

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Among the tribes that occupy the extreme, northern part of South Africa are the Tshivenda speaking people. This tribe (i.e., Vhavenda) came from central Africa and settled what is currently called Venda (Duggan-Cronin, 1928:13). Some people argue that the history of Vhavenda starts from the Mapungubwe kingdom in the 9<sup>th</sup> century ([http://www.kruger.co.za/Africa\\_venda.html](http://www.kruger.co.za/Africa_venda.html)). In the Soutpansberg Mountains, they built their first capital city called *Dzata*.

This cultural group has been known for decades, for the respect they display towards their kings, headmen and other members of royal families. The aforesaid seemingly made it possible for peace and stability to prevail among the various cultural communities of the Tshivenda tribe. It was rare to witness or hear of subjects having been antagonistic, contemptuous or insubordinate towards either their chiefs or kings.

Things have, however, changed remarkably. The honouring of chiefs or kings has conspicuously declined, especially in the Mphaphuli Kingdom. Almost everyone has, by the look of things, lost dignity and social status for royalty. Kings and other royal dignitaries are no longer viewed as complete authoritative figures. This is confirmed by Houston (1996:25-26) who states that “it is quite clear from the 1996 Constitution that traditional leaders have been stripped of their powers.” Very few subjects are prepared to listen to and obey what the headmen or chief say. The title of being referred to as *vhamusanda* (chief), and all that goes with it, has lost most of its value and significance (<http://concourt.law.wits.ac.za/constitution/const12.htm>).

#### 1.1.1 The Mphaphuli Kingdom

In order to understand the context in which this envisaged study is all about, it is important to provide a brief description of the Mphaphuli Kingdom. The Mphaphuli Kingdom originated from the clan known as the Singo. Singo is a clan name associated with totemism (Smith, 1990:278). The founder of the Mphaphuli Kingdom was Nelunguda. He initially settled at the Lunguda and later on moved to Mandala, Tshitomboni, Hamphego, Mbilwana and then Miluwani, which is currently part of

the town of Thohoyandou (Limpopo, South Africa) (Nemudzivhadi, 1977:11). Some of his subjects went to Mbilwi and then settled at a place called Maanea. The senior headmen of this kingdom is Mmbara, Tshikalange, Tshabuse, Mafenya, Madzuta, and Bohwana. They can be easily distinguished by their unique title names *Gole*.

The envisaged research will mainly focus on factors that could be the cause of this disrespectfulness of subjects towards their chiefs or kings and how this problem can be solved or addressed.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As indicated earlier on, kings or chiefs used to be given the respect and honour they deserved. When a chief has died, his subjects say “he is ill”. No more pounding gets done in the village (Van Warmelo, 1932:138). The afore-mentioned statements provide us with evidence that chiefs were hardly treated as ordinary people. What we are witnessing today is that they have lost most of their dignity and authority. In the Mphaphuli Kingdom, there has been countless incidents that show the breakdown in bestowing honour on royalty.

### 1.2.1 The appearance of a king or chief

Nobody qualifies to be a king, appointed or elected, but one is born a king. Traditionally, when a chief appears, everyone bows, with heads nearly touching the floor, and with the hands clasped in front, people shout in unison for several minutes with salutes such as “god of heaven and earth, handsome man with four eyes, lion, ox, light of the world, beast of prey, and other flattering expressions” (Wessman, 1908:203). The above-mentioned are good examples of bestowing honour on royalty. The chief is the head of his tribe, the father of his people, and the sacred living representative of their far-off ancestors. He is the hub of their universe as all the lives of the community, religions, social and economic activities revolve around him. His subjects treat him with reverence, awe and humble adoration.

Nowadays, many people of the Mphaphuli Kingdom say whatever they like to *Vhamusanda*. Some subjects are often heard saying, “there is no distinction between us and the chief. We are all human beings”.

### 1.2.2 Voluntary gifts to chiefs

Wessman (1908:203) remarks that every year the power of the chiefs diminishes; some of them squander their cattle and fortunes in the purchase of European luxuries and, as such, thus alienating the affections of the people who they are expected to father and protect. The customary way of sending traditional beer (*pfumbavhulo*) to the chief before the actual and public drinking begins has diminished. There are chiefs within their areas who force their subjects into adhering to customary practices, but to no avail. On several occasions, these chiefs are threatened or assaulted when they demand the *pfumbavhulo*. This is the beer that should freely be donated to the chief. In addition, it was customary for subjects to give their chiefs a variety of gifts, ranging from money, clothes, cattle to agricultural products. Most chiefs nowadays hardly enjoy what they were previously entitled to. Because of this problem, many chiefs have abandoned their responsibility, and some have even gone to seek employment in urban areas.

### 1.2.3 Initiation ceremonies

The chief calls a *domba* and preparations are made by the families for their girls to be ready and to prepare what is necessary to attend the ceremony (such as entry fee for the ruler, clothes and bangles). Normally, the girls stay for three months with the chief during the initiation. But, nowadays, because of schooling, girls only spend weekends in the ruler's kraal ([http://www.Krugerpark.co.za/Africa\\_Venda.html](http://www.Krugerpark.co.za/Africa_Venda.html), 2007).

The Tshivenda speaking people used to practise initiation ceremonies such as *musevhetho*, *domba*, *vhusha*, *murundu*, and *tshitambo*. These initiation ceremonies could not get underway without the approval of the chief. Failure to report this matter to the chief would result in punishment from the chief or immediate closure of such activities. Today, there is a dramatic change in this regard. More often than not approval to institute an initiation, is nowadays predominately in the hands of the local government, chiefs are hardly consulted (*City Press*, 2007:8). This shows that the chiefs's powers are diminishing quickly.

#### 1.2.4 Traditional dances (*mitshino ya Tshivenda*)

The chief has various ways of entertaining his visitors besides giving them beer and meat. Sometimes he arranges a hunt for their benefit or orders a dance to be performed for them, or fortune-tellers are brought in to amuse them (Hugh, 1968:204). Likewise, the inhabitants of Mphaphuli Kingdom had been renowned for their interest in participating in different traditional dances such as *tshikona*, *malende*, *matangwa*, *tshigombela* (Mudau and Motenda, 1958:9). These dances used to be acted when, for example, a new king or chief was being ceremonially crowned. For instance, as far as *tshikona* is concerned, it was not supposed to be performed everywhere, but at the chief's kraal only. It used to be performed when a chief would have died, and also during any other significant royal event. Participation was not voluntary. In many places within the kingdom, this is no longer the case. Many subjects do as they like. By the look of things, the *tshikona* dance will soon be forgotten and probably replaced by western music as it has already started in some places within the kingdom.

#### 1.2.5 Invitation to the chief's kraal (*tshivhidzo*)

Nemulambo stands in the *khoro* and calls out all the orders for the day. He combines the function of a herald and town crier, and acquires a wonderful facility for shouting, with a variety of peculiar intonations, so that his hearer, although not always catching the words that he shouts, understand by the intonation the importance of the news he intends to convey (Hugh, 1968:2000). The subjects of the Mphaphuli Kingdom used to heed these invitations. They would attend these meeting without grumbling. In honouring the call, the chief's kraal would be full to its capacity before the chiefs would pronounce the purpose of the gathering. Today, many subjects within this kingdom have a negative attitude towards anything royal. Meetings are attended by a few people and, surprisingly, the people who attend these meetings seldom obey what the chief would want them to do. There are those who go through their daily activities as if they have not heard anything about the meeting.

#### 1.2.6 Judgment of village cases

When the whole case has been thrashed out, the chief or judge sums up with extreme efficiency, and it is unusual for the smallest detail of the proceedings to escape his vigilance (Hugh, 1968:220). This confirms the fact that chiefs used to play a role regarding judgment of the cases.

Chiefs used to judge cases among the subjects. If someone would have offended another person, the matter would normally be reported to the chief via the *mukuma* (headman). Headmen had powers of settling some of the minor cases without the chief's interference, (Nenguda, 1990:49). The offended and the offender would be summoned to the chief's kraal for hearing. The chief, together with his royal council, would hear both sides of the story and then come up with a verdict. There used to be order when it comes to the handling of the subject cases. Reporting of cases involved some payments, by the reporter, to the chief. Moreover, cases were initially tried by the *vhakoma*. If no agreement was reached at this level, they used to be referred to the chief. Again, if the matter could not be settled at this level, it would be referred to the territorial council, and from there, to the royal council. This way of handling cases has changed dramatically. Presently, many subjects report their cases at the Police Station. Most chiefs no longer benefit both materially and financially out of trying cases.

### 1.2.7 Missionaries

Missionaries worked both in their own countries and abroad. Mphaphuli Kingdom was also affected by the work of the various missionaries. In modern times too, missionary contacts have often served as the bridge that has affected the eventual subordination of the indigenous people, making them receptive of the new culture in general and thus eroding their own cultural values (Smith, 1990:193). As indicated in the discourse gone by, the residents of Mphaphuli Kingdom were renowned for their loyalty towards their chiefs. In some cases within the kingdom where the missionaries built their stations, there was confusion. The missionaries introduced their western culture, such as Christianity and western music. Many people began to imitate their way of doing things. Some missionaries urged people to abandon their cultural practices, arguing that such practices were sinful. The areas these missionaries occupied were no longer under the chief's control. Many subjects were culturally affected by all this. As such, there arose subjects who do not heed the chief's instructions or commandments, because of their clinging to Christian values.

However, in spite of all this influence, one of the greatest difficulties faced by the Berlin Missionaries in Vendaland, during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, was that of making and keeping a significant number of converts (Kirkady & Kriel, 2006:111).

### 1.2.8 Chiefs and South Africa's new political dispensation

The former South African President, Nelson Mandela, said that "When the new Constitution was drafted, there were concerns that it did not define in sufficient details the status and role of traditional leaders" (*City Press*, 27 May, 2007:32). Many chiefs did not get what they thought was going to be theirs after the 1994 South Africa's general elections. Their roles were not clearly defined in the constitution. "The new constitution is silent on the role which traditional leaders have to fulfill in the newly created municipalities" (<http://concourt.law.wits.ac.za/constitution/const12.html>:2007).

In Venda, chiefs are generally rich, out of all proportion to their subjects, obtaining large revenue from their lands, taxation, proceeds of justice, and the fees levied on social functions, as well as many other prerequisites (Hugh, 1968:217). The new political dispensation has brought many changes in as far as the social welfare of the people within the country is concerned. If the Bill of Rights is anything to go by, it would be apparent to state that some of the things that subjects used to do to honour their chiefs have been affected. In many places within the kingdom, "the right to equality" has not been well understood by the chiefs' subjects. There has been a general perception that chiefs had been oppressing subjects through levies and other impositions. The above-said resulted in some subjects taking advantages of this misconception and then began to underestimate the role that is played by the chiefs. It was also emphasized by Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) on the objection about what is regarded as the marginalisation of traditional leaders (<http://concourt.law.wits.ac.za/constitution/const12.html>:2007). The respect and recognition of the institution of traditional leaders require more than fine sounding declarations in a constitution (*City Press*, 27 May 2007:32).

### 1.2.9 The chief's farm (*dzunde*)

Chiefs used to have large agricultural farms known as the *dzunde*. A chief would not plough the farm by himself. It was the duty of every household head to send one member to the chief's farm for cultivation. The chiefs may spend weeks or even months superintending the reaping of the harvest, lest the fear of the starvation should tempt his hungry subjects to steal his crops (Hugh, 1968:204). The aforementioned is clear evidence of the existence of the *dzunde* in the past. Failure to send household

representatives to this communal cultivation of the land would result in someone playing a heavy fine (Nenguda, 1990:49). It was allowed for those who would not make it to the farm to settle this issue through prescribed payments. Today, some chiefs no longer have these big farms. Some of these big farms have fallen under municipality, e.g., Thohoyandou's Blocks F and G were part of Chief Mphaphuli communal farm. In places where the chiefs still own these farms, it is a disgrace because many subjects no longer feel keen to cultivate them, citing human rights as the basis of their refusal.

