzini on 26 August 2005

While *Umhlanga* is primarily regarded as a ceremony inculcating moral values, it is also, as Patricks (2006) pointed out, a labour service undertaken in a festive atmosphere. This observation is confirmed in Kuper's (1978: 108) assertion that:

> [*Umhlanga*] was sporadically and sometimes locally performed…the first task was to gather wood and subsequently to cut the long reeds required for fencing, and present them to *iNdlovukazi*. The girls obviously enjoyed it all. It was great fun to sing and dance and wear short gay costumes [*indlamu*] that showed off their beauty, and to be admired for their performance. The tunes were catchy, the words pointed, and the movements subtle and a few songs are still remembered.

It is worth mentioning however that, although during its production *Umhlanga* generates multiple texts, it has nevertheless retained a number of its traditional and ritualistic art forms as illustrated in the thesis. It can be argued that this is possible as the Dlamini aristocracy, especially, during the reign of Sobhuza II, reinvented traditional political mechanisms of ruling

the Swazi people. Prominent in the political machinery of rule is *Tinkhundla* system of government discussed in detail in the following section.



Plate IV: *Imbali* after discarding and cleansing in the Great Usuthu River on 27th August 2005 (picture from *The Swazi Observer* 28th August 2005)

1.1.3.*Tinkhundla* System of Rule

This section traces the reinvention and construction of Swazi rituals to King Sobhuza II. It is argued that through his suspension of the Westminster Independence Constitution of 1968, left behind by the British colonial masters and replaced it with *Tinkhundla* system of rule currently in place in the country, Sobhuza was attempting to reinvent the ideology of traditionalism. Caught between the desire to revive the hegemony of the Dlamini ruling household and foreign or western political dispensations such as democracy and liberalism, Sobhuza II decided to reinvent *Tinkhundla* system established by Mswati II during his nation building project (Levin, 1997). Prominent in *Tinkhundla* system of rule is the support and promotion of rituals through *emabutfo* system.

The concept 'Swazi tradition' became the legitimizing basis of King Sobhuza II's actions of 12th April 1973. The 1968 Independence Constitution was replaced by an April 1973 legislation referred to as the "*Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza* II, 12.04.1973". The King's explanation for revoking the Independence Constitution was:

> The constitution has permitted the imposition into our country of highly undesirable political practices, alien and incompatible with the way of life of our society, and designed to disrupt and destroy our own peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic method of political activity: increasingly this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society (Levin, 1997: 163)

King Sobhuza II then went on to ban political parties, at the same time dissolving parliament. Arguing that opposition was new in Swaziland, and had been inherited from the British Colonial Administration, the King swiftly put in place *Tinkhundla* system of rule whose concept of 'Swazi democracy' was outlined by Justice Minister Polycarp Dlamini in July 1974 in this manner:

> We have the Swazi National Council whose members include all adult males and females in the country. At the head of this is the *Ngwenyama* and *Ndlovukati* at which everyone is free to speak his [sic] mind. Then below is *Tinkhundla* where you have a regional authority over a number of areas, Chief's areas, the average being six to ten chiefs and being members of that *inkundla* each chief brings his own committee who constitute *inkundla* council. Below it you have the Chief's council which is constituted by members who represent the area committee. In the area committee you have *indvuna* who presides over a meeting of a number of families within his jurisdiction and those families, since they cannot attend, send their representatives (Levin, 1997: 104).

Following its establishment, *Tinkhundla* became the vehicles for the election of *Imbokodvo National Party* candidates who were mainly members of the royal family. To further show that *Tinkhundla* favoured and still favours the ideology of the royal ruling government, opposition parties were and are still precluded from addressing *Tinkhundla* and on the whole were debarred from campaigning in the country.

Swaziland is an independent state whose full autonomy of *Tinkhundla* system of rule falls under the *Ngwenyama* who is also the Head of State. As such, power is vested in *the Ngwenyama* who

appoints the Prime Minister and consults with the Cabinet which is headed by the Prime Minister (see Appendix A)[5]. Through *Tinkhundla* system, chiefs are appointed as officials who act as middle managers between the *Ngwenyama* and his subjects. The system seems to work well especially in the rural areas where area chiefs are given autonomous power over their areas of jurisdiction. It is important to note how the monarch adopted the former colonial ruler's system of Indirect Rule promulgated by Frederick Lugard[6] in African colonies. Thus, by eliminating political parties Sobhuza II re-asserted pre-colonial authority and power, expressed through royal rituals. Following the re-introduction of *Tinkhundla* system of rule after Independence, King Sobhuza II (1921-1982) systematically (re)invented rituals as a strategy to hold on to the socio-economic and political lives of the Swazi people.

Consequently, Mswati III, who ascended the throne in 1986 at the age of 18 stated in his inauguration speech that he would follow the path paved by his father. The speech is recorded by Zodwa Ginindza (1988: 24) as follows:

> […] although my experience is short and I am new in this task, I have, in my predecessors, an example I can follow with certainty and confidence. I shall endeavor to work as my father did throughout his reign, to advance unity, happiness and prosperity of my people.

Not only did Sobhuza II re-invent *Tinkhundla* system of rule but he also transferred economic power to the royal household. Levin (1997: 21) argues that Tibiyo was founded by King Sobhuza II through re-investment of land and mineral rights vested in the name of King Sobhuza II "in trust of the nation". The name Tibiyo Taka Ngwane can be translated to mean 'a security device put around the Swazi nation'. In this sense, Tibiyo refers to the country's economic security. Subsequently, Tibiyo management embarked on an exercise and strategy of joint investment with foreign companies and the acquisition of major companies.

[5] The Upper House (Senate) comprises 30 Senators of whom 20 are appointed by the King and 10 are elected by members of the public from the Lower House. The House of Assembly is made up of the speaker, Deputy Speaker and 53 other members. The Upper House also includes the President of the Senate and his Deputy.

[6] Frederick Lugard (Google Scholar 14/05/08) reasoned that black Africans were very different from white Europeans. Therefore, natives should act as a sort of middle manager in colonial governance. This would avoid revolt because, as Lugard believed, the people of Africa would be more likely to follow someone who looked like them, spoke their languages, and shared their customs. The technique was employed successfully by European colonial leaders.

Levin (1997) adds that when it became evident that more finance would be required, loan arrangements with potential foreign investment partners were secured, and negotiations involving United Nations, and Commonwealth, backed legal assistance, led to the clinching of deals with Lonrho, Turner and Newall, and Spa Holdings. The resultant cash flow enabled Tibiyo to enter the business of land purchase and development. Accordingly, by the late 1970s, Tibiyo had spent in the region of 15 million *Emalangeni* (Swazi currency equivalent to the Rand) in purchase of freehold land, thus boosting the percentage of Swazi National Land. Much of this land is used for sugar production and Tibiyo is a major shareholder in the sugar industry upon which the performance of the Swazi economy is largely dependent. Tibiyo is also the largest funder of the traditional ceremonies. Launching Tibiyo Taka Ngwane King Sobhuza II is recorded in Levin (1997: 17) explaining that the purpose of Tibiyo is:

> To preserve in co-operation with such progressive local leadership as is essential to the development of a modern state, the customs and traditional institutions of the Swazi people so as to prevent the disillusionment and instability which has followed from their rapid breakdown in other parts of the world.

Indeed King Mswati III has followed his father's footsteps. For instance, marking the calendar are national holidays and observances, some of which are listed below that were introduced by his father.

- February: the *Ndlovukati'*s marula celebration
- March/April: Good Friday/Easter celebration
- Early July: *Lutsango* (women) Reed Dance
- Late July: *butimba* (men)Royal Hunt
- Late August/early September: *Umhlanga* (girls) Reed Dance
- Late December/early January *lusekwane* (young men or boys') *and Incwala* ceremony.

It shall be shown later in the thesis how the dominant ideology of traditionalism is developed through ritual performances such as *Umhlanga* as a strategy to create political legitimacy and foster solidarity to the monarchy. This is evident in the presence of the King's *imbongi* or praise-

singer(s) who uses this occasion to sing the king's praises (to which members of his *libutfo* or regiment interjects with additional praise phrases). Vail and White argue that praise poetry is a mechanism for dialogue between those who exercise power and those who are subordinate (1991: 191). For instance, part of the content of praise-poetry is meant to recount the genealogy of the Swazi kings, the principal events of their lives and other notable events in the history of the Swazi people. Similarly, part of *Umhlanga* songs are meant to exalt the monarch's power evident in the example of the song entitled *Lelive ngelakho Mswati sebamane bayakubangisa!* or This country is yours Mswati there is no room for rivalry! (discussed in detail in Chapter Four). This study concurs with Vail and White (1991) who view praise songs conveying virtually no messages of criticism and as such: "traditional means of propaganda in the service of a state that overtly espouses 'tradition' in support of a 'traditional' monarchy" (Vail, 1991: 192). The following section is a review of works on the Swazi *Umhlanga* by earlier scholars.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

My literature review on *Umhlanga* revealed that the study of oral tradition in Swaziland originated in the works of a number of American sociologists and anthropologists during the 1930s. Although these earlier scholars on Swazi culture and oral tradition paid attention to the country's *lusekwane and Incwala, Butimba, umcwasho* and *Umhlanga,* royal marriages and religious rituals none of them addressed the question of their relatedness to the literariness and appreciation of African literature, particularly the songs, dances, symbols costumes, contexts and settings. In short, scholarship has been silent on the literariness of Swazi tradition and ritual performances.

Most notably amongst earlier scholars is Hilder Kuper who came to Swaziland in 1934 and worked closely with Sobhuza II. The crux of Kuper's (1947, 1978) analysis was that rituals remained an important unifying factor among the Swazi people. She further observed that the emphasis on royal rituals solidify the monarchy's stronghold on his subjects. In some respects, Kuper's study as a field of social scientific inquiry and research is static and not sensitive to periodic changes. Kuper is not alone in these representations as recent work by Swazi historian James Matsebula (1977) (noted as the first Swazi to write the history of Swaziland), views Swazi

tradition as fundamental in cementing the nation's solidarity. In addition, Lemarchand (1977: 123) describes ritual performance functioning to "keep the memory of a 'unique indigenous Swazi way of life.'" This confirms the observation that rituals like *Umhlanga* were not only regarded as an index of value integration but also as a mechanism for bringing about perceived national solidarity.

In their account of *Umhlanga* tradition, (Mavuso, 1999 and Lemarchand, 1997) concentrate only on the role of the monarchy as the custodian of Swazi tradition (i.e. *Incwala, Umhlanga, Umcwasho, Butimba* Royal Hunt, *Lusekwane*), but fail to interpret the significance of these rituals as oral traditional texts that can be studied to promote the study of (oral) literature. Also, Levin (1991) highlights King Sobhuza II's role in the evolution of Swazi tradition and argues that the propagation of tradition has been central to the maintenance of royal hegemony especially in the sphere of land allocation and control, including the portrayal of the Swazi way of life as superior to western lifestyle and practices. In the same vein, Macmillan (1985) does not make any attempt to interpret *Umhlanga* as oral literature. Instead he discusses the roots of Swazi traditionalism in an attempt to explain the nature of the post-colonial state in Swaziland. Therefore, writings on Swazi tradition have focused mainly on the descriptive part of the ritual noting its significance in Swazi society as a vehicle for social unity.

The problem with the above approaches to the study of Swazi tradition and cultural norms is that they present Swazi culture including *Umhlanga* ritual in consensual and historic terms. It is assumed that, notwithstanding social and historical changes in Swaziland, a traditional value-orientation determines the social behavior of the Swazis. In this regard, *Umhlanga* ritual is not only seen as an index of value integration but also as a mechanism for bringing about perceived national solidarity (Kuper 1986; Sundkler 1976; Kasenene 1987). Such an approach tended to ignore the elements of African oral tradition discernible within *Umhlanga* and other oral and traditional performances. This gap constitutes the core research problem of this study and proposes that there is therefore, a need for a 'thick description' of the role of *Umhlanga* as oral literature. Therefore, this study attempts to implement a sense of change into the study of ritual in Swazi society. This is done following approaches propagated by scholars of oral (and

traditional) African literary (i.e. Ruth Finnegan, 1970; p'Bitek Okot, 1978; Karin Barber, 1987; 1992; Okpewho, 1992; Isabel Hofmeyr).

Scholars of African literature have used a number of terms to describe the subject of oral and traditional literature. These include orature, traditional literature, folk literature and folklore (Finnegan, 1992 and, Okpewho, 1992). Most definitions of oral literature stress on creativity in the use of language. Okpewho notes that the word '*literature'* which is a predominant element is "more commonly used in a restricted sense to refer to creative texts that appeal to our imagination or to our emotion (such as stories, plays and poems)" (1992: 3). I also find Okot p'Bitek's (1978) definition of oral literature useful where he views it as: all utterances whether sung, recited or performed and which use to an appreciable degree the spoken word. He further argues that the quality of most recorded African folktales, especially by the pioneer European students are not true reflections of those societies under study. He points out that these pioneer writers of oral African literature lacked knowledge of the language of the people among whom they worked. They therefore, had to rely on English speaking Africans who wrote down the texts in English. In many cases, these assistants did not have a deep knowledge of English, thus they botched the very difficult task of translating ideas from one cultural expression into another. p'Bitek (1978: xi) questions the authenticity of these early-recorded folktales when he states:

> Again these stories were collected in artificial conditions, such as in the tent of the ethnographer. The storyteller was not surrounded by live, responsive audience, taking up the chorus, laughing and enjoying the jokes. He sat facing a strange man who wrote down something, and not really seeing fun.

In short, in these earlier writings of African oral literature there was no attempt to relate the performed texts to their social context and elucidate their literary significance or describe the circumstances of their performance. The above argument confirms Finnegan's (1970) assertion that European study of oral literature in Africa by this time was characterized by prejudice, ignorance and various theories that saw Africans still in the early stages of evolution. In order to avoid this fallacy this study followed the ethnographic approach (discussed in the methodology

section.

Furthermore, the concept performance is used in the study of *Umhlanga* to refer to the total act as well as the context or environment involved in the delivery of oral issues relating to the use of language and symbols in giving significance to its (*Umhlanga*) meaning. This is again in line with oral literary scholars who are unequivocal that the most basic characteristic of oral literature is the actual performance. Finnegan (1978) argues that an unwritten literary piece cannot be said to have any independent existence without its direct rendition by a singer or speaker. As such, art forms such as song/music and dance depend on repeated performances for their continued existence. Although these oral forms may also exist in written form, they however, only attain their true fulfillment when they are actually performed. Gikandi (1992: 150) supports this position by observing that:

> Language becomes more than the outer shell of the meaning; it is the primary subject of the (text) in the sense that all the key issues that concern society-power, politics, class struggle, the status of women, culture and domination are all reflected and promoted through language. Language in this sense is truly practical consciousness.

Therefore, songs, dance and praise poetry which constitute a major part of *Umhlanga* are analyzed in the thesis as literary 'texts' through which language is used to reveal the interpretation and understanding of *Umhlanga* particularly by the Swazi people. Finnegan (1992) suggests that by paying attention to what is actually being 'transmitted' we begin to understand the mechanisms by which traditional art forms work as texts. The concept transmission is used here in contrast to questions of fixed entities from the past. Instead it is adapted to interpret processes of composition and circulation as created and re-created. In order to understand what texts are telling us about society we have to engage with them in a determined attempt to read them according to their own conventions (Barber 1987: 34). Barber's approach is relevant to the present study whose main thrust is to read *Umhlanga* according to its historical context, settings and conventions. This approach is supported in David Cannadine (1985: 162) when he argues:

> For if indeed cultural forms are to be treated as texts, as imaginative works built out of social material, then it is into an investigation of those social materials and of the people who consciously or unaware do the building, that our attention need to be directed, rather than to an intricate and decontextualized analysis of the texts themselves.

Literary scholars further argue that a society cannot be fully understood without its songs and that the detailed way in which the performer enacts the literary product of his art naturally varies from culture to culture. For instance, there are songs associated with birth, marriage, initiation and puberty, funeral and memorial celebrations. Thus, songs constitute part of a people's oral poetry; which is a sub-genre of oral literature. Similarly it hall be seen that the Swazi people's perceptions and relations are expressed in song content and performance. In his study of the poetry of the *Acoli* people in Northern Uganda, p'Bitek (1974: vii) notes that going through their songs (poetry) may give the reader a glimpse of what these people think and believe, their moral values, their sense of humor, their fears and joys as presented through songs. This study therefore, further demonstrates (in Chapter Three) that *Umhlanga* is a popular occasion for comment in song in relation to the girls' chastity, in honor of the monarchy, and the nation at large. The annual convergence of *Imbali* at Ludzidzini royal to perform in the event allows us to discuss and analyze the ritualistic character and nature of *Umhlanga* in the next section.

1.2.1. *Umhlanga* as Ritual Performance

The diverse use of the term 'ritual' has made its unequivocal definition elusive. In the past, ritual was strictly associated with action or performance that was addressed to spiritual values and mystical forces. The concept is used in the thesis in the inclusive sense and follows Kertzer's (1988: 8) observation that ritual is not an entity to be discovered; rather ritual is an analytical category that helps us deal with the chaos of human experience and put it into a coherent framework. Ritual is therefore, understood as "symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive" (Kertzer, 1988: 11). Implicit in the concept of 'symbolic behavior' of ritual is a representation of a people's fundamental beliefs, values, and aspirations. This suggestion enables us to view or analyze *Umhlanga* ritual as a multifaceted literary narrative through which diverse elements of Swazi society are constructed and reconstructed. Kertzer (1988: 9) defines ritual in the following terms:

> Ritual action has a form of quality to it. It follows highly structured, standardized sequences and is often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning. Ritual action is repetitive and, therefore, often redundant, but these very factors serve as important means of channeling emotion, guiding cognition, and organizing social groups.

This is relevant to *Umhlanga* ceremony as it is structured around 8 days, take place at specific settings and times that are of symbolic meaning a discussion carried out in detail in Chapter Three. Notions of ritual's role in channelling emotion are evident in song performance a phenomenon again discussed in Chapter Three. The purpose of ritual performance can be further substantiated in Comaroff's (1985: 20) words who note that:

> Every ritual event is a complex, unique occasion created by specific individual action in specific social circumstances and interpreted and reinterpreted by all the actors directly or indirectly involved […] Rituals just like culture have complex meanings that are not fixed and are therefore, to an extent, adaptable to new circumstances despite their repetitiveness nature.

This observation about the non-static nature of rituals is important to note as it places ritual, tradition and culture in more or less the same category. This means ritual performance open space for change and readily incorporates innovative elements. Debating the nature or character of rituals Kertzer's (1988: 14) notes that

> Ritual is a ubiquitous part of modern political life. Through ritual aspiring political leader struggle to assert their rule, incumbent power holder seek to bolster their authority, and revolutionaries try to carve out a new basis of political allegiance. Political figure from leader of a status quo use rites to create political reality for the people around them. Through participation in the rite, the citizen of the modern state identifies with larger political force that can only be seen in symbolic form.

Thus, ritual space opens up to diverse 'voices'. It shall be demonstrated later in the thesis how ritual space is invaded by modernity and globalization ideologies that involve gender, human rights and democracy amongst others. The issue of political leaders who use the ritual space to

legitimize individual positions and relations with the king are part and parcel of ritual performances. For instance amongst the people who join the king in *kudlalisela* dance on the main day of the event are chiefs, princes (*bantfwabenkhosi*), ministers and aspiring politicians all struggling to reaffirm their positions within the status quo (see photograph on Plate VIII).

Rituals are therefore, viewed in this study as dynamic in nature. This view is supported in Kertzer (1988: 9) who argues that people are not just slaves of ritual, or slaves of symbols, they are also molders and creators of ritual. It is because people create and alter ritual that they are such powerful tools of political action. This is in line with studies that view traditional art forms as a dynamic process whereby human beings "make themselves or unmake themselves over the years" (Barber, 1987). This view seems to be supported in Hofmeyr (1993:2) when she says:

> Oral literature is always changing, and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, oral forms in Southern Africa have altered drastically. Any study of oral tradition is obliged to take cognizance of such transformation.

Thus, popular art and oral literary scholars' views such as (Hofmeyr, 1993; Karin Barber 1987 and Finnegan, 1992) are in consensus that traditional art forms are not fixed or bound but are free-flowing in that by their very nature they are ductile, flexible and interactive. Hofmeyr (1993: 6) concurs with Barber saying:

> Barber's insights remain lucid particularly in understanding the prevailing emphasis of much (oral) literary scholarship. In addition Barber's work is extremely useful in introducing a clear sense of socio-cultural, economic and political struggle as key determinants in African oral literature and traditional art forms.

The thesis demonstrates that traditional art forms are capable of change as new elements are easily appropriated and incorporated into the event's performance from start to finish.

In addition, although *Umhlanga* does not aptly fit Stephanie Newell's (1997) definition of 'popular culture'[7] the concepts 'traditional' and 'popular' are closely intertwined. In this regard, popular culture and traditional arts provide a valuable point of entry into questions of power, gender and politics. In the context of *Umhlanga*, there is a thin line between the role of popular culture and traditional culture. This is because both concepts compel attention to articulations of socio-cultural, economic and political changes brought about by the constitutive dynamics of 'the local' versus 'the global'. This can be supported by Barber's (1987: 22) view that "the arts described as traditional are symbolically related with those described as popular in a continuous process of interaction and mutual modification". It can be argued that *Umhlanga* ritual resonates with popular concepts seen in its appropriation of modern elements as well as the attraction it draws for both local and foreign participants. Popular arts' ability to adapt to change is relevant to the study of *Umhlanga.*

Informants revealed that participation of young children in the event is a new phenomenon. This was confirmed in interviews with elder members of society who revealed that "children were not part of *Umhlanga* as they could not undertake the long march to the reed beds" adding that "besides *Umhlanga* was for *tintfombi* (maidens) not children". The informant explained that "nowadays children have become part of the event especially those whose parents can bring them on the main day of the dance" (see Plate V).

Informants revealed in interviews that the increasing number of children who participates in the event helps to promote the attraction of the event. It also prepares the children at an early age to appreciate or know about their tradition.

Arguably, by drawing on traditional art forms and popular culture, the event can be described as a continuous interplay between traditional and modern art forms. Similar to traditional art forms, the way popular arts are produced and consumed is shaped or conditioned by the wider socio-cultural, economic and political context within which they are both performed 'in a given society and historical period'. Also, popular arts' ability to adapt to change is applicable to traditional art

[7] Newell (2001) states that popular arts rejoice in their freedom from the constraints of both elite and traditional systems of conventions, while at the same time exploiting the possibilities of elements abstracted from both.

forms, showing that they are both interpretive concepts. The analysis draws on aspects of popular culture as means of interrogating the linkages between the event's production and consumption as well as socio-cultural, economic and political changes involved.



Plate V: Children participating in the *Umhlanga* (Picture by Mduduzi Mngomezulu)

1.3. METHODOLOGY

In this section I present and discuss the methods and procedures that I followed to address the research theme. These include the sampling frame, research tools, data collection procedures and methods of analysis and interpretations. Issues that pertain to the objectivity of the techniques used to elicit information are addressed. In addition, I discuss the challenges and problems that I encountered in the development and execution of this research. Discussed also are ethical considerations that informed the study and finally the scope and limit of the study. The bulk of data collected for this study come from my interaction and/or consultations with diverse groups of Swazi society. Primary data was gathered mainly through unobtrusive participant observation, interviews and recordings. Secondary data for the study was drawn from the scholarship on Swaziland in the fields of anthropology, history and political science and oral literature. To

further enrich the study and place it in contemporary times, data from the local media was incorporated.

Beginning in 2004 to 2007, I observed *Umhlanga* proceedings at Ludzidzini Royal residence. Prior to taking pictures and recording the event I obtained a permit from the Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services (SBIS) (see Appendix B). I observed details of the context, songs, and persons attending the performance. In addition to the field work data I collected, I made an effort to collect *Umhlanga* songs from performers and unpublished documents from Richard Patricks at the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC) offices. I also listened to recorded *Umhlanga* songs from the local radio station under the programme *Tingoma temhlanga* or songs for *Umhlanga.* My fieldwork benefited greatly from local media reports about the event's proceedings. These include the Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services (SBIS) radio and TV stations as well as the daily newspapers *The Times of Swaziland* (*TTS*) and *The Swazi Observer* (*TSO*) and their week-end sister editions *The Swazi News, The Sunday Times* and *The Week-End Observer*.

It has been already mentioned that the study of *Umhlanga* is informed by the ethnographic approach. This approach allowed me to engage in a meaningful interaction and dialogue with the Swazi community under investigation. I was able to observe and record *Umhlanga* proceedings such as marches to the reeds sites and dancing and singing by *Imbali* at different settings that would have been almost impossible to learn about by using another approach (Finnegan, 1992; Paul Leedy, 2001). Arguably, the ethnographic approach was suitable to the main purpose that the study set out to achieve. This is to interpret and analyze the event's settings and contexts, dance, songs and praise poetry, motifs and symbols, dress code and performances as a basis to arrive at understandings and interpretations of *Umhlanga.*

The natural setting of the *Umhlanga* ritual is Ludzidzini Royal Residence in the Manzini region where i*Ndlovukati* resides. It is here where throngs of girls or *Imbali* from all the four country's regions assemble before departing to cut the reeds (see map in Figure I). The two important sites for *Umhlanga* is Mpisi Farm (also shown in the map in Figure I) where older girls of about 15-24 years old walk to fetch the reeds. Younger girls between the ages 9-14 years walk to

Bhamusakhe which is nearer Ludzidzini Royal residence. Interviews were carried out on selected respondents in order to gather information on important aspects of *Umhlanga.* The sample identified turned out to be made up of people of different socio-economic statuses, religion, sex, age, education (formal and non-formal) and trade. In-depth interviews and participant observation were used as primary texts. The chiefs and other traditionalists' responses are vital in the study as they may help clarify the phenomenon of *Umhlanga* as presented through the oral tradition of the Swazi people.

The sampling frame I used is a combination of personal inquiry and self-selection techniques. I sought out informants I knew, those who participate and those who do not participate in the event. I deliberately chose teachers since they form a group of easily accessible opinion shapers especially in the rural areas. I sought out information from the young maidens who participate in *Umhlanga.* In-depth interviews were conducted with area chiefs in 2005 (see Appendix J (i) and (ii)); individuals from four diverse groups of Swazi society (see Appendix N); *Imbali* participants and non-participants (see Appendix M), and a focus group discussions.

1.3.1. Interviews

Unstructured questions were used throughout interviews to lead discussions or conversations whose intentions were to cover a range of questions concerning the participants' experiences: the expectations, fears, problems, joys and insights they encounter at the different settings of *Umhlanga*. According to Leedy (2001: 19) the unstructured interview:

> […] has the advantage of enabling the interviewee as well as the interviewer to test the limits of the respondents' knowledge. They encourage co-operation and help establish rapport.

Another advantage of the unstructured interview is its face-to-face nature that allows direct interaction between researcher and respondent.

An interview with a focus group interview was group (made up of school teachers who belonged t was audio-recorded and then the discussions transcribed for analysis[8]. Walker (1990) states that a focus group is defined as an in-depth interview group instead of with individuals. In addition, Walker (1990) states that participants reveal more of their own frame of reference on the subject of study, the language they use, the emphasis they give and their general framework of understanding is more spontaneously on display. Furthermore, it reflects the social constructions- normative influences, collective as well as individual self-identity, shared meanings- that are an important part of the way in which we perceive experience and understand the world around us (Leedy, 2001). Focus groups are supposedly better than in-depth interviews because they efface the role of the interviewer and simulate naturalistic conversation. This is the kind of interview that was used in the present study to get the opinions and perceptions of the group of informants (young maidens) who participated in the 2004 *Umhlanga.* This was important as these informants provided me with their insider views.

1.3.2. Preliminary survey

Prior to embarking on this study, a preliminary survey was carried out between July and December 2004. This exercise was carried out at my former Ntsinini High School where I was a teacher of English Language and Literature. The co-operation of teachers and students contributed to the data that informed the study. From the students, I selected two groups, each made up of ten. One consisted of girls who had participated in the 2004 *Umhlanga* and were looking forward to attending the 2005 event. The second group was made up of girls who had never participated in the event and had no intention of ever doing so.

In addition, discussions and informal interviews were held with members of certain Christian denominations such as those from the Missionary Churches. Finally, members of pro-democratic groups who hold critical views about the event were interviewed. I also selected parents whose children do not participate in the event with the intention of gathering information about their

[8] This focus group comprised of teachers who form the teachers organisation known as Swaziland Association of Teachers (SNAT) who also affiliate to political organizations that are at the forefront in the call for a constitutional Monarch. These are PUDEMO and SWAYOCO to name a few.

perceptions of the event. Most importantly, the preliminary survey helped me to shape the following questions that were later used for interviews:

- How is *umcwasho* received by the Swazi people?
- Who composes *Umhlanga* songs?
- To what extent do the participating *Imbali* comply with *Umhlanga* precepts?
- Has the performance of the ritual addressed the campaign against the HIV/AIDS pandemic?
- How do *Umhlanga* organizers incorporate modern elements within the ritual space?

The analysis and interpretation of *Umhlanga* involved my own analysis of settings and contexts, songs, as well as documentary sources available. The qualitative inquiry method followed in the analysis enabled me to find the voices of *Umhlanga* participants and non-participants. This was achieved through the use of interviews. According to MacMillan and Schumacher (1993: 127) interviews are used "to gather information regarding individual's experiences and knowledge; his/her opinions, beliefs, and feelings; and demographic data". This was important as the empirical grounding of the thesis is partly based on participants' accounts of their experiences and attitudes towards the ritual and its performance. Furthermore, the qualitative approach allowed me to use more than one criterion to triangulate the information I gathered from multiple sources. I gathered information from multiple and diverse sources in an effort to enhance the validity and reliability of the information and conclusions presented in this study.

My being a Swazi citizen enhanced my analysis of *Umhlanga* songs. I was able to ask questions from Swazi people who were familiar with contexts and settings' meanings. In order to analyze various kinds of materials, including symbols, dress codes and songs, the textual analysis perspective was adopted. Following Taylor's (2004: 123) claim that "texts constitute a fundamental form of human understanding, through which individuals make sense of themselves and of their lives", I made an effort to read critically and identify text messages and themes running through the data. For instance, song and dance, costume, symbols are analyzed specifically in Chapter Three and of course in various parts of the thesis. To illustrate some of the changes, transformations and dynamisms observed over the period of the study I used

photographs (inserted in the some of the chapters' paragraphs) from the local newspapers (*TTS and TSO*).

1.4. Fieldwork Constraints

My fieldwork observations used to begin at *Imbali'*s collection point, which is Ludzidzini royal residence. I chose two sites, which are near my place of residence in Swaziland. These are Buhleni royal residence and Nyakatfo area, the latter under the jurisdiction of Chief Jubiphathi Magagula in the Hhohho region. It was easy to talk to the maidens and the guards when they where at the collection points. However, when they were moving to Ludzidzini, I had to remain behind until I made my transport arrangements. As such, I was unable to observe the activities between Ludzidzini and the camp sites (Bhamsakhe and Mpisi Farms).

The use of the participant observation approach for this research was motivated by the urge to collect 'authentic' data. Elaborating on the participant observer technique of research, Grills (1998: 4) asserts that:

> by going 'where the action is,' the field researcher pursues an intimate familiarity with the 'world of the other', through getting close to the dilemmas, frustrations, routines, relationships, and risks that are part of the everyday life. This closeness to the social world is fieldwork's most profound involvement with it.

The participant observer method of research enabled me to discern the basic values, beliefs, practice and concerns, which form the basis of *Umhlanga*.

Following *Umhlanga* proceedings was difficult as the distance between my area of residence Buhleni and Ludzidzini is about 230 kilometres (round trip). The trips involved hours of traveling as I did not have a car. Following *Umhlanga* proceedings from one setting to the next during the marches required me to have personal transport. I was then forced to hire private transport in 2005/6 so that I could observe the eight-day *Umhlanga* proceedings. Luckily a friend who resides in Manzini accommodated me so that I could be near *Umhlanga* venue. I also failed to attend all the proceedings particularly the *umcwasho* ceremony in person because it was

performed at night. However, I followed the proceedings from the Swazi national television station which broadcast the event live. I supplemented the television broadcasts with newspaper coverage of the proceedings. I also relied on radio announcements that I recorded and solicited interviews from informants that I identified following a purposive sampling frame. I also relied on Richard Patrick's (interview) paper from the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC). In this way, it was possible for me to access data that I could not access due to financial and fieldwork constraints.

1.5. Ethical Consideration

The research involved human participants and required the observation of ethical principles. Burns (1999: 70) argues, "Ethical considerations are an important part of any research enterprise". He adds that key principles in the ethical conduct of research are responsibility, confidentiality and negotiation. This view is supported by Finnegan (1992: 215) who notes that:

> This applies in research on traditional [art] forms for [art] forms are creations of human beings, part of their social, political, and artistic activities rather than (as once assumed) a-social product of some impersonal tradition.

A key ethical concern for undertaking research on *Umhlanga* hinged on the tight political control over concepts of tradition exerted by royalty. This was evidenced during my initial attempt to get a letter of consent from the relevant authorities to research on *Umhlanga.* Firstly, following the purposeful selection sample, I identified a senior princess who vehemently advised me not to mention her name in my study. The princess arranged for us to meet the Minister of Home Affairs Prince Gabheni, from whom I was expecting to get a letter authorizing me to carry out the research. The Minister gave us his verbal consent to go ahead with the study stressing the point that "it is an innocent ceremony, with no secrets. Only *Incwala* cannot be researched".

