**2019 NC’WALA TRADITIONAL CEREMONY**

**HOSTED BY**

**HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS INKOSI YAMA NKOSI PARAMOUNT CHIEF MPEZENI IV**

**OF THE NGONI PEOPLE OF EASTERN PROVINCE, CHIPATA, ZAMBIA**

**ON THE THEME**

***“PRESERVING OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH GENDER EQUALITY”***

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT**

**BY**

**PRINCE MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI MP**

**TRADITIONAL PRIME MINISTER TO THE ZULU MONARCH AND NATION**

**FORMER MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**AND PRESIDENT OF THE INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY**

**Mtenguleni Village,** **Chipata, Zambia: 23 February 2019**

His Royal Highness Paramount Chief Inkosi Yama Nkosi Mpezeni IV of the Ngoni people of Eastern Province;

His Royal Highness Inkosi Yama Nkosi Paramount Chief Mberwa of Malawi;

Visiting Royal Highnesses from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania;

Members of the Ngoni Royal Family;

Senior Chief Nzamane of Mfumbeni;

Chief Madzimawe of Mtenguleni

Chief Mishoro of Dingeni;

Chief Maguya of Ngiyelweni;

Chief Sairi of Chiphinga;

Chief Chinyaku of Ndina;

Chief Kapatamoyo of Thondweni;

Chief Mshawa of Kuchweni;

Chief Mnukwa of Chikenkhe;

Induna Mshamunye Mphanza, Prime Minister to Paramount Chief Mpezeni and the Ngoni people;

The Honourable Mr Davies Chama MP, Minister of Defence, together with Ministers and representatives of the Government of Zambia;

The Honourable Mr Makebi Zulu MP, Minister of Eastern Province;

His Worship the Mayor of Chipata and visiting Mayors from across the country;

Ms M’kwanda Sakala, Chairperson of the Nc’wala National Organising Committee, and Members of the Committee;

Her Excellency Ms SN Mji; High Commissioner of the Republic of South Africa to Zambia; and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Traditional Leaders;

Proud members of the Ngoni people.

On behalf of His Majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhezuzulu, King of the Zulu Nation, I bring you greetings. On behalf of my country, the Republic of South Africa, I wish you well. And on behalf of men everywhere, I salute our valued partners in every sphere of life; the women present here today.

I am honoured to participate in the 38th Nc’wala Traditional Ceremony, knowing that this ceremony has its roots deep in the history of the Ngoni people, and knowing the Ngoni people share deep roots with the Zulu Nation.

I speak to you today as the traditional Prime Minister to the Zulu Monarch and Nation. Our present King is the longest-serving Zulu monarch. Before he ascended to the throne, I served his father, King Cyprian Bhekuzulu Nyangayezizwe ka Solomon. My father, Inkosi Mathole Buthelezi, served King Solomon Maphumzana ka Dinuzulu. My great grandfather, Inkosi Mnyamana Buthelezi, served King Cetshwayo and King Dinizulu.

Thus my great grandfather commanded all the regiments of King Cetshwayo during the Anglo-Zulu War. He was Commander-in-Chief when King Cetshwayo’s regiments defeated the British at Isandlwana in 1879. My grandfather, Inkosi Mkhandumba Buthelezi, fought in that battle, where his brother died.

The King himself, King Cetshwayo, was also my great grandfather; for my mother, Princess Magogo kaDinuzulu, was given in marriage by her brother, King Solomon, to his Prime Minister, my father.

I recount all this to explain why I feel so deeply the wound inflicted on my people by the Anglo-Zulu War. Not only were we defeated, but we were subjugated. Our Kingdom was dismantled and our King imprisoned. The mighty nation founded by King Shaka kaSenzangakhona was split into 13 artificial kinglets, sowing the seed of inevitable division.

To finally prevent the possibility of unity in our nation, the British colonial authorities banned the holding of *Ukunyatela*, the First Fruits Ceremony, which had been celebrated every year since the time of King Shaka. They knew that this ceremony had the power to unite us.