#### 1.2.10 Obtaining residential stands and fields

It is customary that subjects are given residential stands by their chiefs. To obtain such a stand, the subject has to pay a certain amount to the chief. *Mukoma* (Petty headman), is also responsible for the distribution of land and hence is supposed to know the boundaries (Hugh, 1968:199). This depicts royal ownership of the land. Most people in the kingdom no longer respect chief's powers regarding the land distribution among subjects. A large portion of land at Sibasa and in Thohoyandou falls under the municipality. Recently, an incident occurred in Maniini Village near Thohoyandou where the landlord was given permission to occupy the land by the local Chief Ratshilumela Mmbi but, the Thulamela Municipality rejected the order by the chief.

The residents were left stranded as bulldozers demolished their home at a squatter camp at Maniini Village near Thohoyandou on Thursday afternoon (*Capricorn Voice News*, 2007:p. 4).

Payments of the sites in the other areas within the kingdom, is presently a municipal issue. In certain areas, land demarcation is also done by the municipal authority. At Sibasa, the chief's land has been demarcated into wards, without proper consultation with the chief. In this situation, there are subjects under a headman who are finding themselves in two different wards. Given that chiefs are now remunerated by the government for their social services, some find it hard to resist this exploitation.

### 1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this envisaged study is to examine the breakdown in bestowing honour on royalty. To achieve its goal, the study will centre its focus on the following research questions:

- What does bestowing honour on the royalty mean?
- What are the effects of failing to honour chiefs on the value system of the Tshivenda speaking people?

#### 1.4 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are the following:

- To highlight activities that undermine the status of chiefs;
- To explore issues that could lead to the restoration of the status of chiefs; and
- To indicate strategies that may be helpful in fostering good relationships between chiefs and their subjects.

#### 1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

South Africa is a country with cultural diversity. Against this background, the Constitution (1996:6) stipulates that “everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights”. The rationale of this envisaged study is to investigate whether chiefs are not being denied their cultural rights of being honoured by their subjects, and if so, what could be done to curtail the occurrence of the phenomenon. The envisaged study will also attempt to encourage other researchers to consider and make further studies on this subject.

#### 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The envisaged study will help scholars to begin to focus more on cultural change trend that is beginning to manifest itself among non-western societies. It will also bring to light the deterioration of powers of the chiefs of the Tshivenda-speaking people. It will also reawaken people of this territory to reconsider their attitude towards their own culture. The envisaged study will show the importance of preserving and promoting cultures and customs that promote the values of *Ubuntu*. The envisaged study will also be used as a research material for other researchers.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method will be used for this envisaged research study. The qualitative method is suitable because it will allow the researcher to obtain information about the subject's attitude towards their chiefs, as well as subjects themselves. This method will also afford the researcher an opportunity to find information from people by means of interviews.

### 1.7.1 Data collection

#### 1.7.1.1 Primary sources

First hand information will be obtained from the following participants:

- a) 5 members of Mphaphuli Royal Council;
- b) 5 members of Mphaphuli Territorial Council: 3 from different areas and 2 from different towns;
- c) 5 headmen, 3 from the rural areas and 2 from the urban; and
- d) 5 *vhakoma*: 2 from the rural areas and 3 from the urban areas.

Examples of open-ended questions that can be asked in this regard are the following:

- What is the importance of bestowing honour on royalty?
- Focusing on the value system of the Tshivenda speaking people, what are the effects of failing to honour chiefs?

#### 1.7.1.2 Secondary sources

The primary aim of using this method will be to focus on the information already collected by various scholars, i.e., both published and unpublished. Relevant information will be obtained by consulting books in libraries, published dissertations and theses, research papers and the Internet.

## 1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.8.1 The Constitution and Democracy

According to Joubert (2005:49), a great deal of the conflict during the 1980s led to the unbanning of the political organisations in 1990, and this led to the return of many exiled leaders to South Africa. Multiparty talks (i.e., The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) Negotiations) were held whereby the majority of political parties and organisations undertook to draw up a new democratic constitution for South Africa. This was done through negotiation by all the different parties and it resulted in the adoption of an Interim Constitution which took effect on 27 April 1994. The final Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) took effect on 4 February 1997. According to Joubert (2005:50), through values such as human dignity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, the constitution strives to build one nation. It does also attempt to accommodate the diversity of interest in the South African society and to ensure justice for all (Joubert, 2005:50). In the constitution, provision is made for three spheres of government, namely, National, Provincial, and Local levels. The *Constitution* and its *Bill of Rights* in particular, had a tremendous influence on the relationship between chiefs and their subjects. Focusing on the subjects of bestowing honour on the royalty, the emphasis will now be on the aspect of findings on the subject by various scholars; with reference to what is happening now and what used to be the case in the years gone by.

### 1.8.2 Land ownership

According to Hugh (1968:214), territorial division fluctuated according to the fortune of war and the personality of an individual ruler. The political organisation of these independent divisions is not unlike the Feudal systems, that is, the chief having his own district and at the same time being the lord over the surrounding country, being in fact *Mudzimu wa shango* (the spirit of the place). His county is called by his dynastic title, the prefix *ha*, denoting the place. This is why there are many areas in Venda called Hamakuya, Hatshivhasa, and Hakutama. Furthermore, each *muvhundu* and *tshisi* is called either after the first petty chief or headman to rule over it, or after the name of the conqueror; or it may be called by some word denoting a peculiarity of the place or some event that occurred there, e.g., *Tshivhuyuni* (at the baobob trees), *Miluwani* (at the *muluwa* trees). By prefixing to the place-name, the syllable *Ne*, which denotes a person,

becomes the headman's title, for example, *Netshirembe*, *Nemaungani* and *Netshivhuyuni*. According to Hugh (1968:215) the positions of the rulers of the different *mivhundu* and *zwisi* are hereditary, and many have been ruled by the same family for a long time.

### 1.8.3 Bestowing honour on the royalty

Subjects used to bestow honour on royalty (Hugh, 1968:202). According to Hugh (*ibid.*), when the subjects were visited by the chief, they would turn their eyes upon him. He would be greeted by customary greetings in accordance with the Vhavenda ceremony. Subjects would show dog-like submission. Another lady would sit in front of him, almost like a wax statue. In the same manner, any coughing, and cleaning of his throat would be accompanied by praises and flatteries from his royal admirers. Van Warmelo (1932:139) says when a Mphaphuli chief dies, a kind of hut is constructed with poles, so that the hole is covered in and it is smeared on the outside. This small hut is called *tshiruxwi*, and is not known to strangers (i.e., strangers do not know that the chief lies there). Van Warmelo (1932) goes on to say that the *tshiruxwi* is not pointed at.

### 1.8.4 *Tshikumo* and *u tamedza*

Van Warmelo (1960:122) stated that *tshikumo* is a privilege of a chief who has just been installed. This, known as '*u pembela*' (lit. 'Dance for joy'). *U pembela* is the term used for what happens when a new chief is installed. Stable horns are blown morning and evening in his kraal. The horns are blown so as to give a deep throbbing sound; it is a *vhutambo* rite. The *tshikumo* privilege is something that is gradually diminishing.

Once the subject of *u tamedza*, the washing water of the chief is fetched daily by his daughters in ox horns. This implies that commoners may not perform this task for the chief because of the position he holds. When they enter the *khoro*, all those present must "die" (i.e., cover their faces). This denoted showing or bestowing honour on the royalty. Van Warmelo (1960:122) stated that the one who does not "die", when the daughters enter the *khoro*, gets all the water poured over him, and then they go back again to the river to fetch fresh water. But it is an offence to see them; they must not be seen by one of the royal members. One will have to determine in this envisaged study how this event impacts on the rights of individuals.

### 1.8.5 **The *domba***

*Domba* is a dance that is associated with bestowing honour on royalty. According to Van Warmelo (1960:58), *domba* is held when the son or daughter of a chief has attained marriageable age and ought to be married or betrothed. It is not allowed for any of the age-grade of such a child of royal blood to remain after the *domba* is over. It is also stated that the *domba* remains in abeyance for a time in order to allow the chief's child, who is the junior of the one that went through the previous time, to attain the age of puberty. Then, it commences again and those of the next age-grade go through. Again, Van Warmelo says that the *domba* centers on a child of the chief. The aforementioned illustrates the fact that subjects used to bestow honour on the royalty. As *domba* is currently being conducted, this study should find out whether it still serves its purpose as originally intended.

### 1.8.6 **The arrival of the Whites in the Mphaphuli Kingdom**

*“Vha Marooivhagi vha swika Fort Edward vha da ha Mphaphuli a pfana navho, vho fhata mishasha ha Ralushai tsini na gamba ya zwino (Dzivhani, 1940:143).* This means that the Whites were allowed to settle at HaMphaphuli. It is also stated that Chief Rambuda came and paid homage to them. Every man was instructed to donate R10 for these white people. After their departure, Joubert arrived and rebuked the Mphaphuli residents for having donated money to the English speaking people. People were again forced to contribute R10 for Joubert. He further indicated to them that the English-speaking people had been defeated by the Boers at Mooi River, and this had a negative impact in as far as bestowing honour on the royalty is concerned, since that was the beginning of the introduction of the western culture on the Mphaphuli Kingdom. These data will be useful to this study as Whites had a role to play in the diminishing of status of chiefs in Africa in general, and in Venda in particular.

## 1.9 **CONCLUSION**

From the above-given discussion, it is clear that chiefs cannot be wished away. The study of this nature is necessary as it is important to examine issues that can bring about peace among royal leaders, chiefs, and their subjects.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. BACKGROUND OF THE VHAVENDA CHIEFS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to give the background of the Mphaphuli dynasty. In addition, the chapter also discusses the relationship between the Mphaphuli dynasty and other Venda dynastics. This is necessary because Venda chiefs are in many instances geologically related to each other. However, as the study is about the Mphaphuli chieftainship, more concentration would thus be applied to it.

The chapter also discusses few topics such as the history, origin, current status and functions of the Mphaphuli chieftainship.

The Vhavenda consist of a multiplicity of groups. According to the literature (Nethengwe, 2005; Lestrade, 1932; Phophi, 1970 and Ralushai, 1982) these groups originated from the same group and they are identified as follows:

- Vhafamadi of Hamashau
- Vhalaudzi of Gwamasenga Lwamondo, Tshisaulu
- Vhambedzi of Malungudzi
- Vhailafuri of Hasinthumule and Hakutama
- Vhanyai of Makahane
- Vhatwanamba of Tshivhula and Matidze
- Vhatavhatsindi of Manenzhe and Nethengwe
- Masingo-of Ha-Mphaphuli
- Vhakwevho of Luonde and Luvhola
- Kwinda of Tshivhale and Tshitumbe
- Vhadau of Thenzheni
- Vhaluvhu of Mulima and Mashamba
- Vhandalamo of Netswinga

Each group was bound by its traditional way of life, although they spoke one language that was understood by all. Molewa (1920), Nemudzivhadi (2001), Phophi (1990) and Van Warmelo (1935) provide more information on the origin and migration of the

Vhavenda from Central Africa to Southern Africa. The place of origin of the Vhavenda is now accepted as the Great Lakes of Africa, (Lake Malawi, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victorian this regard, Ralushai (1982:7) illustrates it thus:

Finally, the migration of the Vhavenda like that of the other Southern African Bantu speaking people, has been presented as a massive wave or a series of waves which started from central Africa or the Great Lakes area.

This main body of the Vhavenda settled at Tshiendeulu, in the Nzhelele valley, and the new Dzata was built. After the disappearance of their chief, Thohoyandou, Dzata was evacuated and his sons Mpofo, also called Munzhedzi, established himself at Songozwi while Raluswielo Tshivhase, Ravhura and Nelunguda established themselves at Depeni, Makonde and Tshitomboni, respectively. Nelunguda's son, namely, Tshilala relocated to Miluwani and Mbilwi and his descendants are currently known as the Mphaphuli people. Therefore, Nelunguda is regarded as the founder of the Mphaphuli Dynasty.