The Minister argued that even those who claim to have written about *Incwala* "can not say that their work is authentic as they could not access the 'secret parts' of the ceremony which in fact the ceremony is mainly about". The Minister argued that even anthropologist Hilda Kuper who

was assigned by King Sobhuza II to write his biography was only allowed to observe the ceremony during the day. The Minister had this to say

> During the night at around 2am only selected traditionalists and royalists attend the ceremony. Not even some of the *bantfwabenkhosi* are allowed to enter the King's *inhlambelo* during which time he is in his birthday suit 'stark naked'[9].

Although the minister assured us that we could obtain a letter of permission from the Senior Curator at the Lobamba Museum, we were again not successful. The Museum curator Rosemary Litchfield was surprised that the Minister of Home Affairs had advised us to go to her office suggesting that he was better placed to write a letter to that effect. This kind of attitude served to confirm my suspicions about the tight political control of the ceremony and apprehension amongst royalty on issues of research on tradition that involved the King and *iNdlovukati*. In an interview (held) with Litchfield, she noted[10] :

> It is sad how the royal officials block research on Swazi traditions. I was interested in writing about the Mdzimba Mountain burial area where Swazi Kings are buried. I had already received funding from European Union. I also proposed that the burial area at the Mdzimba Mountains be fenced off as important national historical sites. I was shocked at the response I got from the traditional authorities with whom I tried to broach this subject. First I was asked if I was a 'true Swazi' may be because I am colored. I was then strongly advised to abandon the idea of writing about Swazi Kings on the grounds that 'no where in Swazi history have ordinary Swazis stepped their foot in the 'ancestral burial site where Swazi Ancestral spirits and departed Kings rested or lay'. Hence I abandoned the project.

This revelation saved me a lot of time as I abandoned the search for the letter which was supposed to be in response to my application letter (see Appendix D).

A fruitful interview with Richard Patricks (see interview extract in Appendix J (ii)) revealed that I should forget about getting official consent from *Umhlanga* authorities and its custodians. Patricks asked if I did not know Swazi saying that *injobo itfungelwa ebandla* or issues

[9] The minister said this when I and my *lincusa* had were in search of permission to research on *Umhlanga.*
[10] Interview held at Lobamba on 20th November 200 at the Prince's residence.

surrounding Swazi tradition are not addressed by individuals but by *libandla* or a group. He told me that it would take decades to find anyone within the royal circles who will sign for me the consent form with regard to *Umhlanga* ritual. Elaborating on the complexity of accessing the consent letter from *Umhlanga* authorities including royalty who are custodians of Swazi rituals, Patricks explained that no individual Swazi, even senior princes has the authority to give an official consent on research about Swazi tradition. Patricks explained that according to Swazi custom:

> The belief or reasoning is that no single Swazi in particular can give answers to something that pertains to Swazis rituals that involve the King and *Ndlovukati*. All the people you went to see know that including the princes. It can take you decades to get the official transcript or script you are looking for.[11]

To confirm the idea of political control over concepts of tradition by royalty, in March 2007, the senior princess told me that she had inherited a good book from her late brother. She added, "This is a very important book that can never be found anywhere". I asked her to show me the book. It was Hilder Kuper's book entitled *King Sobhuza II Ngwenyama of Swaziland* published in 1978. Asked if I could borrow the book, the princess was adamant that I could only make use of it in the confines of her home saying "this book never left the prince's compound and I never knew anything about it until after his death".

Leroy Vail and White (1991: 171) confirms political apprehensiveness about research on Swazi rituals/ or tradition when he writes about an incident where anthropologist, "Van Warmelo almost ruined the prospect of future research by ignoring the King's [Sobhuza II] specific prohibition against taking photographs of the calabash dance"[12]. Vail further reveals a similar "near disaster in 1933, when a journalist wrote a sensationalized account of *iNcwala* for the Johannesburg *Star* that linked the ceremony with human sacrifice" (1991: 171). According to Vail (p171) this incident led to King Sobhuza II exercising personal control over academic research. Bheki Makhubu's incident when he was arrested, charged for high treason in 2001 after

[11] Interview held at Lobamba in the National Trust Commission in Richard Patricks Office on 27/09/2006(see Appendix I (ii)

[12] Hilda Kuper (the then Mrs Winifred Hoernle) was the first to obtain permission to write about Swazi royal household which culminated to her "hagiographic authorized biography of Sobhuza II" (Vail, 1991)

writing about King Mswati III's *Liphovela* in 2000 (*The Times of Swaziland)* is evidence that that there is indeed strict control over reports/research that relate to the royal household.

In view of the above observations, I was not surprised when some of my respondents exhibited elements of anxieties about political repercussions during interview sessions. Therefore, to gain the confidence of my informants, after explaining the purpose of the research, I requested them to sign consent form (see Appendix E). The confidentiality of all respondents who so wished was guaranteed. Amongst informants who gave me permission to use their names are chiefs. This is not surprising as these respondents made sure that they promoted a pro-*Umhlanga* position also evident in their interviews with journalists.

Before starting to take *Umhlanga* pictures, I sought permission from the Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Service office that is responsible for issuing permits to researchers, photographers and foreign media houses to record and take pictures of all royal ceremonies' proceedings (see Appendix B). Additionally, an application to the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee was made and a copy of the proposal was submitted to the Committee. The clearance certificate obtained from the Wits Ethics Committee assisted me in assuring *Umhlanga* authorities as well as informants that the research was for academic purposes only (see Appendix C).

1.6. The Study Structure

Although the interviewees (individual and focus group) for this study might not be as representative of Swazi society as statistics would warrant, nevertheless, a purposive sampling technique employed ensured that the sample obtained fairly represented *Umhlanga* participants from disparate groups of society. The thesis is chapters are as follows:

Chapter One introduces the study, gives a detailed historical background on the Swazi people and the 'origins' of *Umhlanga* ceremony. It also reviews literature on *Umhlanga* and situate the present study within oral and traditional literary studies. Finally the methodology followed is discussed which include preliminary survey, constraints, ethics and scope of the study. Chapter

Two describes and discusses the structure of the event. It begins with a discussion of the event as a monarchical ritual seen in the manner it is announced over the state owned radio and TV illustrating that *Uyezwa na*! or Do You Hera! is a directive that comes directly from the mouth of the *Ngwenyama* also known as *mlomo longa cali manga* or 'the mouth that tells no lies'. I argue that the event's performance is made up of various traditional art forms that include dress code, songs, and dances. Information gathered revealed that *Umhlanga* authorities are appointed by the ruling monarch. This includes the event's Chief Overseer (Ntfonjeni Dlamini), *Tikhulu* or Chiefs as well as the female *indvuna* or leader of the regiment, *Imbali.*

Chapter Three discusses *Umhlanga* songs observed and recorded during the performances. *Umhlanga* space enables the girls to sing songs that address socio-cultural, economic and political issues since the ritual leaves room for improvisation. *Umhlanga* songs are in four categories: Firstly, some songs highlight the construction of gender relationships and human rights in Swazi society by demonstrating how the sex categories of girl and boy, man and woman are continuously reinforced in and through rituals. Secondly, some songs exalt the monarch thus, paying allegiance to the *Tinkhunda* system of rule. Thirdly there are songs that address financial issues affecting *Imbali* further illustrating strategies they employ to combat poverty. Lastly there are songs sung for the princesses during the *giya* dances performed for the audiences towards the end of the ceremony. The second part of the chapter provides an analysis of *Umhlanga* symbols and the symbolic nature of the ritual.

Chapter Four examines faultlines in the ritual's performance that is mainly brought about by the influence of modernity and globalisation. The main argument is that Swaziland, like other developing countries, is not immune to economic and political challenges brought about by modernity and globalization. It is demonstrated how as a dramatic (literary genre) *Umhlanga* exhibits elements of constancy and flexibility where new experiences are incorporated and old ones subverted or discarded confirming the proposition that traditional art forms are not static but dynamic in nature, adapting to socio-cultural, economic and political changes. It is illustrated how *Umhlanga* space is manipulated by *Imbali* for expressing their idiosyncrasies, thus subverting and disrupting known guidelines and rules guarding the ritual. This is demonstrated in the princess's modern party. While constructing identities of their own within the dynamics of

the social group to which they belong, *Imbali* introduce new innovations into the ritual particularly fashionable styles (dress code, facial make-up, jewellery, large amounts of wool tassels, etc). All these pose a challenge to the Monarch, that is, how to balance forces of change with traditionalism.

Chapter Five reflects on interpretations and perceptions of *Umhlanga* by diverse sectors of people in Swazi society as well as tourists and visitors who participate in the ceremony. It syntheses and weaves together the disparate issues that were raised in preceding chapters. First is a discussion and analysis of the traditional hegemonic ideology circulated by the ruling Monarch within the ritual's performance. In this sense the ritual is depicted as a vehicle to reenact the Monarch power. In presenting the Swazi people's understandings, perceptions and interpretations of *Umhlanga*, issues of virginity, gender, human rights, HIV/AIDS and democracy amongst others are discussed and analyzed. What finally emerge are multiple texts that demonstrate the flexibility of *Umhlanga* to address and adopt to change in a global world.

The study concludes by synthesizing and weaving together the disparate issues that were raised in preceding chapters. The summary illustrates how a reading or interrogation of *Umhlanga* as a traditional literary performance enabled us to identify broader themes that form literature. These include: rituals of performing the monarch's power; circulation of traditional hegemonic and patriarchal ideologies; virginity and HIV/AIDS; gender and human rights; democracy as well as modernity and globalization. All of these are pertinent issues to Swazi society. Subsequently, the study concludes by urging the Swazi government to open its doors and sponsor research on royal and national traditional rituals as it is through research that traditional material is documented and preserved for future generations.

CHAPTER TWO

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE EVENT

2.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses and examines the organization and structure of *Umhlanga.* Two research questions are addressed: Firstly, who are the ritual' stake holders? Secondly, how does the organization and structure of *Umhlanga* ceremony contribute to our understanding and interpretation of the event as a traditional (or oral) literary performance? In order to address these questions firstly, this chapter presents a synopsis of the event. It shows how the event's performance is spread through 8 days. This is coupled with descriptions and discussions of *Umhlanga* settings and contexts, performers and their audiences. In the discussion I make use of concepts such as traditional, orchestration, oral and written scripts and performance. Secondly, the structure of the event reveals the significant (and symbolic) role played by the ruling monarch in the staging or orchestration of the event. It illustrates the role played by traditional authorities as it incorporates royal appointees and chiefs in the staging of the event. Orchestration is used to refer to mechanisms and strategies deployed (by *Umhlanga* authorities) mobilizing *Imbali* in particular who are key performers in the event. Oral script refers to the version of the event solicited from oral interviews with Mrs Onicah Shungube and two chiefs; Jubiphathi Magagula and Mvelase Mdluli. The written script refers to the version obtained from the Lobamba SNTC office (from senior researcher Richard Patricks).

2.1. Synopsis of *Umhlanga*

The synopsis presented here is based on my own observation of *Umhlanga* between 2004 and 2007. Information gathered from informants and media reports (*TTS,* 9. 2005) revealed that the King appoints an *indvuna* because of her dancing skills or *bugabazi.* Sindie Tfwala was

appointed as the *indvuna* for the *Imbali* by King Mswati III at the end of the 2005 *Umhlanga* which was led by *iNkhosatana* Sikhanyiso[13]. The local media reported that Sindie Tfwala was also appointed because she is related to the Queen Mother Ntombi Tfwala. However, such comments were dismissed by *Umhlanga* organizers in interviews with the *Times of Swaziland* (4/09/2006) as unfounded, claiming that although Sindie shared a surname with *iNdlovukati* they were not related and her appointment had nothing to do with her clan name. This allegation is not surprising given the secrecy that surrounds information that relate to the royal household. In turn, *indvuna* for *Umhlanga* is expected to perform specific duties as she works side by side with *iNkhosatana* for the event (in this case Sikhanyiso). The *indvuna's* duties include making the national announcements over radio and TV, leading the *Imbali* regiment at Ludzidzini and relaying information to the *libutfo* from *iNdlovukati* and *iNgwenyama* before dispersal to the reed sites. Also, she is expected to lead the *Imbali* throughout the event in dance and song.

Sindie Tfwala made *Umhlanga* announcement through the state owned media houses, the Swaziland Broadcasting Service (SIBS) radio station and Swaziland Television Broadcasting (STBS) TV. Each time an announcement is made on behalf of the King, it begins with the words *Uyezwa Na*! or Do You Hear! that is sometimes repeated five times. After making the announcement the *indvuna* would conclude briefly by reciting the King's praises. *Umhlanga* announcement for 2006 was made beginning on 18th August to 23rd August, on both the national radio and TV stations in the following manner:

Uyezwa na! Uyezwa na!
Lalela ngikutshele!
Utsi okaNdaba!
Tintfombi kuwo onkhe emagumbi lamane emhlaba!
Atiphelele emtini weNkhosi eLudzidzini ngetinkhani!

Ngelilanga lekucala, tiyabhalisa!

Ngelilanga lesibili, tiyashuca

[13] The former *indvuna* Lindiwe Ndlovu got pregnant in 2004 leaving the regiment without a leader. Sindie Tfwala led Imbali during the 2006 *Umhlanga*. Soon afterwards it was reported that she got married. In such cases Princess Sikhanyiso had to play double roles as the *indvuna* and *iNkhosatana* for Umhlanga in 2006 and 2007.

Ngelilanga lesitsatfu tiyageca!

Ngelilanga lesine, tiyabuya!

Ngelilanga lesihlanu, tiyaphumula!

Ngelilanga lesitfupha, tiyacitsa!

Ngelilanga lesikhombisa, tiyagidza!

Ngelilanga lesiphohlongo tiphindzela emuva!

Usho njalo mlomo longacali manga
Usho njalo Mswati longayembatsi ingubo
Bayethe.

Do you hear! Do you hear!
Listen! let me tell you!
Says the King
Maidens from all the four regions of the nation!
Must report to the King's residence at Ludzidzini in their numbers!

On the first day, they register!

On the second day, they march!

On the third day, they cut the reed!

On the fourth day, they return!

On the fifth day, they rest!

On the sixth day, they deposit the reeds!

On the seventh day, they Dance!

On the eighth day, they return home!

So says the mouth that tells no lie!
So says the Mswati who does not cover himself with a blanket!
Bayethe!

So says the mouth that tells no lie!

So says the Mswati who does not cover himself with a blanket!

Hail King!

Bayethe!

Concluding the announcement by saying the King's praises validates the announcement as indeed coming from the 'King's mouth' as only him can be referred to as *mlomo longacali manga* or 'mouth that tells no lie'. In essence, the delivery of the announcement is a form of order or charge as the nation is expected to listen and adhere to it.

The expression *Uyezwa Na* should be understood in conjunction with the power vested in the King as *mlomo longa cali manga* or mouth that tells no lies. In order to understand the meaning of the concept *mlomo longa cali manga* one has to acknowledge that in Swaziland all Constitutional powers are vested in the King as proclaimed by King Sobhuza II to the nation in 1973. Through the Kind's Declaration of 1973 the office of the King is viewed as the constitution:

> [The King] has the power to issue decrees, give or refuse consent to any bill from parliament. Appoints his advisers [the Swaziland National Council], Attorney General, Judicial Service Commission, Prime minister, traditional Prime minister, chief electoral officer, ambassadors, cabinet ministers, regional administrators, principal secretaries, commissioner of police, commissioner of correctional services, commander of the army, etc. He is in fact the commander in chief of the *Umbutfo* Swaziland Defense Force. He also assumes the position of *Ngwenyama* (*mlomo longacali manga*). In full control of all land in the country, and may do anything on it at any time[14].

Debating the notion of 'the mouth that tells no lie', Bheki Makhubu (*The Nation*, July 2005 p21-22)[15] observes that joined at the hip of the name *Ngwenyama*:

> Is the age-old Swazi saying that the King is *mlomo longacali manga*

[14] The People United Democratic Movement (1984) Manifesto.

[15] Bheki Makhubu is former Editor of *The Times of Swaziland.* He was forced to resign from the newspaper in 2000 following his arrest and charge for High treason and sedition after he published a background of the King's *Liphovela.*

> [mouth that tells no lie]…the general understanding of this saying is that once the King has spoken, what he has said is law, it is a Royal Command.

This observation was confirmed in an interview with *Babe* Khumalo at Buhleni Royal Residence[16]. Khumalo revealed the *mlomo longa cali manga* is always associated with what the *Ngwenyama* has to say to the nation. The elder pointed out that "those who do not listen to *Uyezwa na* summons which are directives from the 'mouth that tells no lies' the *Ngwenyama* who represents the ancestors or earlier Swazi Kings or *emakhosi* are an embarrassment to the nation" adding that "may be they have their own Kings."

Contrary to Khumalo, Makhubu views the concept *mlomo longacali manga* in critical terms as he argues that:

> [The] general understanding of this saying is that once the king has spoken, what he has said is law, it is Royal Command. But, the understanding of *mlomo longacali manga* goes further than such simplicity. The integrity of what King Mswati says, or any Swazi King for that matter, is extremely important in giving credence to the saying *mlomo longacali manga*…When the King speaks, he speaks for the greater good of society, not pushing any particular agenda and not working towards the advantage of any one group against the other. That is why we see him as a unifying force in the country.

Makhubu's analysis of the concept, *mlomo longacali manga* is important in the understanding of Swazi perceptions about 'old-age' customs or sayings. An important question raised by Makhubu is whether when the king speaks it is for the greater good of the Swazi society and not working towards the advantage of any one group, adding that "Is the King still the unifying force in the country?" Indeed Makhubu is questioning the relevance of the concept of 'divine' monarchy which is facing challenges in a changing Swazi society. Makhubu (editor of *The Nation Magazine)* further points out that:

[16] Elder Mangololo Khumalo resides at Buhleni Royal Residence. He is one of the traditional officers who have been appointed by the King as overseers of the residence. These officers also mobilize *emabutfo* during the times they are summoned to perform royal duties at Ludzidzini.

> As result of the King's antics the Swazi annual *Umhlanga* ceremony has become a focal point for criticism of King Mswati III's handling of the rights of his female subjects[17].

Makhubu is not alone on the campaign against issues of gender and human rights as it shall be shown in the following chapters how Women groups, NGO's and Human right activists contest issues of arranged marriages that involve the girl-child. It shall be shown later in the thesis (Chapter Five) that pro-democracy groups are calling for the monarch to be a constitutional monarch in order to allow for the decentralisation of power and democracy so that is shared by various sectors of the Swazi society.

It is interesting to note that when Bheki Makhubu (then editor of *The Times of Swaziland*) was arrested by the state for writing about one of the King's *Liphovela* (in August 2000) his arrest hit international headlines as the BBC, CNN, and *The Mail and Guardian* (South Africa) carried reports about the story. For instance BBC (August 2000) reported that:

> A week before his arrest, Makhubu had written an article for a South African newspaper, the *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, in which he admitted that he had faced not only political pressure but also widespread public disapproval of his story as an invasion of the royal privacy.

After leaving *The Times of Swaziland* Makhubu became chief editor of *The Nation* magazine which has a caption that boast of being 'Swaziland' s real Journalism'. Consequently, in *The Nation* magazine (*July* 2005) Makhubu openly debates the concept of the King as the '*mlomo longa cali manga'* suggesting that:

> In order for the King to be respected as the he is expected to abide by international conventions such as human rights, child abuse, and freedom of the press to which the country is a signatory. This can only happen if the King attempts to sweep out the dirt in his own house so that when we listen to him we know that his wisdom can only come from the brains of those who are thinkers in their own right.

[17] This pertain issues surrounding the choosing of the King's *Liphovela or* fiancée. For a girl to qualify to be *Liphovela* she should belong to the *libutfo* (*Imbali*) and participate in the *umcwasho* and *Umhlanga* rituals. Over the years during King Mswati's rule, beginning in 1986 none of his fiancées was above the age of 18 years. Incidentally the King's *Liphovela* 'unveiled' during the 2005 *Umhlanga* was 16 years old. The news of the 16year old *Liphovela* attracted local and international debate as it was condemned by human rights and gender activists as abuse of the girl-child.

Issues of gender, human rights and democracy are not taken seriously in Swaziland as it will be shown in the thesis how patriarchal deny girls/or women the right to choose their partners illustrated in the *kulamuta* custom amongst others. Beginning in 1986 none of Mswati III's fiancées was above the age of 18 years. Incidentally the King's *Liphovela* 'unveiled' during the 2005 *Umhlanga* was 16 years old. The news of the 16year old *Liphovela* attracted local and international debate as it was condemned by human rights and gender activists as abuse of the girl-child.

The bone of contention is whether concepts such as *mlomo longacali manga* and *uyezwa na!* continue to be 'uniting forces that bring the Swazi people together' or not. Both elder Khumalo and Makhubu' views are important in investigating perceptions of the event by traditional stalwarts and pro-democracy standards. Two conflicting views about the authenticity and relevance of Swazi tradition emerge. On the one hand, the elder Khumalo represents the section that holds firmly to Swazi tradition. He represents the group that is critical in its understanding and interpretations of tradition coupled with an awareness of how tradition is constructed by the ruling monarchy as a political and economical strategy to power.

Following *Umhlanga* announcement on Day One *Imbali* are transported by government trucks from their areas of residence to Ludzidzini where they register in their area groups beginning at around 5pm up to 5am (according to an informant at Ludzidzini on 29th August 2005). On Day Two *Imbali* singing and dancing converge at Ludzidzini where they are met by *Ndlovukati*. The song (to be discussed in the next Chapter) that was sung by *Imbali* over the four year period of the study during this encounter is entitled '*Sesikhona Ngwane sitowubuka Lokuhle*' meaning 'We have arrived *Ngwane* to observe what is good'.

While observing the encounter with the *Ndlovukati* and then *Ngwenyama*, I noticed that *Imbali* were excited as they sang at the top of their voices. Once they had stopped singing and dancing, *iNdlovukati* communicated her advice and orders through the *indvuna* for *Imbali* (2006) or their

leader, *Nkhosatana*, Sikhanyiso (in 2005 and 2007)[18]. *Nkhosatana* Sikhanyiso relayed the message from *iNdlovukati* to the regiment in the following manner:

***Sikhanyiso**:* *Uyezwa na! Uyezwa na! Lalela ngikutshele!*
***Sikhanyiso**:* *Utsi okaNdaba tintfombi aticitseke tiyogeca umhlanga!*
***Sikhanyiso**:* *Utsi tintfombi nitiphatse kahle nicaphele tingoti endleleni!*
***Sikhanyiso**:* *Siyini?*
***Tintfombi**:* *SiyiMbali YeMaswati*!

Sikhanyiso: Do you hear? Do you hear? Listen! Let me tell to you!
Sikhanyiso: Her majesty says, the maidens can disperse and go and cut the reed!
Sikhanyiso: She advises maidens to take good care and to avoid accidents along the way!
Sikhanyiso: Who are we?
Maidens: We are the Flower of the Swazi! (Chorus by maidens).

I also noticed that during *Umhlanga iNdlovukati's imbongi* or praise singer gets the opportunity to recite her praises. The content of *iNdlovukati's* 'praises' talk about her as someone "beautiful and praiseworthy" confirming Vilakazi's (1945) claim that women's praises address their virtues. For instance, *iNdlovukati* is referred to as "*Mhlekazi*", meaning one who is beautiful. She is referred to as someone who is faultless. This is opposed to Zulu Royal praises in which according to Victor Turner (1986: 60) there is abundant "scatological and agonistic references". Commenting about praises for Royal women (such as Mkabayi, Nandi and Monase) Turner (1986: 61) points out that the content, despite their rank in society, is often not altogether complimentary or praiseworthy:

> Physical oddities such as ungainly height, wide spaced thighs, big chin, heftiness as well as extreme ambition, meanness, unpleasantness, sexual

[18] In 2004/2005/2006/2007 Sikhanyiso doubled as *Indvuna* and leader of the *Imbali* regiment. In 2006 Sindi Tfwala was the *indvuna* but got bethroted and got married before the 2007 *Umhlanga*. The official opening of *Umhlanga* was performed by the *Ndlovukati*, Ntombi Tfwala. Over the four years of the festival. I had observed that after the singing *iNkhosatana* Sikhanyiso Dlamini who has led *Imbali* regiment over the course of the study would kneel in front of the seated *iNdlovukati* to take instructions.

> forwardness and ruthlessness are some of the disparaging references that are encountered.

On the contrary, during *Umhlanga* occasion (and others) the Swazi *Ndlovukati* is endowed with positive and appreciative epilates in which her physical appearance is praised and kind attributes in words such as "*titfo letihle*" or "beautiful legs" and "*Nhlitiyo lenhle lebutsa tintsandzane*" or Good Heart that caters for the orphaned (for the *Ndlovukati*'s full praises (see Thembi Vilakazi, 2002).

Soon after receiving orders from the *Ndlovukati*, *Imbali* regiment began the 5km march from Ludzidzini to Ngabezweni where they were met by the *Ngwenyama* who is usually in the company of *emabutfo, emazinyane* (sons to the *Ngwenyama*), *eMakhosikati* (wives to the *Ngwenyama),* visiting guests as well as locals and tourists. In a similar fashion, the *Ngwenyama* communicates his message and advice through the *Indvuna yeMbali,* Sindi Twfala. The King urged the area *tindvuna*, soldiers and police accompanying *libutfo* to look after and protect the girls from any form of danger. Finally, in similar fashion *Nkhosikati* Sikhanyiso knelt in front of *iNgwenyama* to take advice and orders that she in turn relayed to her *libutfo* (shown in Plate V in the next page). Soon after receiving orders from the king at around 4pm *Imbali* were dispersed to the campsites.

Before embarking on the march, the girls are separated into two groups according to age. One group comprised the more mature girls, aged between fourteen and above. The other group was made up of girls aged between 10 and 13 years old. During the marches, *Imbali* carry knives, sickles, torches and their sleeping paraphernalia. They are also heavily guarded by their area guards, officials, soldiers and members of the police force as they march to the campsites, Masundvwini for the younger group and Mpisi Farm for the older girls. Transport, in the form of government trucks, Red Cross cars and ambulances are provided for girls who get tired or sick along the way.

Findings reveal that this is one of the moments in *Umhlanga* that *Imbali* always look forward to as they are personally assigned by *iNdlovuka*ti and *Ngwenyama* in their practical roles as *Make* or Mother and *Babe* or Father to the nation. The following utterances recorded during my

fieldwork show how significant it was for some of the *Imbali* to be addressed and sent on a mission by their Majesties: "*sicitfwe yiNdlovukati eLudzidzini sabese siyashuqa safika eNgabezweni lapho sabese siqitfwa khona yiNgwenyama* (We were first dispersed by the *Ndlovukati* at Ludzidzini. Thereafter we marched to Ngabezweni to be dispersed by the *Ngwenyama*) (See picture in Plate VI).

A lot of significance is attached to the marches during which girls sing various *Umhlanga* songs. An example of a popular song that was sung over the years is the one entitled '*Wangiphatsa kwaze kwasa yemlamu wami*' (discussed in detail in the next chapter). Interviews revealed that for some girls, the marches were the most important part of the ritual. For instance, some informants retorted, "how can one say she has attended *Umhlanga* if she has not participated in the marches?" Such remarks are usually directed at non-participating girls encountered along the way. Here are a few examples:

Imbali sibili iya emHlangeni
Ingabe nihlaleleni ningayi emhlangeni?
Nihlalele bafana
Itanitfola iAIDS.

True *Imbali* is going to the Reed Dance
What is the reason for staying behind?
You remain behind because of boys
AIDS will catch up with you

As a result non-participating girls make sure that they are nowhere near the roads especially on the days of the marches. Nowadays the guards who accompany *Imbali* ensure that the girls behave themselves once aboard the trucks.



Plate VI: King Mwsati III giving orders to *Nkhosatana* Sikhanyiso at Ngabezweni before the *Imbali* were dispersed to the reed sites 27th August 2005 (Photograph from *The Times of Swaziland)*

With specific reference to *Umhlanga* event of 2006 this is what happened. Once at the campsite, the girls spent the night in government tents constructed for the occasion. The following morning, the girls embarked on the journey to the swampy reed beds. On arrival at the reed beds, the senior princes, Sikhanyiso, followed by *Liphovela* or King's fiancée la-Nkambule (2006) were the first to cut the first reeds. The rest of the princesses and *Imbali* followed suit. In instances where the reeds proved to be difficult to cut, the princesses were assisted by soldiers and younger girls by their male *tindvuna* who accompanied them throughout the event. After cutting and tying their reeds in bundles, the girls returned to the campsite where they spent another night. On the 4th day, the *Imbali* woke up early to prepare for the journey back to Ludzidzini. Carrying their reed bundles, the girls began the long march shown in Plate VII.

On Day 5 the girls 'rest' meaning that they do not do physical labour. Instead, on this day the girls prepare themselves for the main dance on the next two days. Women Groups, Gender and

HIV/AIDS activists make use of this time to 'teach the girls messages of safe sex' amongst other lessons (discussed in subsequent chapters). Informants revealed that on this day some of the *Imbali* who come from neighboring towns use this opportunity to go to town or visit friends and relatives. This is easy for girls from town as they do not have *tinvuna* to monitor them as it is the case with *Imbali* from the rural areas.



Plate VII: *Imbali* marching from the campsites Mpisi Farm to Ludzidzini Royal Residence carrying reed bundles (Photograph by Mduduzi Mngomezulu of *The Times of Swaziland*)

On Day Six, fully dresses in *Umhlanga* regalia and led by the senior princesses and other princesses, *Imbali* gather their *umhlanga* bundles and singing and dancing in their area groups (identified by wearing the same colour of *umjiimba*) deposited their reeds the cattle bye at the *Ndlovukati*'s head quarters. This ritual which begins at 3pm takes about one and a half hours. This occasion is again graced by the presence of their Majesties (*iNdlovukati* and *Ngwenyama*) as invited guests who include diplomats from outside the country. After depositing the reeds *Imbali* proceed to the stadium where they continue with the singing and dancing up to 630pm. It

is easy to identify the princesses during the main dance as they all wear red feathers in their hair (see Plate VIII).



Plate VIII: Princess Sikhanyiso with her sisters at the forefront leading the *Imbali* on 31st August 2005 at Ludzidzini (Picture by Mduduzi Mgomezulu).

The 7th day marked the main dance day and this is always declared a holiday for the whole country.). Accompanying the arrival and departure of *iNdlovukati* is significant display of royal power and splendor. The *Ndlovukati* arrives at *Umhlanga* arena clad in traditional regalia in state of the art cars such as limousines and red carpet with protocol personnel and body guards fusing over her as shown in the next picture (shown in Plate VII). Indeed in its celebrations of *Umhlanga* and other national events the Swazi monarchy replicates the British ceremonial scenario described by Cannadine (1985: 264) as: "An official national day! Formal mobilization, processions and marches, pomp of the state power, uniforms, parades, bands, flags and the like" (1985: 224Royalty splendor and pomp displayed illustrates how royalty live in affluence thus creating a gap between royal blood and commoners (or those not related to the royal family).



Plate IX: *INdlovukati* Ntombi Tfwala arriving at the arena at Ludzidzini stadium in 31/08/2006 (Picture by Mduduzi Mngometulu)

Royal splendor is also displayed as diplomats and visiting signatories from outside the country share in royal affluence. These are accommodated in the opulent royal villas, royal hotels and enjoy the privileges and status of royal power. On the main day, diplomats and dignitaries are normally seen shaking hands with the *Ndlovukati* and *Ngwenyama* at the pavilion reserved for the ruling government. In this sense the event can be viewed as an opportunity for the ruling government to tighten its diplomatic relationship with leaders from outside countries. For instance, on 31st August 2007 gracing the event with their presence were the following: The then South African Vice President, Jacob Zuma; The President of Zambia, Levy Mwanawasa; Chief of the Bathembu, Mandla Mandela, King of the Tembe and other chiefs from neighboring South Africa as well as local chiefs.

Conspicuous in *Umhlanga* celebrations was the presence of the Zulu King Zwelithini who attends the Swazi *Umhlanga* annually. It is worth mentioning that the Swazi and Zulu kings have a long history of exchanging maidens during *Umhlanga.* This means that a group of girls from

Swaziland *Imbali* annually join the Zulu girls during *Umhlanga.* Likewise, a group of Zulu girls join the Swazi girls to perform in the event[19].

Day Eight marks the end of the ritual. As per tradition, on this day, cattle are slaughtered for the girls. Before dispersing *Imbali* (and other regiments) the king instructs officers at the *Tibiyo* office at Ludzidzini to slaughter a certain number of cows (ranging from 20 to 25). Each one of the girls is supposed to get a chunk of meat to take home. As a result those girls who return home without the meat 'from' the king are taken to task by their parents. Informants however, revealed that sometimes it is not easy to wait for the meat as the queues are too long. Those who hire private transport (buses and kombis) explained that it is not possible to wait for the meat that is served on Day Eight, as they embark on the journey back home soon after the main dance in the evening (on Day Seven).