For more than a century the Zulu people were prevented from holding the First Fruits Ceremony. It was only in 1990, under the leadership of our present King, that the ceremony was reinstated as *Umkhosi Wokweshwama*. Our King had returned to us the opportunity to celebrate our identity and unite as a nation. Sometimes it is referred to as *Umkhosi woSwela*.

However, ten years before *Umkhosi Wokweshwama* was revived in the Zulu Kingdom, it was revived here, in Mtenguleni Village, by His Royal Highness Paramount Chief Mpezeni IV, as the Nc’wala Traditional ceremony. This ceremony was part of the cultural heritage of the Ngoni people from before their migration out of Zululand. The Ngoni had celebrated *Ukunyatela,* the First Fruits Ceremony, before the birth of King Shaka.

Shortly after King Shaka ascended to the throne in 1816, Zwangendaba left Zululand and settled for a time in Swaziland, then Mozambique, then Zimbabwe. He and his people, the Ngoni, crossed the Zambezi River in 1835. WhenZwangendaba passed away near Lake Tanganyika, his son, Ntutu Mpezeni I, led his people south-west towards the Bemba, and then south-east across the Luangwa River. In 1865 Mpezeni I moved eastwards, towards Chipata.

In all this time of migration, settlement, fighting and marriage, the Ngoni people always remembered to offer sacrifices to their ancestors.

As Zwangendaba had done, Mpezeni I organised his men for military training, placing both men and women into military regiments, *AMABUTHO***.** In every village, unmarried women slept in *nthanganeni*, girls’ dormitories, where they learnt about womanhood. The older women would teach the younger ones. In the same way, boys had the *laweni*, boys’ dormitories, where they learnt the important aspects of manhood, and how a man looks after himself**.** Even now we still refer to young man’s rondavels as *ilawu* or *elawini*.

The Nc’wala ceremony remained a fundamental aspect of Ngoni culture under Mpezeni I. It was an expression of the Ngoni people’s faith in their ancestors. When they danced *ngoma* and proclaimed the praises of Inkosi Mpezeni, they sought the approval of the spirits of their ancestors from long ago. Likewise when there was drought or disease, Mpezeni I led the Ngoni to offer sacrifices to the ancestors.

During Nc’wala, the first fruits taken to Mpezeni I included *mamphenga*, *maswela* and *nshowo*. These came from the garden of Kasambamulopa Tembo, the induna of Mtenguleni.

But tragically, the celebration of Nc’wala by the Ngoni people was stopped, just as it had been stopped for the Zulu nation by the British colonial authorities. On 6 February 1898, the Ngoni were defeated by the troops of the British Central Africa Protectorate. Just as King Cetshwayo and King Dinuzulu had been, Inkosi Mpezeni I was forced into exile. His cattle, numbering 12 000, were looted and ferried across the Zambezi.

Having very few cattle left to them, the Ngoni found their marriage customs, prayer ceremonies and funeral rites severely affected. Because of the European invasion, the Nc’wala Ceremony could not be held in 1898; and with the loss of so many cattle, which play a pivotal role in the ceremony, Nc’wala had to be suspended. It was difficult to re-establish the traditional ways of life, for the British were intent on removing the powers of the chiefs.

One of the greatest losses suffered by the Ngoni in 1898 was the execution of Nsingo, the son of Mpezeni I, in Lulaka village, after he had been taken prisoner. He was tied to a Mubanga tree and shot. His wives, Mkucwa Mbazima and Zikhalo Ngulube, were so distraught that they demanded to be shot as well. It was a day of great tragedy for the Ngoni people.

Nsingo’s son, Chiloa, by his wife Mkucwa Mbazima, became Mpezeni II in 1901. Throughout his 41 year reign, the Nc’wala ceremony was never held. Mpezeni II was a staunch Roman Catholic, but he held fast to his traditional customs. During a drought in the 1930s he took the advice of *zinduna* of Mtenguleni and Luangeni to offer a black bull to the ancestors. Hundreds of people gathered for the ritual ceremony.