The disappearance of Thohoyandou led to the Vhavenda tribe being spread throughout the country and ultimately ended up in three groups (Nethengwe, 2005: 51). When Thohoyandou disappeared, the Vhavenda spread out over a large area of Northern Transvaal and can now be divided into the following three subgroups.

Western Venda: They consist of Chief Mphephu and his family who live in the Nzhelele valley.

The Eastern Group: This group has been least subjected to foreign influences and is considered the purest Venda group today. They include tribes such as those of chiefs: Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Rammuda Khakhu and Nethengwe.

The Southern Venda: This group linked with Tribes of the Shangaan-Tsonga or Sotho This Subgroup is composed of the tribes of Chiefs such as Masia, Mashau, Netshimbupfe and Nesengani.

As already stated, the scope of this study is confined to the Mphaphuli chieftainship and thus the discussion that follows deals with various aspect associated with this chieftainship.

## 2.2 THE ORIGIN AND THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE MPHAPHULI CHIEFTAINSHIP

As stated in (2.1) above, the Mphaphuli kingdom originated from Dzata and its clan is known as Masingo. Singo is a clan name associated with an elephant totem. This kingdom's origin could be traced back to Mphaphuli Gole Kutame Tshiboho, also known as Nelunguda (Mudau, 1990:3).

Although Nelunguda had many sons, the most famous was Tshilala. This is why at Nelunguda's death, Tshilala succeeded him as the chief of the Mphaphuli people. However, Tshilala did not stay long at Tshitomboni as he relocated to Miluwani. Phophi (n.d.) confirms this as he indicates thus:

U re musanda wonoyu, ndi u vhalwaho u dzulwa hawo u bva kha u dzulwa nga Tshilala. Hu tshi ralo ha vha hu hone midzimuni na zwiendeuluni zwa Mbilwi.

(This kraal came into existence due to Tshilala and it is where the ancestor spirits and graves for chiefs of Mbilwi are found today.)

Apart from Nelunguda, Tshilala is also regarded as the founder of the Mphaphuli dynasty. Tshilala was a traditional healer. He used “*zwirovha*” to defeat his enemies. Tshilala was loved by Vhangona, who hated Raluswielo Tshivhase as he burnt their houses and they thus preferred to be under Tshilala's rule. With the influence of Nematikanga, Vhangona chiefs installed him as their chief. He was known as a traditional healer, a military man and a Vhangona's favourable benefactor.

From the above description, it is evident that the relocation of Tshilala from Tshitomboni to Mbilwi was not accidental. He was soon invited by the Vhangona to move his kraal from Tshitomboni to Mbilwi, for he was regarded as pivotal for their security. Nemudzivhadi (2001:3) confirms this as follows:

U ralo Tshilala a fhirela Miluwani, Mbilwana ha sala mufumakadzi. Hu sa athu u fhela zwilimo zwi si zwi-ngana, a vha o wa Nematikanga e nga hu takutshelwe Iveni, he ha vho do vha hone musanda Mbilwi. Miluwani ha sala mukololo Matshifhahula.

(Tshilala arrived at Miluwani and left his wife at Mbilwana. Within a few years, Nematikanga arrived and persuaded him to settle at Iveni where Mbilwi is now situated. His son Matshifhuala remained at Miluwani)

Tshilala's sons were, namely, Matshifhahula, Ratsibi, Ramukumba and Madadzhe. Although Tshilala had many wives, the most known were Masindi from Hamphego and Nyaphindu from Ha-Tshivhasa. His mother was Nyaliovhola Mphego from the Vhanyai clan. Tshilala died in 1839 and was buried at Miluwani. He was succeeded by his son Madadzhe. What now follows is a brief discussion of the chiefs that ruled the Mphaphuli people after Tshilala's death.

### **2.3 CHIEF MADADZHE MPHAPHULI (1840-1847)**

Madadzhe was a handsome chief of the Mphaphulis. During the reign of Madadzhe, there was no peace at Mbilwi. His brother, Ratsibi, opposed him for his succession as a chief. People threatened him for all his wives were ugly. Dzivhani (1940:148) confirms this as follows:

Madadzhe o vha o naka tshifhatuwo tshawe. Musi a tshi dzula kha khulunoni vha mu khoda vha tshi mu renda lwe a vhuya a di-hangwa. Vhathu vha ri kha vhatanuni vhawe na kha vhafumakadzi vhawe haho o mu fanelaho.

(Madadzhe's face looked so handsome. When he sits on a "khulunoni" people praised him in a way that he even forgot himself. People said that his queens and his wives did not match him.)

As there was no one among his wives who was beautiful, Madadzhe followed Mathedi, a lady who was very beautiful at Tshakhuma. He did not mind although Mathedi was already married by one of the Tshakhuma royal family members. Coming back home, Madadzhe was killed at Tsianda in a sudden attack.

After the death of Madadzhe Mphaphuli, Nyaphindu, who was Madadzhe's mother, took over the chieftainship. The reign of his mother did not last long as Ratsibi (Madadzhe's younger brother), who was waiting for the chieftainship, expelled her from the throne and installed himself as a chief of the Mphaphuli dynasty.

## 2.4 CHIEF RATSIBI MPHAPHULI (1848 – 1860)

The installation of Ratsibi (also called Masindi) was a blessing to the Mphaphulis. He was loved by the royal family and this was especially shown during the day of his installation. Nemudzivhadi (2001:7) has this to say:

Nga duvha lazwo wa vha mudalo, ha vholoma likona, vha u tanga vhe vha u tanga, vhapembeli vha tshi pembela, dzinanga, khwatha, ngwala, zwa pfala hothe zwi tshi unga na govha la Mutshindudi. Hu Mupfufhi u si mphire. Ha takalwa tshothe.

(During his installation, masses of people were in attendance. All sorts of music instruments were played. People were very happy for him.)

People praised him rejoicing. Ratsibi was praised as *gunyukhunya la ha Manyatsha, wa buka li si na mutshila, tsibi ya kanda inwe i a vhinama, Ratsibi Mphaphuli a vhathu, mudala a malebeko, ha na lekutu Mphaphuli, sithaku u tswara sa muguguruba.*

During Ratsibi's reign, some of the headmen were deposed and some of his sons were given areas to rule. The reason for this step was to strengthen his chieftainship.

Netshififi was deposed and replaced by Ranwedzi (his first born son). One of his sons, namely, Mavhungu, was given Tshipwarapwara where Netshakhumba was deposed. Mathieledzha was given Mangondi to rule as its former ruler, Nemangondi, has been deposed.

During his reign, areas such as Thengwe, Mukula, Makonde and all the areas across Ngwedi were under the Mphaphuli chieftainship. Ratsibi died and was succeeded by his son Ranwedzi Ngolo in 1861.

## 2.5 CHIEF RANWEDZI NGOLO (1861-1903)

Ranwedzi is the only chief of the Mphaphuli dynasty whose rule lasted longer than those of most of the Mphaphuli chiefs. Ranwedzi was Ratsibi's first born and his reign was not opposed by anyone. He was a great fighter that he even helped Chief Ngungunyani (of the Vatsonga people) who was often attacked by the Zulus. Ranwedzi was also known for his sense of humour and as a person who liked the "*tshikona*" dance.

Ranwedzi Ngolo had two sons who both qualified for the chieftainship. They were Makwarela and Tshikalange. Dzivhani (1940:152) explains this as follows:

“Ranwedzi Ngolo” Ranwedzi muswa u da na zwawo. O vha e na vhana vhavhili vha ndu khulwane vhothe. Tshikalange wa Nyatshikalanga, na murathu Makwarela wa Matsheketsheke, wa Singo, wa Vuvha.

(Ranwedzi, which means that the new moon has come with its own things. He had two sons from different wives. Tshikalange whose mother was from the “kwinda” clan and his brother Makwarela whose mother was from Matsheketsheke from the Singo clan of Vuvha.)

According to the Mphaphuli customs and rules, the mother of a successor should come from the royal family related to the Mphaphuli kingdom. This is done for the reason of maintaining the land and royalty. Tshikalange did not qualify for the chieftainship because his mother was not coming from a related royal family, as she was from the “kwinda” clan. On the other hand, Makwarela qualified to succeed his father because his mother was from the royal family that was related to the Mphaphuli dynasty, namely, the Singo clan.

During the reign of Ranwedzi Ngolo, Tshivhase wars continued. It was during the time that some areas such as Vondwe, Mukula, khubvi and Makonde were still under Mphaphuli dynasty, but those areas were later conquered by the Tshivhase chieftainship.

Though Ranwedzi had many sons, the following were the most famous: Tshikalange, Makwarela, Luvhengo, Makhamedzha, Mudzhiba, Mmbara and Makungo.

## **2.6 CHIEF MAKWARELA RANNDOGWANA MPHAPHULI (1904-1925)**

Makwarela Ranndogwana succeeded his father, Ranwedzi, in 1904. His mother was from the Singo clan of the Ravhele family. Although his reign was characterized by peace and prosperity, at first there was a fight between him and his brother, Tshikalange, for the Mphaphuli chieftainship. At the end, Makwarela won the battle. Dzivhani (1940:152) alludes to this battle as follows:

Naa vuhosi vhu nga vha ha Tshikalange wa muthu fhedzi, wa Kwinda? Makwarela a ri nne ndi nga si vhuswe nga wa mme wa Kwinda.

(How can the chieftainship be given to Tshikalange, an ordinary person from the Kwinda clan. Makwarela said, he could not be ruled by the one whose mother was from the Kwinda clan.)

The above statement indicates that, indeed, traditionally, according to the Mphaphuli customs, the mother of a successor should come from the related royal family. Tshikalange failed to qualify for the chieftainship as his mother was coming from the Kwinda clan, which was not related to the Mphaphuli dynasty, whereas Makwarela, though he was a younger brother to Tshikalange, had a mother who was from the Masingo clan, which was related to the Mphaphulis.

Makwarela was the first Mphaphuli chief who attended school; and also a Christian. Nemudzivhadi (2001:13) illustrates it thus:

Makwarela sa muthu o funzwaho nga mufunzi Kuhu, o vha a konaho u nwala na u vhala. Ndi zwe Bivhili naho i songo vha ya Tshivenda ya dzula i zwandani zwawe. Sa khosi hu tshi takalelwa mafhungo a Davida ha sandwa a Nebukadanezara.

(Makwarela, as an educated person, taught by pastor Kuhu, could write and read. That was why the Bible, though not written in Tshivenda, was always in his hand. As a chief, he was interested in reading the book of David and hated that of Nebukadnetsar.)

On account of being both a Christian and an educated person, Makwarela built a church (Lutheran) at Ha-Magidi and a school at Miluwani, namely, Tshitongodzivha Memorial School. By then, he was encouraged by Dzivhani, who was a teacher at the same school. Chief Makwarela Ranndogwana spent a lot of money buying materials for building those structures and he also paid the teachers from his own pocket.

Makwarela married many wives and the following are some of his wives and their children:

## **1. Kone from Tshivhazwaulu chieftainship**

Children:

- Fakatsimbi - male
- Madala - a royal lady who was given Tshikhudini area to rule.
- Mutshinye - a lady who was married to headman Themeli of Ngwenani.

## **2. Mukumbudzi from Tshikweta**

Children:

- Kutama - a female who ruled Mavhunda area.
- Nyanndana - a female who died during domba initiation.
- Tshitokisi - male

## **3. Tsanwani from Ngudza**

Children:

- Mmbangiseni - a female who was married to headman Thukhutha.

## **4. Matodzi Tshintshi from Tshiombo**

Children:

- Tshavhungwa - she was married to headman Makumbane of Tshisahulu.
- Thinadzanga - a female
- Ratshalingwa - a male teacher

## **5. Mudzuli from Tshiwani ha-Tshivhasa**

Children:

- Mubva- a royal lady married to Chief Mphephu of Nzhelele.
- Swondaha - male
- Tshivhidzo - male

**6. Munzhedzi Madugu from Lwamondo**

Children:

- Nyadzanga - Mother of Chief Madzivhandila of Tshakhuma.
- Tshisevhe - Mother of Chief Netshimbupfe of Tshimbupfe.
- Muraga - Headman of Tshianzwane.
- Mutheiwana - A male who committed suicide.