2.2. Commercialization of the Event

In its attempt to diversify tourism products from wildlife and sightseeing, the Swaziland Tourism Authority under the Ministry of Tourism Authority (STA), established in 2002 concentrates on marketing and advertising the Swazi Reed Dance among other Swazi traditional art forms that are attractions for tourists. This is in line with the concept of cultural tourism which generally focuses on traditional communities with unique forms of art and distinct social practices. It depicts dominant images of the host culture, what local people consider as images of who they are, viewed at leisure (Deepak, 2001). In an interview with the then STA Director, Popi Khoza, I learnt that *Umhlanga* is one of the biggest tourist attraction in the country, adding that, "in some of the tourist resort areas such as Mlilwane Maguga, girls perform *Umhlanga* songs and dances in full regalia for tourists". This suggests that *Umhlanga* has been commercialized.

[19] The strong ties between the Zulu and Swazi can be traced to King Sobhuza I and Shaka. Sobhuza I is said to have given two of his daughters to Shaka to marry so that the fighting Shaka would spare the Swazis. The relationship between the two countries was strengthened during Zwide's time who gave his daughter Thandiwe Ndwandwe to Sobhuza I to marry. Thandiwe became the *Ndlovukati* cementing the strong relationship between the two nations. Furthermore, King Zwelithini married Princess Mantfombi Dlamini (currently senior wife) Sobhuza II's daughter and King Mswati III's sister.

Prevalent in *Umhlanga* scene are vendors who are all over Ludzidzini. As it is, the ritual provides an opportunity for street vendors or small business entrepreneurs to make quick money especially on the main day of the dance. These seize the opportunity offered by the event to sell their products that include food stuffs, photography, and traditional artifacts. In an interview with *The Times of Swaziland* (07.09.2006) a vendor revealed that "I grossed money that I would have had to work for two months and I am extremely happy". This particular vendor was selling *emahiya* to tourists. I learned that *emahiya* sale faster than other commodities because some tourists arrived at *Umhlanga* scene wearing pants not knowing that such a dress code is not allowed in the arena. As a result, tourists and visitors were forced to buy *emahiya* to tie around their waits covering the pants underneath[20]. I also noticed that vendors took advantage of the situation and inflated prices. For instance, *lihiya* which normally sells at R30 was raised to R50.

In addition, small scale businessmen and women buzz with sales of ice block, fruits, popcorn and ice cream as well as different assortments of food-stuffs like roasted chicken or beef in take away plastics. Photographers also jumped on the occasion, taking instant photographs at a fee of R10. On 31st August 2005, one photographer revealed in an interview that "I got something like R1010 in cash and cannot complain as there are few days that I get this kind of money. Events like *Umhlanga* can therefore be seen as providing economic survival among indigenous artisans.

My observation also revealed that the event is no longer just the preserve of Swazis only but has become a global attraction where people of different cultures meet. Interaction between tourists and Swazis during the event's performance attest to Stuart Hall's (1992) description of the global becoming a site of cross cultural meetings (the influence of modernity and globalization is discussed in Chapter Four). For instance, on 31st August 2005 I noticed that a number of tourists sat next to locals and requested them to explain or interpret the proceedings; especially the meanings of songs and artifacts carried by the girls such as shields, knives torches feathers stuck in their hair, tassels of different colours (meant to identify the different groups) also discussed under symbols in the next chapter.

[20] This was eexperienced by one of my colleagues from Wits who had joined me during the event to witness *Umhlanga* for the first time.

2.3. The Written and Oral Scripts

The oral and written literary versions of *Umhlanga* solicited from interviews and unpublished works are examined in this section. This is important in establishing that *Umhlanga* is indeed a traditional performance text that has been handed down from one generation to the next. The written script discussed here was accessed from the Swaziland National Trust Commission and can be also accessed from the internet. It gives an account of the sequence of events which is normally eight day. I mentioned in the methodology section that I had an illuminating interview with Richard Patricks who is a Senior Researcher at the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC). Patricks is a white American who acquired Swazi citizenship status through the traditional *butseka* or initiation to a particular *libutfo* and his *butseka* or regimental name is Mdvumowencwala (associated with being one of the few whites who participate in the sacred *Incwala* ceremony). The SNTC is situated at Nkhanini (former Lobamba) adjacent to the King's Office. In one of its brochures the SNTC states that:

> Our vision at SNTC is to make the natural and cultural heritage of the Kingdom a source of pride and pleasure for all people of Swaziland as well as our international visitors.

Furthermore, Patricks is authorized by the King's Office to take pictures and record royal ceremonies for the National Museum. In an interview held at Lobamba in his office on September 2007 (see Interview extract in Appendix j (ii)) Patricks informed me that he is a member of the Lobamba National Museum Administrative Board. He also informed me that the local TV and Radio broadcast stations, as well as Tourism Publications use his written script. This was confirmed in an interview with the Swaziland Tourism Authority (STA) Chief Executive Officer, Popi Khoza who revealed that the monthly publication *What's Happening In Swaziland*, published by the Swaziland Tourism Authority relies on Patricks' SNTC document.

The fact that the above institutions use Patricks' written script to advertise and announce the event, suggest that custodians of the event, both the *Ngwenyama* and *Ndlovukati* approve of it. I

therefore, refer to Patricks' script as the official script because it also encompasses *Umhlanga's* aims and objectives. It states (see full script in Appendix F) that:[21]

> In an eight day ceremony, girls cut reeds and present them to the Queen Mother and then dance. (There is no formal competition) It is done in late August or early September. Only childless, unmarried girls can take part. The aims of the ceremony are to:
>
> 1. Preserve girls' chastity.
>
> 2. Provide tribute labor for the Queen Mother.
>
> 3. Produce solidarity by working together.
>
> The royal family appoints a commoner maiden to be '*indvuna'* (captain) of the girls and she announces over the radio the dates of the ceremony. She will be an expert dancer and knowledgeable on royal protocol. One of the King's daughters will be her counterpart.

To celebrate their chastity, the girls present themselves to the Queen Mother who assigns them the duty of bringing reeds to her residence. After presenting the reeds which are described as 'trophies' (*The Swazi Observer*, 2005) to the Queen Mother, the girls celebrate in dance in full *Umhlanga* regalia. The 'trophies' are presented to their Majesties as a symbol that a national duty has been accomplished. This means that by participating in *Umhlanga,* Imbali show their loyalty to the ruling monarchy.

The purity of *Imbali* can be paralleled to the spring season that marks the beginning of rains and the planting season. This observation was confirmed in interviews with informants who pointed out that the requirement for every *Imbali* during the main dance was:

> To reveal their breasts, at least one, and to put on *indlamu* covering part of their buttocks, symbolizing that they have not been touched by men [virgins] therefore are not ashamed to showcase their bodies.

[21] The initiation process called *butseka* is carried out ruthlessly by the *emajaha*. It involves fetching water from a far away river using a bucket full of holes. Once one is a *lijaha* he is required amongst other things, to sleep on a mat, apply cow dung on the floor and participate in all royal duties which include weeding and harvesting the royal fields and in joining the King in the *Butimba* royal hunt.

Imbali, in this context, represent the Swazi as a nation whose customs have not been contaminated by alien customs. Thus, these girls have variously been referred to as *Lunyati* (resembling lighting), *Ingabisa* (showcasing virginity/or beauty) and subsequently, *Imbali* (the flower of the Swazi Nation). Furthermore, the marches to the reed sites are symbolic as a form of transition. The cutting activity can be interpreted following Alembi's (2002: 140) argument that:

> The basic message in all cutting activities is to bring about disconnection, an end or loosening", adding that "it should be noted that in rituals, cutting does not mean an end to life but signifies transition-one stage in life is ended and the person moves onto the next, higher, status in life, that is, from confinement to membership in wider society, as in birth from childhood to adulthood, as in circumcision.

This is an important observation in relation to the journey to the reed dance and the actual cutting of reeds. "First, the senior princess is followed by *Liphovela* (in cases where there is one such as in 2006) in the cutting and then the rest of the girls. Therefore, the metaphor of *Umhlanga* as cutting can be interpreted as a transitional stage from girlhood to womanhood. This could also mean that from now onwards, the girl can leave the home and participate in national events or perform societal duties. Making parallels to circumcision, Alembi (2002) notes that, for instance, cutting the foreskin at circumcision symbolizes an end to childhood saying, "from now onwards, the initiate is an adult and must strive to behave like one, as not doing so is a sign that one is failing to live according to the set rules of the society" (2002: 140). This description can be extended to the discussion of *Umhlanga* rules in that participation requires that the group abide by a set of rules. For instance, for an *Umhlanga* girl the most humiliating occurrence is to fall pregnant before marriage. Such a person is banned from participating in the event because the act is despicable to the group members.

2.3.1. Oral Script(s)

Also pertinent to the study of *Umhlanga* is the 'oral script' which refers to narratives collected from informants (elders). In this regard, *Umhlanga* represents various oral and traditional literary forms of the Swazi community that involve the use of idioms, proverbs, motifs, symbols, songs and dances that have existed prior to writing. As Noleen Turner (1986: 58) highlights, "ritual art

forms have lived on and will probably continue to live on regardless of whether they are recorded in writing or not". In addition, the oral nature of *Umhlanga* ritual is in line with Walter Ong's (1988: 8) description of "oral residue" which he views as pertaining "to the characteristics of orality which remain in the world of literacy even after the introduction of writing". Also intrinsic in the oral script is the mythical dimension of the ritual which is absent in the written official script discussed thus far. Myth is used to refer to the taboos and abstinences of customs associated with or accompanying *umcwasho and Umhlanga.* I use Abrams (1999: 170) definition of mythology as:

> A system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular group, and which served to explain why …things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives.

Most of the myths embedded in *umcwasho and Umhlanga* rites are related to social set norms and procedures to be observed during the ceremony. There are well known taboos by Swazis that surround these two rites which include the type of food to be eaten and language to be used by participants. For instance, when responding to a greeting an *umcwasho* carrying girl is supposed to say *simile* (we are standing) which can also be interpreted to mean we are solid or unshaken

2.3.1.1. Interviews with two Chiefs

In order to establish the significance and symbolic nature of the event, I solicited for an interview with Chief Jubiphathi Magagula, at his *umphakatsi* (headquarters) in the Nyakatfo area. The interview is shown in the following transcript:

LM: How is *Umhlanga* significant?

JM: It is a culture that is performed by girls who set out to cut reeds that are used as traditional windbreakers around the Queen Mother's residence and other royal residences.

LM: Do the girls participate in this ritual willingly?

JM: Yes, they do it out of their own free will. You see, in that group (pointing) there is an eight-year-old *Imbali* who is too young to be attending *Umhlanga.* If I were to send her back home, she would cry and that would affect the whole group. I have already instructed the leader not to allow her to join the marching *Imbali,* but to leave her behind and assign her to watch over the group's belongings.

LM: Do the girls benefit from participating in these rites: *umcwasho* and *Umhlanga?*

JM: Not only do the girls benefit, but the nation as a whole through the observation of these rites, *umcwasho* girls know that they are not supposed to engage in sex as that would result into premature pregnant.[council member interjects]

Council member: These rites' purpose is to safeguard and preserve girls' virginity until such time when they are ready for marriage. In fact, *umcwasho* is an advisory board for the girls as it embodies principles about the upbringing and conduct of Swazi girls in general. It is far much better than contraceptives and condoms.

LM: Will you yourself attend *Umhlanga* this year?

JM: Of course yes! I have a *lilawu* (man's hut) at Ludzidzini. It is our duty as chiefs to be in the company of the king during national rituals. He cannot be all by himself. You will see me there, fully dressed in my traditional attire**.**

The chief went on to narrate how he was once in the entourage of King Mswati III when he visited China in 2003. "I was wearing my traditional attire, *emajobo* [cow skin] and *belungu* [Europeans] wanted to know more about Swazi culture and customs from me. I told them all they wanted to know". What came out strongly in this interview was the sense of ownership of Swazi culture that was displayed by the chief and his council members. An elder who resides at Buhleni Royal residence in the Hhohho region echoed the chief's sentiments, emphasizing that Swazi traditions and culture should be preserved and not looked down upon. Chief Mvelase Mdluli explained that:

> Swazi culture and traditions are God given and will continue to be practiced as long as the Swazi monarchy exists. This is because the King is God's representative and we respect his wisdom. Do you remember King Solomon in the bible? God ordains kings and without them there would be no nations. Each time a Swazi King ascends the throne, he is by

> tradition expected to walk in the footsteps of his father. He is obliged by custom and culture to practice and perpetuate Swazi rituals[22].

All this is evidence of chiefs' loyalty to the monarch. It is not surprising that chiefs express great concern about the significance of Swazi tradition as it shall be shown later in the discussion that they are beneficiaries in the system.

2.3.1.2. Interview with elder Shungube

In an attempt to gain more insight into the mythical aura surrounding the event, I followed the purposeful sampling methodology to select an elder for an in-depth interview. The interview was solicited from Mrs Onicah (nee Masango) Shungube (see interview transcript in Apopendix J (i)). Mrs Onicah Shungube was born in 1921, is a former teacher who was appointed by King Sobhuza II in 1979 as a parliamentarian shown in the picture in Plate IX.

. Most important, is that Mrs Shungube attended *Umhlanga* in the early 1940s. Shungube narrated the nature of the ritual's performance six decades ago. The informant revealed that she had participated in *Umhlanga* from the age of 14 or 15 in the early 1940s. The interview that was held on 7th September 2006 at Shungube's home in Mliba was recorded and transcribed, proved to be most illuminating as it shed light into the research which addresses the question on the 'traditional ideology' of the ruling monarchy. I asked Mrs. Shungube to explain how *Umhlanga* was observed and performed during her time. She had this to say:[23]

> Since there were no radios during our time, area *tindvuna* or forerunners traveled from one homestead to the next announcing the commencement of *Umhlanga*. Parents were warned against deterring their girls from participating or else they would be fined. During our time, transport was not provided, so we had to walk long distances, first to the *Ndlovukati*'s royal residence Lobamba (now Ludzidzini) which took us about four to five days. The journey was difficult as we carried our sleeping mats, blankets and foodstuff on our heads. Once it became dark, we sought accommodation from nearby *umphakatsis* or chiefs' quarters. We did not mind the difficulties we encountered along the way. What was important

[22] Interview extract in Appendix H (ii)
[23] These informants allowed me to cite their true names for the study.

for us was to participate and perform in the one and only ritual that was set apart for us as *tintfombi takaNgwane* or maidens of the Swazi nation. In spite of all sorts of difficulties, the *Ngwenyama and Ndlovukati's* acknowledgement of our endeavour to preserve our virginity in celebration was the main motivation.



Plate X: Mrs Onicah Shungube 4th from the right Member of Parliament between 1979 and 1983.

It is worth noting that, nowadays, organizers of the event have incorporated transport provision for *Imbali* in the form of government trucks. Also, the event's performance is structured around eight days since the majority of the *Imbali* (performers) are school going. Time allocated for the event does not exceed the eight days.

Shungube further observed that the girls' purity is symbolized in their regimental names. "For instance, the regiment name preceding the *Imbali* or the 'Flower' in the late 1960s was *Ingabisa yemaSwati'* loosely translated, 'the Show-off of the Swazi Nation'. Both names encode the status

given to the girls as symbols of national 'pride.' Probed further on whether during her time chastity requirements were met by the girls, Shungube described how much pride was attached to ones '*butfobhi*' or maidenhood. According to the informant, *tintfombi* or maidens from the chiefdoms were known and the community looked up to them to be exemplary to the younger girls. Hence, *tintfombi* had a responsibility to abide by the chastity rules not only for their own sake but also for their families, chiefdoms, as well as the community[24]. Shungube elaborated:

> First of all, in order to make sure that *umcwasho* rules were followed, girls from each area used to monitor one another. Even if a girl was old enough to have a boyfriend, say 21 years old, she would not visit her boyfriend until the necessary arrangements for a traditional marriage were carried out. Still the fine of a cow would be paid if the girl got married during *umcwasho* period.

According to this informant, cutting the reeds was not done on an annual basis. Instead once in three or four years after hearing from the *Ngwenyama,* Area Chiefs in turn sent their forerunners to different homesteads to summon the area maidens using the royal salute *uYezwa na*! already discussed. Once delivered at the Lobamba royal residence the reeds were used for renovating the *iNdlovukati*'s residence and other Royal Residences spread throughout the country shown in the map on Figure 2.

At the forefront of the support and funding of the event is Tibiyo Taka Ngwane which is administered from the King's Office (at Lozitha Palace). Tibiyo is a major shareholder in the sugar industry amongst other big companies in the country. Tibiyo is also responsible for financing all royal rituals or functions. Following King Sobhuza II's explanation during the launch in 1968 where he pointed out that the purpose of Tibiyo, amongst others, was to "preserve…the customs and traditional institutions of the Swazi people" (Levin, 1990: 17). In what can be described as a move to promote and empower national rituals, new Tibiyo offices were set up at Ludzidzini Royal Residence in 2004. Information gathered revealed that officials in these offices concentrate on ensuring the smooth running of rituals which include providing

[24] During traditional weddings maidens put on *indlamu* regalia and join the ceremony in singing and dance. This also provides an opportunity for the matured ones to be spotted by potential suitors. According to informants, *tintfombi* normally got the opportunity to 'showcase their *butfobhi*' during community weddings.

various *emabutfo* (regiments) with transport (government trucks), food rations and accommodation throughout their stay[25]. This includes the boys' regiment called *tingatja* who cut *lusekwane* (tree branches) used in the construction of the King's *inhlambelo* (sacred kraal) during *Incwala* ceremony.

During their stay, regiments are provided with food rations that include chicken, beef and juice. In an interview with a senior official at the Ludzidzini Tibiyo offices, the informant explained that the "cows slaughtered and money used to cater for *emabutfo* come from the pocket of the *Ngwenyama*". This is not surprising in view of the fact that the King owns huge herds of cattle kept in his farms and palaces that are spread throughout the country. Further inquiries made about the source of food rations revealed that area Chiefs contribute some of the cows slaughtered for the occasion.

Findings revealed that each one of the performances between 2004 and 2007 has unique and emergent aspects discussed in the next chapter. This means that although structures and conventions may provide precedents and guidelines, however, the possibility for variability and alternatives is inevitable in the unfolding of the event. For instance, data findings revealed that despite organizers' expectations and representations of the event as uniting all Swazis "from all the four regions of the country" (radio reports) the event is not necessarily a universal performance as a large number of Swazis do not participate, nor do they send their daughters. It shall be seen in the course of the thesis that due to socio-cultural and political effects, the event has drawn a lot of criticism from members of pro-democracy activists who claim that a lot of the tax payer's money is wasted on the event while the majority of people are living in poverty. The question of forced labour is also pertinent in the discussion of the event's performance as sectors of society view the event as a scheme to force the country's citizens to perform royal duties.

[25] Additional information revealed that besides funding national rituals Tibiyo offers scholarship for royal children and provides scholarships for children from disadvantaged families at their secondary/high school education as well as chief's salaries.

2.4. Tribute Labour

The notion of tribute labor dates back to pre-colonial Swaziland. The re-introduction of *libutfo* system by Sobhuza II *as a policy* in schools in 1933 was a strategy to re-invent the concept of tribute labor. Sobhuza II re-introduced the *libutfo* system when he realized that missionary ethics were alienating Swazi traditions. The girls who formed a *libutfo* that observed the *umcwasho/umhlanga* rules also performed duties in the form of tribute labor. Area chiefs ensure that their subjects attend royal duties; otherwise fines are imposed on those who defy orders.

Each area chief assigns four *tindvuna* or guards to accompany the girls and be with them throughout the eight *Umhlanga* days. An awareness of the challenges faced by the guards during the event is discernible in the warning the chief made to a group of girls at Nyakatfo Residence[26]prior to the arrival of the government trucks. The chief made it very clear that girls who were once pregnant or currently pregnant should not dare join the *Imbali* regiment as they might "encounter misfortunes" [27]. He added that such carelessness could shame the name of the King and the land. The chief stressed the point that serious disciplinary measures would be taken against those who would be found outside the premises of the event and their families would pay heavy fines. Chief Jubiphathi Magagula said:

> We know that some of you leave your homes under the pretense of attending *Umhlanga* when in actual fact your main interest is to attend the 'Show'. The guards will report all those who leave *Umhlanga* settings and go loitering around the Trade Fair grounds in Manzini.

The chief's words indicate that in spite of tight security dispatched to watch the girls illustrated in the picture below in figure 4, there are likelihoods that the girls would disobey laid down rules.

[26] During my fieldwork and participatory observation on 26th August 2005 I had the opportunity to record proceedings at Chief Jubiphathi Magagula's *Umphakatsi* or Headquarters at Nyakatfo area. Following '*UYezwa Na*!' royal summon and clad in *emahiya* or traditional attire and wearing *umcwasho* girls arrived in groups registered and waited for government trucks to transport them to Ludzidzini Royal Residence.

[27] Girls' families who do not adhere to the rules are fined (a cow).

In an interview with two *tindvuna* on 26th August 2005 and again on 16th August 2007 they revealed that their duties included monitoring the movements of the girls and protecting them from any form of danger. "Some of the girls get uncontrollable when singing aboard the moving trucks and it is our duty to order them to 'sit down!'"[28]. *Ttindvuna* also revealed that they have to make sure that the girls control their excitement and avoid passing vulgar comments to pedestrians. *Tindvuna* also reported that before they go to sleep they ensure that all the girls are present.

The role played by area chiefs is significant as they are responsible for mobilizing *emabutfo* including *Imbali* each time there is a Royal Command. Levin (1990: 17) argues that the primary significance of tribute labor resides in the political rather than the economic power which it gives chiefs. Levin (1990: 19) further notes that most chiefs use tribute labor "as a means of stressing the unity of the chiefdom, and in asserting their traditional rights to summon people to cooperate in royal duties" and add "that chiefs benefited from the practices of forced labour and forced contributions as well as fines". In addition, a number of the local government institutions serve to promote the success and survival of *Umhlanga* and other kingship rituals. The Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services radio and TV stations broadcast announcements and report about the event's proceedings from beginning to end. The extract below serves as an example of how radio reporting of the 2005 *Umhlanga* proceedings from day one to day eight painted a traditional spectacle that should not be missed by young Swazi girls. The report is as follows:

- *Lapha sibona libutfo Imbali iphelele ngetinkhani iyahlabela!*
- *Maye uyashiywa wena Mbali longekho kutohlanganyela nalenye Imbali!*
- *Uyowutigcabha ngani njengeliSwati uma ungahlanganyeli kuhalisela butfobhi bakho kanye nalenye Imbali leyogeca umhlanga?*
- *Lesi sikhatsi sekuchayisa butfobhi bakho nekutigcabha ngemasiko etfu singeMaswati lamahle lahawukelwa ngulamanye emave!*

[28] One *indvuna* recalled an accident of a girl who was reported (*Times of Swaziland*) date to have fallen from a moving truck and died on the sport in the 2004 *Umhlanga.*

- Here we see 'The Flower' regiment *Imbali* in great numbers singing and celebrating their culture.
- We pity those members of the 'Flower' regiment who are not using this opportunity to embrace their culture!
- How are you going to boast to your children and be proud that you were once a member of the 'Flower' regiment and fully participated in *Umhlanga*?
- This is opportune time to display your womanhood and pride in your Swazi culture, which is the envy of many other nations.

The above discussion illustrates how the invention and reinvention of Swazi 'tradition' was and is central in strengthening the royal house's legitimacy within the country. Sobhuza II's endeavor to strengthen royal control through the use of the traditional ideology dates back to the main motive behind building the country's first national school founded in 1931, based in Matsapha. Vail (1991: 169) points out that the school gave:

> Royalists an educational institution that was beyond the control of white missionaries hostile to Swazi customs and values and that was exclusively devoted to the cultivation of the spirit of Swazi tradition and all that went with it.

In an attempt to reinstate the position of the monarchy, Sobhuza II inculcated Swazi tradition especially in the face of what he considered alien cultural teachings by the missionaries. Swazi writers such as Matsebula (1983) inform us that the Swazi people and their traditions were not left unaffected by British cultural imperialism. For instance, misunderstandings of traditional ceremonies, particularly *umcwasho* and *Umhlanga* rites led to a meeting between Conference of Churches members and King Sobhuza II's Councillors in 1970. Drawing examples from the meeting that was held in 1970 over the issue of the appropriateness of the *indlamu* dress code and *umcwasho* rite, Matsebula (1983: 107) states:

> To some, European tradition was equated with Christianity, and anything that was not based on the European way of life was unchristian. Western dress, even the all-revealing mini skirt, was acceptable. But anything that was Swazi tradition, such as *sidvwaba* (skin skirt) or *indlamu* (traditional

> short skirt worn during the ceremony) was labelled 'unchristian' because it showed the body of the girls.

Evidence proves that mission churches always discredited Swazi tradition and cultures, always labelling them 'uncouth, immoral' and so on. In the same way, the authorities of the Conference of Churches discredited *umcwasho* rite. Matsebula (1983:107) informs us that one minister of religion was charged and tried by the Swazi Court, which found him guilty of trying to obstruct the ceremony "by trying to force the girls belonging to his church not to take part in the ceremony because it was unchristian".

Matsebula describes the attitude of the Conference of Churches representatives as "the result of ignorance and lack of understanding and appreciation of the ceremony and its meaning" (1983: 107). Reiterating what transpired in the meeting in which he was the chairperson, Matsebula (1983:107) tells us that the Conference members were reminded that the main purpose of *umcwasho* and *Umhlanga* ceremonies was:

> To protect the girls' chastity from external influences. The Swazis feel that certain unchaste practices have been introduced by the western way of life. By keeping them to the strict rules of *umcwash*o the girls' morals were protected.

In response to the explanation, the leader of the Conference of Churches delegation is reported to have simply said: "We are satisfied that the aims of the ceremony are in the interest of young people and the interpretations we have heard are true" (1983:108). One can argue that, may be on realizing that a head-on confrontation with King Sobhuza II might jeopardize their relationship and affect their stay in the country, the Conference members decided to compromise their puritanical Christian ethics and pretended as if they understood the validity of *umcwasho* and *indlamu*. To further emphasize the cultural confrontation that ensued, Matsebula cites a speaker who was defending *umcwasho* rite who asked the Conference members, "What kind of dress did God, the Creator, prescribe? And if he came here today, what dress would he be wearing"? According to Matsebula none of the Conference representatives could answer those questions. It should be mentioned that Matsebula's position as pro-monarchy is not surprising given that he was King Sobhuza II's private Secretary as illuminated in his book entitled *The Kings' Eye*

which when translated into siSwati mean *Liso LeNkhosi.* Amongst other duties, Matsebula was "Chief Executive Officer of the SNTC for 20 years.

In sum, the ritual space allows us to glean at contending forces within Swazi society. Traditional authorities struggle to balance the traditionalism with modernity in an attempt to embrace change. The interview with Chief Mvelase Mdluli illustrates this point where he says:

> As Swazis we are obliged to practice our traditional art forms that can be traced to the founders of the Swazi nation. The fact that we wear western clothes does not mean that we are ignorant of our tradition. Although you see me wearing these trousers as soon as I hear the royal call *Uyezwa na!* summoning a regiment I simply put aside this as you can see they are not stuck on my body and simply put on my traditional regalia (*emahiya and emajobo etc).*

Although the position of the speaker is indicated in his emphasis that 'our traditional art forms are traced to founders or forefathers of the country' there are disjunctions between tradition and western influence. For instance, at the time of the interview with the chief, although he was at the Buhleni royal residence in his *lilawu* (man's hut) he was, however, wearing western clothes, trousers and a jacket.

2.5. Conclusion

The chapter has looked at the structure of the event which involves a number of settings. The oral literary nature of the event has been illustrated in the announcements, settings and contexts as well as *Umhlanga* symbols. The organization of the event which is structured on a sequence of 8 days further illustrate the plot of the event whose climax is on Day 7 when *Imbali* fully dressed in *Umhlanga* regalia and adorned in different assortments of modern artifacts (such as *emaduku,* jewellery, facial and hair make-up) sing and dance for the audience. *Umhlanga* has been discussed as a chastity rite, a form of tribute labor and art performance that illuminates the monarchy as the patron of tradition. This is shown in that Tibiyo Taka Ngwane which is administered from the King's Office and is not answerable to government, finances the event and all other royal ceremonies. The discussion highlighted that there are conflicting views in the

reception of the ritual in its entity posing questions on validity as rite that instills moral norms and values particularly amongst the girls/ or *Imbali.*

Contrary to the elder's (and traditionalists) expectations, findings revealed that each one of the performances between 2004 and 2007 exhibited subversive actions not in line with *Umhlanga* rules (discussed in Chapter Four as influences of modernity). This shows that although structures and conventions may provide precedence and guidelines, the possibility for variability and alternatives is inevitable in the unfolding of the event. For instance, data findings further revealed that despite the organizers representations of the event as uniting all Swazis 'from all the four regions of the country' (radio reporters) the event is not necessarily a universal performance as a large number of Swazis do not participate nor do they send their daughters. In that regard, the event's performance has drawn a lot of criticism from members of pro-democracy activists who claim that most of the tax payer's money is wasted on the annual staging of the event while the majority of Swazi people are living in poverty. The subsequent chapter discusses and analyses *Umhlanga* songs recorded during the performances between 2005 and 2007.

CHAPTER THREE
UMHLANGA SONGS AND SYMBOLS.

3.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on discussing and analyzing *Umhlanga* songs and its symbols. The aim is to demonstrate how song performance and symbols all embedded in *Umhlanga* contribute to its being interpreted as a literary performance. The analysis follows scholars' assertion that oral (and traditional) literature can be realized as a literary product through its performance, where the "performer formulates it in words on a specific occasion" (Finnegan, 1970: 2). It is illustrated in this chapter that the event's musical and dance art forms come alive during song performance. It is argued that *Umhlanga* receives its fulfillment when it is actually performed in front of an audience. It is further argued that in order for one to understand the ritual's full meaning there is need to elucidate its symbolic nature that involve settings and contexts, song and dance, costumes and an array of artifacts such as shields and flags. Therefore, firstly, this chapter examines *Umhlanga* songs (and dance) to elucidate how they contribute to the research question asked in this thesis. The second part of the discussion examines *Umhlanga* symbols. In this way, the ritual space becomes a window through which the Swazi people's socio-economic and political situation can be viewed.

Observations made in this chapter derive from my fieldwork data and secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines and history books. *Umhlanga* songs are divided into four categories. These are songs: First, sung by *Imbali* on arrival at the Royal Residences (Day One); second, during the march to and from the reed sites (Day Two and Day Four); third, when delivering *umhlanga* reed bundles at the cattle byre (Day Six); Fourth when entering the arena to dance for the audience and perform *giya* dances (mainly by princesses) on the main day of the event (Day Seven).

The concept performance is used here to imply the total act as well as the context involved in the delivery of songs and symbols relating to the significance of *Umhlanga*. Finnegan (1992: 108) points out that "song delivery can be directly represented through the dramatic art of the performer, often through the use of such techniques as direct speech, gestures, or dramatization". She further observes that "links between oral performances and physical texts are sometimes seen in the 'kinetics' which are expressed in body language, gestures involving movement. Thus, through repetition, gestures, and other forms of non-verbal expression, the form of song delivery tends to convey much of the meaning.

My understanding of *Umhlanga* song meanings was enriched by my observation of the event. I was able to listen to song messages and also sought explanations or interpretations from informants in cases where meanings were obscure. Members of *Imbali* explained in interviews "singing *Umhlanga* songs is our main attraction in the event especially during the march(es) and main dance(s) at Ludzidzini"[29]. I also noticed that one of the resources available for the girls to exploit in song performance is the "highly tonal nature" of the siSwati language. For instance, lead singers (usually four) for each group carry whistles which they blow in tune with the song and dance steps. While observing the 2006 *Umhlanga* I noticed that leader of *Imbali* regiment Sindie Tfwala proved to be a skilled and resourceful dancer and singer as she strived to manipulate the emotions of *Imbali* by taking them through a variety of songs throughout the event particularly during the main dance at Ludzidzini on 30th August 2006.and Ngabezweni.

3.1. *Umhlanga* Songs

The durability of the songs is sustained as performers' (*Imbali*) retain their popularity over many years. As already illustrated in the previous chapter *Umhlanga* songs permeate the event throughout its 8 days. Over the years (of the study) the first songs sung by *Imbali* on arrival at the Royal Residences beginning on the official day (Day 2) when they meet their majesties, first,

[29] Nowadays girls interested in learning *Umhlanga* songs do so in their schools during extra curricula activities. My observation has revealed that in most schools both at Primary School Certificate level and secondary school level there are traditional dance teams organized under the title *'Ummiso*'. During this time, pupils learn traditional dances in which some of *Umhlanga* songs are sang. It should be noted that unlike *Incwala's* sacred songs, *Umhlanga* songs are sang anywhere and at anytime such as during traditional weddings and at other cultural events as well as by dance troupes to entertain visiting dignitaries in the country.

*iNdlovukati*and at Ludzidzini and next *iNgwenyama* at Ngabezweni is entitled *Sesikhona Ngwane* or we have arrived Ngwane (referring to the Dlamini dynasty). In 2006 the song was sung for about 20 minutes at Ludzidzini. It goes like this:

(Lead singers)	*Sesikhona Ngwane sesikhona Dlamini.*
(Chorus)	*Sesikhona sitowubuka lokuhle.*
(Lead singers	*Sivulele Ngwane sesikhona Dlamini*
(Chorus)	*Tsine sitowubuka lokuhle.*

(Lead singers)	We have arrived Ngwane we have arrived Dlamini
(Chorus)	We have arrived to observe what is good
(Lead singers)	Open for us Ngwane we have arrived Dlamini
(Chorus)	We are here to observe what is good.