The Roman Catholic Church did not approve. They banned the *chimbo* and *ndonda* dances, excommunicating those who took part in them, and they ordered Mpezeni II to refrain from conducting ritual ceremonies. This too is a tragedy, for when the Ngoni dance they feel united and proud of their culture, just as the Zulu do when we dance. It is tragic that most missionaries who brought us the gospel discouraged and banned our rituals.

With the death of Mpezeni II in October 1941, his only surviving child, Inkosi Mpezeni III ascended to the throne. During his reign, the Ngoni royal family experienced some terrible misfortunes, including several deaths by lightning, fire and electrocution. Paramount Chief Mpezeni III consulted leading *zinduna* and *ng’anga*, who urged him to remember the spirits of his forefathers. The need to reinstate Nc’wala was often discussed.

However, just as had happened to the Zulu people, the colonial administration thwarted every effort to reinstate Nc’wala, knowing its power to unify.

When Zambia was born in 1964, it was agreed that Nc’wala should only be reinstated when it could contribute to the development of a new nation. Thus the Ngoni’s most symbolic ritual was revived by Inkosi Mpezeni III on 24 February 1980.

It is touching to know that the *izibongo* of Paramount Chief Mpezeni I, Sangwa Steven Ngoma, lived to see the 1980 Nc’wala celebrated; the first in more than 80 years.

Paramount Chief Mpezeni III understood that the Ngoni’s traditional dances, like *ngoma* and *chimbo*, and the *citelele* which is danced only by women, gave people a sense of belonging and pride in their cultural heritage. He, like his forebears, was a freedom fighter. He sought the liberty of his people to express their identity. And wherever freedom was being sought, he offered his support.

Indeed, Paramount Chief Mpezeni III was one of three prominent paramount chiefs in Zambia who became members of the African National Congress. The ANC, Africa’s oldest liberation movement, was founded by my uncle, Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme, in 1912. I became a member while I was a student at the University of Fort Hare. In fact, I was expelled from Fort Hare for my political activism.

Mpezeni III’s political activism saw him called to Government House in Lusaka where the Colonial Governor warned that he would be deposed if he persisted.

This was the experience of many leaders in our liberation struggle. I remember being summoned to Pretoria by the Minister of Justice and Police, Minister Jimmy Kruger, who tried to intimidate me. The colonial government had already threatened not to confirm my hereditary position as Inkosi of the Buthelezi Clan because of my political activism for liberation, and in fact they delayed my official installation for five years.

There was great mourning when Paramount Chief Mpezeni III passed away in June 1981, so much so that the following year the Nc’wala Ceremony was not held. But in June 1982, Paramount Chief Mpezeni IV ascended to the throne and the celebration of Nc’wala resumed.

For almost four decades now, the Ngoni have gathered every year in a celebration of song and dance. School children dancing clubs have become popular, allowing the youth to be part of this ancient ceremony. In the early 90’s I came to Lusaka to brief the founding President of Zambia, President Kaunda. One evening a message came from State House that we should switch on the TV as our people, the Nguni people, were celebrating Incwala.

This is a time of unity, of celebration and pride. It is a time of remembering, and a time of looking ahead to how we can meet the challenges of tomorrow and remain strong. For someone like me, coming from outside Zambia, the experience of Nc’wala is deeply touching. There is no better way for Zambia to showcase the proud spirit of its people than through this symbolic ceremony.

We thank His Royal Highness Paramount Chief Mpezeni IV for *ukubuyisa*, bringing back the departed spirits, for the good of his people. He is a symbol of the unity, strength and wellbeing of the Ngoni people. We remember this when he enters the dancing arena to the sound of his warriors singing, “Unango Mpezeni sadauka naye, eti na ng’ombe” – “Here is Inkosi ya Makosi Mpezeni with whom we migrated from the south, together with the cattle.”