**7. Alilali from Mauluma (in the Nzhelele area)**

Children:

- Nnditsheni - male
- Mmboniseni - female

**8. Musundwa from Tshiwani (Tshivhasa area)**

Children:

- Befula - Headman of Mangondi
- Maemu - female
- Khashama - female
- Thinavhuyo - female
- Mphephu - Headman of Lufule

**9. Mudzunga from Mauluma**

Children:

- Muofhe - married to headman Bababa of Haluvhimbi
- Matamela - female
- Mugivhi - male

**10. Thuga from Dzimauli chieftainship.**

Children:

- Kanakana - female
- Ndalambi - married to Vuvha chieftainship

- Ravhutsi - male
- Aifheli - male

**11. Tshililo from Rambuda chieftainship**

Children:

- Ramuthogi - Headman of Mbahe area
- Ntavhanyeni - female
- Mutsharini - female
- Nndamuleleni - male

**12. Khubuwa from Tshisunda**

Children:

- Manwatha - Headman of Tshitavha, later Mangondi

**13. Mutsharini from Tshaulu**

Children: Maemu

**14. Mutshekwa from Tshitomboni tsha Mmbubana**

Children:

- Musumuvhi - female
- Nyadzannya- female
- Musandiwa - female

**15. Musoliwa from Tshivhera**

Children:

- Mudzhadzhi - A male headman who ruled Tshififi and later was deposed by Tshikalange. He was given Maphefeni.
- Alilali - female married to Sikhuthuma chieftainship
- Musengi - male

## **16. Khangale**

Children:

- Bele - was married to headman Tshikalange of Tshififi
- Mabula - father to Lucas and Marcus Mphaphuli
- Konanani - female

## **17. Mutshinya from Dzingahe (Tshabuse headmanship)**

Children:

- Phophi - female
- Shandukani - was married to Dzimauli.
- Mudzuli - was married to Chief Magoro of Ngwenda.
- Muvhi - a royal lady who ruled Maniini and was married to Tshikovha

## **18. Muditambi from Dzingahe (Tshabuse headmanship)**

Children:

- Phophi - was married to Chief Rambuda, mother of John Ratshilumela, former Minister of the Republic of Venda
- Sukumani - married to Chief Mashau of Hamashau.
- Maemu - married to Dzingahe (Tshabuse headmanship)

## **19. Nyakutama**

Children:

- Phaswana - male

It is said that Chief Makwarela Ranndogwana had beautiful daughters. To avoid wars and maintain peace, those beautiful girls were married to the other chieftainships in Venda. Some of the chiefs who visited the Mbilwi kraal were given the chance to choose the most beautiful girls while they were assembled.

In honour of the Mphaphuli chieftainship, some of their children became successors, such as the mother of Chief Madzivhandila of Tshakhuma, mother of Chief Netshimbupfe, mother of Chief Rammbuda of Dzimauli, mother of chief Magoro of Ngwenda and the mother of Chief Mashau.

Makwarela died on the 25th of March 1926 and was succeeded by his son, Phaswana Mphaphuli.

## **2.7 CHIEF PHASWANA MPHAPHULI (1927-1948)**

Chief Phaswana Mphaphuli was appointed by the Mphaphuli elders to succeed his father Makwarela. His brother, Madadzhe (also called Munzhedzi), also wanted to be a successor and was favoured by many, such as Lambani, Radzilani Tshikalange, Ramukumba, Ralulini, Ramuswogwana, Vhuromu, Luvhengo, Munzhedzi, Tshisevhe, Negota, Nyamita, Tshimange, Magoloi and others. Nemudzivhadi (2001:15) says that:

Vhe vuhosi ndi ha Madadzhe, singo la Masingo. Ene o tiwaho nga mune wawe, a newa na yunifomo na mendele yo bvaho kha Lord Methuen.

They said that the chieftainship is meant for Madadzhe who was a pure singo of Masingo. He who was appointed by his father. He was also given a uniform and a medal from Lord Methuen to confirm his status.

Madadzhe was a humble man, but some few family members favoured Phaswana. Due to this, Madadzhe was arrested and ultimately deported to Barberton in 1928 and again to Hammanskraal in 1936. His son, Tshikonelo, sided with his father and he was also taken to Zeerust. Upon coming back, he was sent to Hamatsheka, which is today called Hatshikonelo.

Chief Phaswana deported those chiefs who did not side with him during the chaos between him and his brother Madadzhe. Upon coming back from Zeerust, Madadzhe Tshikonelo made friendship with Phaswana and was installed to Hamatsheka where he ruled the area. Muthaphuli of Lufule was deposed and Mphephu was installed. Mathieledzha of Mangondi was deposed and Maumela was installed. Rasiuba of Tshamutilikwa was deposed and Nkavhele was installed. Rululimi of Malavuwe was

deposed and Mafenya was installed. Ramukumba of Tshidzini was deposed and Muntswu was installed. Mmbi of Vhurivhuri was deposed and Sumbana was installed. Phaswana was a chief who was interested in business. He built shops, butcheries and had many trucks and vans. Like his father, Makwarela, Phaswana had many wives. Some of Phaswana's wives and children are as follows:

**1. Nyaluvhengo**

Children:

Muhanelwa - female  
Mathomu - male headman of Tshiulungoma  
Magwedzha - successor of Phaswana  
Mukhethoni - female  
Buraweni - male

**2. Matodzi Bababa from Haluvhimbi**

Children:

Mashudu - female advisor of Royal council  
Ntanganedzeni - married to former President of Venda Patrick Mphephu of Nzhelele, who was also a chief.

**3. Mavhungu from Sinthumule Chieftainship**

Children:

Elelwani - female  
Tshinanne - female

**4. Tshamano from Tshisahulu**

Children:

Mukhakhisi

## **5. Nnditsheni Magiledzhi from Thengwe**

Children:

Mmbengeni - male - deposed from Nweli headmanship.

Nthumeni - male

## **6. Tshinakaho Nyamukuvha from Samvuni (Miluwani)**

Children:

Manzhanzha - male

Aluoneswi - male

Thina - male

Thivhalitshi - male

## **7. Nyavhambadzani from Vhufuli**

Children:

Nyandevhe - female

Nyamufuwi - female

Belina - female

Gilbert - male

Chief Phaswana died in 1948 and his son Makhado succeeded him.

### **2.8 CHIEF MAKHADO MPHAPHULI (1948-1950)**

Chief Phaswana was succeeded by his son, Makhado, who was also known as Thavhayamipfa (Thorne Mountain). There is no much information about Makhado Thavhayamipfa from the literature, only that he was very cruel to everybody. Due to his cruelty, the elders such as Mafenya, Tshabuse, Tshikalange, Mmbara Muthabeni and Makhadzi Mutshinye, needed help from the government to depose him from the throne. Eventually, Makhado was removed, and with the help of the Whites, Magwedzha Raluswielo was installed to the Mphaphuli chieftainship.

## 2.9 CHIEF RALUSWIELO MAGWEDZHA MPHAPHULI (1951-1966)

After the removal of Makhado Thavhayamipfa, Magwedzha Raluswielo with the help of Whites, was installed in his place as a permanent chief of the Mphaphuli dynasty in 1951. Raluswielo Magwedzha was loved by the people and during his reign there was peace and development. Roads were constructed and new schools were built, e.g., Raluswielo Secondary School.

It was during his reign that the refugees who ran away during the fight between Madadzhe and Phaswana were reconciled and brought back to Mbilwi again.

My informer aged 81 illustrates:

Nne ndo tuwa ndi musidzana. Ra shavhela Dzingahe hayani ha mme anga. Ha pfi na henefho Dzingahe ndi ha Mphaphuli. Ra shavhela Ha-Tshivhasa. Musi Magwedzha a tshi dzhia vuhosi ha pfi kha ri vhuye hayani Mbilwi. Nne ndo vha ndo no vha mufumakadzi

(I went away being a girl. We went to Dzingahe to my mother's home. There we were told that Dzingahe was still under Mphaphuli territory. From there we went to Ha-Tshivhasa. During Magwedzha's reign, we were told to go back home to Mbilwi. By then I was a woman).

Some of Magwedzha's wives and children are as follows:

### 1. **Tshinakaho Tshali Guvho from Mbilwi**

Children:

Aluoneswi - female who is married to headman Mashau of Tshifudi headmanship.

Nkhumiseni - male

### 2. **Jerry from Duvhuledza**

Children

Masala - male

Ntuweleni - female

**3. Tshinyadzo from Tshivhulani**

Children:

Prince - male  
Nkhangweleni - female

**4. Tshinakaho Musandiwa from Vhufuli**

Children:

Musundwa - male  
Thivhileli - female  
Thina - female  
Elisa Takalani - female

**5. Nyamufuwi from Mbilwi**

Children:

Muanalo - female  
Nyadzanga - female  
Ferosi - male

**6. Madilonga from Hankhwathovhele**

Children:

Azwidohwi - female  
Aifheli - male  
Mashonelo - female  
Thizwilondi - female  
Azwimbavhi - female  
Thihanedzwi - male  
Tovhowani - female

**7. Mmbangiseni from Tshifudi**

Children:

Madzhuta - male  
Avhatendi - male

**8. Muofhe Ramusivhuli from Lufule**

Children:

- Nkhetheni - female
- Thizwilondi - female (was nicknamed Makhuwa)
- Zwidofhelangani - female

**9. Maemu from Mabelesule of Tshikweta**

Children:

- Mmbofheni - male
- Mpfumedzeni - male (regen to Musiiwa)
- Nkhangweni - married to Tshidzini of headman Muntswu

**10. Masindi Nemuswirini**

Children:

- Thizwidivhi - female
- Adziambei - female
- Mbulaheni Madambatila - male

**11. Matodzi from Malamangwa**

Children:

- Masikila Thivhulawi - male

**12. Musundwa from Tshidzini**

Children: No children

**13. Tuwani from Hamandiwana**

Children:

- Thidziambi - female

## **14. Muofhe from Duvhuledza**

Children:

Mpandeli - male  
Nndweleni - female  
Malokisa - male  
Nndokiseni - male

Magwedzha Raluswielo died in 1966 and was succeeded by his son, Mpandeli Michael Mphaphuli.

### **2.10 CHIEF MPANDELI MICHAEL MPHAPHULI (1970 – 1975)**

When Magwedzha Raluswielo died, his successor, Mpandeli Michael, was still a minor. The Mphaphuli elders appointed Mpandeli's aunt, Makhadzi Muhanelwa, to act as his regent. She relinquished the position of chieftainship when Mpandeli came of age. My respondent (aged 78), illustrates this as follows:

During the reign of Muhanelwa as regent, Mpandeli and his half brother, Mpfumedzeni, were taken to Miluwani where they were brought up by headman Mmbara. According to the Mphaphuli customary law, a chief to be, should stay at Miluwani (a sacred kraal for the Mphaphuli dynasty) until he ascends the position of chieftainship.

Chief Mpandeli attended school at Pax near Polokwane. From there he was taken to Ha-Mulima (St. Scholastic). Mpandeli was installed as a chief of the Mphaphuli dynasty in 1970 and nobody was against his installation.

Some of Chief Mpandeli's wives and children are the following:

#### **1. Tshifura Rose from Ha-Tshifura**

Children:

Makhadzi Virginia - female  
Calbert - male

#### **2. Magoro Eunice - from Magoro Chieftainship**

During the death of Mpandeli, Eunice (a dzekisa wife) was pregnant. Her pregnancy was only known by the royal family and the family elders. The dream came true when a baby boy was born in 1975 as it was the wish of the royal family from the beginning to have a baby boy. The infant was named Musiiwa (meaning that he was born when his father passed on) and on the 21st of December 1990, he was installed as a chief of the Mphaphuli dynasty. In this regard, Nethengwe (2005:103) states that:

When the child was born, they named him Musiiwa. the family members took the little boy and registered him as the chief of Mphaphulis in 1990; fearing that some rivals, amongst the royal members may usurp the chieftainship before he is recognized.