In this song, the girls are reporting that they have arrived at the royal residence after heeding the *Uyezwa na!* announcement. The presence of the *Ndlovukati* to receive *Imbali* and be the first one to disperse them highlights her role as the Mother of the nation and patron of *Umhlanga* ceremony. 'To observe what is good' can be interpreted as acknowledgement in appreciation of *Umhlanga* as a valuable (or good) custom. According to an explanation by an elderly informant '*sivulele Ngwane'* (open for us Ngwabe), means that the girls are pleading with their King (or ancestors) to "receive them and bless them as they participate in this important ritual/or tradition". The *Imbali* are then in dialogue with the Ngwane kings (who are in the ancestral or spiritual world).

In the above song the girls articulate their adherence to a royal command which reverberates over the country's radios for a week or more (at least 7e times a day)'s in the *Uyezwa na!* Announcement. Through this song which is sung by throngs of girls exceeding 30 000 (according to local media reports) the controversial *mlomo longa cali manga* is supported. As the announcement order *tintfombi kuwo onkhe emagumbi lamane emhlaba* or maidens from all the four regions of the country from all the four regions to attend, the study findings revealed that

indeed *Imbali* come from the four regions of the country. This is evident in the announcement which specifies that.

3.1.1. Chastity Songs

A song that illustrates the purpose of the event as a chastity ceremony is entitled '*Tsine siyiMbali yemaSwati, akunamfana longatsintsa tsine'* meaning 'We are the Swazi Flower, there is no boy who can touch us'. It should be noted that *libutfo Imbali* was named by King Mswati III in 2001 following the introduction of the *umcwasho* (already discussed in the introduction chapter. King Mswati III cited two reasons for introducing the 2001 *umcwasho.* Firstly, *umcwasho* was re-introduced in order to '*kukhulisa'* or initiate to maturity the King's first born daughter, Sikhanyiso. Secondly it was introduced as a traditional strategy to curb the HIV/AIDS scourge. Ironically, two months after *umcwasho* announcement, King Mswati chose two *umcwasho* girls as his fiancées. The King's action indicates ambiguities and inconsistencies surrounding the tradition and custom. For instance, the King's action was explained by traditionalists interviewed (media reports) as in line with the tradition saying:

> No one is above *umcwasho rules.* Not even the king himself as he was fined a cow for taking the then *Liphovela* laNtentesa as his bride while she was still observing *umcwash* rules, and another beast for *Liphovela* la-Mahlangu.

Nevertheless, following the discarding of *umcwasho* in 2005 (shown in pictures in the introduction chapter) to celebrate their virginity after adhering with *umcwasho* dictates the girls sung the following song:

(Lead singers)	*Tsine siyiMbali, siyiMbali, siyiMbali yemaSwati!*
(Chorus)	*Akuna mfana longatsintsa tsine!*
(Lead singers)	*Tsine siyiMbali, siyiMbali, siyiMbali yemaSwati!*
(Chorus)	*Akuna mfana longatsintsa tsine!*

(Lead singers) We are the Flower, the Flower, the Flower of the Swazi!

(Chorus) There is no boy who can touch us!

(Lead singers) We are the Flower, the Flower, the Flower of the Swazi!

(Chorus) There is no boy who can touch us!

This song conveys the symbolic nature of *Imbali or* flower which is used throughout the thesis to emphasize that *Imbali* regiment represents the future (mothers) of the nation. Therefore, while celebrating their virginity, the girls warn the boys/men that they can not be 'touched'.[30]

Ironically a song that undermines and contradicts the chastity rite was sung during the march to Ngabezweni and again on arrival. This song which is popular even during traditional wedding ceremonies is entitled '*Wangiphatsa kwaze kwasa yemlamu wami*' and goes as follows:

(Lead singers) *Wangiphats'emabhuswini yemu lami wami*

(Chorus) *Wangiphatsa kanjani?*

(Lead singers) *Wangiphatsa kwaze kwasa yemu lamu wami*

(Chorus) *Wangiphatsa kanjani?*

(Lead singers) *Wangiphatsa kwaze kwakhala make laphe khaya*

(Chorus) *Wangiphatsa kanjani*

(Lead singers) You touch me in most sensitive parts my in-law

(Chorus) How do you touch me?

(Lead singers) You touch me up till morning hours my in-law

(Chorus) How do you touch me?

(Lead singers) You touch me until the woman of the house cries.

(Chorus) How do you touch me?

[30] Informants revealed that a number of girls did fall pregnant during *umcwasho* season adding, 'but of course the men's families responsible for contravening *umcwasho* rules paid the fines in the form of a cow for impregnating *Imbali.*

In this song *Imbali* register their grievances in protest against what can be considered to be men's infidelity, and the abuse of girls and women in the name of culture. This song in particular, articulates injustices entrenched in Swazi cultures/ or customs that tend to subjugate women (and girls) to patriarchal dictates such as the *kulamuta*[31] custom the song alludes to. In this song *kulamuta* is viewed as abusive to girls/ or women as it does not allow them room to choose whether they want to be with this man (in-law) or not. Such a custom also encourages gender discrimination, infidelity and sexual inappropriateness (a discussion carried out in Chapter Five).

Hofmeyr (1993) observes that song performance in oral literature is used as site for women to voice their grievances. She argues that through song performance the informal power of women is exercised as a tool for socio-cultural protest. Seen in that light, the above song can be described as vehicle protest against the patriarchal structures of Swazi society that shape women's conditions. Through this cong society is sensitized to females (young and old) suffering and abuse by patriarchal practices that sexually objectify women. The part about the 'crying of the woman of the house' refers to the in-law's official wife. This shows that both women are not comfortable about the man's behavior. While the older woman is left without a companion, the younger woman is having miserable nights and at the same time aware of her elder sister's misery.

Ironically, in 2008, I noticed that as soon as *Imbali* arrived at Ngabezweni were received by the King, *emajaha* and his entourage, a song that counters the above was sung. The song in which the *Imbali* also participated as lead singers went like this:

(Lead singers)	*Yesibali kungisele!*
(Chorus)	*Abalamu bami baphi Abalamu bami baphi!*
(Lead singers)	*Yesibali kungisele!*
(Chorus)	*Abalamu bami baphi Abalamu bami baphi!*
(Lead singers)	*Mswati uyalibusa live lonkhe!*
(Chorus)	*Vumani bo! vumani bondaba!*

[31] This custom is practiced by men in cases where a younger sister would come to assist her elder sister soon after or during maternity. The brother in-law would then come to his in law's room (the visitor) uninvited and seduce her which often results to her pregnancy.

(Lead singers)	*Mswati uyiNkhosi yeSwatini!*
(Chorus)	*Vumani bo! vumani bondaba!*
(**Lead singers)**	My in-law I woke up late!
(Chorus)	My in-laws where are they, My in-laws where are they
(Lead singers)	My in-law I woke up late!
(Chorus)	My in-laws where are they, My in-laws where are they?
(Lead singers)	Mswati rules the whole country!
(Chorus)	Agree Ho! Agree rumour mongers!
(Lead singers)	Mswati rules the whole country!
(Chorus)	Agree Ho! Agree rumour mongers!

In this song (which went on for about 15 minutes) as the king and his entourage joined the *Imbali* in dance at Ngabezweni palace, the latter seem to be apologetic in the phrase *Yesibali kungisele!* or My in-law I woke up late! With the men answering in chorus saying: *Abalamu bami baphi Abalamu bami baphi! Yebalamu bami! yeba lamu bami!* Or My in-laws where are they, My in-laws where are they? In this context the meaning of the song changes as instead of protesting about being touched by the 'in law' in 'sensitive parts' resulting in the 'sister's misery', *Imbali* keeps on repeating the phrase *Yesibali kungisele!* and seem to be in compliance with the *lamuta* custom. It can also be inferred that *Imbali* not openly criticize Swazi culture in the presence of the *Ngwenyama* who is responsible for their dispersal to the campsites and subsequently the reed sites[32].

The phrase saying: *Mswati uyalibusa live lonkhe!* Or Mswati rules the whole country! with the chorus (men) replying: *Vumani bo! vumani bondaba!* or Agree Ho! Agree rumour mongers! suggests the monarch's absolute power (discusses in detail in Chapter Four). Although the custom of '*kulamuta'* is scorned upon by women and human rights activists they cannot directly tell the king that it is a bad culture. This is more so because the King and Swazi men are by Swazi culture and custom eligible to *kulamuta.* The custom of *kulamuta* can also be read as a

[32] Although the custom of '*kulamuta'* is scorned upon by women and human rights activists they cannot directly tell the king that it is a bad culture. This is more so because the King and Swazi men (and *emejaha)* are by Swazi culture and custom eligible to *kulamuta.*

form of polygamy as in the event of the younger sister getting a child from the in-law she eventually becomes a second wife and her 'husband' pays *lobola* to his in-laws for the second time. This custom is viewed as worthwhile by traditional Swazi men as they are assured of getting *lobola* for their daughters. Similarly, when the King marries from a particular clan the parents (and family) of that particular girl are not remorse as they are assured of *lobola*.

While it can be argued that *Umhlanga* is a forum used by traditional authorities to instill and inculcate Swazi culture it also raises an awareness of gender /or girl abuse as articulated in the two songs respectively. It is then not surprising that not all Swazi people support Swazi rituals such as *Umhlanga.* For instance some parents in interviews expressed 'fear' in sending their daughters 'there'. For instance, an informant who is a Christian declared that, "over my dead body! I will never allow my daughters to step their feet on those grounds. It's kind of 'spooky and ghostly'" (July 2005, see interview extract Appendix N (iii)). Probed further the informant described the event as one in which:

> Girls are brought into contact with settings that are pervaded by spirits connected to ancestors, immoral language evident in the types of the content of songs they sing, indecent short *indlamu* that is supposed to be worn without panties, and to make matters worse they are made to walk and dance bare footed inside the arena.

There is no doubt in my view that this informant understands and interpretation of the event is influenced mainly by her Christian background despite the fact that she is a born Swazi. A song that connotes issues of immoral behavior and seems to confirm the 'fears' surrounding *Umhlanga* is the following:

(Lead singers)	*Ngikhandze ligcabho letfu lijumile*
(Chorus)	*Jikajika ngisayo tjel' indvuna*
(Lead singers)	*Ngikhandze ligcabho letfu lijumile*
(Chorus)	*Jikajika ngisayo tjeli' indvuna*
(Lead singers)	I found our pride in a man's hut!
(Chorus)	Turn Turn! I'm going to report to the guard!

(Lead singers) I found our pride in a man's hut!
(Chorus) **t**urn Turn! I'm going to report to the guard!

This song was sung during the march and on the main days of the dance. This song raises questions on the validity of the 'virginity' aspect as this particular girl was caught red-handed in a man's *lilawu* (a room for an unmarried *lijaha* or young man). The incident poses a question to the authenticity of the *umcwasho* and *Umhlanga* guidelines. One would expect to pour scorn on this particular girl (at least in song form) instead of simply reporting her to *indvuna*[33]. This observation is be further supported in a letter by a '*Imbali'* who set out for *Umhlanga.* This particular story is cited wholesome as it connotes 'immoral behaviour' practiced by some of *Imbali'*[34]. The story entitled *Virginity Crusade* is as follows.

> Christmas just came too early for me. I really thank the 'big man' for restoring our culture and tradition; look how easy it is to make quick money simply because one is going to take part down there. *Asiyukukhohlwa impela* (we will never forget you for sure!) Hold your breath my good friend, after leaving home, I called my boyfriend, Ace. Remember Ace? We met with Ace around town and I gave him all sorts of complaints about money and food. He listened. He gave me E100 plus Kentucky Fried Chicken barrel! Surely the heavens were about the fall. So much luck in a short space of time. The Gods were smiling on me really! When we parted with Ace, I went to the Central Bank of Swaziland, where my brother-in-law is a supervisor in the Research Department. I cried, whined and made all sorts of complaints about having very little money to take with me to Ludzidzini. He pitied me and said he could only have E100 to spare! I thanked him for his "generosity". By now I had E400. *Awucabange nje*. 4 clipper *ngespidi nje mfana…lula kanjalo nje*! As soon as I reached Ludzidzini, I hooked with three of my friends and we devoured my first chicken in no time. We raised E30 each and sneaked our way to the army barracks nearby where we bought three bottles of Autumn Harvest and had a ball. When the *Indvuna* noticed that something was wrong with the four of us, we just gave him E10 and the idiot kept quiet. Simple. In short, my dear friend, next year I am going there again. I really had a jolly good time. We also sneaked to the Trade Fair and silenced the prefects with the waters of mortality. Good Times indeed.

[33] Findings revealed that some *tindvuna* are not disciplined themselves as they take bribes from the girls. At times *tindvuna* would leave *Umhlanga* vicinity to imbibe in traditional/or modern alcoholic beverages sold in near by homesteads.
[34] *TSO* (26th August 2005) in the Guest Columns section

A number of elements that touch on the Swazi people's socio-economic background are illuminated in the above story. To start with, upon leaving home the girls are need food provisions and pocket money. Some girls revealed in interviews that 'attending *Umhlanga* provided them with an opportunity to take a break from the monotonous and under nourishing *ligusha* (slippery vegetable eaten with porridge/or pap)'. For these girls *Umhlanga* presented an opportunity to eat beef and chicken.

Other informants revealed that in order to survive the eight *Umhlanga* days would need E300. They insisted that they always need pocket money to buy food provisions as the queues are too long explaining that:

> Sometimes you could be in the queue for two hours only to find that by the time you are near getting your ration the food gets finishes…you could die of hunger if your parents do not provide you with pocket money.

According to these informants besides buying foodstuff, they use the money to buy jewellery, cosmetics (and facial make up) and use it to take pictures they pose for on the main day. It shall be shown in Chapter Four how the advent of modernity and globalization exposes girls to significant shifts as they are caught in between the flux of tradition and modernity. Thus, given that some girls come from poverty stricken families, the prospect of asking for money from boy friends and 'sugar-daddies' alluded to in the above story can not be ruled out.

The money aspect is very sensitive as it exposes girls to immature and promiscuous relationships that contradict the objectives of *Umhlanga.* The aspect of money is expounded in a popular song entitled *lishumi labompondo* (ten pounds) sang over the years which go as follows:

(**Lead singers)**	*Watsi unginika imali kani ungika lishumi labo pondo*!
(Chorus)	*Lishumi labo pondo*! *Lishumi labo pondo*
(Lead singers)	*Watsi uginila imali kani unginika sheleni*
(Chorus)	*Lishumi labo pondo*! *Lishumi labo pondo*
(Lead singers)	*Lishumi labo pondo*
(Chorus)	*Lishumi labo pondo Lishumi labo pondo*

(Lead singers)	*Lishumi labo pondo*
(Chorus)	*Lishumi labopondo Lishumi labo pondo*
(Lead singers)	You said you were giving me money but you gave me only ten pounds!
(Chorus)	Ten pounds! Ten pounds!
(Lead singers)	You said you were giving me money but you gave me only ten shillings!
(Chorus)	Ten pounds! Ten pounds! (Chorus)
(Lead singers)	Ten pounds!
(Chorus)	Ten pounds! Ten pounds! (Chorus)
(Lead singers)	Ten pounds!
(Chorus)	Ten pounds! Ten pounds! (Chorus)

In this song the girls are addressing issues of inflation indicating that the amount 10 Pounds is of little value (not money at all). This again shows awareness amongst the girls that 'they are worth far more than that 10pounds". This is emphasized in the repetition of the phrase, *Lishumi labo pondo*! *Lishumi labo pondo*. This awareness can be extended to interpret the value of *intfombi* or *Imbali* in Swazi culture. For instance, when marrying an *Imbali* or *intfombi,* a young man (*lijaha)* is expected to pay *lobola* which amounts to not less than 18 cows[35].

The girls' awareness about their value as *Imbali* is also discerned in the song about the economic background of their fiancée. In the following song the girls show their attraction to the expensive and modern music that is played at the fiancé's home through the stereo (Hi-Fi) system. This shows that 'love' is also bases of one's material possession. The song is as follows:

(Lead singers)	*Kuhle ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*
(Chorus)	*Ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*
(Lead singers)	*Kuhle ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*
(Chorus)	*Ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*

[35] According to Swazi society when paying *lobola* you pay by cows and not money captured in the siSwati saying that '*tinkhomo letihamba ngemasondvo'* or cows walking on their hoofs.

(Lead singers) Its beautiful at my darling's home, there is Hi-fi-music!

(Chorus) At my darling's home there is Hi-fi music!

(Lead singers) Its beautiful at my darling's home, there is Hi-fi-music!

(Chorus) At my darling's home there is Hi-fi music!

It can be further inferred from this song that some of the girls have identified their prospect husbands. The following section examines song improvisation in *Umhlanga* songs.

3. 2. Song Improvisation

Song improvisation in *Umhlanga* confirms oral literary scholars' observation about the flexible nature of traditional forms as they are never static. Song improvisation was noticed throughout the eight *Umhlanga* days as *Umhlanga* songs mutate to accommodate social-cultural transformations as illustrated in the song entitled *Tsine siyiMbali yemaSwati*. The common pattern is for some of the words to be substituted whilst maintaining the original form of the song over time. For example, the preceding girls regiment called *Ingabisa* used the same tune and dance steps to sing *Tsine siyiNgabisa yeMaswati, akekho mfana longa tsintsa tsine.* Except for substituting the word *siyiNgabisa* with *siyiMbali* the current regiment has retained the form and tune of the song.

As already illustrated in the above songs through song improvisation, *Imbali* are able to manoeuvre the scope of *Umhlanga* songs to accommodate contemporary socio-economic and political challenges facing Swazi society. Song improvisation has significantly enabled *Imbali* to incorporate songs that address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The songs are also in line with the re-invention of *umcwasho* rite by King Mswati III in 2001. The following song advances awareness message about HIV/AIDS:

(Lead singer) *Inyandzaleyo Malangeni!*

(Chorus) *Nawe ingakutfola iAIDS*

(Lead singer) *Hlala ngentfombi Ntfombatana!*

(Chorus)	*Nawe ingakutfola iAIDS*
(Lead singer)	*i- AIDS ibhokile lonyaka.*
(Chorus)	*Nawe ingakutfola iAIDS*
(Lead singer)	*Beware Malangeni!*
(Chorus)	*You too will be caught by AIDS*
(Lead singer)	*Sit like a lady, girl!*
(Chorus)	*You too will be caught by AIDS*
(Lead singer)	*AIDS is widespread this year*
(Chorus)	*You too will be caught by AIDS*

The song addresses the HIV/AIDS scourge that is ravaging the socio-economic stability of Swaziland. Through this song, the girls use the ritual space to articulate socio-economic challenges facing the Swazi people. The '*inyandzaleyo*' cry is only used in instances where someone is in danger, often during the night. At times, the alarm cry is made when there is fire. Such a cry would wake neighbours who would in turn come to the rescue of the victim(s) fully armed and ready for action. It is meant to awaken the whole neighbourhood, men and women alike. In the same vein, the song carries an awareness message and goes a step further to warn society about the reality of the pandemic. The opening word *'inyandzaleyo*,' is a loud and shrill cry, which is understood in the siSwati language as an oral alarm. In the context of the ritual, the song can be interpreted as a call to the whole nation to take up 'arms' in order to wrestle with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It cautions, first the nation in general and then the girls in particular, to conduct themselves well and 'to sit like a lady'. To 'sit ladylike' in siSwati literally means bringing your knees and legs together. This symbolizes good girl conduct. Through this song, the girls enter into dialogue with spectators, revolutionizing spectatorship by demanding a kinship and new means of perception.

In line with the above song is the song that can be interpreted as a prayer. In this song the girls are articulating how they are overwhelmed by calamities that surround the nation (also illustrated in the '*kulamuta'* song already discussed). In the next song *Imbali* appeal to *Nkulunkulu* or God to give them strength (health) to survive or overcome all the depravations that pervade Swazi

society and the global world. The song which has become popular over the study years is as follows:

(Lead singers)	*Nkulunkulu ngicela emandla ngiboningwenya lapha ekhaya*
(Chorus)	*Wayiva ngabani? Wayiva ngabani?*
(Lead singers)	*Nkulunkulu ngicela emandla ngibon ingwenya lapha ekhaya*
(Chorus)	*Wayiva ngabani? Wayiva ngabani?*
(Lead singers)	*Mine ngibona ingwenya lapha ekhaya*
(Chorus)	*Wena wayiva ngabani? Wayiva ngabani ingwenya lapha ekhaya?*
(Lead singers)	*Nkulunkulu ngicela emandla ngibon ingwenya lapha ekhaya*
(Chorus)	*Wayiva ngabani lapha ekhaya! Wayiva ngabani?*

To see a crocodile at one's homestead is taboo and unheard of as a crocodile is supposed to remain in big rivers or water. What this means is that something strange is happening and the girls are praying that God should give them the strength and courage to face challenges and difficult situations they encounter. It can be inferred that the girls are praying to God to protect the nation from all sorts of 'evil'. Furthermore, in this song, it is noticed that the belief system of the Swazi people have been influenced by Christianity as *Nkulunkulu* in *siSwati* refers to the biblical God (Jehovah). This song can also be understood as a national prayer with regard to the continuity of Swazi tradition. By asking for strength, *Imbali* are inferring that there are challenges facing Swazi cultures such as *Umhlanga* (i.e. *kulamuta*) where their relevance and validity are questioned. The following section examines the solo *giya* songs.

3.3. *Giya Songs*

The *giya* part of the event takes place on the main *Umhlanga* day. The *giya* session is reserved mainly for the leader *indvuna* (Sindie Tfwala in 2006) and princesses d[36]. The following song

[36] *Imbali* and members of the general public have registered their complaint that only princess's *giya* for the audience who are mostly tourists or visitors. They feel that the limelight is stolen by the princesses. Informants revealed that they do not go into the arena on the main day of the event saying, "after participating in the marches, cutting and delivery of reeds we join the audience to watch the princesses as they are the ones who *giya* for the audience'.

has been sung throughout the period of this study. In 2007 princess Temaswati displayed her skills when the song entitled '*Ayasikisa emagabazi akaNgwane'* meaning 'The Ngwane expects are showing off their dance skills'. Her dancing skills were enhanced by the musical sound made by the *emafahlawane* and the whistle that she blew in tune with her dance steps. Tfwala was followed by princess Temaswati who exhibited her unique dancing skills also displaying very expensive *indlamu* and jewellery (necklace, hand band, earrings and so on). The song is as follow:

(Lead singers) God please give me strength I see a crocodile in this home!
(Chorus) Told you about it?
(Lead singers) God please give me strength I see a crocodile in this home!
(Chorus) Told you about it?
(Lead singers) Myself I see a crocodile in this home!
(Chorus) Yourself who told you about it! Who told you about it in this home?
(Lead singers) God please give me strength I see a crocodile in this home!
(Chorus) Told you about it in this home? Who told you about it?

(Lead singers) *Awubheke emagabazi akaNgwane!*
(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane!*
(Lead singers) *Ayasikisa emagabazi akaNgwane!*
(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane*
(Lead singers) *Awubheke emagabazi akaNgwane!*
(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane*
(Lead singers) *Ayasikisa emagabazi akaNgwane!*
(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane*

(Lead singers) Watch these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*
(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*
(Lead singers) They are showing off these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

.

(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Lead singers) Watch these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Lead singers) They are showing off these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

In this song the princesses represents skilled dancers of the nation *imbali* as they display their unique dance styles. While exhibiting their skills they also innovate new styles, to the delight of the spectators. Attention is not just paid to words but also to how they are delivered. Elements such as intonation, speech, rhyme, tone, dramatization, rhetorical devices and performance techniques are utilized.

The last to perform the *giya* dance for the public (2004 to 2008) was *Umhlanga* Princess, *iNkhosatana* Sikhanyiso as she was popular referred to by members of the *imbali* regiment. The following is the princess's song in 2007:

(Lead singers) *Lelive belinga nje! Belinga nje!*

(Chorus) *Uboqhakaza ntombe mhlophe!*

(Lead singers) *Yelomabuya sambe! Yelomabuya sambe!*

(Chorus) *Uboqhakaza ntombe mhlophe!*

(Lead singers) The country was not like this! It was not like this!

Chorus) You must blossom fair looking girl!

(Lead singers) Come let us go! Come let us go!

(Chorus) You must blossom fair girl

The first lines saying 'the country was not like this' articulates changes that have taken place not only in the country but in the performance of the event itself. Such changes that have taken place are evident in the incorporation of western elements into the event. The words 'blossom' (light up or shine) 'fair girl', can be read to be an appraisal for the princess' complexion and the

innovations that she has introduced in the event's performance over the years. The song can also be read as illuminating the dramatic aspects of *Umhlanga.*

Over the period of the study, I noticed that the event took a dramatic turn the moment Sikhanyiso's step out to perform the *giya.* Indeed she has become popular as she had led *Imbali* for four years. As such she has become an icon for for some members of *imbali.* It is interesting to note the princess's vision on Day Two the event in the 2007 *Umhlanga* (recorded on TV)[37]. Sikhanyiso described the event like this:

> This year's *Umhlanga* is amazing. I have never seen such numbers. To show that this year's event is extraordinary soon after dispersal from Ludzidzini upon reaching the dry river and while we were about to start ascending the small hill, I saw angels up there in the heavens. This is a sign that God and the ancestors are happy about our ritual and look this year about 100 000 girls have joined *Umhlanga* and other girls are from outside the country even as far as England. This year we have been blessed[38].

This description of the event in sentimental/ or romantic terms by the princess illustrates her position in the event not only as *iNkhosatana* but senior (first born daughter) royal maiden. Seen in this light she has a duty to pass on the legacy of *Umhlanga* to her siblings and her members of her regiment *Imbali.*

3.4. *Umhlanga* Symbols

This section focuses on *Umhlanga* symbols. These range from its settings and contexts, costume and artifacts, dance forms. The symbolism nature of the ritual can be understood following Joshua Mzizi (*Weekend Swazi Observer*, 27/08/2005) in the following words:

> When our girls dress revealingly, they are symbolically displaying the potential for the fertility of the land just coming out of a dry and cold winter; the reed, which is cut from swampy soil. They are saying soon the mountains and valleys will blossom, the rivers will flow with water once

[37] 2006 *Umhlanga* DVD from Swaziland Television and Broadcasting Service (STBS)

[38] The princess' speech was recorded during the 2007 *Umhlanga* on the day of the march to the reed beds and broadcast on Swazi TV during prime news between 7pm and 8pm.

> again and the lilies on the mountainsides will brighten the land, thus signalling hope and the continuity of life. [T]he chastity requirement at the Reed Dance neatly befits the profundity of the ritual. It is a fertility cult that celebrates the flora, the spring of life, in the context of our dominant national reality, namely, the traditional headquarters where the Queen Mother lives. On the other hand, when the King chooses a maiden during this time, it is in line with the traditional demands of the ritual, namely, the promise of fertility and the continuity of the Swazi nation.

The celebration of *Umhlanga* is held at the end of the spring season and beginning of autumn season. During this time rains are expected and often times they come. According to elders interviewed, rain symbolises that the ancestral spirits are happy with the nation. Metaphorically, the purity or virginity of *Imbali* can be paralleled to the spring/Autumn seasons that symbolise the beginning of rains and the planting season. The girls in this metaphor are also compared to fertile soil that is ready for the ploughing season. On the other hand, *Imbali* (flower) metaphor represents the beauty and purity of the girls' bodies described in the above quote as 'the flora [and] spring of life'.

It is interesting to note Mzizi's explanation about the controversial issue of the king's choosing a maiden who becomes his *Liphovela* or fiancée 'during this time'[39]. According to Mzizi this is "in line with the traditional demands of the ritual, namely, the promise of fertility and the continuity of the Swazi nation". Although the issue surrounding the choosing of *Liphovela* has drawn a lot of controversy (locally and internationally), I concur with Mzizi that in terms of *Umhlanga ritual* the presence of the *Liphovela* symbolizes the continuity of the nation. As the king's future wife she is expected to bring forth amongst other things a future king. This is evident in that *Liphovela* is only wedded (traditionally) and becomes *iNkhosikati* (wife to the king) once she has brought an offspring to the royal household. This time she can also moves to her own royal residence.

[39] My own investigation revealed that the King does not necessarily identify his *liphovela* on the main day of the dance as it is popularly assumed. Instead, the King's *Liphovela is 'unveiled'* to the public on the main *Umhlanga* day. Proof of this is that on this particular day, similarly to princesses, Liphovela is escorted by royal guards; she wears a long *lihiya* instead of indlamu, she leads the *Imbali* regiment together with the princesses at the forefront and is adorned with a full line of red feathers on her hair; and similarly to the senior princesses, when dancing she also carries the royal insignia (silver or gold).

Also symbolical in *Umhlanga* are the different colours of woolen tassels adorned by the girls (on their *umgaco*) according to their area groups (a group is made up of 100 to 150 girls). According to informants, this makes it easier for the girls to move together in their area groups. It also enables the area *tindvuna* to easily identify their group. When entering the dancing arena on the main day each group sings its own song.

3.4.1. Settings and Contexts

Ludzidzini serves as the headquarters for all national rituals. Furthermore, not only national rituals are held here but each one of the traditional authorities and heads of the traditional government (see Appendix of *Tinkundla*) have his *lilawu* (man's hut) here. This includes the governor of Ludzidzini (currently Jim Mbokane Gama also referred to as the traditional Prime Minister and *tindvuna* of Ludzidzini. Also one of the area chiefs has his *lilawu* or man's hut at Ludzidzini. According to an informant, chiefs are from time to time summoned by the king and sometimes they have to attend *ummemo* or meetings and hold discussions with the king. This observation was confirmed in an interview with my area chief Jubiphathi Magagula who revealed that:

> I have my own *lilawu* at Ludzidzini and each time there is a national event like *Umhlanga* I simple go there. Sometimes I go there to *kuyowotsa lilanga* (to bask in sun/ to be in the king's presence).

Ngabezweni Royal Residence represents the traditional the king's traditional headquaters. Also symbolized in these settings is the notion of the dual monarch system of rule (*iNdlovukazi* rules in conjunction with *iNgwenyama*)[40] This is also symbolized in the country's Coat of Arms shown in Figure II.

[40] At the demise of the King the *Ndlovukazi* rules with the Council of elders (see *What's Happening in Swaziland* magazine

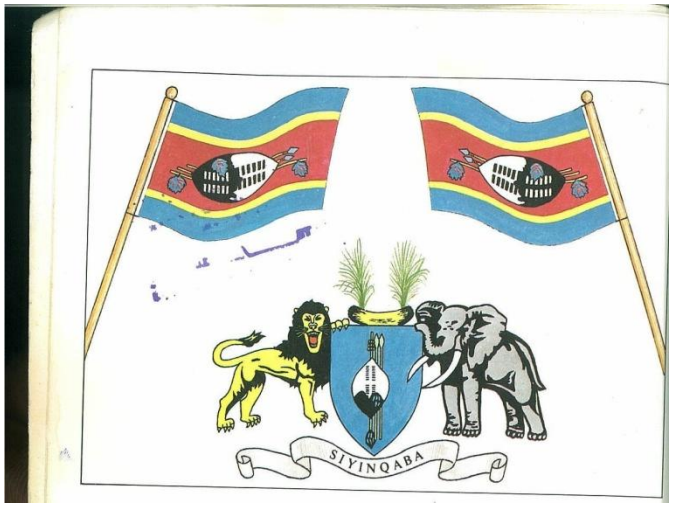


Figure II: The Swazi National Flag and Coat of Arms.

The dual monarch system of rule is symbolized in the images of the Lion (*Ngwenyama*) which stands for the King and the elephant *Ndlovukati* which stands for the Queen Mother. Above the shield is the King's crown of feathers, which is worn during *Incwala* ceremony. At the bottom is the national motto '*Siyinqaba*'-we are the fortress (Matsebula, 1983; Ginindza, 1988). A fortress in this context is a symbol of security and stability or national unity. *Siyinqaba* also means we are a fortress in the sense that Swaziland welcome refugees or people that are destitute and gives them shelter and protection.

Conspicuous during the dances are small shields and flags carried by the girls. Matsebula explains that the Swazi national flag (Figure III) has been used since 1967[41].

[41] Describing the flag, Tourism Authority (2007) tells us that national flag comprises a black and white shield on a bright background of blue, yellow and red. The shield depicts racial harmony and is also part of the weaponry of the '*sotja'* [soldier] regiment that served in World War II. The blue represents the sky; the yellow is for gold, or the country's mineral wealth; and the red is the rich fertile soil of Swaziland.

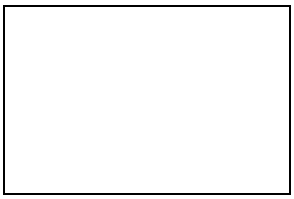


Figure III: The Swazi Flag

The Swazi shield (see black and white insert in flag) significantly bears the history of the Swazi people particularly during the reign of Mswati II who is known as the Swazi fighting King. As stated in the Introductory Chapter, King Mswati defended the region from being occupied by the Ndwandwe under Zwide and Zulu under Shaka (see Kuper for long write-ups about the history of the Swazi). For instance, *Umhlanga* popular song '*lelive ngelakho Mswati sebamane bayakubangisa*' ('the country is yours Mswati they are just disturbing you') can be read to mean two things. First, it can be understood as referring to Mswati II who brought about the Swazi nation. Secondly, it can also be understood as assuring the incumbent not to bother himself about 'alien' cultures as his monarchical position was secured for him by his forefather Mswati II and his predecessors.