We have the privilege today of listening to his wisdom as he speaks to us about preserving cultural heritage through gender equality. I applaud His Royal Highness for the choice of this theme, for the issue of gender equality must take center stage at this point in human history.

Women have always been the backbone of our societies. Through them, the next generation is born and raised. Through women, the fight for food security is waged. Through women, our families are nurtured, healed and maintained in a spirit of hope. Through women, we find strength for the future.

Yet throughout the course of history, women have not always been honoured the way they deserve. In some cases, even in my own country, we have failed to protect them from abuse, and we have failed to respect their equality. Times are changing, however, and it is important that we change our perspectives to keep pace with the march of progress.

His Royal Highness has indicated his faith in female leadership by appointing Ms M’kwanda Sakala as the Chairperson of the National Organising Committee for this year’s N’cwala. He has also given the example of willingness to change by instructing that this year, for the first time, women’s breasts will be covered during Nc’wala. When our King holds the Reed Dance, held every September to encourage our maidens to remain chaste, they don’t cover their breasts at present.

However, these are symbolic actions by Paramount Chief Mpezeni IV. They tell us that the Ngoni people respect gender equality, and that gender equality is important to the preservation of our cultural heritage.

When we think back to the time of Paramount Chief Mpezeni I, when young girls were trained by older women, and young boys by older men, it becomes clear that strong social bonds are formed, and discipline is nurtured, when the roles of both women and men are understood and respected.

In every challenge we face, women have a critical role to play in our overcoming. I think for instance to our ongoing battle against HIV/Aids which has decimated lives on this continent, and particularly here in Sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa, we made a particular intervention focussing on women, and it has led to many lives being saved.

My party, the Inkatha Freedom Party, led the administration of KwaZulu Natal for ten years. During that time, we instituted the roll-out of the anti-retroviral, Nevirapine, to all birth clinics, to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. That programme was such as a success, that national government was ordered by the Constitutional Court to follow suit across the country. Today, this is one of South Africa’s greatest success stories.

We know that women are the primary caregivers in our communities for those affected by HIV/Aids. I believe that Her Excellency Vice President Wina will understand when I say that women make excellent social workers, for they have a unique ability not only to empathise, but to get things done. Where there is need or suffering, a woman will find a way to assist.

We must therefore place women in positions of authority to resolve the many difficulties that face us, including food security, poverty, gender-based violence, and abuse. We will never create social justice until we create gender equality.

Women have an inalienable right to dignity. I remember the sense of healing we felt in South Africa when the remains of Saartjie Baartman were repatriated from France. On Women’s Day in August 2002, this beautiful Khoi woman finally received a proper burial.

I must therefore tell you that we are encouraged by reports that the United Kingdom is considering returning the Kabwe skull and bones of “Rhodesian Man” from the London Natural History Museum, to Zambia. Repatriation of ancestral artifacts is a necessary part of healing from the pain of our colonial past.

I believe that the holding of Nc’wala in Zambia, and the holding of *Umkhosi Wokweshwama* in South Africa, are also symbolic acts of healing from the past. It is an honour to be in the city of Chipata to witness this great celebration.

I am grateful that this visit to Zambia has given me the opportunity to see not only His Excellency President Edgar Chagwa Lungu, but also my old friend and comrade, His Excellency Dr Kenneth Kaunda.

The first President of Zambia was an inspiration to my generation of freedom fighters. We honour him now as we did then. It is fitting to remember the Nc’wala song, “Mu-Zambia Zambia, O Mu-Zambia, Muli Kaunda umo” – “In Zambia we all know there is only one Kaunda”.

There is power in remembering the past. It is a power we need, in order to meet tomorrow as conquerors, and not victims. We have written our history. Now we must write the next chapter. May it be written in the hands of both men and women, for we all have a stake in its making.

I thank you.

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