## **2.11 REGENT MPFUMEDZENI MILTON MPHAPHULI (1975 – 1990)**

Mpfumedzeni Milton Mphaphuli was Mpandeli's headman. Mpfumedzeni was appointed as a regent to Musiiwa as Musiiwa was still a minor and at school. However, the majority of the family members did not like Mpfumedzeni to act as a regent. Hence there was conflict between the royal family members as to who should act as a regent to Musiiwa. Nonetheless, with the influence of headmen Mmbara, Mmbi, Tshabuse, Mashau, Madzhuta, Muntswu and Makhadzi Muhanelwa, Mpfumedzeni took the position of chieftainship as a regent to Musiiwa.

During Mpfumedzeni's reign, he was appointed as a Minister in the Venda government in 1979. Regent Mpfumedzeni was suspected of ritual murder and was consequently imprisoned at Matatshe. However, due to lack of evidence, Mpfumedzeni was released from prison. Although he was not found guilty, his status was, as a result, destroyed. The incident was followed by his removal from the Venda government cabinet and also from the Mphaphuli chieftainship. The following are his wives and children.

### **1. Elisa from Tshikuwi**

Children: Mercy - female

### **2. Thifhelimbilu Filis from Makumbana chieftainship**

Children:

Kenny Tshovhonaho - male

Raluswielo - male  
Maanda - male  
Maemu - female

### **3. Barbara from Tshino**

Children: Gole

### **4. Luvhengo from Gaba Chieftainship**

Children: No children

## **2.12 CHIEF MUSIIWA PHASWANA MICHAEL (1990)**

The removal of regent Mpfumedzeni Milton Mphaphuli from the chieftainship was welcomed by the royal family. Musiiwa Phaswana Michael, who was already installed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1990, succeeded his father, Mpandeli, to the chieftainship of the Mphaphuli dynasty.

As his majesty Thovhele Gole Musiiwa Phaswana Michael was still at school, and still young, the royal family appointed the late Khosi Vho-Makhuvha K.H. as the acting Thovhele to the Mphaphuli dynasty. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2001, the acting Thovhele Makhuvha surprised the entire Limpopo Province and the Mphaphuli dynasty when he handed over the reign to His Majesty Thovhele Gole Musiiwa Mphaphuli without any resistance.

Musiiwa studied at the University of Venda. He is the first chief of the Mphaphuli dynasty to complete a tertiary education. He completed his L.L.B in 2008 and graduated on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2008. Musiiwa married Ntambudzeni from Vondo. Recently, they have three children, namely,

Lusani - female  
Zwiada - female  
Mpandeli - male



### 2.13 THE MPHAPHULI ROYAL COUNCIL (KHORO NDANGULI)

After the handing over of chieftainship to His Majesty Thovhele Gole Musiiwa Mphaphuli on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2001 by the acting Thovhele Makhuvha, the Mphaphuli royal council was elected on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2001. The council was elected under the leadership of Khamusi Mphaphuli. Due to a misunderstanding with Thovhele Musiiwa, the council was dissolved on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2002 and, on the same day, the new council was appointed.

The council consists of the chief's half-brothers, one or two of Vhavenda (senior members) official members, the chief's sisters, headmen who are related to the ruling family, and the immediate family members within the traditional community. One of the respondents, (aged 74), had this to say:

The Mphaphuli royal council is composed of *dzikhadzi*, *makhadzi*, *makhotsimunene* and nominated headmen who are closely related to the royal family and the chief. They are nominated according to the knowledge they have concerning the history, rules and customs of the Mphaphuli dynasty.

At the time of the research, the royal council was as follows:

- The Chairperson is His majesty Thovhele Gole himself.

NAMES	POSITIONS	SEX
1. Masikhwa A.H.	First Deputy Chairperson	M
2. Sumbana R.R.	Second Deputy Chairperson	M
3. Singo T.J.	Additional member	M
4. Mphaphuli M.	Public Relations Officer	M
5. Mphaphuli A.C.	Secretary	M
6. Mphaphuli J.	Deputy Secretary	M
7. Mphaphuli N.G.	Additional member	F
8. Makhadzi Muanalo	Treasurer	F
9. Makhadzi Vusani	Additional member	F
10. Mphaphuli T.S.	Ex-officio member	M
11. Madzhuta B.C.	Traditional leader rep.	M
12. Mphaphuli M.J.	Traditional leader rep.	M
13. Mphaphuli A.	Additional member	F
14. Makhadzi Masindi Mutshotsho	Advisor	F
15. Maumela	Legal matters	M

### 2.13.1 Functions of the Royal Council

Functions of the royal council are many and varied. Among others, the royal council's duties can be listed as to:

- identify a person who qualifies in terms of customary law to assume the position of chieftainship and to identify the successor to the position of headmanship;
- intervene where there are disputes between two or more headmen;
- deal with wrongful appointment of a headman and furnish reasons for such removal to the premier of the province concerned;
- see to it that there should be no headmen or headwoman who is convicted of an offence with a sentence of imprisonment for more than twelve months without an option of a fine;
- guide and protect the traditional authority;
- monitor the progress in various traditional leaders' communities;

- coordinate ceremonial activities, for example, installation of a traditional leader; and
- maintain peace and order within the communities as a whole.

### 2.13.2 The Advisory Committee

As the chief cannot rule the whole country alone, he is given senior members of the Mphaphuli family who are honoured by the title “*Vhavenda*”. The committee advises the royal council where necessary. Some of the functions of the advisory committee are as follows:

- To give advice on matters relating to boundaries disputes;
- Genealogy of family track;
- Dissolve disputes from headmen;
- Installation of headmen; and
- Visit headman in their areas of jurisdiction.

### 2.13.3 The royal family (*khoro ya muta*)

A royal family, according to the “Presidency” Section 3 (2003), is the core customary institution or structure within a traditional community that has been identified in terms of custom, and includes, where applicable, other family members who are close relatives of a ruling family.

The Mphaphuli royal family consists of *vhomakhadzi* (chief’s sisters), *makhotsimunene* (chief’s brothers) and *makhadzi* (the elder sister)

The committee is responsible for the welfare of the royal family as a whole, such as burials, domestic issues, and more especially for genealogical matters where succession is involved. The committee is also responsible for family ritual ceremonies. In this regard, Nethengwe (2005:29) explains thus:

The term *makhotsimunene* refers to the chief’s brothers and half brothers. Their duties are to protect the chieftainship as they are also part of the royal family.

#### **2.13.4 The Mphaphuli traditional authority**

The apartheid government declared in 1951, through the Bantu Authority Act, that each chief should have his own traditional council. This was to make sure that they managed their own affairs separately and that the government would be able to collect income tax from those councils.

The Mphaphuli traditional authority is expected to fulfill the following functions:

- To administer the affairs of traditional community;
- To assist, support and guide traditional leaders in the performance of their functions;
- To support the municipality in identification of community needs;
- To participate in the development of policy and legislation at local level;
- To promote indigenous knowledge systems for sustainable development and disaster management;
- To promote the ideals of cooperative governance, integrated development, planning sustainable development and service delivery;
- To participate in the development of programmes of municipalities and of the provincial and national spheres of government; and
- To prepare meetings and programmes of traditional leaders.

#### **2.13.5 The position of chieftainship in the Mphaphuli dynasty**

In the past, the chief was loved, respected and highly honoured by the subjects, petty headmen and headmen. He was truly said to be almost absolute lord and master over his people. He was, for many purposes, regarded as a high priest and head of his people. Lestrade (1932) illustrates that:

The chief's person is so sacred that it is no rare thing to see people rub on their own bodies, by way of a strengthening drug, sweat and mucus of which the chief has got rid. All the chief's actions are highly landed when he drinks beer, or takes snuff, or coughs, or expectorates, there is always an adulatory chorus:

*Ndau ya nduna* (male lion)  
*Ngwenyama* (meat eater)  
*Mboloma* (great bull)

Though the Mphaphuli chief is regarded as lord and master, at the same time he is not so much of a tyrant, because he is sometimes bound by laws and customs. He is there to follow the customs and laws and, therefore, he is powerless to make any alterations even in religion, taboo and ritual practices.

#### 2.13.6 **Headmanship**

A chief cannot rule the whole territory without headmen who serve as an “eye” of the chief. All headmen are under the chief and should obey everything said by the chief. A headman is the head of a ward (*muvhundu*). In this regard, my informer (aged 78) explains thus:

Gota kana nduna ndi lito la Khosi Gole ngauri Gole ha koni u vhona zwothe zwi bvelelaho kha shango lawe. Ndi mushumo wa gota u vhona uri muvhunduni wawe hu vhe na vhudziki.

(A headman is the eye of Chief Gole as the chief alone cannot see everything happening in his area of his jurisdiction. It is the function of a headman to see to it that there is peace and stability in his area)

The appointment of headmen under a chief is hereditary and this should adhere to customary law and tradition. Currently, headmen are being paid by the government whereas previously headmen were not paid. Instead, they were given certain customary privileges from their subjects that they were serving, especially from some of the initiation schools.

Traditionally, most of the headmen in the Mphaphuli dynasty are related to the chief in order to form part of the royal family. Sometimes, a headman is appointed in accordance with custom. The Venda Districts and Territorial Council Act of 1996 has this confirmation:

As part of custom and tradition, the head of a tribe could also nominate headmen who were each assigned a section of the tribe to rule on behalf of the chief. These were the chief's king's men or notable leaders of the tribe. The position was hereditary in some areas and was not in other areas but, in both instances, the principles of succession according to customary law was applied.

The Mphaphuli headmen still honour their chief. When there is *khoro* (tribal council meeting) at the chief's kraal, all headmen assemble at the council hall to listen to the chief's speech. Every headman should carry the information back to his respective area of jurisdiction, so that his subjects should have the correct information from their chief. My informer aged 68 explains as follows:

Mahosi vhothe vha kuvhangana Khaselani, Vho-Gole vha tshi dzhena, vhathu vhothe vha a luvha. Musi Vho-Gole vha tshi zwa hu a kumeliwa. Musi vho fhedza u zwa, mahosi vha a tuwa na mazwiwa othe a Vho-Gole vhathuni.

(All headmen assemble in a council hall. When the chief approaches, people kneel down. When his majesty Gole speaks, an adulatory chorus follows, praising him, after the speech, headmen take the message to the entire people in his ward.)

If any headman does something wrong, he or she will be taken to the tribal authority and charged for misconduct. When he or she is found guilty, there is punishment and fines imposed by the tribal authority.

#### 2.13.7 Petty-headmen (*vhakoma*)

Under headmen, are the petty-headmen. Petty-headmen are installed by their headmen in their area of jurisdiction to be their sub-ward (*kusi*) leaders. They serve as an eye of their headmen. It is the duty of a petty-headmen to see to it that everything in his/her sub-ward is in good order. A petty headman takes instructions from a headman to the community he serves. In other words, a petty headman is the "mouth of a headman." Whenever there is a meeting at the headman's kraal, the petty-headman is responsible for calling the whole sub-ward to the kraal by blowing a harp. My informer aged 78 explains as follows:

Mukoma ndi ito kana dzomo la khosi. U isa mafhungo vhathuni a bvaho kha khosi. U dovha hafhu a ya vhathuni a disa muvhigo kha khosi u suma uri zwi khou tshimbila hani. U fanela u vha e na tshidzumbe u itela u ri a si sokou lopola zwithu zwa vhatu.

(A petty-headman is the “eye” and a “mouth” of a headman. He takes the message to the subjects and also collect the information from the subjects to the headman. He should be a person of secrecy to avoid gossiping.)

When there are disputes, a petty-headman should attend to the matter. Should there be an appeal, the matter will be taken to the headman, then to the tribal authority, where the matter will be settled by the council committee. A person who is found guilty is taken to “*khoro tshitumbe*” to be given “*thamu*” (a fine)

Petty-headmanship is an unpaid position, but people in such position can be honoured by being given *pfumbavhulo* (the beer that is freely donated) from the subjects. In addition, when he gives resolution in small cases, the petty-headman is given money called *mulifho* (fine for his own personal use).