The Swazi flag also carried by the girls during the main dance articulates the independence of Swaziland. My research revealed that when Independence Day is scheduled to be celebrated, *Umhlanga* days stretch up to the 6th in order for the girls to participate in the independence celebrations. Matsebula (1983) also informs us that in 1969, a year after the country's independence, King Sobhuza II instructed area chiefs to announce *Umhlanga* and *butimba* royal hunt rituals. Hence, the celebration of the two events is sometimes combined and celebrated on Independence Day. It is notable that Matsebula's description of the 1969 *Umhlanga* and *Butimba* performances is replicated in 2007. Matsebula's (1983: 107) description of the 1969 events may also be used to describe *Butimba* events in 2007:

> The return of the hunting expedition to Lobamba [now Ludzidzini] coincided with the annual Reed dance (*Umhlanga)...Umhlanga* girls dressed in spectacular and picturesque dress, sang and moved rhythmically and with enthusiasm until they reached the yard between the Queen Mother's hut (the Great Hut) and the cattle byre. They threw the reeds about wildly and moved to start at the dance at the other end of the corral,

> outside the main entrance. The dance took place on two days, and on the third, cattle were slaughtered for the girls

The symbolic nature of the ritual setting is highlighted in this quote. First is the traditional setting depicting the *Ndlovukazi's* traditional hut(s), the *sibaya* or cattle byre. The *sibaya* which is huge is significant as it symbolizes plenty of cattle.[42]

In observing how the 1969 *Umhlanga* and *Butimba* celebrations were replicated in 2007 one notes the sense of durability of Swazi rituals. According to Matsebula (1983) *Umhlanga* began to be celebrated *annually* in 1969 a year after the country got its independence from Britain. This confirms Levin's observation about the 'systematic process in the creation and resuscitation of tradition'. It can be further argued that interpretations of Swazi rituals find explanation in historical and socio-cultural settings and contexts. Thus, for the Swazi people, independence is regarded as both a social and historical moment in that it re-opened the space for them as a nation to celebrate their rituals and traditions without fear of prejudice. Schipper (1982: 51) seems to concede with this view when he argues that traditions and religious systems bind "man to his past, his present and his future".

3.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter examined *Umhlanga* songs and its symbols. The dramatization of the event's themes through song and dance attest to the observation by literary scholars that oral and traditional forms are realized through performances carried out and mediated by people (rather than existing independently. The discussion has further elucidated meanings embedded in the *Umhlanga* symbols that involve settings and contexts and artifacts such as shields and flags. Subsequently, the discussion and analysis demonstrated how the ritual's songs and symbols constitute aspects of literariness all entrenched it. At the same time, the element of improvisation observed in *Umhlanga* songs and symbols articulate the influence of modernity and globalization a subject discussed in the next chapter.

[42] *Sibaya* in Swazi culture symbolizes 'life' as it shows that there are cows. Cows are also used to pay *lobola.* The wealth of a man is judged by the size of his *sibaya.*

CHAPTER FOUR

INFLUENCES OF MODERNITY AND GLOBALITION ON *UMHLANGA*

4.0. Introduction

This chapter explores the changing nature of the ritual in a country that is caught up in the web of modernity and globalization. The discussion is informed by the oral script (discussed in Chapter Two) as it articulates the purposes of *Umhlanga* as a Swazi traditional performance that centers on the upright up-bringing of girls. The oral script allows us to identify emergent elements observed over the study period that are viewed as a result of the influence of modernity and globalization. Observations reveal that the performance of *Umhlanga* is constantly being (re)invented and reformulated confirming Ranger's argument about tradition being 'inevitably invented' adding that "to talk about the 'invention of tradition' is to emphasize that tradition or culture is a "dynamic product of human consciousness" (1983: 241). This emphasizes the non-static nature of traditions and the varied ways in which tradition can be reinvented and reconstructed by individuals or groups at a given time and space. It is argued that for the event to be a success its organizers (mainly traditionalists) incorporate modern elements in its production and consumption. *Umhlanga* is thus, understood as an invented tradition following Giddens (1990: 37) observation that:

> Tradition is a mode of integrating the reflexive monitoring of action with the space organization of the community. It is a means of handling time and space, which inserts any particular activity or experience within the continuity of past, present and future, these in turn being structured by recurrent social practices. Tradition is not wholly static, because it has to be reinvented by each new generation as it takes over its cultural inheritance from those preceding it. Tradition does not so much resist change as pertain to a context in which there are few separated temporal and spatial markings in terms of which change can have any meaningful form

Indeed Giddens' argument that tradition is not wholly static is illustrated in the *Umhlanga* performance as it is continuously reinvented to suit changing times. Evidence is seen in the princess' actions as she (together with her friends) introduces inventions into the event's performance. its performance. The issue of 'new generation' bringing in new innovations is confirmed in the subversive actions of the princess as her actions (of throwing a modern party to be discussed later) redirect the purpose of the event. The changing nature and character of the event is exacerbated by the presence of diverse media networks of telecommunications including, tourists and visitors who participate in the event. All these are attributes of modernity and globalization discussed in the following section.

4.1. Modernity and Globalization

Charles Taylor's (1999) broad or general definition provides a starting point in our understanding of modernity as: "Historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices…of new ways of living." Modernity is used in line with Charles Taylor's (1999: 91) definition to refer to:

> […] modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence.

Instead of an abrupt transformation from the so-called traditional societies to modern societies, modernity as seen in Giddens' (1990) concept of flexivity that does not suggest a break between the two. Instead, by using the flexivity concept to define or explain the process of modernity we begin to realize that there is no clear cut line between the two. For instance, to talk about the dynamic nature of tradition is not different from talking about the flexivity characteristic of modernity. Ranger's notion about continuities is confirmed by Giddens' (190: 6) argument that some modern social forms "have specious continuity with pre-existing social orders". Giddens (1990: 98) uses the example of the city saying:

> Morden urban settlements often incorporate the sites of traditional cities, and it may look as though they have merely spread out from them.

The notion of incorporation and appropriation is important in my analysis of subversions and inversions evident in the incorporation or innovation of new elements into the ritual space particularly by *Imbali.* Giddens' (p6) discussion of the flexivity of "modern social life consists in

the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character".

Meanwhile, Arjun Appadurai (1995) argues that the present interest in globalization is undoubtedly the intensification of the advent of mass media technologies, which has spatially collapsed the globe and penetrated every inch of the earth. This view is supported by Stuart Hall (1992) who argues that socio-cultural, political, and economic activities are becoming 'stretched across the globe', such that events in one part of the world have immediate significance for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the global system. Hall (1992: 98) further describes globalization as "implying the intensification in the levels of interaction, interconnectedness or interdependence between states and societies which constitute the modern community". The notion of interconnectivity amongst nations was confirmed during the study of *Umhlanga* as people from all over the globe were seen in the arena especially on the main day of the Reed Dance. Hence, the nature of pressure exerted by global interconnectivity on the ritual seems to express both a hunger and appetite elsewhere in the world for cultural isolates. It shall be shown later in the discussion how the event has become a main tourist attraction for the country as it seems to provide European tourists with the ideal remote and exotic cultural repertoire.

Whereas in the past only the local media and selected institutions such as the STA, National Archives, and Swaziland National Trust were licensed to take pictures, nowadays licenses or permits to take pictures are availed to those interested in taking pictures. Application forms for such are made two weeks prior to the event and are obtainable from the SBIS (See Appendix B). This shows that there is relaxation of the rules/restrictions as regards photographing or taking pictures of members of the royal family such as *iNgwenyama* and *iNdlovukati* and *bantfwabenkhosi* as their *Umhlanga* pictures are taken by tourists and foreign media (also posted in the internet) posted on the internet. As mentioned above, this is not surprising, bearing in mind that *Umhlanga* event has become an international spotlight for tourists. To confirm this, while at the *Umhlanga* arena, I noticed that some girls especially when leaving the stadium at the end of the ceremony would stop tourists' cars and 'pose' for pictures. Dancing, singing and waving

knives, groups of girls were seen stopping tourists' cars whereupon tourists would come out and take the group pictures.

4.2. Subversions and Inversions

The influence of modernity shall be interrogated by using examples of subversive actions by *Imbali* observed during the study period. It was mentioned in Chapter One that the ritual provides space for the girls to question patriarchal roles embedded in Swazi society. For instance, central in the ritual is the chastity/or virginity rite that symbolizes the notion of continuity of the nation. Girls' chastity also articulates the theme of fertility that in turn is symbolized in the reverence attributed institution of motherhood. In the context of *Umhlanga,* the girls 'bodies', that symbolize future mothers of the nation are 'policed' by *tindvuna* or guards throughout 8 *Umhlanga* days. The notion of policing the female body is viewed as a patriarchal attempt to contain female sexuality (Foley, 1996). Robert Allen supports this view when he argues saying: "the discourse of co-ordinating groups frequently falls back on the imagery of the body in an attempt protect or redefine moral and social boundaries" (1998: 37). Allen adds that in patriarchal systems of leadership, control of female sexuality is part of self definition in which a woman is seen as a figure of Motherhood.

In the following discussion it is illustrated how patriarchal expectations also inculcated in rituals such as *Umhlanga* are subverted and reinvented by the girls to suit their idiosyncrasies. The 'modern party' that attracted a lot of controversies from the local and international public sphere is used as an example of a subversion of patriarchal and traditional expectations from the girls especially during the course of the event's performance. The modern party at Mpisi farm discussed in the following section attract local and international media illustrated on the Plate X.

4.2.1. The Modern Party

The public first learned about the modern party at Mpisi Farm from the *Swazi News* whose headlines read "REED DANCE SHOCKER' (see Plate XI). It was reported that the senior princess and chief leader of the *Imbali,* Sikhanyiso, had organized a modern party at the older

maidens' campsite of Mpisis Farm. *Imbali* were reported to have 'danced to modern music' and wore mini skirts' as party requirement. The reports went on to describe how *Umhlanga* Chief Organizer, Ntfonjeni Dlamini on hearing the music and noise at night, arrived at the party and demanded that the stereo be switched off and handed over to him. It was during this confrontation that Dlamini is said to have 'turned his whip' on the princess who refused to hand over the stereo.



Plate XI: A newspaper cutting showing Headlines about the Reed Dance Shocker (Cutting form Swazi News dated 27/08/2005))

Following the incident traditional authorities, custodians of *Umhlanga*, elders and senior princesses were reported (in the daily newspapers) to have condemned the party as tarnishing the image of the event and in total contradiction with its aims and objectives. Similarly, members of the public (in Letters to the Editor) condemned the party pointing out that stereo music and modern dances were not in line with the tradition or culture of *Umhlanga.* Ironically, the mini skirt can be viewed as an equivalent of the *indlamu,* while the singing and dancing to stereo music can be juxtaposed with the singing that takes place throughout the eight *Umhlanga* days. The only difference is that one is modern and the other is traditional. This shows how modern elements easily find their way into tradition depending on the individual or group engaged in that particular traditional performance.

It can be further argued that custodians of tradition are paranoid about the influence of modernity as this means losing men's privileged place within patriarchal leadership. Proof of this is when *Umhlanga* chief organizer Ntfonjeni Dlamini 'lashed his whip on the princess' upon her refusal to hand over the stereo. At this point the youth and elder were standing at opposite ends contesting their power. At onother level the princess actions of bringing a stereo and playing modern music can be understood as contesting her gender and human rights as well as royalty status. The fact that the princess was a leader in her own right should not be overlooked. This observation is confirmed by Alan Brody, United Nations International Children Fund representative in Swaziland cautioned elders to 'Think twice before beating that girl'. He went on to describe the princess as someone who had overcome harsh challenges while at boarding school in England where she "had also served as a 'big sister' to her brothers and sisters as they struggled to adjust to the life, loneliness and discipline of that challenging environment" (*The Sunday Times,* 8th September 2005). Similarly Kath Manson (guest writer) expressed shock at the Chief organizer's actions saying:

> How can the country say it is putting trust in the young entrepreneurs and turn on the other to say that an 18-year old girl who is more than capable of taking her own actions be beaten like a grade 3 student who is late for class?.

The main question Manson asked was: "how Dlamini could beat an 18-year-old girl responsible for leading a regime of about 50 000 girls in barely two days before the main dance?" In

addition, 18 years is internationally recognized as the year marking adulthood. Hence, the incident about the 'beating' of the princess sparked a hot debate from different sectors of Swazi society indicating diverse consciousness on traditionalism and modernity mainly carried in the media reports.

The public's responses to the beating of the *Nkhosatana* Sikhanyiso by *Umhlanga* Chief Organizer Ntfonjeni Dlamini however, varied. At one, traditional authorities and elder *bantfwabenkhosi* (princes) were reported to have condoned the 'beating'. For instance, Governor of Ludzidzini Jim Gama is reported as having said, "according to Swazi way of life every child found to have done wrong is punished by beating" (*TTS* 24/09/2005). The governor emphasized that in Swazi culture a stick is used to correct 'wrong behaviour'. At another level, although Women and Gender Groups did not condone the party, they however, condemned the beating of princess Sikhanyiso asking whether Dlamini "would have used his whip had the party been organized by the senior prince" (*The Times of Swaziland*, (07/092005).

To answer the question that was uppermost in people's minds *The Sunday Times* (27/08/2005) reported that princess Sikhanyiso was enraged by the organizer's behaviour. She decided to summon *The Sunday Times'* journalists to her home, the royal palace at Nkoyoyo, where she posed for the photographers dressed in a mini skirt (see example in picture on Plate X. The newspaper reported that the princess showed no feeling of remorse about the incident. She reportedly asked the reporter; "We were just dancing…once we have cut the reed, what should we do next, *kantsi sesizilile yini*, or are we in mourning?" According to the princess, there was nothing wrong with the fun they were having, especially given that the maidens had walked long distances and hence needed a bit of fun especially at the camp.

This however, is contrary to the concerns raised by parents. For instance, a parent who disapproved with the whole idea of the 'modern party' said in an interview: "I am really disappointed by the behaviour of the girls, I am happy they carried *umcwasho* all these years but their behaviour really puts me off. I wish their superiors could give this problem all the attention it deserves because we released the children to do a national duty but what they are doing is the opposite."

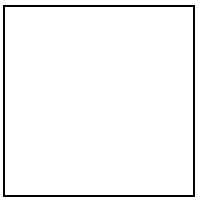


Plate XI: Princess Sikhanyiso was reported beaten by the *Umhlanga* by Chief Organizer Ntfonjeni Dlamini (Photograph taken by *Sunday Times* Photographer on 29th August 2005).

Coincidentally, the 2005 *Umhlanga* also marked the princess's coming of age *umcwasho* rite, which was performed, in the national *Sibhimbi* a day after the discarding of *umcwasho*. This was confirmed in the *Sunday Times* (11/09/2005) reports that, "on the day of her beating she was 4 days away from her 18th birthday and the *umcwasho* ritual had marked her coming of age ceremony". It can then be inferred that 2005 being her year of coming of age the princess felt a sense of independence and a (human) right to mark this important period in her life with a modern celebration, given her orientation to modern lifestyles (partying) as she was doing her studies in England where this is seen as normal. One can infer that the princess' enlightened awareness of her position as the King's daughter and Chief leader of *Imbali* made her refuse to hand over her stereo to the elder Chief organizer. By embracing her royalty status the princess challenges the older man and in a way asserts herself as an individual who needed to be treated with respect. However, her position as already said is undermined by the patriarchal way of viewing things that overrides the Chief organizer's perceptions.

At the same time, the princess's actions can be read as subversive and disruptive to the traditional guidelines laid down for *Imbali* participating in this national event. In fact, princess is not afraid of making people around her aware of her powerful presence as the King's daughter despite the fact that her actions (for instance, the modern party incident) contradict the trajectory of organized ritual. It can be added that being the King's first born child, princess Sikhanyiso uses her position to speak her mind. It is then not surprising that over the years (of the study) *Nkhosatana* Sikhanyiso earned herself controversial iconic status as on one hand traditionalist were wary about her innovative charisma while on the other she was viewed as a heroic *Umhlanga* model amongst her age group. The name of princes Sikhanyiso reverberated throughout *Umhlanga* seasons. In addition, in her role as leader of *Imbali* Sikhanyiso attracted

the attention of the local and international media evident in her pictures that can be easily downloaded from the internet. Nevertheless her popularity followed the modern party and beating incidents already discussed above.

It is then not surprising that while the incident about the princess's modern party at the Mpisi campsite was condemned by different sectors of Swazi society as not being in line with the ritual, on the other, it was received with mixed feelings among her peer group. There were those who sided with the princess taking cue from her own words saying "the day's work had been concluded and the princess's party was in the evening and didn't disrupt anything". At the same time there were girls who felt that the party issue might affect their parents' decision to release them to attend *Umhlanga* the following year. The 'fear' of not being released to attend *Umhlanga* indicate an awareness amongst the girls of the kind of conduct expected by their parents from the.

4.2.2. Girls Demand to 'see King'

Another significant subversive text to the event was witnessed in 2005 and 2006 respectively. The *Times of Swaziland* (13/09/2007) was the first to publish a story titled: 'Miss Swaziland Finalist Demands to be *Liphovela*" shown in the picture in Plate XIII.

Again in 2007, 10 other girls were reported to have remained at Ludzidzini 'hoping to see the king'. Following these publications, the girls' behaviour has been dubbed a 'get rich quick scheme' by the public. Some of the observations are that these girls are 'gorgeous' and 'come from poverty stricken families' and that being the case, they are desperate to live in luxury and to support their families. According to the newspaper report, a source close to royalty disclosed that some members of the royal family 'have gone to the extent of keeping these girls in their homes so that they can introduce them to the king" (*Times of Swaziland* (10/09/2006). The contention is that such behavior is triggered by the desire to live in splendor. This also leads to the conclusion that the King's lavish lifestyle has tempted many young girls, especially from poverty stricken homes to seek royal splendor.

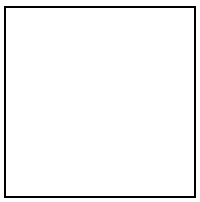


Plate XIII: Miss Swaziland finalists amongst whom one was reported to have demanded to be the King's *Liphovela* (Picture from *The Times of Swaziland* (13/09/2005)

The issue of royal splendor is exhibited by the princesses throughout *Umhlanga* period. Conspicuous during the marches to the reed sites were princesses wearing expensive designer shoes with the latest labels (such as Reebok, alpha, Levis etc), carrying expensive cell-phones, expensive jewellery, fancy hairstyles and makeup. It can be suggested that as a result of seeing the princesses living expensive and exclusive lifestyles, girls desire to live in such opulence. It is common knowledge that the King's wives live a luxurious life. For instance, Swazi TV station runs a programme entitled "From the Palace" on Fridays between 8pm and 9pm and repeats it on Saturdays. The programme covers mainly what happens within royal circles. The programme also covers the international trips taken by the king with his wives, one at a time. In the programme, the King's wives or fiancées are shown adorned in the latest fashion, jewellery and hairstyles. Subsequently, the issue of *Liphovela* (further discussed in the next chapter) has tainted the image of *Umhlanga* as a positive traditional forum in the up bringing of girls.

My observations revealed that *Umhlanga* runs simultaneously with the International Trade Fair. In the juxtaposition of the two events is obvious that the Swazi people embrace tradition and modernity. May be it is for this reason that the Reed Dance pictures are used to advertise the Trade Fair (*TTS* 27/08/2005) where a picture of *Imbali* dancing *Sibhimbhi* was shown. The caption under the picture read, "The Trade Fair is at hand…the beginning of *Umhlanga* Reed Dance ceremony signals that the Trade Fair is about to start" shown in the picture in Plate XIV. Unfortunately, the Trade Fair poses a threat to the smooth running of the event as girls are reported to 'bribe' the guards in order to be at the Trade Fair grounds.

Indeed the trade fair is a distraction to the event as its programme includes performance by modern music artists, beauty contests, all night discos, soccer and many other forms of entertainment appealing to some of the girls. Incidentally in 2006 princess Sikhanyiso and some of her siblings were seen at the trade fair grounds on the day it was officially opened by the king (their father). In-line with the newspaper the 'Virginity Crusade ' story there were numerous reports from the *tindvuna* and newspapers about girls leaving *Umhlanga* premises to be seen all over the Trade Fair grounds.

An inversion I observed is that some of the girls use private transport to come to the event. An example of private transport was *Indumiso* Bus service which transported the group of girls from Buhleni to Ludzidzini throughout the period of the study (shown in Plate XVI). When asked why they were not using public transport, the girls revealed that "it is not safe to travel in these trucks as they are exposed to dust, rain and sometimes dangers of falling off" (see Plate XV)..

Plate XIV: *Sibhimbi* picture used to advertise the annual Trade fair that runs concurrently with the *Umhlanga* ceremony (Picture from *The Times of Swaziland* (13/09/2005)

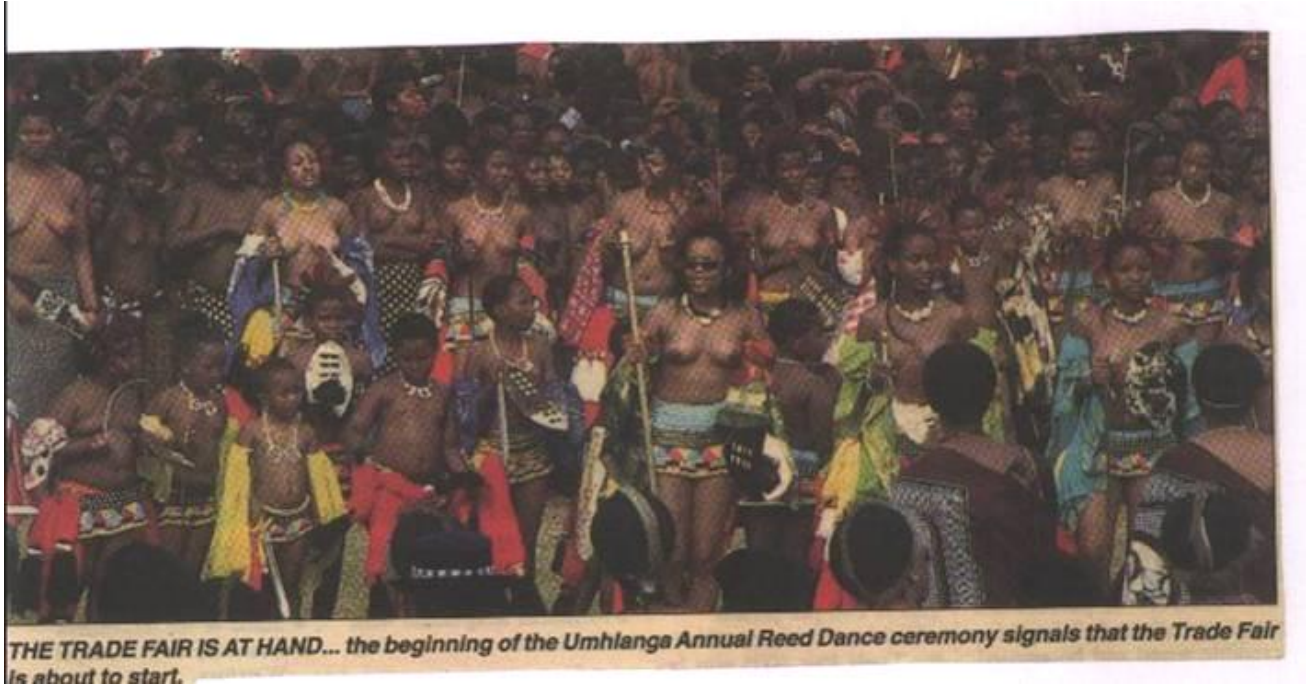


Plate XV: *Imbali* alighting from the one of the trucks on their arrival at Ludzidzini (Photograph by Mduduzi Mngomezulu)



Plate XVI: *Imbali* boarding a hired bus from Buhleni Royal residence (Picture taken by Researcher)

4.3. Identity Formations

According to Giddens (1999), group identity formation is a process, a series of choices one continually makes about one's lifestyles. In line with Giddens, Van Dijk (1998: 123) argues that, "group identity involves a complex array of typical or routine practices, collective action, dress, objects, settings, heroes, and other symbols". It has been already seen that *Imbali* regiment come from diverse backgrounds that include religious, educational, and economic status. During *Umhlanga* season, they are expected to do everything together such as eating, bathing, sleeping, marching, singing and dancing.

What is significant here is the flexibility of shifting from one setting to another. The notion of shifting identities or positions according to settings and contexts is illustrated in the princesses who alternate between modern lifestyles in England where they study and Swaziland where they are required to participate in the traditional ritual performances (*Umhlanga* and *Incwala*). This position can be described in Hall's (1992: 275-277) words when he explains that:

> The very process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more open-ended, variable and problematic...as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with-at least temporarily.

This quote suggests that different settings and contexts make available different subject positions. *Umhlanga* event can therefore be interpreted as a site of representations of fluid identities for diverse groups. In sum, one can therefore say that group identity formations are regarded as an emergent text in the ritual. Girls who come from different backgrounds have to adapt to *Umhlanga* structure. The argument above suggests that context is a crucial consideration in theorizing identity. Interpretation of the girls' identities show a complex process, which has to

do with who they are, how they see themselves, how others see them and what they would like to become (Ndlangamandla, 2006: 123).[43]

Giddens (1990: 38) notes that with the advent of modernity, reflexivity takes on a different character. It is introduced into the very basis of systematic reproduction, such that thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another. The routinisation of daily life has no intrinsic connections with the past at all, save in so far as what "was done before" happens to coincide with what can be defended in a principled way. The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character. All forms of social life are partly constituted by actors' knowledge of them. In all cultures, social practices are routinely altered in the light of ongoing discoveries which feed into them.

My observation further revealed that the majority of the girls attempted to identify with the princesses who are at the forefront of the performance. For instance, in 2004 only a few princesses were seen wearing sunglasses. However, in 2005 a number of *Imbali* were wearing fashionable sunshades. In 2006 a number of princesses were seen carrying cell phones, a thing which was emulated by other girls in 2007. The princesses seem to be at the forefront of inscribing new elements into the ritual's production. This is however not surprising as they are part of the royal household and in a sense co-authors of the script[44]. Other girls follow suit because they too are part of the performance and as 'commoners', it is only fitting that they should want to emulate royalty. Stuart Hall's (1992: 394) observes the following on identity:

> Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialist past, [identities] are subject to continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity,

[43] Ndlangamandla (2006: 76) correctly observes that group identity formations do not preclude the notion of self. In fact, identity is formed through 'interaction' between self and society. He points out that "the core or 'self' is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural world 'outside' and identities that they offer".

[44] Evidence of this was also obtained from media ethnography, particularly the daily newspapers where the photographers' camera concentrated on the girls wearing glasses and princesses carrying or even answering their cell-phones during some of the events.

> identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narrative of the past.

What Hall suggests is that all history is contemporary history since humanity uses its historic-cultural baggage to define the present. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) offer numerous examples of how new artifacts of culture can eventually become embedded as important traditions. For instance, adding to the visual aspect is the appropriation of great amounts of different colours of wool used as tassels that tend to cover most of the revealed parts of the girls' bodies. This appropriation of woolen tassels can be interpreted as means to give symbolic significance to new emerging groups. Also new are hand bands and *emaduku* or handkerchiefs of different colours tied around the arms of the girls. All these add to the spectacle of the event.

I also noticed that a majority of *Imbali* add large amounts of wool to the *umgaco* (top-dress regalia) and *umjijimba* (bottom-on the side of the beaded skirt) thus concealing most of girls bodies. This is contrary to the guidelines of *Umhlanga* as the emphasis is that the girls are supposed to 'showcase their bodies by revealing their 'virgin' breasts and buttocks. In this way the ideals about 'showcasing' are undermined especially in case where members of *Imbali* are seen clad in *emahiya* instead of the popular *indlamu* that is designed for the purpose of the event. Over the period of the study I noticed that a huge number of girls both young and old opted for *lihiya* instead of *indlamu.* Although some of the girls cited poverty as a hindrance to buying *indlamu* some pointed out that they did not want to expose their buttocks as their main purpose was to dance freely.

4.4. HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign.

The event's space is used by Women's groups and NGO's (such as Red Cross) to teach messages of abstinence and safe sex to *Imbali* particularly on Day 5 of the event. On this day the girls are supposed to 'rest' and prepare themselves for the dances on Day 6 and Day 7. Women Groups revealed that they see *Umhlanga* as an appropriate forum to be utilized in trying to promote messages of safe sex, HIV/AIDS and human rights. For instance, counselors from the Swaziland AIDS Support Organization, and the Swaziland HIV/AIDS Support Centre noted that Umhlanga girls are in the risk group. Thus, they used the event as a venue to circulate information about

HIV testing for girls. Faith Dube, a counsellor from Swaziland Association Against Abuse (SWAAGA), in an interview with BBC (2001) said, "These are girls who assemble once a year to pay homage to the Queen-Mother, and they are also celebrating Swazi girlhood. They are a perfect audience because most of their time is unoccupied, and they are receptive to our message." As a result, BBC confirms that "Volunteers from the AIDS Information Support Centre were out in full force at the event to drive home the abstinence message." The presence of Women groups to council and teach safe messages contradict the message in the song *Tsine siyimbali yemaSwati akekho mfana longatsintsa tsini.*

Teachings about the use of condoms which are regarded alien to Swazi culture provoked a hot debate between traditionalists and these liberal groups. While the two groups seem to agree on the notion of abstinence, traditionalists were however adamant that teachings about the use of condoms were 'unSwazi' and not inline with the purpose of *Umhlanga* ritual[45]. Concerns were raised by some parents about teachings that take place during *Umhlanga.* Some questioned the authenticity of the event asking whether the event should still be regarded as a traditional forum where girls are taught about chastity or virginity requirements. In one letter a parent asked, "Do we send our children to the event so that they become experts in the use of condoms?"This concern is further noted when Ludzidzini Governor, Jim Gama in an exclusive interview with the (*Swazi Observer* (20/09/2007) contested clauses in the 'New Constitution' with regards to freedom of choice and rights for women and children in a Swazi family set-up. During the interview Gama insisted that the Constitution must be understood in the Swazi context in relation to culture, customs, norms and values. Gama was reported saying:

> At some point, we said parents should now teach their children, irrespective of their age, everything there is to know, so long as they ask questions. We said we must answer all questions.

This is not surprising given that the subject of sex is not discussed openly according to custom Swazi families. This observation is supported by Gama when he was reported saying:

[45]Debates were carried in the daily newspapers (*TSO* and *TTS*) puplic columns (i.e Letters to the Editor and Guest Writer'.

> In our culture, we are selective with information. ...we never discussed pregnancy issues with our children from early age until *batfombhe* [they reach puberty/ maturity]. It is taboo. ...But because of the new teachings, our children are now given too much information that ends-up corrupting them.

Gama went on to explain that according to Swazi custom even if a child asks her mother who is pregnant about "her bulging tummy" the mother does not say "there is a baby here" and explain the whole process to the child how the baby got there. The reason children are not told about the baby in the 'tummy' is that "by explaining all the intricacies of conceiving a child, these youngsters go and try it themselves". The question about teachings about HIV/AIDS during *Umhlanga* free times prove that with the advent of change, it is inevitable to address issues that surround society. This attest to the fact that tradition is not static as it embraces change. Thus the incorporation of lessons about safe sex to prevent HIV/AIDS and pre-mature pregnancies into the ritual space allows us to interpret tradition/and modernity as flexible and adaptive to elements of change.

Parents interviewed revealed that though they feel the ritual is in line with the proper upbringing of girls, they are paranoid about allowing their daughters to be away from parental care and guidance for the duration of the ritual, a whole week. As a result, some parents have decided to personally bring their daughters to participate only during the main dance. A parent explained in an interview that:

> Since my daughters are keen on performing during *Umhlanga*, I buy for them the regalia and accompany them to Ludzidzini on the main day of the dance. They then join the rest of the girls. Afterwards I take them home with me.

One cannot blame the parents as daily newspapers carry reports about what happens at the campsites such as "girls partying", "getting drunk" and so on.

4. 5. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has demonstrated how *Umhlanga* traditional performance is continuously being reinvented to meet demands by modernity and globalization. The discussion and analysis built on the assertion that tradition is dynamic and not static as it readily adapts to change. As a result, a number of subversive and inventive actions by *Umhlanga* stakeholders (orgazizers, *Imbali*/performers and participants) are identified. The discussion further revealed that *Umhlanga* provides space for the *Imbali* to challenge and subvert some of the traditional and patriarchal roles entrenched in patriarchal Swazi society. While the girls seem to have no problem with conflating modernity and tradition, traditionalists, authorities and elder members of society seem to have trouble reconciling the two. Subsequently, liberal ideas that include gender and HIV/AIDS awareness, human rights and democracy are contested within the ritual's space a discussion further carried out in the next chapter on perceptions about *Umhlanga.*

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF *UMHLANGA*

5.0. Introduction

This chapter, consolidate the preceding chapters' observations and discussions. It reflects on how a reading of *Umhlanga'*s literary aspects such as 'announcements' (*Uyezwa Na!*); settings and contexts; oral and written scripts; songs and dances; symbols and costume amongst others explicate the literariness nature and character of *Umhlanga.* Three important research themes are addressed: How do Swazi people understand and perceive the notion of 'divine kingship' embedded in *Umhlanga* performance? To what extent can *Umhlanga* be viewed as a site where tensions and challenges facing the traditional hegemonic ideology of the ruling government are tested and contested? How is *Umhlanga* understood and interpreted in a rapidly changing society where liberal ideas are promoted as pro-democracy groups are calling for a complete overhaul of the monarchical system of rule inherent in the *Tinkhundla* government? In the following section I discuss the concepts hegemony and ideology and their relatedness to the production of *Umhlanga* ceremony.