**2.13.8 The following headmen are registered in the Office of Mphaphuli Tribal Authority**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Headman</b>	<b>Sex</b>
1. Dimani	Ndou N.A.	M
2. Duvhuledza	Neduvhuledza T.S.	M
3. Dzavhavha	Mmbi John	M
4. Dzingahe	Tshabuse M.W.	M
5. Gaba	Madzhuta B.C.	M
6. Gokolo	Mahalihali L.W.	M
7. Gondeni	Mukhethoni M.J.	M
8. Gunda	Makhuvha T.H.	M
9. Habudeli	Muthakhi T.	F
10. Hadumasi	Dumasi T.	F
11. Halambani	Lambani M.E.	M
12. Halambani	Ratshilumela T.	M
13. Hamagidi	Magidi T.	M

<b>Village</b>	<b>Headman</b>	<b>Sex</b>
14. Hamavhunda	Mavhunda N.	M
15. Hamukomaasinanndu	Nyambeni N.S.	M
16. Hamuraga	Mphaphuli M.J.	M
17. Hamutoti	Masikhwa M.G.	M
18. Hasidou	Sithali N.E.	M
19. Hathukhutha	Thukhutha T.D.	M
20. Ha-Tshifura	Ndou A.F.	M
21. Hatshikambe	Kutama R.W.	M
22. Hatshikovha	Tshikovha T.G.	M
23. Lufule	Mphephu A.N.	M
24. Lukalo	Nelukalo N.E.	M
25. Lukunde	Mmbi R.E.	M
26. Mahunguwi	Nemalamangwa M.	M
27. Malamangwa	Nemalamangwa M.	M
28. Malavuwe	Mphaphuli T.S.	M
29. Malili	Magoloi M.J.	M
30. Manamani	Ravele T.D.	M
31. Mangondi	Maumela T.A.	M
32. Maniini	Mmbi M.D.	M
33. Maphefeni	Mphaphuli M.A.	M
34. Mathaga	Muthabeni P.J.	M
35. Mathaphu	Mmbara R.R.	M
36. Mavunde	Nemavunde P.R.	M
37. Mbahe	Mphaphuli T.N.	M
38. Mbaleni	Mphaphuli A.J.T.	M
39. Mbilwi	Tshimange M.	M
40. Miluwani	Mmbara M.J.	M
41. Mpandeni	Mphaphuli M.N.	M
42. Mubvumoni	Nemubvumoni R.A.	M
43. Mushiru	Nemushiru N.T.	M
44. Mushungwa	Nemushungwa N.W.	M
45. Mutavhanani	Kone S.P.	M
46. Nweli	Ramukumba N.A.	M

<b>Village</b>	<b>Headman</b>	<b>Sex</b>
47. Sambandou	Mandiwana M.J.	M
48. Siambe	Muofhe J.	M
49. Tshabvuma	Maragwane K.	M
50. Tshamutilikwa	Mphaphuli M.P.	M
51. Tshamutshedzi	Singo D.W.	M
52. Tshaulu	Madzhadzhi N.J.	F
53. Tshidaulu	Mphaphuli M.J.	M
54. Tshidzini	Muntswu F.E.	M
55. Thififi	Tshikalange G.R.	M
56. Tshifudi	Mashau P.A.	M
57. Tshifudi	Mashau R.A.	M
58. Tshikhudini	Maraganedzha M.W.	M
59. Tshikweta	Mmboneni T.	F
60. Tshilivho	Makhuvha H.	M
61. Tshitangwe	Mmbara T.T.	M
62. Tshitani	Mphaphuli N.R.	M
63. Tshitavha	Mundalamo F.J.	M
64. Tshiulungoma	Mphaphuli T.G.	M
65. Tshivhulani	Mphaphuli K.C.	M
66. Tswinga	Tshishonga M.A.	M
67. Vhudimbilu	Singo T.	M
68. Vhurivhuri	Sumbana R.R.	M
69. Vhutsavha	Maboho D.P.	M

**2.13.9 The following are some of the Mphaphuli Headmen and petty-headmanship's villages and their wards**

**2.13.9.1 Miluwani under headman Mmbara**

<b>Petty-headman</b>	<b>Ward</b>
1. Murei	Thondoni
2. Tshisikule K.M.	Tshisikule
3. Netshivhumbe A.N.	Tshivhumbe
4. Nesamvuni P.T.	Samvuni
5. Mushome R.	Lukau
6. Netshiluvhi B.J.	Tshiluvhi
7. Netshiguguvhale J.	Hatshiguguvhale
8. Makumule Booi	Hamakumule
9. Mamedzi Frank	Hamamedzi

**Lufule under headman Mphephu**

<b>Pettyheadman</b>	<b>Ward</b>
1. Lishivhuwe W.L.	Tshivhawe
2. Mahade J.	Thondoni
3. Makhari N.	Mungindini
4. Maladze J.	Hamaladze
5. Musivhuli V.P.	Haramusivhuli
6. Muthaphuli J.	Sigidi
7. Ravhutsi M.	Guvhila
8. Tshifume N.S.	Hamanavhela
9. Tshisela F.	Hatshisele

**Tshikweta under Tshilambuvhe (Tshimange)**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Pettyheadman</b>
1. Hatshifura	Tshifura C.N.
2. Lushai	Ralushai P.
3. Magovhani	Nemagovhani P.
4. Makanga	Nemakanga R.T.
5. Malili	Magoloi M.J.
6. Mathaga	Nemathaga M.
7. Tshidaulu	Mphaphuli J.M.
8. Tshikweta	Tshikange P.T.
9. Tshivhera	Nemushungwa R.
10. Tshivhulani	Ramafhidza J.

**Tshififi under Headman Tshikalange**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Pettyheadman</b>
1. Bunzhe	Phophi F.N.
2. Hamaboho	Nyambeni J.
3. Mukanoni	Authony R
4. Muthifa	Mahade N
5. Thondoni	Mamaema R
6. Tshitomboni	Madzunye H.F.

**Tshitani under Phaphuli N.R.**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Pettyheadman</b>
1. Dzata	Nedzata F
2. Thondoni	Marafha W.
3. Vhusenga	Nevhusenga D.V.

**Dzingahe under Headman Tshabuse M.W.**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Pettyheadman</b>
1. Gokolo	Mahalihali Wilson
2. Lukau	Mushaathoni Peter
3. Luvhuyuni	Khadammbi Titus
4. Madevhele	Alidzulwi Frans
5. Mufhandani	Tshishonge James
6. Mungindini	Ranzhingana Charles
7. Mutamvuni	Nemutamvuni C.
8. Mutangwa	Tshikovhele Alfred
9. Ndalani	Mposhomali Jan
10. Sihambe	Ndwamato J.
11. Thondoni	Mutswana Wilson
12. Tshabvuma	Marabwana Andries
13. Tshamatavhi	Tshisikule Andries
14. Tshilindi	Netshilindi Sam
15. Tshimbulu	Takalani Jutas
16. Tshitea	Magalela Frans
17. Vhutshini	Lalumbe Alpheos
18. Hamatanga	Raphalalani A.

**Tshamutilikwa under Headman Asiene Mphaphuli**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Ha-Malinda	Malinda R.
2. Ha-Matambela	Matambela W.
3. Ha Siremeli	Siremela J.
4. Thondoni	Siobo J.

### **Nweli under headman Ramukumba**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Ha-Khedzi	Khedzi J.
2. Mafhahwe	Maberegisi W.
3. Mudavhini	Franc Ramukumba
4. Thondoni	Mabalane R.
5. Tshavhangoni	Tshililo R.
6. Tshiphinda	Netshiphinda L.

### **Malavuwe under Headman Mafenya**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Hamabere	Mabere W.
2. Mabulu	Tshikoliso J.
3. Matsika	Johannah V.
4. Muhuwane	Mutafunwa L.
5. Muramba	Maria
6. Thondoni	Muthuli W.
7. Tshikovhi	Tshilukwa J.
8. Tshitombonda	Mapholi A.
9. Tshivhazwaulu	Tshinale A.
10. Tshivhonzhe	Matombo W.

### **Hamukomaasinandu under headman Nyambeni**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Thondoni	Nyamande P.
2. Ha-Matumbe	Matumbe J.
3. Tshirando	Netshirando R.
4. Tshauba	Netshauba W.

### **Malamangwa under headman Nemalamangwa**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Thondoni	Mareda J.
2. Ha-Mahanise	Rathogwa R.
3. Ha-Ramugondo	Ramugondo P.
4. Ha-Masevhe	Makuhudze T.
5. Tshamavhudzi	Pandeka J.
6. Ha-Tshikukununu	Davhula P.
7. Tshamutavha	Netshamutavha J.
8. Tshishonga	Mathase M.P.
9. Ha-Mangumane	Mangumane J.

### **Mangondi under headman Maumela**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Thondoni	Mushovholwa J.R.
2. Luvhalani	Neluvhalani M.P.
3. Tshivhuyuni	Tshikalange T.J.

### **Tshilivho under headman Makhuvha**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Malaria	Ndou J.W.
2. Phalandavha	Jack Phophi
3. Thondoni	Tshisaphungo P.

### **Tshikhudini under headman Maraganedzha**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Thondoni	Muthelo W.
2. Fhasi ha thavha	Mudau N.M.

### **Mphego under headman Mphego**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Tshiawelo	William Mphego
2. Vuka	Wilson Mphego
3. Pfananani	Wilson Muthelo
4. Tshinyiwaho	Wilson Mphwanya

### **Mutoti under headman Masikhwa**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Magada	Tshikhawe T.
2. Mpondi	Ramanaga N.
3. Thondoni	Tshisikamulilo J.

### **Tshikovha under headman Tshikovha**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Thondoni	Johannes Muthaphuli
2. Hamulima	Jim Tshiambaro

### **Tswinga under headman Netswinga**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Petty headman</b>
1. Makhothi	Jan Muhadisa
2. Masetwe	Tshishonga P.
3. Rampale	Rampale Tshifura
4. Thondoni	Makungo Munwai
5. Tshampengo	Raluvhekedza J.
6. Tshilalani	Tshisevha P.
7. Tshiozwi	Nyanwovha R.
8. Tshivhuyuni	Mulilima M.

## Hadumasi under headman Dumasi

Village	Petty headman
1. Thondoni	Lunzhi R.
2. Vuwaudiitele	Nemukula Jim

### 2.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the origin, the status and the relationship of the Mphaphuli dynasty to the other Venda chieftainships. The Mphaphuli chieftainship was established through traditional leadership of Nelunguda and Tshilala, who were especially honoured by the Vhangona chiefs for their help against Tshivhase chieftainship who used to attack them.

The Mphaphuli chieftainship was characterized by succession disputes between the royal family and the prospective candidates for chieftainship. Some of the disputes led to the divisions between family members, such as the succession between Tshikalange and Makwarela, Madadzhe and Phaswana. The two incidents left an indelible mark of animosity amongst the Mphaphuli family members, especially those who know the Mphaphuli succession history.

Although the animosity continues, the successions of Raluswielo Magwedzha, Mpandeli and Musiiwa were not opposed by other royal family members. Today, Musiiwa Phaswana Michael is loved, respected and honoured by almost everybody from the family, even by the headmen and petty headmen under his jurisdiction.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MPHAPHULI DYNASTY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the impact of socio-economic activities on the Mphaphuli dynasty. Linguistic and cultural issues receive attention in so far as they show relevance to the Mphaphuli dynasty and Tshivenda in particular.

Traditionally, subjects in the Mphaphuli dynasty used to give their chiefs a variety of gifts such as money, clothes, cattle and products from their fields. Gifts that are given to chiefs are called *nduvho* (honourship). This was a customary way of honouring the chiefs. There was also *pfumbavhulo*, the beer that should freely be donated to the chief. Free labour was also donated to the chief's fields. Some of the subjects were also nominated for building huts in the chief's kraal. Initiation schools were also the source of the chief's income. All this receives more scrutiny in the discussion that follows.

The aim of this chapter is also to investigate the effect of power relations between the chief, headmen and traditional institutions and the newly established government of South Africa (in the post-apartheid era).