5.1. The ideology of Traditionalism

Levin (1997) explains how while other African leaders concentrated on issues of nationalism during the decolonizing period, King Sobhuza II embarked on a policy of traditionalism that mainly involved the invention and re-invention of Swazi traditional rituals. Levin (1990: 3) notes that the propagation of tradition in Swaziland has been central to the maintenance and development of royal hegemony, and has attempted to portray the 'Swazi way of life' as superior to 'Western' lifestyles and practices introduced under colonialism. This is evident in Sobhuza's suspension of the 1968 Independence Constitution already discussed (in Chapter One). Levin further notes that, "in Swaziland, tradition became the principal mobilizing factor especially during the decolonization period" (1990: 12). He adds that the use of tradition goes beyond general understanding of tradition as referring to the transmission of culture, or the repeated handing down of ideas, conventions and practices which humans need in social interaction"

(Levin: 1990: 4). Instead tradition is used as a socio-political tool to strengthen Swazi belief systems and customs in the eyes of the people. Amongst such beliefs are concepts such as *Uyezwa na! and mlomo longa cali manga.* Tradition has therefore, been depicted as age-old and beneficial to the Swazi people. Hence, participation in rituals performances such as *Umhlanga* amongst others is a tradition that has been handed down from generation to generation without question or challenge.

This observation echoes Cannadine (1985) who notes the way in which African leaders during the colonial period took advantage of the symbols of 'European invented tradition' specifically, the 'monarchical ideology'. In the case of the British, Cannadine informs us that, "the King was spoken of more in mystical than in practical terms and presented as almost divine, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent" (1985: 224). Subsequently, the significance the British attached to public rituals of the monarchy such as birthdays, coronations, royal marriages to mention some, were appropriated by African Kings following the example of their former colonizers. These have in turn been passed on to heirs in accordance with the monarchy system of rule.

5.1.1. Hegemony and Ideology

The concept hegemony is used to illustrate how *Umhlanga* ritual promotes the traditional ideology of the ruling government to dominate in the country. For the purpose of this study I follow Gramsci's (1971: 222) definition that says:

> Hegemony refers to a complete fusion of economic, political, intellectual and moral objectives which will be brought about by one fundamental group and groups allied to it through intermediary ideology when an ideology manages to spread throughout the whole of society determining not only united economic and political objectives but also intellectual and moral unity.

It has been illustrated in the preceding chapters how the traditional hegemony is circulated throughout the ritual's production and reception/ or consumption. Prominent is the political and symbolic significance attached to the presence of the heads of state *iNdlovukati* (Queen Mother) and *Ngwenyama.* There conspicuous presence of *eMakhosikati* (The King's wives)

bantfwbenkhosi (princes and princesses) who also form the majority of the ruling government emphasizes the role royalty plays in the country's rituals (and ceremonies).

It has been shown that in the case of Swaziland, traditionalism has been deployed as the key strategy to royal hegemonic power. It shall be seen in the following discussion how through concepts such as 'Swazi way of life', 'Swazi unique democracy' and 'land held by the king in trust of the nation' the traditional ideology has been and continues to be promoted by the ruling status quo. The concept ideology and hegemony are complementary concepts. According to Gramsci (1971: 223):

> Ideology works through existing values and should not be considered an alien belief system imposed on an inhospitable host culture. Ideologies are not directly imposed, but are constituted by the institutional, occupational, and cultural practices that make up the mass media.

This is described by Gramsci (1991: 225) as 'expansive hegemony' which he further explains in the following words:

.

> The whole society must advance… so that all its elements fuse in a 'collective will' which becomes the new protagonist of political action which will function as the protagonist of political action during that hegemony's entire duration. It is through ideology that this collective will is formed since its very existence depends on the creation of ideological unit which will serve as 'cement'.

The notion of a 'collective will' also referred to as 'national popular will' has its own intrinsic implications. The notion of the creation of a genuine 'national-popular will' is debatable as it hinges on the ideological struggle being pursued by the particular hegemonic class. In the case of this study hegemony obtains from our understanding of the struggle by the royal ruling class to strengthen its hold on the economy and politics of the country.

5.1.2. The Monarch's Power

As already illustrated in Chapter One, the legacy of Swazi monarchs is traceable to the establishment of the Swazi kingdom under Mswati II who defeated ethnic groups that occupied the region prior to the arrival of this renowned Swazi fighting King. Mswati II and his followers

(the Dlamini) were able to control most of the land. This was done through concepts such as 'land held by the king in trust of the nation' (to be discussed in the next section), tribute labour through the *emabutfo* system, arranged royal marriages and the claim to tradition and ritual supremacy. As a result notions about 'shared understandings of rituals and symbols by the Swazi people' are traceable to their belief system that embraces a number of elements that relate to nature, seasons and an array of mythical beliefs based on the people's history (some already observed in the performance of *Umhlanga* ritual (Kanini, 1982). Therefore, shared understanding and interpretation of rituals emanates from a strong feeling for social solidarity that results from communal interaction and dramatic expression. This view is supported in Schipper's (1982: 12) argument that communal rituals foster national solidarity further "strengthening a sense of cohesion and identity." Concepts such as 'Swazi way of life', 'Swazi unique democracy' have been used to dispel 'fears' about the inevitable encroachment of liberal ideas that involve gender, democracy and human rights amongst others. These arbitrary concepts are meant to create a worldview of Swazis as moving in ritual unity and happily under the *Tinkhundla* system of rule (see Appendix A). The absolute power of the Swazi Monarch is stated in the PUDEMO's MANIFESTO (1984) as follows:

> **King of Swaziland** is:
>
> - Above the law
> - Above the judiciary
> - Controls all land
> - Controls all minerals
> - Appoints and Control the Prime Minister Cabinet
> - Controls the Legislature
> - Appoints and Control the Judiciary
> - Controls the Army
> - Controls the Police
> - Controls the Correctional Services Warders
> - Controls the Public Service
> - Controls the people who are not called citizens, but Subjects
> - Controls the Economy through what was once a peoples' fund called Tibiyo through royalties and shareholding in many major companies in Swaziland
> - Controls everything that lives in Swaziland

The concept "Swazi land held by the King in trust for the nation" adopted by the *Tinkhundla* system of rule allows chiefs to "control the distribution of land on behalf of the king. This is done through *kukhonta* a custom observed in order to reside in an area under a particular chief. This involves paying a cow or two to the chief as allegiance followed by continued tribute labour to the chief and the monarch. For instance, a chief may demand that the subject/s perform duties in his field, or pay some dues to him etc. In addition, the chief: "Ensures his subjects attend royal duties, otherwise fines are imposed on those who defy" (p2 Manifesto). It should be noted that chiefs do not have absolute control over land as they themselves are at times forced through the royal commands to give up their areas for royal project, refusal of which may result in eviction.
The position of the monarch and control over land (and mineral resources) is important in our understanding of royal hegemony exhibited in the production and reception of *Umhlanga.* Royal control over land was further strengthened through the signing of the Swaziland Native Administration Proclamation in 1950. Through this Act the monarch was empowered to issue "orders to be obeyed by the natives within any area of his jurisdiction and to make rules provided they did not conflict with laws already in force by the colonial masters" (1990: 17).

In the 1960's Sobhuza II launched a National Fund known as Lifa (inheritance) and managed to buy back some 268 093 acres of land from the British (Levin (1990). The position of the monarch and control over land and minerals was further reinforced in Chapter VIII of the 1968 Independence Constitution which states that, "All land which is vested in the *Ngwenyama* in trust for the Swazi nation shall continue so to vest subject to the provision of this constitution" (Levin 1997: 98). It is interesting to note that although the Independence Constitution of 1968 was rejected on the grounds that it promoted foreign elements that were contradictory to the Swazi way of life, some of its clauses that favoured the royal monarch were adopted by the *Tinkhundla* system of rule such as the land Act of 1950. Explaining the magnitude of control over Swazi national land by the monarch, Levin (1919: 15) observes that:

> Propagation of tradition has been central to the maintenance of royal hegemony especially in the sphere of land allocation and control, including the portrayal of the 'Swazi way' of life as superior to western lifestyle and practices.

It was during the reign of Mbandzeni in the late 1800's that the Swazi aristocracy was disrupted as a hegemonic class both at the economic and political level[46]. This occurred through a loss of control over land which came in the form of concessions. Levin (1997: 5) explains that:

> The land question in Swaziland dates to the 1880's and to the huge influx of prospectors that flocked into the country in search of mineral deposits following the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, along with farmers and herders attracted by Swaziland's fertile soils and rich pastures. Concessionaires were more than willing to pay the Swazi aristocracy for access to trading and mineral rights. This saw King Mbandzeni preside over a cynical carve-up of Swazi territory.

The *Umhlanga* song entitled *lelive ngelakho Mswati* addresses the issue of land and control over it. The loss of land to South Africa has remained a sore spot in the history of the ruling monarchy. The monarch and its government are still nursing hopes that the land lost to South Africa would one day come back. The complete song is as follows:

(Lead singer)	*Lelive ngelakho Mswati sebamane bayakubangisa*
(Chorus)	*Gcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*
(Lead singer)	*Lelive ngeleNkhosi ngeleNkhosi yeMaswati*
(Chorus)	*Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*
(Lead singer)	*NgeleNkhosi yeMaswati ngeleNkhosi yeMaswati!*
(Chorus)	*Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*
(Lead singer)	The country is yours Mswati they are just bothering you!
(Chorus)	Watch, watch, land concessionaires!
(Lead singer)	The country is for the King, the King of the Swazis!
(Chorus)	Watch, watch, land concessionaires!
(Lead singer)	It is for the King of the Swazis! For the King of the Swazis!
(Chorus)	Watch, watch, land concessionaires!

[46] King Mbandzeni operating under the traditional concept "land and mineral rights held in trust of the nation" in 1875 signed away three thirds of the land. Kuper (1986: 25) points out that between 1885 and 1899, the whole country was concessioned away.

In this song emphasis is on the words '*lelive* or the land/country it is yours, it is yours Mswati'. This is repeated to highlight the position of the King in the country. The mood is serious and the singing and dancing is accompanied by musical elements such as sounds made by the *emafahlawane* that goes together with the dance steps and blowing of whistles. In the context of Swazi King praises as Vail(1990) correctly observes there is virtually no message of criticism which effectively shows how this genre in effect serves as a traditional means of propaganda in the service of a state that overtly espouses 'tradition' in support of a 'traditional'. Thre is no doubt that the above song serve to 'reaffirm the status quo' of the ruling Dlamini dynasty. It further charts the process of nation building that dates back to the eighteenth century during foundation of the Swazi state and in a sense suggests the notion of permanence associated with (Swazi) monarchs.

In this song the girls are lamenting how the land that 'belonged to the King and his people' was spoilt by *kusika* or cutting of land by concessionaires. Proof to illustrate that the Swazi monarchy is still hoping to regain the land lost is seen in the endless formation of Border Adjustment Committees under government of Swaziland (the present one is led by Prince Khuzulwandle). The purpose of these committees is to engage the South African government in talks on returning the land that belonged to the Swazis with the understanding that it was stolen by the Afrikaners through a series of concessions that were not intelligible to King Mbandzeni. These talks have been going on despite the fact that 'Swazis' who are residing on the South African side of the border are reported to be against the idea of being incorporated into the Swazi system of government. As a result pro-democracy movements have described government's formation of the Border Adjustment Committees as a waste of the tax-payers' money and another way of creating jobs for those closer to royalty.

What all this means is that royal control over land is central to royal hegemony. It is through land control that the chiefs on behalf of the king mobilize *emabutfo* to perform royal duties. Therefore, *Umhlanga* is analyzed as a traditional art performance and ritual whose purpose is to promote and strengthen royal hegemony. This purpose is achieved through the annual mobilization of throngs of girls (a similar event, the *Incwala*, targets the boys to cut *lusekwane* branches used during this religious ceremony).

In the context of Swazi King praises as Vail(1990) correctly observes there is virtually no message of criticism which effectively shows how this genre in effect serves as a traditional means of propaganda in the service of a state that overtly espouses 'tradition' in support of a 'traditional'. This point can be illustrated in the following song. This song which is rendered and recited in poetic form can be read as a praise song that propels the status quo. It is as follows

(Lead singers)	*Awu yelomazondo! Yelomazondo!*
(Chorus)	*Sebayosala batiteka bodvwa!*
(Lead singers)	*Mswati uyiNkhosi yabekelwa eMaSwati!*
(Chorus)	*Yabekelwa eMaSwati!*
(Lead singers)	*Yelomajikeleta kaHhohho!*
(Chorus)	*Hhohho! kaHhohho!*
(Lead singers)	*Mswati uyalibusa leSwatini!*
(Chorus)	*Sebayosala batiteka bodvwa?*

(Lead singers)	Hey! you hatred, you hatred!
(Chorus)	They will remain debating alone!
(Lead singers)	Mswati is a King installed for the Swazis!
(Chorus)	He was installed for the Swazis!
(Lead singers)	Hey! You who make his rounds in Hhohho!
(Chorus)	At Hhohho, at Hhohho!
(Lead singers)	Mswati rules the Swazi nation!
(Chorus)	They will remain debating alone!

In this song, the King's position is reaffirmed. By stating that those who hate the king "will remain debating alone", the girls are saying it is a waste of time and energy to be against the King as he was installed for the Swazi nation. The Hhohho (region) referred to in this song is significant in the history of the Swazi nation as King Mswati II (after whom the nation was named) built his first capital. In this song therefore, it can be inferred that the girls are stating that since the time of Mswati II in the pre-colonial Swaziland, the Dlamini dynasty has remained in the throne. It can be further inferred that this song is directed to the pro-democracy groups

who are calling for an overhaul of the system saying it should be replaced by a democratic government that is representative of the masses and not only royalty who are a minority group as the case is now.

5.2. Gender and Human Rights

Barber's (1987:12) observation that media processing and uptake of ritual speaks to emerging consciousness is relevant to my analysis of letters that appear in the 'Letters to the Editor' and 'Guest writer's' columns' sections. This is seen in the debate around the issue of girls' 'virginity' that was sparked by reports that followed *iNkhosatana* Sikhanyiso's public declaration in the *Swazi Observer* that she was 'a virgin'. A number of reports followed in both papers where girls came out to declare that they too were virgins. In addition, *The Times of Swaziland* reported that Miss Swaziland Zinhle Magongo refused to disclose her virginity status saying that "it was a private matter," adding that she saw no need of publicly proclaiming it. Following Miss Swaziland's refusal to disclose her virginity status, letters appeared in the 'Letters to the Editor' and 'Guest columns' where members of the public either approved or questioned the media about their ethics. For instance, Joshua Mzizi, a renowned columnist in the *Weekend Observer* and Chairperson of The Human Rights Association asked whether it was 'true' journalism to intrude into people's private lives saying:

> In these days of new dispensation where human rights are constitutionally guaranteed and protected, this issue is a subject matter on its own right. Thus it must form part of the continuing national political and social discourse as we await the new constitution. For once operational, the new constitution will have an indelible effect on our lives as we currently know and understand it.

Activists and Women's groups have viewed the question of virginity which is only posed to females as discriminatory. Sharing her views on the issue, the Director of the Swaziland Action against Abuse (SWAGA) Lindiwe Dlamini said that a person can disclose her status voluntarily, but asking violates one's right to privacy. "Personally I do not think it is right to ask females such a question. Is Mr Swaziland ever asked if he is a virgin or not? Such a question victimizes women and infringes on their rights," said Dlamini. The question of virginity was addressed in

the guest writer space in *The Weeend Observer* (27/08/2005) written under the title: 'Virginity Crusade'.

Responding to the girl-child relationship with adults as a 'get rich quick' strategy Magongo went on to urge career guidance teachers in schools to empower female students

> Towards various sustainable careers, that will liberate them from being social beggars and subservient to the economic male dominated society. It should help develop hope for the future, not subject them to a forever socio-cultural subjugation. It should channel them to careers that will empower them outside any individual dependency. As for the young girls, it should divert their attention away from any imaginary glitz and glamour, towards reality.

According to this writer, the behaviour of these girls is in line with the prevailing socio-economic situation of the Swazis, especially within individual families.

In yet another report in *The Times* dated 26/o8/2005, the virginity debate touched on very sensitive issues such as rape, incest and other forms of child abuse. In this particular letter, the columnist first congratulated those girls who had publicly boasted of being virgins. Using 21 year old Lindelwa Dlamini's testimony, quoted by *The Times of Swaziland* saying, "I am very proud of myself and am happy that I have managed to live to this day and maintained my virginity. I see no problem with the question because I know I am still intact and I am very proud of that", Africa Magongo writes:

> Lindelwa was lucky than the many young girls and babies raped and sexually abused by their teachers, fathers and strangers. I am sure many of them would have wanted to protect their virginity so that like Lindelwa, they could have publicly boasted about the fact. However, they were weak and vulnerable against stronger male predators and the rest of Swazi society did nothing to help protect them. If anything, Swazi society was an accomplice to many of these heinous crimes.

Human rights and gender awareness groups' intervention in these debates addressed issues surrounding girls' freedom of choice and education as well as thorny issues such as the King's choice *Liphovela* or fiancées.

5.3. Democracy

For the purpose of finding out the perspectives of oppositional groups, it was important to investigate 'progressives'[47] views about the event. A focus group interview and discussions with pro-democracy proponents revealed that their interpretations of the event are negative. According to this group, *Umhlanga* ritual (like other rituals) is used as strategy by the ruling government to strengthen its political hold on the 'unseeing' citizenry. The event is viewed as a "gimmick to embezzle state funds under the pretext of teaching about chastity". This group also observed that *Umhlanga* girls are provided with free transport and free food by the king's fund, Tibiyo. According to them, these are very strong incentives for attendance. Some of the questions about *Umhlanga* addressed to this group included the following:

- What is the significance of *Umhlanga* and how do you perceive it?
- Do you think the girls ascribe to the 'virginity' theme expounded in *Umhlanga* and *umcwasho*?
- What do you think is the main attraction of the girls to the *Umhlanga*?
- Why do parents send their girls to the *Umhlanga*?
- Do you think *Umhlanga* will survive our generation?

The responses of this group were quite perceptive. According to them, *Umhlanga* was used as a strategy to strengthen the stronghold of the Tinkundla system of rule that purportedly sustains the monarchy. They pointed out that for the girls, *Umhlanga* is an outing, in the sense that they get the opportunity to be around urban surroundings (especially those maidens from the rural areas.) Some members in the group pointed out that children born to these mothers (*Imbali*), some nine months after the event often are given names associated with *Umhlanga* such as *Lomhlanga* (named after the reed dance), *Temcwasho or Lomcwasho* (conceived during or after the *umcwasho* period).

[47] The term progressive is used to refer to those people who criticize the status quo. These are people who ascribe to political parties which operate illegally as Swaziland is a one Party state. Underground parties or movements include The People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) and Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO). Amongst other things, they are calling for the monarch to be non-constitutional and are vehemently against the *Tinkundla* system of Swaziland.

Kertzer (1988) further contends that although it is politically granted that ritual serve to bolter the status quo, ritual is vital to revolution as well. He argues that: "kings rely on it to shore up their authority, but revolutionaries also use ritual to overthrow monarchs". This study's findings however, revealed that in the case of Swaziland, an attempt to employ rituals to incite political conflict and to challenge or 'overthrow' the monarch proved to be a futile effort. Proof of this was in 1998 when both the People's Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) and Swaziland Federation Union Trade Unions (SFTU) leadership discouraged their members from participating in the 1998 *Incwala* ceremony (*TTS* 22/12/1998). Caught between politics and traditions it is reported that the planned march was aborted as members did not show up for the planned march or '*Toyi Toyi"* (*TOS*, 1998).

Findings also revealed that members of both organizations (PUDEMO and SFTU) felt that it was taboo to 'toyi toyi' or demonstrate during *Incwala* ceremony which is regarded as a sacred national prayer. Additionally, informants revealed that "first we are Swazi citizens and only members of these organizations by affiliation". Weighing the two they felt that they could not disregard their cultural heritage which has been passed down by their forefathers. Commenting on the failure of the strike that was termed "The Strike to End All Strikes", which was planned to coincide with *Incwala*, the *Times of Swaziland* lamented the wrong timing on the part of the organizations' leadership. Caught in the dilemma of choosing between participating in their traditional culture and the strike action the members opted for *Incwala*. Following the 'dismal' failure of the intended strike, *TTS* (28/09/1998) hypothesized that the Unions leadership is bound to loose members for trying to make them choose between their traditions and cultural heritage and 'democracy'. In that regard, Kertzer's (1988: 102) contention that ritual is vital to revolution as well as reaction in that "revolutionaries …use rituals to overthrow monarchs", is not universal as this strategy has not yet been successful in the context of Swazi society.

Groups and individuals interviewed who are members of the progressive movements such as PUDEMO were critical about the amount of money spent on food, transport amongst other things during the 8 *Umhlanga* days. According to information gathered from the Tibiyo offices at Ludzidzini, about 40 cows are slaughtered for the girls at the end of the ceremony according.

Indeed Day 8 cows are slaughtered for the girls who are supposed to collect chunks of meat to take home. A disgruntled former Member of Parliament was reported by *TTS* (22.09.2007) saying the events such as *Umhlanga* are a drain on the economy, it would be better if they were celebrated at least once in ten years". When this suggestion was followed up in a radio talk show, traditionalists dismissed the suggestion as sentiments of no consequences. What then emerges is a confrontation between two groups: traditional proponents and democratic proponents who view the ideology of traditionalism as a political strategy of the ruling *Tinkhundla* government to control the lives of the Swazi people. This is seen in the role government plays in promoting *Umhlanga* as already illustrated in previous chapters and also discussed in the next section.

King Mswati III's government is today facing a dilemma: 'how to keep change within bounds'. If the Dlamini dynasty is to survive, it cannot opt for one role or the other, but will have to continue straddling the contesting forces of conservatism and reform (Levin, 1997: 84). Although the event has drawn diverse groups of Swazi society, the study's findings revealed that pro-democracy movements view the annual performance of *Umhlanga* (and other) national rituals as a strategy for the ruling government to remain in power. There is therefore, popular dissent in Swaziland as the progressives', mainly the People's Democratic Movement, have not been lured by the mythical aura surrounding kingship and 'tradition'. Instead, they are continuously demanding "democratization of the political system" (Ibid, p81). Therefore, tension exists between the traditionalists', custodians of the *Tinkhundla* system of government and the proponents of democracy. This includes the call for the monarch to be a constitutional one and the nationalization Of Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (to be part of government). The above discussion already shows the winds of change that speak of fractures and gaps marking the performance of rituals and the call for democracy and transparency by progressive groups.

5.4. Foreign Media, Tourists and Visitors Perceptions

The interpretation of the patriarchal role played by *Umhlanga* is also seen in United States photographer David Blair (30/08/2005) photo representation of the event. Although Blairs's representation of the event raises questions of prejudice, it however addresses the issue of

patriarchy that is promoted in the event. The following picture and caption is useful in analysing patriarchy embedded in *Umhlanga*:

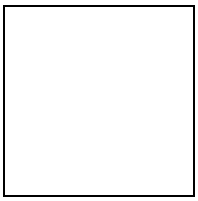


Plate XVII: Photograph by David Blair Tuesday August 30, 2005 taken at Ludzidzini Royal Residence

> Portly and beaming, King Mswati III of Swaziland basked in adoration of 50 000 topless virgins yesterday when the flower of his country's girlhood paraded before him, vying to become his new queen. Legions of half-naked teenage girls danced, twirled, and pounded the earth outside the royal kraal, proclaiming their willingness to become the 13th wife of the last monarch in sub-Sahara Africa. 'We are happy, we are healthy, and we are alone' sang thousands of tuneful, high-pitched voices. We are the flowers of the Swazi people. The former pupil of Sherborne School in Dorset has already amassed 12 wives, 1 fiancée, and 27 children.

'Portly beaming' can be read to refer to the well-fed figure of the monarch who is the epitome of patriarchy. In the context of the text the elated girls are 'demanding' to become part of royalty. Blair's text equates the ritual to strip shows or pornography which insinuates indecency. The representation depicts issues of child abuse in words like 'half-naked teenage girls' crying in 'high-pitched voices'.

Blair's description suggests that despite the King having received Western education, he is still 'primitive' as he continues to practice customs that are considered outdated such as polygamy. In African society a man's wealth was measured by the amount of cows, land and number of wives and children he has. Mswati is here represented as having done very well along those lines as he has 'amassed' 12 wives, 1 fiancée and 27 children. This portrayal of the King reveals how much the ritual's performance is steeped in patriarchy which is promoted by the hegemonic ideology of the ruling monarch which is cemented through the use of rituals such as *Umhlanga*.

As a result, the king and the country have been criticized for contravening Human Rights, and International Conventions to which the country is signatory. The Human Rights matters touch on sensitive issues such as girls' age, right to education and so on. The choosing of a 16 year-old-school-going-girl in 2005 as the next *Liphovela* fueled criticism on the monarch's actions from different sections of society, both local and foreign. As a result, King Mswati III's lavish lifestyle, which includes many wives, has been challenged in view of the poverty of many of the Swazi people; hence, customs like *Umhlanga* have received negative press coverage in light of the socio-economic status of the country.

5.4.1. Tourists Interpretations and Perceptions

My discussions and interviews with tourists revealed their paradoxical and ambiguous perceptions of the Reed Dance. On one hand, some tourists especially those from the West, expressed delight in the fact that the "Swazi people are holding on to their traditional art forms" one said. On the other, some tourists expressed shock at the idea of wearing *umgaco* that revealed breasts and *indlamu* revealing the girls' buttocks. This observation was confirmed on 31st August 2006 when I came across two tourists from the United States of America who were taking pictures and wearing *emahiya.* They expressed 'love' for *indlamu* so much that they wished they could wear it. When I asked them if they could put on *indlamu* given the opportunity, they responded with an emphatic no! The reason they gave was that they were not that young anymore. When I asked the younger of the two who said she was 21 years and was busy taking pictures and seemed captivated by the girls wearing *indlamu* that "suppose you were still young would you wear the *indlamu*?" Her response was "No! I wouldn't. It is one thing admiring the regalia, but another to wear the *indlamu*" she said. Furthermore, tourists from different parts of the world expressed appreciation of *Umhlanga* regalia. This observation is confirmed in the following interview extracts:

Ute Burcle (23) -Germany

I really enjoyed myself and will come back next year with my children. I think it is a beautiful culture, an amazing festival of happiness and I will

definitely tell my family and friends back home. If given a chance, I would definitely wear the short beaded skirt. I think it is a beautiful skirt.

Nissa Ramsey (24)-England, Sheffield

It is my third time in Swaziland and I love it here because it is a beautiful country and the people are friendly. I would definitely wear the beaded skirt if I were given a chance. I also think it is nice to maintain the culture even though the place is changing.

Similar sentiments were articulated by a number of whites I interviewed (formal and in-formal) and those interviewed by journalists from the daily newspapers. The following is an example of the paradoxes and ambiguities surrounding tourists' and visitors' perceptions of the event: The following interview was conducted at Ludzidzini on 31st August 2005 with a Briton who attended the Reed Dance in 2005 in the company of a mutual friend:

At Ludzidzini on 31st August 2005
Lomagugu Masango; LM:
Steve=SZ

LM What motivated you to come and attend the event today?
SZ: I am here to have first hand experience of the event's performance and to take pictures.
LM: How do you find the event?
SZ: It is quite different from watching it on TV. Here it is so much alive and intense. Seeing thousands of girls at close range walking and dancing almost half-naked, looks incredible and really shocking.
LM: What do you mean shocking?
SZ: I mean it is one thing watching the event on TV and another thing to be confronted with the reality, its reality.
LM: How do you find the event now?
SZ: It's amazing how the girls and Swazis as a nation are committed to their culture.

The above interview extract reveal ambiguities in the reception or perception of the event particularly the dress code. The informant could not hide his shock at seeing the 'half-naked' girls at close range. For him it is one thing to watch the event on TV and another to be confronted by the reality of the 'half-naked' spectacle. This could also be attributed to cultural shock. When debating the idea of cultural shock with other group (3 in all) of tourists on 31st August 2006, they raised issues about the annual contests for Miss World where girls are supposed to parade wearing revealing clothes such as mini-skirts, swimming costumes and small bikinis.

Other tourists from the West interviewed expressed their excitement and intrigue at seeing culture observed at national level. They even drew parallels between *Umhlanga* and modern beauty contests saying although one is western and the other traditional they have the same objectives. Two tourists argued that similar to *Umhlanga* girls, beauty contestants represent their countries either at national level or world contest by wearing revealing clothes such as mini skirts. Similar to *Imbali,* beauty contestants abide by certain rules. In order for one to participate in the beauty pageant she must have had no child. In order to balance the perceptions of whites with blacks, I interviewed a colleague who had come to witness the event on 31st August 2006 shown in the following extract.

(ii) Extract from interview with a Zambian tourist, Violet Msimangu

LM: How do you find *Umhlanga?*

VM: I must state that Swaziland is still holding to its deep rich culture. Most cultures are being westernized. Zambian women will in most cases cover their breasts with bras. I also noted the respect that was accorded the event. Both foreigners and Swazis seemed to have had the right attire for the event. Others came in the

traditional outfit or *emahiya,* while others were in long skirts. *Umhlanga* show how the Swazi people have managed to retain their cultural heritage.

5.4.2. Visitors Perceptions

Observations made further revealed that the Reed Dance space increasingly incorporating new elements as girls from outside the country are invited annually to participate in the event during the main days (with some participating during the marches, cutting and delivering the reed bundles at Ludzidzini). The 2007 *Umhlanga* showed an increased number of participants. Maidens from different parts of Africa who attended the 2007 reed dance were given an opportunity to showcase their traditional dances. These include the Zulus and Ndebele, amongst others who joined the local *Imbali* to perform during *Umhlanga.* The maidens revealed in interviews with TV presenter Tengetile Khumalo that "although they do hold traditional dances in their regions these were however not celebrated at such a large scale". Instead they were confined to clan or regional level.

During my participant observation, on 30th August 2005, I noticed that the number of Chinese who participate in the event has increased. At around 6pm, soon after the main dance, I boarded a taxi with about ten Chinese women who had attended *Umhlanga.* When I asked them what motivated them to attend *Umhlanga* they said "to check out the king". When I asked, "How did you find the King?" they said "it was nice". May be to prove that they wanted to see the King, I had earlier noticed that Chinese men and women would pose for photographs in front of the podium reserved for the *Ngwenyama, Ndlovukati, eMakhosikati* as well as diplomats and visitors. An example of this is shown in the picture below.

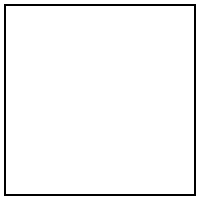


Plate XVIII: Chinese taking a picture capturing King and Queen Mother (Picture by Mdududzi Mngomezulu).

In my opinion, the Chinese use the ritual space (including *Incwala)* to improve their socio-economic and political positions in the country. This observation can be substantiated by reports in the *Times of Swaziland* (16th June, 2005) where about ten Chinese men went to the Ludzidzini royal residence to undergo the *butseka* custom which is a traditional custom observed by men who wish to become members of a particular regiment and in the case of foreigners, to subsequently acquire citizenship. In this way, *Umhlanga* provide space for the Chinese (and other immigrants) to participate in the event with the motive of impressing the King. As a result, a number of Chinese in the country own shops and other business outlets. It is not surprising then that they would want to 'see the King' as most of them have acquired residence permits and citizenship status in the country. All these demonstrate the diversity stance assumed by *Umhlanga* contributing to its multi-layered nature and character.

5. 5. Conclusion

The chapter attempted to consolidate discussions of the preceding chapters. The main concern was to elucidate the (oral and traditional) literary aspects entrenched in the performance of the ritual. The role of *Umhlanga* in promoting or strengthening royalty political is seen in that its organizers (such as chiefs and *tindvuna*) are functionaries of the *Tinkhundla* system. Concepts such as 'Swazi way of life' and 'Swazi unique democracy' are viewed is strategies by ruling dynasty strengthen to entrench its traditional hegemonic ideology. Furthermore, issues of land control narrated in *Umhlanga* songs attest to the powers attributed to the absolute Monarch. The discussion went on to illustrate how issues of gender and human rights, virginity and HIV/AIDS and democracy are addressed within *Umhlanga* space. This was achieved through an analysis of data taken from interviews held with disparate sectors of the Swazi society (Women Groups, pro-democracy proponents as well as tourists and visitors who form part of the event's audiences (participants). In sum, the interpretations and perceptions of the event involved its stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

My overall aim in this thesis has been to contribute towards the interpretation of Swazi rituals specifically the Reed Dance using the oral (and traditional) literary framework. A close examination of literary components such as settings and contexts, song and dance, costume and symbols revealed that *Umhlanga* is embedded with themes that significantly contribute to the study of oral and traditional literature. Major themes that address pertinent issues in Swazi society were discussed and analyzed. These include: rituals of performing Monarch's power; circulation of traditional hegemonic and patriarchal ideologies; virginity and HIV/AIDS; gender and human rights; democracy as well as modernity and globalization. A close examination of the literary aspects accompanying *Umhlanga* (such as songs and symbols) allowed me to reflect on perceptions about the socio-cultural, economic and political lives of Swazi people in contemporary Swaziland. The combination of the literary and ethnographic approaches enabled me to address the research question on how *Umhlanga* ritual can be viewed as a powerful literary genre that provides an important channel about the Swazi people's perceptions.

The discussion and analysis revealed that *Umhlanga,* is better understood as a literary traditional performance through its laid down precepts in the oral script that has been passed down from one generation to the next (recorded in an interview with elder Mrs Shungube in Chapter Two). As indicated in the preceding chapters, *Umhlanga* heavily rely on its performance for the realization of its meanings. As a result, *Umhlanga* has a communal character that involves performers and an audience. In line with De Graft's (1978) observation about African drama, this ritual draws its material from society (evident in song improvisation). In its analysis therefore, *Umhlanga,* emerge as a multifaceted narrative through which diverse elements of Swazi society are constructed and reconstructed.

The study noted that prominent during the event's performance is the ritualisation of Monarch's power. Firstly, Monarch power is observed from the time the national announcement is made over the state owned radio and TV following the royal summons *Uyezwa na! Uyezwa na* as illustrated in Chapter Two. Secondly the event's settings, is made up of Ludzidzini and

Ngabezweni, both traditional headquarters for their Majesties *iNdlovukati* (Queen Mother) and *iNgwenyama* respectively. Thirdly, it has been mentioned in Chapter One that *Umhlanga* can never be celebrated at the absence/or demise of the king. This shows how the ritual's performance centers on the ruling monarch. This is also evident in that the king is the one who ultimately disperse *Imbali* to the campsites and subsequently reed beds and eventually send them home with meat provisions. Fourthly, the position of the monarch is articulated through song performance in which he together with members of his household join *Imbali* in the celebration. This was illustrated in analysis of the popular song entitked '*lelive ngelakho Mswati sebamane bayakubangisa*' meaning 'the country is yours Mswati they are just provoking you".

The thesis further examined the symbolic nature of the event highlighting the virginity theme symbolized in the dominant *imbali* metaphor. The discussion of 'virginity or chastity', which is a requirement to be met by members of the *Imbali* regiment, revealed a lot of ambiguities, controversies and controversies that permeate the ritual space. The controversies is witnessed between traditionalists (or ritual orgarnizers) and liberals (who follow ideals brought about by modernity and globalization. These became evident on the issue of virginity when while traditionalists applauded the action taken by the senior princess to publicly announce that she was a virgin; gender and human right groups contested such a stance. Another controversy was evident when traditionalists such as Ludzidzini Governor expressed shock and disapproval at (Women Groups, gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS activists) teachings about safe sex and the use of condoms to combat the HIV/AIDS.

Also noted in the study are subversions and inversions of the ritual particularly, by *Imbali* as some of the girls' manipulate the ritual space and introduce new innovations that suit the idiosyncrasies of the age-group. Prominent was the modern party organized by *iNkhosatana* Sikhanyiso which threw the authenticity and validity of the ritual into public spot and debate (both locally and internationally). This incident emphasized the unpredictable manner in which adolescent girls can behave and also ways in which assumptions and presuppositions about the theorized structure of the ritual can be disrupted. As such, myths or notions that form the rhetoric or themes of the ritual in its traditional terms are subsequently under challenge. Such myths

include the authenticity of the 'virginity' rhetoric represented in the *Imbali* or 'Flower' symbol. This was further contested in *Umhlanga* songs such as *Ngikhandze ligcabho letfu lijumile* or I found our Pride in a man's *lilawu.* The 'Virginity Crusade' story has further highlighted faultlines in the seamless portrayal of *Umhlanga* ceremony further throwing questions about its viability as an appropriate forum for the upright upbringing of the girl-child.

Thus, a major finding made by this study is that ambiguities, contradictions and conflicting views which challenge the beliefs, myths surrounding the ritual's precepts and guidelines and by extension the ruling monarch, are largely attributed to the influence of modernity and globalization. An exploration of the effects of modernity and globalization (in Chapter Four) revealed that the ritual space is constantly being (re)invented and reformulated as new forms are incorporated, confirming scholars assertion about the non-static nature of tradition and the varied ways in which tradition can be reinvented and reconstructed by individuals or groups at a given time and space. It has been noted that the increasing presence of the international media and participation of tourist has also added to the changing nature and character of the event. For instance, as a result of the digital camera and analogue *Umhlanga* pictures are taken by tourists and can be easily accessed from the internet.

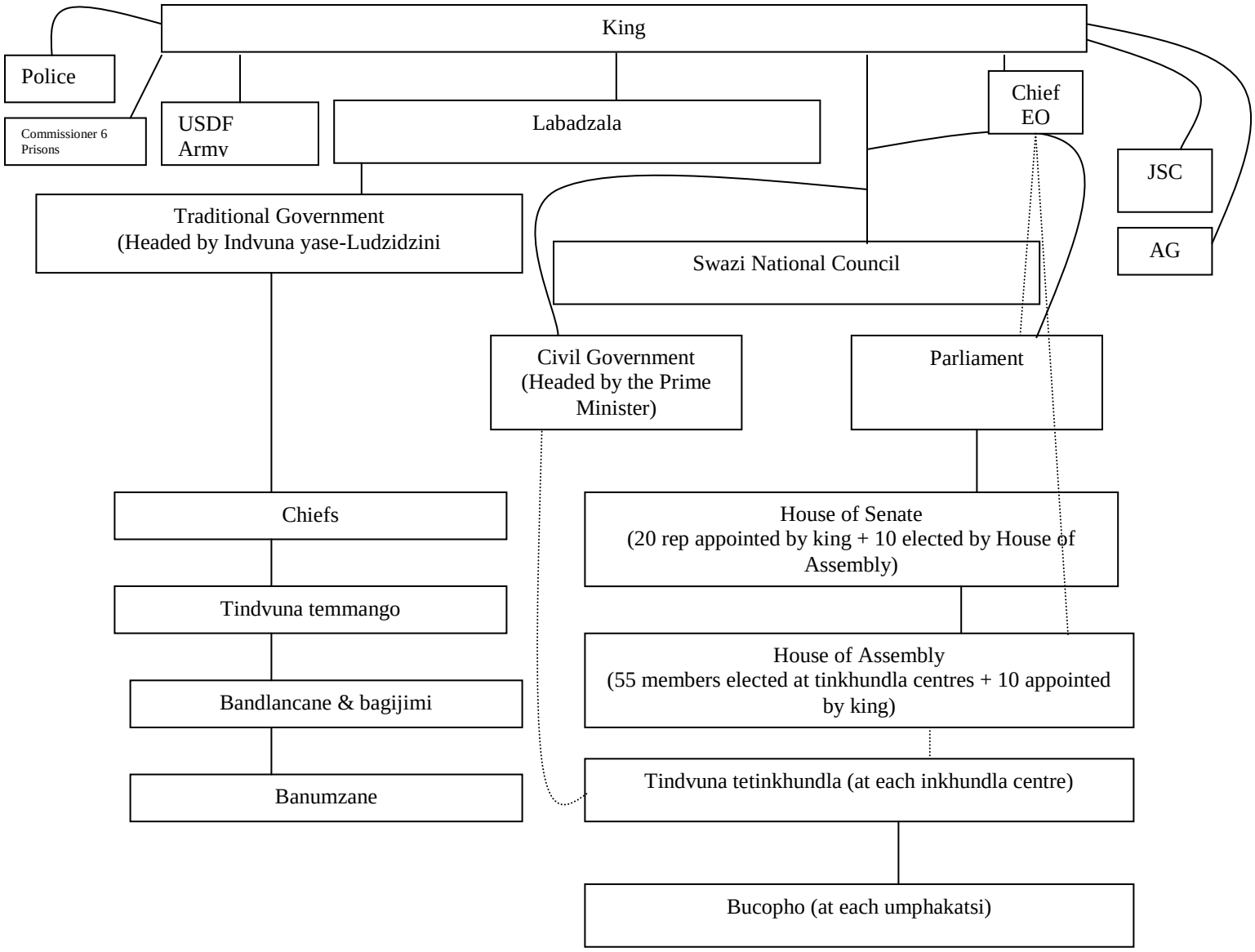
In its observations, the study equally noted how *Tinhundla* system of rule that promotes and support rituals like *Umhlanga* is facing challenges from pro-democracy groups that are calling for a constitutional monarch system of rule that will allow the decentralization of economic and political power. These groups lament national ceremonies as they are viewed as an economic drain to an already ailing Swazi economy. Therefore, Makhubu of the *Nation* Magazine postulates, there is need for the monarch to balance traditionalism and modernity especially in view of the fact that the King and country are signatories of international conversions that include Human Rights, Democracy, Gender to mention a few. There is of course reason to think that the process of public contestation and discussion will go a long as the Swazi Reed Dance draws diverse perceptions from diverse sectors of Swazi society.

I shall conclude the discussion by offering reflections on the tight control over media reporting about issues that relate to royalty and by extension academic research. There is need for an

awareness of the advantage to be gained from academic validation of Swazi customs. Vail and White inform us that Sobhuza II was aware of research on Swazi culture/or customs as he engaged white anthropologists such as Kuper, Gluckman, Marwick amongst others. It is interesting to note that when writing Sobhuza's biography, Kuper, acknowledges that she worked in collaboration with Sobhuza II, members of the royal family as well as members of the Swazi community. This study suggests that in order to document and preserve in writing traditional art forms, since they are ephemeral, the Swazi government (and other organizations) should encourage and sponsor research. The preservation in writing of traditional material would also enhance future generations. I therefore, urge researchers and journalists to deliberate on pressing issues that contribute to the democratization of the economic and political situation in Swaziland. This is because scholars and journalists are professionals endowed with skills to critically engage and analyze issues that impact on society.

APPENDIX A

THE TINKHUNDLA SUPERSTRUCTURE



Each of these has a role to play at its own level

- ✧ **King** – all powers lie in him. Has the power to issue decrees, give or refuse consent to any bill from parliament. Appoints his advisers – SNC, AG, JSC, Prime minister, traditional prime minister, chief electoral officer, ambassadors, cabinet ministers, regional administrators, principal secretaries, commissioner of police, commissioner of correctional services, commander of the army, etc. He is in fact the commander in chief of the Umbutfo Swaziland Defence Force. He also assumes the position of Ingwenyama (umlomo longacali manga). In full control of all land in the country, and may do anything on it at any time.
- ✧ **Labadzala** – very senior princes, princesses and traditionalists. Not known to the public, and the composition of this structure always assumed. They are in fact involved in all decision making in the country and are very influential.
- ✧ **SNC** – a 30 member king-appointed body. It advises king on traditional and other matters that relate to governance. A majority of them are traditionalists very close to the king – princes, princesses and chiefs, with a few intellectuals and other people to give it public image. Scrutinize bills intended for parliament for debate and further scrutinize them after debate at parliament before being signed into law by the king. They make sure the king hears and signs what he wants to hear and sign into law, and not what the people want.
- ✧ **Traditional Prime Minister (*Indvuna yase*-Ludzidzini)** – heads the traditional government from the traditional headquarters – Ludzidzini. Ensures that chiefs keep control of their subjects, and attend to royal duties like umhlanga, lusekwane, incwala, kuhlakula, kuvuna, buganu, immemo, birthday celebrations, elections, etc.
- ✧ **Chief** – ensures his subjects attend royal duties, otherwise fines are imposed on those who defy. Control the distribution of land on behalf of the king. This he does through kukhonta, from which he gets direct benefits. May demand that the subject perform duties in his field, pay some dues to him, etc.
- ✧ ***Indvuna ye-mmango, umgijimi & bandlancane*** – convey chief messages to the community and ensure orders are adhered to. Try defiant subject in the community in kangaroo courts.
- ✧ ***Umnumzane welikhaya*** (The Head of the family)is part of bandlakhulu in the umphakatsi. Is a member of the king's regiments. Ensures that his family is schooled on the role of each member in the community. The indvuna and bandlancane link with him directly, who then ensures his family participates in any activity organized by the chief. Assist in entrenching patriarchy, and benefits through payment dowry for a girl-child, hence may at times practice kwendzisa just for his own benefit.
- ✧ **Prime minister and Cabinet** – these are appointed by the king, with a majority of them being the king's appointees to parliament – both houses. They are the faces shown to the international community as the government. They link directly with business, and do the running of the country's civil government. The role of the traditional government in the whole scenario cannot be overlooked though. They bring bills for debate to parliament. Those bills must have first went though the SNC for scrutiny first before being passed by parliament as bills for parliament.
- ✧ **Parliament** – pass laws acceptable to the king.
  - ♦ **House of Assembly** – 55 members elected at tinkhundla centers + 10 members appointed by the king. Debate bills from the cabinet and passes them to senate. 10 king's appointees must make sure anything that is not acceptable to the appointing hand is not passed to

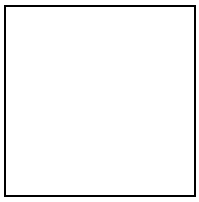
senate. If they fail, Senate deal with it. Most of the elected are not politically conscious people, whose only "role" is community development. Before being elected into parliament, they are not supposed to have been participating in politics.

- ♦ **House of Senate** – further debate bills from house of assembly, and pass them to SNC. The two thirds majority who are king's appointees make sure that whatever may have slipped through the attention (and strength) of the appointed 10 in the lower house does not pass through the house. Bills that have passed through them are not laws yet.

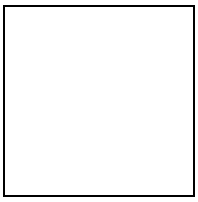
- ✧ **Indvuna yenkhundla & bucopho** – organize the people into structures such as community organizations. Ensures that every member of the community is kept busy with a project like water schemes, tingadzi, tinkhukhu, instead of participating in political issues of the country. Work very closely with the chiefs so that if a subject is seen to be now participating in politics, the chief deals him with accordingly in many ways, including eviction.
- ✧ **Chief Electoral Officer** – facilitates the election process in the country. Appointed directly by the king, and answerable to him and only him. Ensures that the election system does sift the unwanted political elements in the whole process, but accepts others to gain legitimacy and acceptance. Ensures, through the use of chiefs and other structures, that the people participate in the election process.
- ✧ **Judicial Service Commission** – a 6-member commission appointed directly by the king. It is responsible in recommending people that can be appointed judges by the king. The appointment of the judges of the high court and the court of appeal remains the sole responsibility of the king. The same is true with their sacking.
- ✧ **Attorney General** – appointed directly by the king. Advises the king, parliament, and government on all legal matters. Is responsible for ensuring that all bills that are in conflict with the liking of the king are not passed as laws of the country.
- ✧ **Army Commander, Police Commissioner, Prisons' Commissioner** – ensure that country's subject remain silent. This is in the event the traditional structures are not able to deal with them. Their forces remain ready to violently pounce on any voice of dissent.

NB: Not all the structures of the system have been included. The economic structure of the system has not been included as well (shall be dealt with in other discussions). The structure may not be very perfect, but it gives the idea of the system though.

APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C



APPENDIX D

School of Literature and Languages Studies
University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3

Wits 2050

Johannesburg

July 2004

The King's Office

Lozitha Royal Residence
Lozitha

RE-REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON *THE UMHLANGA*

I am registered for a PhD degree programme at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. In fulfillment of the degree, I am expected to write a thesis and submit the work thereof. I would be grateful if you would grant me permission to conduct my research on one of the country's rituals under the tentative title: *READING THE SWAZI REED DANCE (UMHLANGA) AS A LITERARY TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCE ART*

My study focuses on the sustenance and preservation of culture through oral tradition (oral literature). I am interested in determining how Swazis have managed to preserve and sustain their culture as oral literature. It is hoped that the results of this study can help not only Swazi citizens but also other nationalists understand and appreciate the practices that pertain preserving cultures through oral traditions. It is also hoped that future reference will be made to this study in a variety of situations, such as historical, cultural and literary studies.

Please note that all the data obtained in this study will be confidential.

Yours Faithfully

Lomagugu Masango

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

You are being requested to participate in a study investigating ways in which the *Umhlanga* ritual is performed and preserved in the Swazi oral tradition under the tentative title: *READING THE SWAZI REED DANCE* (*UMHLANGA) AS A LITERARY TRADITORAL PERFORMANCE ART*. Your participation may help to clarify some of the controversies surrounding the rituals so that we can better explain their importance in the historical and oral traditional lives of the Swazi people and the monarch.

I……(Names), after being assured that my anonymity will be guaranteed in the course of academic research conducted by Lomagugu Masango on *READING THE SWAZI REED DANCE* (*UMHLANGA) AS A LITERARY TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCE ART*

I here by allow her to quote my responses to the interview questions.

Done at……(Place)

APPENDIX F

WRITTEN SCRIPT

By Richard M. Patricks, SNTC. July 2006.

In an eight day ceremony, girls cut reeds and present them to the queen mother and then dance. (There is no formal competition) It is done in late August or early September. Only childless, unmarried girls can take part. The aims of the ceremony are to:

1. Preserve girls' chastity.

2. Provide tribute labour for the Queen mother.

3. Produce solidarity by working together.

The royal family appoints a commoner maiden to be "induna" (captain) of the girls and she announces over the radio the dates of the ceremony. She will be an expert dancer and knowledgeable on royal protocol. One of the King's daughters will be her counterpart. **Day 1**: The girls gather at the Queen Mothers royal village. Today this is at Ludzidzini, in Sobhuza's time it was at Lobamba. They come in groups from the 200 or so chiefdoms and are registered for security. They are supervised by men, usually four, appointed by each chief. They sleep in the huts of relatives in the royal villages or in the classrooms of the four nearby schools.

Day 2: The girls are separated into two groups, the older (about 14 to 22 years) and the younger (about 8 to 13). In the afternoon, they march, in their local groups, to the reed-beds, with their supervisors. The older girls often go to Ntondozi (about 30 kilometres) while the younger girls usually go to Bhamsakhe near Malkerns (about 10 kilometres). If the older girls are sent to Mphisi Farm, government will provide lorries for their transport. The girls reach the vicinity of the reeds in darkness, and sleep in government-provided tents I marquees. Formerly the local people would have accommodated them in their homesteads.

Day 3: The girls cut their reeds, usually about to ten to twenty, using long knives. Each girl ties her reeds into one bundle. Nowadays they use strips of plastic bags for the tying, but those mindful of tradition will still cut grass and plait it into rope.

Day 4: In the afternoon the girls set off to return to the Queen Mothers village, carrying their bundles of reeds. Again they return at night. This is done "to show they travelled a long way".

Day 5: A day of rest where the girls make final preparations to their hair and dancing costumes.

Day 6: First day of dancing, from about 3 to 5 in the afternoon. The girls drop their reeds outside the Queen Mothers quarters. They move to the arena and dance keeping in their groups and each group singing different songs at the same time.

Day 7: Second and last day of dancing. The king will be present.

Day 8: King commands that a number of cattle (perhaps 20-25) be slaughtered for girls. They collect their pieces of meat and can go home.

Today's Reed Dance is not an ancient ceremony, but developed out of the old "umcwasho" custom. In "umcwasho", all young girls were placed in a female age-regiment. If any girl fell pregnant outside of marriage, her family paid a fine of one cow to the local chief. After a number of years, when the girls had reached a marriageable age, they would perform labour service for the Queen Mother, ending with dancing and feasting.

A**PPENDIX G**

List of SA tribes (clans) who attended the reed dance (*Times of Swaziland*, 4 September 2007)

KaTsabedze 67
Ebhadzeni 180
KaLomshiyo 497
KaDanji 30
KaTembe 28
KaMsogwaba 51
KaMdluli 50
Emjandini 42
Batembu 65.

PART I

APPENDICES

H. *Umhlanga* songs Analysed (10)

I Sample of *Umhlanga* songs sang during the occasion between 2004 and 2005 (5)

J. Interviewees Solicited for oral script (3)

K. Chiefs (2) and traditional authority/*Indvuna* at buhleni royal residence (1)

L. Guards: Male (2) and female (2)

M. participants (2) and non-participants (3)

N. Individuals from diverse groups (4)

O. Tourists (2)

Appendix H: *Umhlanga* songs analysed

1.

(Lead singers)	*Sesikhona Ngwane sesikhona Dlamini.*
(Chorus)	*Sesikhona sitowubuka lokuhle.*
(Lead singers	*Sivulele Ngwane sesikhona Dlamini*
(Chorus)	*Tsine sitowubuka lokuhle.*

(Lead singers)	We have arrived Ngwane we have arrived Dlamini
(Chorus)	We have arrived to observe what is good
(Lead singers)	Open for us Ngwane we have arrived Dlamini
(Chorus)	We are here to observe what is good.

2

(Lead singers)	*Tsine siyiMbali, siyiMbali, siyiMbali yemaSwati!*
(Chorus)	*Akuna mfana longatsintsa tsine!*
(Lead singers)	*Tsine siyiMbali, siyiMbali, siyiMbali yemaSwati!*
(Chorus)	*Akuna mfana longatsintsa tsine!*

(Lead singers)	We are the Flower, the Flower, the Flower of the Swazi!
(Chorus)	There is no boy who can touch us!
(Lead singers)	We are the Flower, the Flower, the Flower of the Swazi!
(Chorus)	There is no boy who can touch us!

3.

(Lead singers)	*Wangiphats'emabhuswini yemu lami wami*
(Chorus)	*Wangiphatsa kanjani?*
(Lead singers)	*Wangiphatsa kwaze kwasa yemu lamu wami*
(Chorus)	*Wangiphatsa kanjani?*
(Lead singers)	*Wangiphatsa kwaze kwakhala make laphe khaya*

(Chorus) *Wangiphatsa kanjani*

(Lead singers) You touch me in most sensitive parts my in-law
(Chorus) How do you touch me?
(Lead singers) You touch me up till morning hours my in-law
(Chorus) How do you touch me?
(Lead singers) You touch me until the woman of the house cries.
(Chorus) How do you touch me?

4.

(**Lead singers)** *Watsi unginika imali kani ungika lishumi labo pondo*!
(Chorus) *Lishumi labo pondo*! *Lishumi labo pondo*
(Lead singers) *Watsi uginila imali kani unginika sheleni*
(Chorus) *Lishumi labo pondo*! *Lishumi labo pondo*
(Lead singers) *Lishumi labo pondo*
(Chorus) *Lishumi labo pondo Lishumi labo pondo*
(Lead singers) *Lishumi labo pondo*
(Chorus) *Lishumi labopondo Lishumi labo pondo*
(Lead singers) You said you were giving me money but you gave me only ten pounds!
(Chorus) Ten pounds! Ten pounds!
(Lead singers) You said you were giving me money but you gave me only ten shillings!
(Chorus) Ten pounds! Ten pounds! (Chorus)
(Lead singers) Ten pounds!
(Chorus) Ten pounds! Ten pounds! (Chorus)
(Lead singers) Ten pounds!
(Chorus) Ten pounds! Ten pounds! (Chorus)

5.

(Lead singer)	*Inyandzaleyo Malangeni!*
(Chorus)	*Nawe ingakutfola iAIDS*
(Lead singer)	*Hlala ngentfombi Ntfombatana!*
(Chorus)	*Nawe ingakutfola iAIDS*
(Lead singer)	*i- AIDS ibhokile lonyaka.*
(Chorus)	*Nawe ingakutfola iAIDS*
(Lead singer)	*Beware Malangeni!*
(Chorus)	*You too will be caught by AIDS*
(Lead singer)	*Sit like a lady, girl!*
(Chorus)	*You too will be caught by AIDS*
(Lead singer)	*AIDS is widespread this year*
(Chorus)	*You too will be caught by AIDS*

6.

(Lead singer)	*Lelive ngelakho Mswati sebamane bayakubangisa*
(Chorus)	*Gcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*
(Lead singer)	*Lelive ngeleNkhosi ngeleNkhosi yeMaswati*
(Chorus)	*Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*
(Lead singer)	*NgeleNkhosi yeMaswati ngeleNkhosi yeMaswati!*
(Chorus)	*Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*
(Lead singer)	*NgeleNkhosi yeMaswati ngeleNkhosi yeMaswati!*
(Chorus)	*Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni!*
(Lead singer)	*Mswati uyiNkosi kaHhohho kaHhohho!*
Chorus)	*Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni!*
(Lead singer)	*Balonile balonile!*
Chorus)	*Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni!*
(Lead singer)	*Liyoze libuye lakaNgwane!*
(Chorus)	*Gcamu gcamu balisike malegeni*
(Lead singer)	*Liyoze Libuye lakaNgwane*

(Chorus) *Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessionaires!

(Lead singer) The country is yours Mswati they are just bothering you!

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessionaires!

(Lead singer) It is for the King of the Swazis! For the King of the Swazis!

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessionaires!

(Lead singer) Mswati is the King at Hhohho at Hhohho!

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessionaires!

(Lead singer) The country is for the King, the King of the Swazis!

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessionaires!

(Lead singer) It is for the King of the Swazis! For the King of the Swazis!

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessionaires!

(Lead singer) They have spoiled it, spoilt it!

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concesioners!

(Lead singer) It will eventually come back, the Ngwane-land!

(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessioners!

7.

(Lead singers) *Nkulunkulu ngicela emandla ngiboningwenya lapha ekhaya*

(Chorus) *Wayiva ngabani? Wayiva ngabani?*

(Lead singers) *Nkulunkulu ngicela emandla ngibon ingwenya lapha ekhaya*

(Chorus) *Wayiva ngabani? Wayiva ngabani?*

(Lead singers) *Mine ngibona ingwenya lapha ekhaya*

(Chorus) *Wena wayiva ngabani? Wayiva ngabani ingwenya lapha ekhaya?*

(Lead singers) *Nkulunkulu ngicela emandla ngibon ingwenya lapha ekhaya*

(Chorus) *Wayiva ngabani lapha ekhaya! Wayiva ngabani?*

(Lead singers) God please give me strength I see a crocodile in this home!

(Chorus) Told you about it?

(Lead singers) God please give me strength I see a crocodile in this home!

(Chorus) Told you about it?

(Lead singers) Myself I see a crocodile in this home!

(Chorus) Yourself who told you about it! Who told you about it in this home?

(Lead singers) God please give me strength I see a crocodile in this home!

(Chorus) Told you about it in this home? Who told you about it?

8.

(Lead singers) *Awu yelomazondo! Yelomazondo!*

(Chorus) *Sebayosala batiteka bodvwa!*

(Lead singers) *Mswati uyiNkhosi yabekelwa eMaSwati!*

(Chorus) *Yabekelwa eMaSwati!*

(Lead singers) *Yelomajikeleta kaHhohho!*

(Chorus) *Hhohho! kaHhohho!*

(Lead singers) *Mswati uyalibusa leSwatini!*

(Chorus) *Sebayosala batiteka bodvwa?*

(Lead singers) Hey! you hatred, you hatred!

(Chorus) They will remain debating alone!

(Lead singers) Mswati is a King installed for the Swazis!

(Chorus) He was installed for the Swazis!

(Lead singers) Hey! You who make his rounds in Hhohho!

(Chorus) At Hhohho, at Hhohho!

(Lead singers) Mswati rules the Swazi nation!

(Chorus) They will remain debating alone!

9.

(Lead singers) *Ngiwahambile onkhe emave Lilodvwa lelekaNgwane*

(Chorus) *Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*

(Lead singers) *Ngiwahambile emave Lilodvwa lelakaNgwane*

(Chorus) *Ngcamu gcamu balisika emalegeni*

(Lead singers) *Balonile balonile!*

(Chorus) *Gcamu gcamu balisike malegeni*

(Lead singers) *Balonile lakaNgwane*

(Chorus) *Gcamu gcamu balisike malegeni*

(Lead singers) I have been to many countries but the *Ngwane* is just unique!
(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessioners!
(Lead singers) I have been to many countries but the *Ngwane* is just unique!
(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessioners!
(Lead singers) They have spoilt it, spoilt it!
(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessioners!
(Lead singers) They have spoilt the *Ngwane*-land!
(Chorus) Watch, watch, land concessioners!

10.

***Giya* song 2007**

(Lead singers) *Yelomabuya sambe! Yelomabuya sambe!*
(Chorus) *Ubochakaza ntombe mhlophe!*
(Lead singers) *Lelive belinga nje! Belinga nje!*
(Chorus) *Ubochakaza ntombe mhlophe!*
(Lead singers) *Yelomabuya sambe! Yelomabuya sambe!*
(Chorus) *Ubochakaza ntombe mhlophe!*

(Lead singers) Come lets go! Come lets go!
(Chorus) You must blossom fair/bright girl
(Lead singers) The country was not like this! It was not like this!
(Chorus) You must blossom fair/bright girl
(Lead singers) Come lets go! Come lets go!
(Chorus) You must blossom fair/bright girl

I Songs sang during the occasion (2004-2007)

1.

(Lead singers) *Yesibali kungisele!*
(Chorus) *Abalamu bami baphi Abalamu bami baphi!*
(Lead singers) *Yesibali kungisele!*
(Chorus) *Abalamu bami baphi Abalamu bami baphi!*
(Lead singers) *Mswati uyalibusa live lonkhe!*
(Chorus) *Vumani bo! vumani bondaba!*
(Lead singers) *Mswati uyiNkhosi yeSwatini!*
(Chorus) *Vumani bo! vumani bondaba!*

(Lead singers) My in-law I woke up late!
(Chorus) My in-laws where are they, My in-laws where are they?
(Lead singers) My in-law I woke up late!
(Chorus) My in-laws where are they, My in-laws where are they?
(Lead singers) Mswati rules the whole country!
(Chorus) Agree Ho! Agree rumour mongers!
(Lead singers) Mswati rules the whole country!
(Chorus) Agree Ho! Agree rumour mongers!

2.

(Lead singers) *Sebasiletsele umcwasho eSwatini*
(Chorus) *Siyabonga, siyabonga, eMakhosi etfu*
(Lead singers) *Siyawatsandza emaKhosi etfu ngekusiletsele umcwasho!*
(Chorus) *Siyabonga, siyabonga,eMakhosi etfu*

(Lead singers) They have brought us *umcwasho* in Swaziland!
(**Chorus)** We thank you, we thank you our Kings!
(Lead seingers) We love our Kings for bringing us *umcwasho!*
(Chorus) We thank you, we thank you our Kings!

3.

(Lead singers) *Kuhle ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*

(Chorus) *Ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*

(Lead singers) *Kuhle ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*

(Chorus) *Ekhabo dali kukhala emahayifa*

(Lead singers) Its beautiful at my darling's home, there is Hi-fi-music!

(Chorus) At my darling's home there is Hi-fi music!

(Lead singers) Its beautiful at my darling's home, there is Hi-fi-music!

(Chorus) At my darling's home there is Hi-fi music!

4.

(Lead singers) *Ngikhandze ligcabho letfu lijumile*

(Chorus) *Jikajika ngisayo tjel' indvuna*

(Lead singers) *Ngikhandze ligcabho letfu lijumile*

(Chorus) *Jikajika ngisayo tjeli' indvuna*

(Lead singers) I found our pride in a man's hut!
(Chorus) Turn Turn! I'm going to report to the guard!
(Lead singers) I found our pride in a man's hut!
(Chorus) **t**urn Turn! I'm going to report to the guard!

5.

(Lead singers) *Awubheke emagabazi akaNgwane!*

(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane!*

(Lead singers) *Ayasikisa emagabazi akaNgwane!*

(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane*

(Lead singers) *Awubheke emagabazi akaNgwane!*

(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane*

(Lead singers) *Ayasikisa emagabazi akaNgwane!*

(Chorus) *Emagabazi akaNgwane*

(Lead singers) Watch these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Lead singers) They are showing off these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Lead singers) Watch these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Lead singers) They are showing off these unique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

(Chorus) **U**nique skilled dancers of the *Ngwane!*

Appendix J:

All interviews were conducted in siSwati and later transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. In an attempt to construct the official script of the *Umhlanga* which proved to be difficult to get from royal authorities, I solicited interviews from three informants who in my view were in a position to give an authentic oral version of the event. I first give a brief profile of each of the three informants and proceed to record the in-depth interview transcripts that were useful in the discussion of the organization and structure of the event and the official script in Chapter I and the subsequent chapters.

(i) Mrs Shungube
(ii) Richard Patricks
(iii) Phanginjobo Metiso

(i) Extract from Interview with: Elder Mrs Onica T. Shungube

Date: 7th September 2006 at Shungube's home in Mliba.

LM=Lomagugu Masango

OS=Onica Shungube

LM: First of all, can you please aunt (anti), tell me what your full names are?

OS: I'm Onica Thulwane Shungube.

LM: Where were you born anti?

OS: I was born at siDvwashini at Hhohho.

LM: Do you remember anti when that was?