#### 3.2 *DZUNDE* (THE CHIEF'S FIELD)

Traditionally, African people used to collect their wealth from the land. It was the duty of chiefs, headmen and petty-headmen to ensure that every subject under them had enough land to produce enough food for their survival. The field of an ordinary person is called *tsimu*, whereas that of the chief is called *dzunde*. The chief's fields known as *dzunde*, were in headmen's areas and worked by the subjects, and the crops were brought to the chief for his own use.

The difference in terminology is due to the fact that commoners use ordinary language, whereas the royal people use special language called the Musanda language.

The Mphaphuli chieftainship had very large agricultural fields (*madzunde*). As the chief is not allowed to plough the fields by himself, it was the duty of every subject to ensure that the field of the chief has been ploughed. Every household head must send one member to the chief's farm for cultivation. Nenguda (1990:49), in support of the above-mentioned point, illustrates as follows: "Failure to send household representative to his communal cultivation of the land would result in someone paying a heavy fine."

Things are no longer the same due to the democratic dispensation in South Africa. The powers and authority of chiefs are being diminished by the existence of local municipalities. Some of these big fields are now under the Thulamela Municipality, for instance, Thohoyandou Block F and Block G. All these areas were part of Chief Mphaphuli's communal farm and it was named *Sedza Tshikwana* (meaning, look in your pocket) which means that if you fail to give labour to the chief, you have to pay a fine. Mabaso (2006:25) highlights this problem as follows:

The paradox between the Local Governments and traditional leaders, has a history that is rooted in the apartheid era when tribal leaders were given custodianship of land that was then allocated by them to individual members of community for various uses such as residential, grazing and arable. This inevitably leads to conflicts and resettlement on both sides.

Although the *Constitution of South Africa Act 1996*, together with *Traditional Leadership Governance Framework Act, 2003* (Act 41 of 2003), state that local government and traditional leaders should work together, the relationship is not that good as there are misunderstandings between these structures. Things are being done and businesses are being established without consulting a chief or a headman. On this issue, Mabaso (2006:25) has this to say:

One of the traditional leaders in Sekhukhune District expressed that municipality officials invade the land and provide essential service such as Tourism attractions without the consultation of the traditional leader in charge.

The above statement confirms that the new government and the private sector are using land spaces, forests and sacred mountains as tourist attractions without the knowledge of the chief. Today, the Mphaphuli dynasty is like a crocodile without a pool of water as its authority has been diminished by the advent of modernity.

In the past, *madzunde* were used to produce, among others, the following types of products:

<i>Luvhele</i>	(millet)
<i>Mavhele</i>	(maize)
<i>Mafhuri</i>	(pumpkins)
<i>Miroho</i>	(vegetables)
<i>Nduhu</i>	(peanuts)

All these products represented wealth and the chief could provide his subjects with food during years of famine.

### 3.3 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The word “culture” has been variously defined by many scholars, however, the differences are minor as most definitions only differ in phraseology. According to Taylor (1971:09), “Culture is that complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of a society.”

Cleary *et al.*, (1999:30) define culture thus:

People of a particular culture have shared values and beliefs, shared rules of behaviour and a shared symbolic code such as language. This shared knowledge binds the people together and gives them sense of belonging.

Fowler (1996:206) defines culture as:

Intellectual and artistic achievement or expression, customs, achievements of a particular civilization or group.

The Vhavenda have their own culture that differs from other African cultures, although there are similarities in some instances. The Vhavenda chiefs in general, and the Mphaphuli dynasty in particular, had been renowned for their interest in participating in different traditional dances such as *tshikona*, *malende*, *matangwa*, *tshigombela*, *tshihwana*, *ngala*, *dzwio*, *tshinzholo*, *tshitiringo* and *mbila* (Hugh, 1968:204).

### 3.3.1 *Tshikona*

The *tshikona* dance is a religious dance among the Vhavenda people that is supposed to be performed by males only. Females can only be spectators and simply dance, and ululate to encourage the males. It is a sacred dance especially in the Mphaphuli dynasty. That is why this dance is not allowed to be performed everywhere, but only at the chief's kraal. The *tshikona* dance is mostly performed on specific functions, such as upon the death and burial of a chief, during rituals such as *thevhula*, other chief's visits, chief's installation, and any other royal occasions as Lestrade (1932:153) illustrates thus:

When we wish to eat the fruits of the new season, we announce that a "*tshikona*" will be held because a *tshikona*-dance always concludes the sacrificial rites. When they (the rulers) do so, they say they are going to *kunguwedza*, which means they are going to enjoy something.

The *tshikona* dance is also used to honour the chief when he is supposed to speak during an occasion. The chief cannot just stand up and talk to the nation. Before he speaks, *tshikona* dance must first be performed to ask him to stand up (*u takusa*). After speech (*u zwa*), it is performed again to accompany the speech (*mazwiwa*) of the chief. This shows great respect for the chief by his tribe.

Nowadays, the *tshikona* dance is performed almost everywhere. It is no longer considered a royal activity. It is now used to entertain people during wedding ceremonies, graduation parties, birthday parties and when mayors and councilors deliver speeches. *Tshikona* has thus lost its royal status as Joubert (2006:5) confirms:

This activity is now being performed by both boys and girls it is no longer performed by the males only because of our new democratic dispensation. The right of equality that everyone is equal before the law could have resulted in boys and girls performing this activity together.

These days, the *tshikona* dance in the Mphaphuli dynasty is also meant for competition purposes with the sole purpose, of collecting money. Sometimes, a chief is given a share of the money as a gift (*nduvho*) if his subjects win the competition. A *tshikona* group may slaughter a cow for the celebration after winning the competition. A chief may be given a share as tribute.

During the ceremonies, when the chief is rejoicing, he stands up and dance. It is then that the old women will show honour in its totality. This activity is called *u tanga tshikona* and *u vhungela*. Lestrade (1928:21) adds that:

The solemn dance of the chief whereby he becomes a God has been mentioned above: it is called the pembela dance, this is however also applied to a solitary dance by persons than a chief.

Structurally, *tshikona* consists of a variety of flutes that are operated by males under the leadership of *malugwane*. *Malugwane* serves as the conductor as he gives signals as to when to start and bring to an end the dance. Flutes of *tshikona* are of different sizes and they thus produce different melodies that combine to produce an intoxicating music to the ears that are used to it. These flutes linguistically belong to different noun classes:

<b>Flutes</b>	<b>Noun Class</b>
Zika (boss flute)	5
Thakhula ( <i>mpinzhe</i> ) (main flute)	9
Phala (screaming flute)	9
Phalana ( <i>khodelo</i> (mixer, spices flute)	9
Mutilo (high note)	3
Mvusi ( <i>u vusa tshikona</i> ) awakening	11
Dangwe (barks like puppies)	5
Kholomo (sounds like a cow)	11
Tshiaravhi ( <i>tshikona</i> rhythmic sound)	7
Veve (middle flute)	5

The above reed-pipes are only found in two countries in the whole world. The *tshikona* reeds are found in South Africa (Tshaulu in Venda) and in China. At Tshaulu, the place where the reeds are found is regarded as a sacred place. Nobody is allowed to go to the reeds bush except a nominated royal elder.

### 3.3.2 The *Malende* dance

*Malende* is a cultural dance of the Vhavenda. This is an informal dance that everyone dances in his or her own style. It is regarded as an African solo dance.

*Malende* dance is usually performed when people are happy or if they are drunk, or even if there is a ceremony for entertainment. There is no formula of performing *malende* and it is performed by both sexes in the community. Usually, people from the same area dance the same style.

Nowadays, *malende* has metamorphosed into a business activity. People practise *malende* and go for competitions where they win substantial amounts of money. Under the Mphaphuli dynasty, there is a *malende* group titled “*Malende a Tshikweta*”. If this group wins, part of the money goes to the chief as a gift (*nduvho*). The *Malende* dance is also performed in schools for competition purposes, entertainment during heritage days and during ceremonial activities. Sometimes when the chief has functions at his kraal, a group of learners is sent to go and perform for the chief and his visitors.

It is the duty of the chief and his council to motivate these cultural activities within the Mphaphuli communities in order for them to maintain its culture.

### 3.3.3 *Tshigombela* dance

*Tshigombela* dance is a cultural activity of the Vhavenda tribe. Traditionally, *tshigombela* should be performed by girls. This activity used to be practised in the chief’s kraal or headman’s kraal by girls. It is performed to entertain people of the community, visitors or for competitions. In the olden days, when another chief had died, *tshigombela* dance was sent to go and pay tribute. A cow will be slaughtered and *tshizwa* (thigh) is brought back to the chief as tribute (*musumo*). My informer (aged 78) adds thus:

Ro vha ri tshi bva bepha la u ya u imela inwe khosi arali  
mativha o xa. Ro vha ri tshi tshimbila nyendo ndapfu nga  
milenzhe. Ri swika nga madautsha. Ri tshi swika a ri iti  
phosho, Ri swika khoroni ra thoma u lidza ngoma na  
mirumba. Vhathu vha vuswa nga u pfa khoroni yo  
tangedzana.

(We used to go on trips to perform *bepha* as a way of paying our condolences when another chief has died. We used to travel long journeys on foot and reached our destination very early in the morning. On arrival we did not make noise. What we used to do was beat a drum at the entrance. People would wake up when they hear the commotion in the courtyard.)

These days, *tshigombela* is no longer performed as a way of paying tribute when a chief has died because the death of a chief is regarded as anybody else's.

### **3.3.4 Initiation schools**

It is an African culture to take children to the initiation schools. This was done in order to teach them rules and customs of their tribe. In the olden days, initiation schools were first approved by the chief before they could commence. Failure to report this matter to the chief would result in punishment from the chief or immediate closure of such activity and paying fines for misconduct to the very chief. The Tshivenda speaking people used to practise initiation ceremonies such as *musevetho*, *domba*, *vhusha*, *tshikonda*, *murundu* and *tshitambo*. These initiation schools were performed to mould and prepare boys and girls for marriage, discipline and good morals. It was the duty of the chief and his co-workers to see to it that initiation schools were established in order to supplement their income. The amount of money charged for these activities must, however, be fair and reasonable lest people view them as undue enrichment by the chief. What now follows is a discussion of these schools.

#### **3.3.4.1 *Musevetho* (circumcision school for girls)**

*Musevetho* is an initiation school for young girls from the age of six years. The money that is paid is shared among the traditional healers (*maine*) and both the headmen and chief. Nethengwe (2005:158) explains the practice as follows: "The school is meant for young girls from the age of six year old. The money paid in is also shared among the doctor, headman, chief and territorial council."

Although *musevetho* is performed somewhere in the bush, it should first be approved by the Mphaphuli Tribal Authority. In the Mphaphuli dynasty, *Musevetho* is joined by ordinary people within the communities as the royal family and royal children are not

allowed to perform it. It is regarded as a curse to the royal people to join *musevetho*. Such royal people will no longer be allowed to take part in *thevhula* (sacred ceremonies). Joining *musevetho* means the removal of such persons from *thevhula* activities. Therefore, it is taboo for the *vhakololo* (princess/princesses) of Mphaphuli dynasty to join this ritual performance.

Today, *musevetho* is gradually dying in this dynasty. Children and parents are only interested in Western education. Even the people who used to do this ritual are no longer there. The other reason is Christianity. Some Christian parents do not allow their children to perform it, since they regarded it as evil. It is also regarded as something primitive or the act of heathens, whereas it was a place where girls were learning good morals such as respect, acceptable behaviour, honour and tolerance before they became adults.

#### **3.3.4.2 Vhusha and Thondo**

These initiation schools are meant only for girls who are matured. Traditionally, when a girl becomes matured, she must be taken to the royal kraal to perform these initiation activities. *Thondo* is for royal girls while *vhusha* is for the ordinary people. Royal girls are honoured in that they are not to be seen by the commoners, while on the other hand, Lestrade (1932:111) indicates that: “Those not of the chief’s sib are not allowed to enter.”