OS: I cannot say exactly when as my parents (*bobabe*) were not educated. But they say I was born in nineteen...nineteen twenty-five! (1925)

LM: As you were growing up did you attend *Umhlanga?*

OS: How else would I have celebrated my maidenship? Of course I joined the girls regiment called '*inkhumbuntsetse*' and started participating in *umcwasho* and *umhlanga* rites at the age of 18years.

LM: Can you explain why participating in these rites was important?

OS: *Umcwasho* was observed at area or regional level for about two to three years. The end of the *umcwasho* season was celebrated at national level. First of all, in order to make sure that the *umcwasho* rules were followed, girls from each area used to monitor one another. Even if a girl was old enough to have a boyfriend, say 21 years old, she would not visit her boyfriend until the necessary arrangements for a traditional marriage were carried out. Still the fine of a cow would be paid if the girl got married during the *umcwasho* period. Since there were no radios during our time, area *tindvuna* or forerunners traveled from one homestead to the next announcing the ceremony of the *Umhlanga*. Parents were warned against deterring their girls from participating or else they would be fined. During our time, transport was not provided, so we had to walk long distances, first to the *Ndlovukati*'s royal residence Lobamba (now Ludzidzini) which took us about four to five days. The journey was difficult as we carried our sleeping mats, blankets and foodstuff on our heads. Once it became dark, we sought accommodation from nearby *umphakatsis* or chiefs' quarters. We did not mind the difficulties we encountered along the way. What was important for us was to participate and perform in the one and only ritual that was set apart for us as *tintfombi takaNgwane* or maidens of the Swazi nation. In spite of all sorts of difficulties, the *Ngwenyama and Ndlovukati's* acknowledgement of our endeavour to preserve our virginity in celebration was the main motivation.

LM: How is *umhlanga* today different from thirty years ago?

OS Today *umhlanga* is fashionable as you can see girls transported to the reed sites, assisted to cut the reeds and adorned in western make-up and jewellery, and all sorts of hairstyles such as relaxers, braids and hairpieces. Nowadays you see children who do not know what *umhlanga* entails in full *umhlanga regalia*.

LM: How does the ruling monarch benefit from the event?

OS: As the head of the Swazi nation the *Ngwenyama* can be paralleled to a Father figure and the *Ndlovukazi* as the Mother figure. In order for the Swazi nation to be strong and united as a 'household' they should adhere to the guidelines laid down by the Father figure and Mother figure. Respect for the *Ngwenyama* and *Ndlovukazi* is shown in heeding the royal call each time a particular *libutfo* is summoned to perform a particular royal duty. There is no other opportunity for the girls of the country to honour and show respect for their kings than through observing the *umcwasho and Umhlanga* rules and guidelines. In fact the pride of

the Swazi people lies in their respect of their Kings. To answer your question, the Swazi monarch does not necessarily benefit directly from the event as you can see that a lot of money is spent to cater for the girls food, transport and so on. What is important for the monarch is that the Swazi people honor their tradition whose custodians are their majesties. There is nothing that pleases a father and mother in a home than the respect and obedience shown by their children.

LM: One more question, do you think the issue of virginity is still relevant in today's *umhlanga?*

OS: It is very important for the girls to know that the cutting and delivering of the *umhlanga* bundles is symbolic to their status as virgins. Anyone participating in this sacred ritual knowing very well that she is not a virgin only invites bad luck and the wrath of the ancestors upon herself. In fact that is the message the chiefs and parents should pass on to the participants.

LM: Anti, one last question, what would you say about the issue of the King choosing his *liphovela* during the *Umhlanga* occasion?

OS: I for one I have never seen the King choosing *liphovela* during *Umhlanga.*

LM: In the last three years the King has been reported to have chosen *Liphovela* . Do you think this is good for the image of the event?

OS: I do not remember King Sobhuza II choosing his wives during *Umhlanga.* In the case of Sobhuza he would attend traditional dances (marriages) and identify prospective wives during the performance. Sometimes his entourage would identify a prospective wife for him during traditional ceremonies where *tinftombi* would be required to entertain the guests. At the same time I do not see anything wrong with the present King choosing a prospective wife during this event as *emajaha* also identify their prospective wives during the event. Otherwise where else do you think the King would meet prospective wives?

LM: In your view do you see the performance of the *Umhlanga* continuing in the next five years or so?

OS: Unless the *Ngwenyama* decides to suspend the event, I have no doubt in my mind that the event will continue to draw large numbers of girls to participate especially with the effect of modernity on the ritual. Nowadays the girls get free transport rides, free food and the prospect of being away from home during the ploughing season.

(ii) Extract from Interview with: Richard Patricks

Date: 27th September 2006 at Lobamba SNTC Office

LM: I would need your assistance in my study of the *Umhlanga* for my PhD thesis.

RP: I can help you in any way I can, feel free to ask any question.

LM: First of all, can you please tell me what your full names are?

RP: I'm Mdvumowencwala Richard Patricks.

LM: Where were you born?

RP: I was born in England but am now a Swazi citizen.

LM: Where do you stay?

RP: I have my *lilawu* at the royal residence here at Lobamba.

LM: From the conception of my study in July 2004 I have tried to get an official letter granting me permission to investigate the *Umhlanga* event, but to date I haven't got one.

RP: It could take you another decade to get one which again is not likely?

LM: I have seen one in the internet posted the STNC written by you. How did you come across it?

RP: I conducted interviews with *Umhlanga* authorities, observed and recorded the event proceedings during my own participation observation in my capacity as senior researcher in the STNC. That is the only written script you will come across. It is the same one that is used by the Swaziland Tourism Authority in their magazines such as *What's Happening in Swaziland, Tourists Guide Maps* and tourists brochures distributed during the *Umhlanga* season. There is in fact another one being written by my colleague which is almost similar to mine.

LM: Why is it almost impossible to get the official letter from the custodians of the event such as the *Ndlovukazi,* appointed *Umhlanga* authorities or even members the royal family? In fact I had thought that since I was in the company of a senior princess it would be easy.

RP: I am not surprised about all this. There is a saying amongst the Swazi people that *injobo itfungelwa ebandla.* You will not find one Swazi who will answer questions on *emasiko emaSwati.* The belief or reasoning behind this is that no one Swazi in particular can give answers to something that pertains to all the Swazis including the King and *Ndlovukazi*. All

these people you were seeing know that and again it can take you decades to get the official letter you are looking for.

(iii) Extract from Interview with: Phanginjobo Metiso

Short Profile

Phanginjobo Metfula is Overseer of all Hhohho based *emabutfo* both male and male. He works hand in hand with Ludzidzini authorities in announcing and mobilizing different *emabutfo* to perform royal duties.

Date: 29tht^{h} September 2006 at Buhleni Royal Residence

(iii) Extract from Interview with: Phanginjobo Metiso

LM: I am doing a study of the *Umhlanga* and need information about how it is organized who is behind its performance and what purposes it serves?

PM: I do not see any problem in writing about Swazi culture but have you obtained permission from the rightful custodians of the *Umhlanga?*

LM: I have talked to the Minister for Home Affairs prince Gabheni who has appointed a senior princess as my *lincusa.*

LM: What is your role in the *Umhlanga?*

PM: I was appointed by the King as the Overseer of all Hhohho based *emabutfo* both male and male. This means after mobilizing their regiments area chiefs report to me. The same applies with the *Imbali* regiment. Once the girls have been summoned over the radio they report to their area chiefs who disperse them to Ludzidzini. At Ludzidzini the *tindvuna* accompanying the girls report to me.

LM: How is *Umhlanga* significant in these changing times?

PM: *Umhlanga* is an example of how the Swazi people hold on to their traditions. It is through participating in the *umhlanga* that Swazi maidens can celebrate their maidenhood. Through the *Umhlanga* practice girls afforded an opportunity to celebrate their status as future mothers of the nation. You have heard about the HIV/Aids pandemic, we as Swazis believe

that we can overcome the scourge if we inculcate good morals in our children embodied in the *umcwasho* and *umhlanga* rules and guidelines.

LM: Do you think the girls are making good use of the *umhlanga* lessons?

PM: As long as parents advise their children to preserve their virginity and encourage them to participate in the event as a way of celebrating their chastity there is no doubt that the event is useful. Over the years we have seen girls from neighboring South Africa joining the *Imbali* during the *Umhlanga* celebration.

LM: What kind of disruptions have you witnessed during the *Umhlanga?*

PM: Each and every group ranging from 100 to 150 is assigned about four guards who make sure that the girls comply with the laid down guidelines. Instances where disruptions or mischief were reported are where girls joined the *umhlanga* on their own volition without an *indvuna* to report to.

Appendix K

Extracts from Interviews.

(i) Chief Jubiphathi Magagula-Nyakatfo area

(ii) Chief Mvelase Mdluli-Mvembili area

(iii) Bhekinkosi Ndzimandze-Buhleni *indvuna*

(i) Chief Jubiphathi Magagula, 26/08/2005

Short Profile

Chief Jubiphathi Magagula resides at Nyakatfo area in the Hhohho region. He also has *lilawu* at Ludzidzini Royal Residence. His headquarters referred to in siSwati as *umphakatsi* has been observed in 2005 and 2006 where the *Imbali* gathered to await government trucks that transported them to Ludzidzini. The following is an extract from an interview with the chief on 26th August 2005.

LM: Lomagugu Masango

JM: Jubiphathi Magagula

LM: What is the significance of *Umhlanga*?

JM: It is a culture that is performed by women and girls who set out to cut reeds that are used as traditional windbreakers around the Queen Mother's residence and other royal residences.

LM: Do the girls participate in this ritual willingly?

JM: Yes they do it out of their own free will. You see, in that group there is an eight year-old *Imbali* who is too young to be attending *Umhlanga.* If I were to send her back home, she would cry and that would affect the whole group. I have already instructed the leader not to allow her to join the marching *Imbali*, but to leave her behind and assign her to watch over the group's belongings.

LM: There is going to be a big ceremony of the *umcwasho.* What is Umcwasho all about?

JM: The carrying of *umcwasho* is a tradition in which the girl child is educated about moral behavior and societal expectations about a woman. For instance, through the *umcwasho/Umhlanga* a girl knows that she is not supposed to engage in sex as that would result into premature pregnancy.

Council member (interjects): Its purpose is to safeguard and preserve the girl's virginity until such a time when she is ready for marriage. In fact, *umcwasho* is an advisory board for the girls as it embodies the principles about the upbringing and conduct of Swazi girls in general. It is far much better than contraceptives and condoms.

LM: Will you yourself attend *Umhlanga*?

JM Of course yes! I have a *lilawu* (man's house) at Ludzidzini. It is the duty of us chiefs to be in the company of the king during national ceremonies, he cannot be all by himself. You will see me there, fully dressed in my traditional attire.

(ii) **Chief Mvelase Mdluli**

Short Profile

Chief Mvelase Mdluli has his headquaters *umphakatsi* at Mvembili area and has *lilawu* at Buhleni Royal Residence and Ludzidzini Royal residence.Chief Mdluli is overseer for all chiefs in the Hhhohho region. This means he is the King's liason between all area chiefs in the region. This however, does not mean that chiefs cannot consult the King outside his jurisdiction. The following is an extract from an interview with the chief on 26th August 2005

LM: Lomagugu Masango
MM: Mvelase Mdluli

LM: How is *Umhlanga* received by the Swazi people?

MM: *Umhlanga* is an old practice that has been passed on from one generation to the next. Swazi people understand that it stands for the upright upbringing of girls who are future mothers of the nation. Despite the impact of western ideologies about human rights and freedom of choice, Swazi people know that when it comes to choosing what is good, they

cannot easily discard their traditional beliefs and practices that promote their unity as a nation.

LM: How would you describe the position of the *Ngwenyama* and *Ndlovukazi* in the performance of *Umhlanga?*

MM: The *Ngwenyama* is the key custodian of national ceremonies. He represents the ancestral spirits and departed Kings of the nation. Amongst his major responsibilities is to participate together with the nation in the traditions passed to him by his predecessors, the departed Kings. The *Ndlovukazi* who by tradition rules in conjunction with his son, the *Ngwenyama,* is supposed to see to it that tradition and culture is not compromised but carried successfully. That is why the Queen Mother's residence is the 'home' for national rituals including the *butimba and iNcwala* ceremonies.

LM: Do you see the *Umhlanga* surviving in the face of challenges for change and democratization?

MM: I do not see the *Umhlanga* standing in the way for democracy. In the wake of democracy tradition is useful as the basis for past present and future deliberations. To do away with tradition would be to severe one's roots. I think the way to go about change is to take what is good and viable from foreign ideologies.

iii) Bhekinkosi Ndzimandze

Short Profile

Bhekinkosi Ndzimandze resides at Buhleni Royal residence Buhleni Royal Residence has been monitored in 2005 and 2006 where the *Imbali* gathered to await government trucks that transported them to Ludzidzini. The following is an extract from an interview with the the residence and *Umhlanga* officer/official on 26th August 2005

LM: Lomagugu Masango
BN: Bhekinkosi Ndzimandze

LM: How do the girls view *Umhlanga?*

BN: They seem to be excited about it as their numbers increase each year.

LM: What do you think is their main attraction to the event?

BN: The prospect of joining other girls from all walks makes the event irresistible. Nowadays, the regiment is treated to nice meals so there is no question of getting hungry and missing home. Instead, when the time the *Umhlanga* is over some girls are not very excited.

LM: There have been reports that girls join the *Umhlanga* group to escape strict rules at home and get the opportunity to meet their boyfriends. What do you say about that?

BN: It is a known fact that some of the older girls already have boyfriends. I have just finished addressing the group begging them to 'please suspend their meetings with their boyfriends' and to pay respect to the *Umhlanga* as it represents their loyalty and respect for the *Ngwenyama* and *Ndlovukazi* as well as the nation. The *tindvuna* are also given strict rules to report any girl who would be mischievous during the 8 days of the event.

LM: I can see very young girls even less than 10 years ready to undertake the journey. Do they manage the marches and cutting of the reeds?

BN: It has been announced over the radio that parents should not send girls who are too young to march and cut reeds. But as you can see there are young girls. We have arranged with the *tindvuna* that the young ones should remain in at Ludzidzini to look after the

belongings of the group. They will only join the others during the dances as they are carrying their regalia.

LM: Are there any reports of disruptions or dangers that you have received over the last two years?

BN: So far guards for the group from Buhleni have not reported any mischief. There are of course instances where girls were reported to be sick and those matters were referred to the Red Cross officials who are always there to cater for such concerns.

Appendix L: Extracts from Interviews with two Male (M) and two Female (F) Guards

(i) Mavundla Simelane [M]

(ii) Sihlangusemphi Shongwe [M]

(iii)Sebentile Magagula [F]

(iv)Nqobile Mkhonta [F]

(i) Extract from Interview with Mavundla Simelane.

LM: For how long have you been *indvuna* for the *Imbali?*

MS: I have been *indvuna* for 4 years this is my fifth year.

LM: What are your duties?

MS: Mainly my duty is to monitor the girls movements as some of them get unruly during the rides in the trucks and even during the marches.

LM: How do they get unruly?

MS: For instance, when singing they start dancing on top of the moving truck. This in fact resulted into one girl falling off a moving lorry in 2004 while retrieving her *lihiya* which was hooked into the lorry. Sometimes we restrain the girls from hailing insults at pedestrians as this resulted into one of the girls last year being injured as the pedestrians (boys) who were being booed threw a stone that hit the girl in her right eye.

LM: Once at Ludzidzini, is it easy to monitor the girls' movements especially those who are usually reported to have sneaked to the Trade Fair Grounds in Manzini?

MS: Although it is not easy we try our best. We work together with the female guards who carry the record books which has the group's names. Every evening before going to sleep we make a role call to check if everyone is present. In cases where people are absent they are supposed to be reported to the area chiefs once back in order to be disciplined.

LM: Are there times when you have reported mischievous girls?

MS: Not necessarily as I discipline them on the spot. For instance, those who misbehave are sometimes not allowed to join in the marches but made to remain in at Ludzidzini to look after the luggage. In that way they miss the marches which are full of fine as most girls look forward to.

(ii) Sihlangusemphi Shongwe

LM: For how long have you been *indvuna?*

SS: I have been *indvuna* for five years.

LM: Do you get paid for the job?

SS: No! we do it out of love for the King and our culture.

LM: I can see very young girls in the group, while in the radio announcement it was emphasized that they should be turned back. Are those two going?

SS: There is no way in which we can turn them back. As for those two they are traveling with their elder sisters.

LM: Can you please call them for me I would like to ask them a few questions?.

(When these two were called they were reluctant. When I asked them what was their interest in the *Umhlanga* they burst out crying. I then learned that they were afraid that I would turn them back as they had overheard me asking the *indvuna why they were being allowed to attend the event).* Are they attending for the first time?

SS: Yes they are. You see how much they have prepared themselves such that to send them back home would cause a lot of pain on their part. They are really a problem because they cannot mange the walks. They will be assigned to look after the luggage and only join the others on the main day of the dance.

(iii) Extract from Interview with Sebentile Magagula

LM: How old are you Sebentile?

SM: I am 15 years old

LM: What is your role as the *iNkhosatana* from Nyakatfo?

Male *Indvuna* answers*:* She is going to work hand in hand with *indvuna* Zanele who also works in collaboration with us

LM: Sebentile why were you chosen as the *iNkhosikati?*

Male *Indvuna* answers*:* She is the first born daughter of chief Jubiphathi. It is the custom of the *umcwasho* that each area chief chooses iNkhosatana for the area preferable his own

daughter. The area *iNkhosatana* is given the same respect and responsibility accorded the *Inkhosatata* for the *umcwasho* at national level who in this case is *Nkhosatata* Sikhanyiso.

LM: What are other requirements for one to be *iNkhosatana* besides being a chief's daughter at area level?

Male *indvuna answers*: In order to be an *iNkhosatana* one should be a virgin, good in dancing and composing songs. In cases where the chief does not have a daughter who qualifies to be *iNkhosatana* one who carries the Dlamini surname is chosen.

(iv) Extract from Interview with Nqobile Mkhonta

LM: What is your role as the leader of the group?

NM: The maidens report their problems to me. There are some things that they cannot report to the male guards such as their 'periods'.

LM: What do you do in a situation like that?

NM: I sometimes use my own money or organize money from the maidens to buy the necessary things.

LM: What other responsibilities do you have?

NM: The younger ones usually give me their pocket money to keep for them for fear that it might be stolen from them. I have this small notebook where I write their names and record the amount of money they give me.

LM: I can see that you are carrying lots of *umcwasho* in that plastic bag. To whom do they belong?

NM: I am carrying the *umcwasho* for the girls who either fell pregnant or are sick and cannot attend the *Umhlanga*. Also, there is my attire; the *indlamu, umgaco, emafahlawane* 'ankle rings', jewellery, etc…

LM: Can you please show me your *Umhlanga* regalia?

NM: Yes …

Appendix M: Extract from Interviews with two Participants and three non-participants

1. Bekiwe Dlamini 20 [participant]

2. Phephile Ngwenya 14 [participant]
3. Simphiwe Nkambule 19 [non-particpant]
4. Ntobeko Mdluli 17 [non-participant]
5. Makhosazane Xaba 15 [non-participant]

(i) Extract Interview with Bekiwe Dlamini, 24/08/2005

Bekiwe is 20 old and finished her Grade 12 (metric) n 2005. She stays near Emkhuzweni *umphakatsi* or Chief's headquarter.

LM: Have you ever taken part in the *Umhlanga* event before?

BD: Yes I have been a member '*Imbali*' for more than 9 years.

LM: At what age did you start attending *Umhlanga*?

BD: I started '*kugeca*' [to cut] when I was 11 years old and by that time I was doing my standard 3 [grade 5].

LM: What motivated you to participate in the event?

BD: I used to listen to my elder sisters reveling about their experiences soon after returning from Ludzidzini and wished that my time could soon come to talk about my experiences too.

LM: Once you started participating in the event how did you find it?

BD: ThefirsttimeI attended I was overwhelmed by the multitude of girls, especially during the marches.

LM: What did this encounter with a crowd mean to you?

BD: At first I was afraid that I might get lost, however, seeing that there were girls even younger than me made me feel confident.

LM: How did you find the event, your experience?

BD: Being part of the *Imbali* was a pleasant experience for me especially taking part in our culture with my age-mates and friends.

LM: Will you be joining the *Imbali* next month for the event?

BD: No. I became pregnant in 2004. Luckily for me my parents were willing to take me back to school to finish my 'O'Levels.

LM: Do you miss being part of *Imbali?*

BD: I do because I made lots of friends. What is sad is that the time we parted I didn't take their contact details as we had promised each other that we would meet the following year 2004. Worse still, my parents have to look after me and my child.

LM: What happened to the father to your child?

BD: He transferred to another school to finish his High school education. I can say that I am a single mother.

(ii) Phephile Ngwenya [Buhleni]

LM: How old are you?

PN: I am 14 years old.

LM: What grade are you in?

PN: I am in grade 9.

LM: What made you want to attend *Umhlanga?*

PN: We decided with my friends at school to ask permission from our parents to attend *Umhlanga* as most of our age-mates talk about their experiences.

LM: Would you please tell me about your own experiences both good and bad from the day you left home to the time you came here.

PN: I joined the Mpofu group with my sister Phetsile. We are just one year apart. My mother had arranged with the *indvuna* that she would call from his cell phone from time to time. She also gave our pocket money to the *indvuna.* Riding in the government trucks was a bit uncomfortable for me as it was windy and it started drizzling along the way. On reaching Ludzidzini we were shown to the classrooms at Lobamba High School where we were to sleep. We only went to sleep after 2am when our female guard locked the door. The marches were exhaustive I nearly cried regretting the decision to join the marches as the guard had suggested that I remain behind. I developed a serious headache. However, I arrived and proceeded the following day to cut the reed. The journey back to Ludzidzini was less exhaustive. What I enjoyed most was the delivering of the reed in front of the King and Queen Mother. Unfortunately, I did not participate on the main dance as I had developed stomach problems during the night. I joined the spectators. The journey back home was somber as there was no singing.

LM: Will you be attending the *Umhlanga* next year?

PN: Yes of course I am looking forward to next year based on my experience.

(iii) **Extract Interview with Simphiwe Nkambule, 18/08/2007**

Simphiwe is 18 years old. She is doing her grade 12 (Metric) in Mhlatane High School

LM: You say you have never attended *Umhlanga,* can you tell me the reason?

SN: My mother would never allow me as she herself has never participated in the 'non-Christian or heathen practices'.

LM: Given the opportunity would you participate?

SN: It would be difficult because none of my friends at school have participated?

LM: Are there any girls from your school who participate in the event?

SN: Yes plenty of girls' participate.

LM: What can you say about them?

SN: They are indeed lucky because they have first hand knowledge about Swazi culture as it has been incorporated in the SiSwati subject.

LM: Would you say you are missing out?

SN: Not necessarily as I can easily watch the event's proceedings from TV at home.

(iv) **Extract Interview with Ntobeko Mdluli, 20/08/2007 Ntobeko is 15 years old she is doing grade 11 at Ndzindgeni Nazarene High School.**

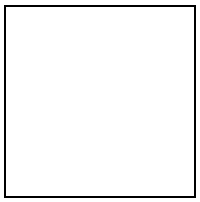


Plate XIX: Nontobeko Mdluli wearing the *Umhlanga* regalia at the age of 13 years

LM: You say you have never attended *Umhlanga,* can you tell me the reason?

NM: My parents would not allow me to be away from home for eight days.

LM: Given the opportunity would you participate?

NM: I would have very much liked to participate but again the idea walking long distance and sleeping on grass in the open is a bit scary.

LM: How do you find the event?

NM: I think it makes one feel proud of being a Swazi maiden.

LM: Which aspect of it do you find most interesting?

NM: I like the *Umhlanga* regalia' As it is, I begged my mother to buy one for me and I have pictures in the family album where I am in full *umhlanga* regalia including the *indlamu.*

LM: How would you tell someone who is not Swazi about the event as you have never participated?

NM: Two of my friends at school have been participating and they tell me all I have to know. Besides during the *Umhlanga* day we all watch it from TV.

(v) **Extract Interview with Makhosazane Xaba, 24/08/2005**

Makhosazane is 16 years old and doing Grade 9 at Bahai Faith High School.

LM: You say you have never attended *Umhlanga,* can you tell me the reason?

MX: It is something I have never considered and I cannot think of a reason of not participating or participating.

LM: Would your parents allow you if you were to ask?

MX: It's an issue that we have never discussed because it is basically of no consequence to us.

LM: As a Swazi what would you say about the event?

MX: It is something I am cut off from especially as my school does not incorporate culture in the syllabus and neither do my parents who are from the Church of the Nazarene show any inclination towards the event.

LM: What do you understand to be the purpose of the event?

MX: I understand that it is a Swazi tradition that has been passed from older generations with the purpose of teaching and encouraging girls to preserve their girlhood and not to get involved in pre-marital sexual relationships.

LM: Don't you think you are missing out on those lessons?

MX: Each time we visit my grandparents; grandmother takes time talking to us about how children who respect are blessed and live long. In fact my grandfather who is a pastor in the Manzini Nazarene Church convenes prayer meetings for us all his grandchildren.

LM: Which aspect of the *Umhlanga* do you find interesting?

MX: I wouldn't really say which one as I am not attracted to it.

Interview N. Interviews with individuals from diverse sectors

(i) Civil Servant: Anonymous Civil Servant=AC
(ii) Pastor Missionary Church: David Mamba=DM
(iii) University lecturer: Anonymous=AL
(iv) Senior Inspector/Education: Cebsile Nsibandze=CN

(i) Interview L. Civil servant

Lomagugu Masango=LM
Anonymous Civil Servant=AC

LM: How would you explain the significance of the *Umhlanga*?

AC: According to elders (grandmothers) once a girl begins to hide her body it was suspected that she had started engaging with boys and was afraid that there are detectible signs. Laid down guidelines for *Umhlanga* girls strictly state that in order for one to participate in the *Umhlanga*, you should not have had a child. I would then say *Umhlanga* prior to the advent of western contraceptives such as the pill and vaccinations that prevent pregnancy was a good measure of preventing pregnancy.

LM: Do you think that nowadays girls who are not virgins participate in the event?

AC: Of course they do. Take the case of girls who go to attend the *Umhlanga* with the intention of meeting their boyfriends. Some are escorted to Ludzidzini by their boy friends and sugar daddies. This does not however, mean that the idea of preserving one's virginity is not important as the majority of the girls claim that they are indeed virgins. Nowadays girls as young as 7years attend the *Umhlanga* and one can suggest by practicing *Umhlanga* at an early age rules are inculcated at an early age.

LM: Have you yourself ever participated in the *Umhlanga?*

AC: I used to participate when I was a teenager. It was really great fun meeting with girls from all over the country. It was not easy as it is today as we had to walk the 30 Km from Ludzidzini to Mpisi Farm. Transport provision was reserved only for those who got too tired and sick along the way.

LM: Do you see *Umhlanga* surviving the challenges about democracy facing the country?

AC: *Umhlanga* has become so popular and most girls want to have first hand experience. Once the girls participate in the *Umhlanga*, the tendency is to continue doing so. There is significance group formation that results into lasting friendships between the girls. It is normal for the girls when they are parting after the ceremony to say 'see you next year during *Umhlanga*'. This shows awareness amongst the participants that in order to meet at the *Umhlanga* they should adhere to the laid down rules and guidelines.

LM: Would you allow your daughter to attend *Umhlanga?*

AC: I would not stop my daughter from attending, but I am relieved that she had never shown any interest in it.

LM: Why are you relieved?

AC: My daughter is an only child and I wouldn't like her being away for a whole week away from me. The only time I allow her to be away is when she has gone to visit her grandmother who I know will take care of her.

(ii) Extract Interview with Pastor David Mamba

20th September 2005

LM

David Mamba=DM

LM: I am doing a study on the *Umhlanga* and would like to hear you views about it. What do you think is the main objective behind its performance?

DM: I think like all the other rituals such as *iNcwala* and Good-Friday *Umhlanga* is a traditional religion of the royal family in which Swazis are expected to participate.

LM: I am aware that the *iNcwala* is associated with ancestral worship seen in the type of songs sang, secluded areas and times during which it is preformed. But *Umhlanga* is said to be 'innocent'.

DM: There is nothing that is innocent or not associated with the ancestral and spiritual world that takes place at the Royal Residences especially those graced by the presence of the King and Queen Mother. Have you not seen that there are areas where women are not supposed to

step their foot on. Why do you think babies and pregnant women do not go near these royal ceremonial places?

LM: How do you know all these things?

DM: Before I was converted into Christianity I used to attend *iNcwala* and *Umhlanga.* These ceremonies are organized at national level so that the participating Swazis are initiated into ritual life.

LM: Would you say the performance of the event is associated with *muti?*

DM: There is no way in which you can go near the royal residence and find that *muti* has not been used. The purpose of the *muti* is not however to kill but to 'protect', 'unite' and solidify the Swazi people under the monarchy.

LM: Do you think *Umhlanga* will continue to be performed in the next five years?

DM: As long as there is a monarchy the *Umhlanga* just like all the royal rituals will continue to be performed.

(iii) Extract Interview with Celbsile Nsibandze Ministry of Education (in her office) 31st November 2005

LM: I am doing a study of the *Umhlanga* and would like to hear your perceptions about it?

CN: I make sure that I distance myself and my family from all practices that involve ancestral worship as they are unchristian.

LM: I thought it was just a cultural event in which girls are encouraged to preserve their virginity through observing the laid down precepts. Why do you associate it with ancestral worship?

CN: The ritual of cutting reeds and bringing them to the Queen Mother's residence where they are delivered next to the cattle byre is a performance of ancestral worship. The cattle byre is a place of the home for ancestral worship as seen during the *incwala* when the King's *inhlambelo* (secluded cleansing area) is constructed. The cattle byre is also used by the King as a meeting place especially when there is a serious announcement or strife in the country. In that way for the *Umhlanga* girls to deliver their reeds next to the cattle byre symbolizes their own strengthening which involves lots of *muti* that is sprinkled around the

area as means of protection. In fact while the *incwala* centres on the 'doctoring' of the King the *Umhlanga* can be viewed as centred on 'doctoring' of the girls.

LM: Have you ever attended any national event?

CN: Luckily for me my parents never sent me to attend *Umhlanga,* I have only watched it on Television. I will never allow my daughters to step their feet on those grounds. It's kind of spooky and ghostly. Everything that happens there is anti-Christian ranging from songs, dancing barefooted and revealing their bodies.

LM: Who do you think benefits from the performance of the event?

CN I think the organizers of the event who are part of the ruling monarch benefit as such rituals bring them closer to the King. Traditionalists also benefit as they find it important for customs and beliefs that were practiced by our forefathers to be passed on to the next generation.

(iv) Extract Interview with a lecturer from the University of Swaziland who preferred anonymity.

Lomagugu Masango=LM

Anonimous Lecturer=AL

LM: I am doing a study of the *Umhlanga* and would like to hear your perceptions of it?

AL: It is amazing how the Swazi manage to hold on to their cultural heritage which is the basis of their unity. I see the *Umhlanga* as a vital tool in bringing together the Swazi people.

LM: Do you see the *Umhlanga* useful in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic?

AL: The safety messages passed to the girls are instilled during the celebration when the girls assemble in the stadium to perform for the nation and visitors. I however, have reservations about the multitude of girls who assemble at Ludzidzini. As we were passing through Lobamba from the convention centre at eZulwini I saw the girls all over Lobamba. These girls looked tired and hungry…vulnerable to men who were all over the place. No one is there to monitor the movements of these girls as you can also find them all over Manzini, away from the *Umhlanga* vicinity. With the spread of HIV, strict measures should be taken to monitor the movements of these girls.

LM: How do you think this problem could be solved/or minimized?

AL: My suggestion would be that the ceremony is held regionally. In that way it would be easy for the guards to monitor the girls' movements. The fact that Ludzidzini is near the towns Manzini and Mbabane could also be a contributing factor for many girls to attend. Once the event is celebrated regionally it would be clear whether the main interest is to participate in *Umhlanga* or to be near Manzini for the Trade fair.

APPENDIX O

Extracts from interviews with two tourists

Two extract from interviews one with a tourist from England and another with a tourist from Zambia

At Ludzidzini on 31st August 2005

LM:

Sylvester Ziman = SZ

LM: What motivated you to come and attend the event today?

SZ: I am here to have first hand experience with the event's performance and to take pictures.

LM: How do you find the event?

SZ: It is quite different from watching it on TV. Here it is so much alive and intense. Seeing thousands of girls at close range walking and dancing almost half-naked, looks incredible and really shocking.

LM: What do you mean shocking?

SZ: I mean it is one thing watching the event on TV and another thing to be confronted with the reality, its reality.

LM: How do you find the event now?

SZ: Its amazing how the girls and Swazis as a nation are committed to their culture.

(ii) Extract from interview with a Zambian tourist

LM: Please allow me to ask you a few questions about the event you are attending.

VM: It's fine you can ask.

LM: What is you name?

VM: My name is Violet Msimangu

LM: Where do you come from?

VM: From Zambia and I really like it here.

LM: How do you find the *Umhlanga?*

VM: I must state that Swaziland is still holding to its deep rich culture. Most culture are being westernized. Zambian women will in most cases cover their breasts with bras. I also noted the respect that was accorded the event. Both foreigners and Swazis seemed to have had the right attire for the event. Others came in the traditional outfit or *emahiya*, while others were in long skirts. *Umhlanga* shows how the Swazi people have managed to retain their cultural heritage.

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