The royal girls are allowed to see what is going on at the *vhusha* school. These ritual performances are done only at the chief’s kraal. This is confirmed by this note:

Normally the girls stayed for three months with the chief during initiation. But nowadays because of schooling, girls only spend weekends in the ruler’s kraal. ([http://www.krugerpark.co.za/Africa\\_venda.htm](http://www.krugerpark.co.za/Africa_venda.htm), 2007)

Through *vhusha* and *thondo*, girls are taught good morals. Nethengwe (2001:63) concurs with this when she illustrates:

An initiation school (*thondo/vhusha*) is where a girl is prepared to be a woman who will probably express herself in good language. Missionaries taught people that to attend such initiation schools is sinful and evil, whereas they did not take

part in the school to see what is bad. Girls at the school are fairly treated and taught good morals, norms and values accepted by their society with the main aim of producing good citizens who value their culture. Traditional healers are also involved to make sure that initiation health is maintained.

In the Mphaphuli dynasty, payments differ from headman to headmen. Royal girls pay more money than the commoners. This is to indicate that royal girls are superior to the commoners.

At the time of this research, royal girls paid R80,00 while commoners paid R60.00 each. After collecting the total amount, the headman pays *Nematei* (educator) the amount of about R20,00 depending on the number of girls who have been initiated. Nowadays, some of the headmen are no longer getting initiation income, especially in urban areas. Most of the girls are taken to the Zionist Church without the knowledge of the chief or headman. People are no longer interested in taking their children to the royal kraal. Many parents are interested in the gifts they get during the initiation ceremonies from the Zionist churches.

In the Mphaphuli dynasty, very few communities are taking their children to the chief's kraal for the *thondo* and *vhusha* purposes, especially those related to the royal family. The chief and headmen hardly benefit financially as it used to be the case in the past.

#### **3.3.4.3 *Tshikanda* (skin)**

*Tshikanda* is the initiation school for girls from *vhusha* and *thondo*. *Tshikando* is an initiation school that precedes *domba*. This initiation is also attended at the chief's kraal. It has fewer payments than those of *vhusha* and *thondo*. In this initiation school there is no division as both the royal girls and the commoners attend the same classes.

When the last day comes, the *domba* starts with what is called *u pwasha gumbu* (to smash the calabash). After *u pwasha gumbu*, every girl under Mphaphuli dynasty should be ready to continue with the *domba* initiation school at the same chief's kraal. A girl who does not want to attend the *tshikanda* pays heavy fines and *Nematei* will collect all funds and give what is due to the chief. Each district contributes four calabashes of beer to the chief's kraal as tribute.

#### 3.3.4.4 The *domba* initiation school (also called the python dance)

After *tshikanda* initiation school, *domba* should commence immediately at the chief's kraal. *Domba* is the last initiation school for the Vhavenda girls. Before a girl gets married, she goes to the *domba* initiation school to be prepared for marriage. Lestrade (1932:58) illustrates thus: "In the olden days a young man or girl that had not been through the *domba* was not allowed to marry."

A traditional doctor is nominated to go and kindle fire at the *khoro* whose flame must be kept alive from the first day until the last day of the initiation. Matured boys who have attended *vhutuka* are also allowed to join *domba*. This is the initiation school that takes a long period. In the past, *domba* formally lasted up to two years. The *domba* initiation school that is held after the installation of a chief is called *domba la tshifaro*. After an interval of three to four years, the *domba* initiation school repeats again and all girls who have attained the age of puberty are brought to the *domba*.

During *domba* initiation, boys and girls are initiated on how to handle a family, how to take care of a husband and to keep secrets to a certain extent. The songs and instructions consist of formulae that are practically all of sexual content. Although girls and boys used to dance *domba* together, they were shown *matano* which were used to warn them against engaging in sexual practices before marriage. Girls were also afraid to virginity inspection that was conducted by old women as one of the ways to encourage them to remain as virgins. Lestrade (1932:75) confirms this state of affairs as follows:

After this all the girls go down to the river for inspection at the hands of the old women, who start with the girls of royal descent. Whoever has permitted full connection return home on foot, the others being carried.

The virgin girls would go home with beautiful white beads on their heads and would be anointed with fat and would also wear a sheep skin (*gwana*). The girls who have sinned were spat at with saliva, black beads were put on their heads as a form of humiliation and would go home greatly embarrassed.

*Domba* provides the chief with free labour and revenue. Girls used to work for the chief's wives. They used to till the lands of the chief's wives.

*Domba* initiation school is the one that generates more money for the chief. In the Mphaphuli dynasty, the royal girls pay more money than the commoners. The payments range from R120 to R200. Those who refuse to attend *domba* pay an amount of R350 each. The money is shared among the chief, headmen, *nyamungozwa* (educator) and the traditional doctor. Although girls may be allowed to go and be initiated in another chief's areas, the fees should eventually be paid back to the girls' original chief. This helps in keeping the relationship among the Vhavenda chiefs in tact.

Nowadays, *domba* does not last for a long period and most educated girls and Christians are no longer interested in the initiation schools as they deem them outdated.

#### **3.3.4.5 The *Murundu* initiation school (circumcision for males)**

The *murundu* initiation school is for boys from the age of 12 years and also men who are not yet circumcised. It is performed during winter time. Traditional healers are the ones responsible for the initiation act and should have the knowledge and skills when it comes to circumcising exercise. Though *murundu* is performed in the bush, when initiates go home, they do go via *musanda* (chief's kraal) who gave the approval for *murundu* to commence. It is the Mphaphuli's culture that the *zwigwamathukhwi* (initiates) should go to the chief's kraal to pay tribute before going home.

This initiation school was adopted from other tribes, especially the Sotho language speakers because most of the songs and formulae that initiates use are from the Sotho language. On this matter, Lestrade (1932:125) has this to say:

When the Venda first began to leave their tribal areas to work for the Europeans in the South they were often caught on the way and circumcised by the Sotho through whose territory they passed. To avoid this, many Venda voluntarily went through circumcision, and lodges were started at home by the Venda themselves to meet the demand. But it was not until much later that the first Venda chief was circumcised, namely Makhado.

It is important to note that *murundu* is not meant for chiefs of the Mphaphuli dynasty. Chiefs, headmen and royal sons are not allowed to attend *murundu*. My informer, (aged 79), explains *murundu* as follows:

Rine vhakololo murundu a si washu. Mukololo a si musiwana. Murundu ndi zwithu zwa vhannda. Mukololo a yaho murunduni tshiendeulu ha dzheni. Na vuhosi vhu nga mu pfuka, ngauri ndi lishandukwa.

Murundu a si wa Vhavenda, ndi zwithu zwa Vha-Sotho na Vhalemba. Ndi vhone vho daho na zwithu hezwi kha Vhavenda.

(We royals *murundu* is not ours. A royal person is not a commoner. *Murundu* is for the outsiders. A royal person who goes to *murundu* is not allowed to get into the *tshiendeulu* (sacred place). Even the chieftainship cannot be given to him, because he made himself an outside. *Murundu* is for the Sotho and Lemba people. Those are the people who brought *murundu* to the Venda people.)

When *murundu* comes to an end, the boys are sent hom. The money is paid by the initiates to the chief at the tribal office. The money is shared among the traditional doctor, headmen, the chief and the territorial council according to the number of initiates. Nowadays, there is a drastic change in this regard. The *murundu* initiation school is in the hands of the local government. Chiefs are no longer involved in the welfare of their subjects, therefore they are even hardly consulted. *City Press* (17 June 2007:8) confirms this as follows: “Limpopo health spokesperson Phuthi Seloba however said, the available staff would be monitoring the Province’s initiation schools.”

The above statement shows the diminishing powers of chiefs as regards their influence in traditional matters. The chiefs and headmen had more powers only in the past, but nowadays because of democracy their powers are being diminished by the existence of Local Municipalities. In the end, it normally leads to conflicts between the two aforementioned powers. Initiates are the chief’s subjects and he must be consulted in every action, but this is no longer happening as chiefs are slowly but purely becoming redundant.

#### **3.3.4.6 The land**

In many African countries, traditional leaders or chiefs played an important role on land issues. The problem started when the first Dutch settlers arrived in 1652. Traditional chiefs were no longer regarded the custodians of lands. Some were deposed and removed

from their positions. Those who refused to give their land to the whites were even killed, i.e., Shaka, king of the Zulus was killed because of land issues. About 93% of the land by the end of nineteenth century was in the hands of settlers. Many cultural and traditional institutions in South Africa were destroyed and replaced by European institutions. In order to strengthen the colonial rule, the traditional system had to be abolished.

Most South African people were happy when the new regime of democracy emerged. Traditional leaders were also happy too, not knowing that the constitution of the democratic regime had left them out, only municipal managers' officials and councilors were given more powers to rule the land of traditional leaders within their jurisdiction. The Mphaphuli dynasty's big area is under the Thulamela municipality. Recently, an incident occurred at Maniini village near Thohoyandou Township where the residents were given permission to occupy the land by the local chief named Ratshilumela Mmbi. The Thulamela municipality rejected the grant approved by the headman. *Capricorn Voice* (2007:4) reported this incident as follows:

The residents were left stranded as bulldozers demolished their homes at a squatter camp at Maniini village near *Thohoyandou* on Thursday afternoon.

The above matter was referred to His Majesty Chief Gole Musiwa Mphaphuli for his attention and was again referred to Thohoyandou Supreme Court. Above all, the problem of undermining the chief and his headmen by the municipality was clearly revealed. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) states that traditional leaders should be respected too, but there are misunderstandings and paradoxes around the role played by municipalities and traditional leaders. Municipalities and traditional leaders should know that they have their duties, i.e., ruling and development. Traditional leaders are custodians of land and the backbones of community's traditions whereas the municipalities are there for roads, water, electricity, sanitation, and health services to communities if needed. Underestimation of traditional leaders by the municipalities is the stumbling block of cooperation between them. Matshidze and Bereda (2005:3) have this to explain: "The Traditional Leadership and the Governance Framework Act, 2003 opens window of opportunity for municipalities and traditional council to work together in the spirit of cooperative governance."

The dishonouring of traditional leaders by the municipality officials give complications, especially in rural communities where traditional leaders still own land. Mabasa (2006:25) remarks that: “These relationships are marred by conflicts, and lot of time the problems related to land allocation.”

Chiefs and headmen still see themselves as the custodians and heads of their communities. They see their land as their wealth. They cannot rule without land. They still need to be respected, honoured and praised. They also need to enjoy the status of being fathers of their tribes, and also need their tribal customs to be revived. The money that they used to collect from households is now going to the local municipalities. The gifts and tributes they used to be honoured with have become a rarity. As such, the establishment of municipalities by the government contributes towards the destruction of chieftainship in the Mphaphuli dynasty. The Mphaphuli traditionalship has not only lost loyalty and honourship from its people, but has been financially disempowered as well.

#### **3.3.4.7 Traditional justice**

Within the Mphaphuli dynasty, the chief is responsible for the welfare, security and well being of his people. For the chief and his/her subjects to live in harmony, he or she is assisted in his functions by various *magota* and *vhakoma*. In this regard Rupert (1975:19) states that: “A chief is responsible for the well being of the whole tribe during his life time and even after death.”

If someone has offended another person, the matter would normally be reported to the petty headmen (*vhakoma*). If the mukoma fails to give the judgement, he takes the matter to the headman (*gota*). If the headman finds it difficult to make a decision on the reported matter, he takes the matter to the tribal authority for hearing. The tribal council is the alpha and omega in giving judgement. After the hearing, the tribal council gives judgement that is regarded as final. If the offender is found guilty, he or she pays fines in the form of money, goat or a cow. The fines are determined by how big or small the case is. If both of them are found guilty, they had to pay equal fines. By so doing, chiefs were collecting money or wealth from their subjects, which traditionally confirmed respect and honour to the chief. Traditionally, paying fines is also regarded as a lesson even to the other subjects within the community not to repeat the same mistake. This, in turn, helped

the chief to promote peace and stability within the community as well. Van Warmelo (1932:14) adds the following:

These people constitute his “*khoro*” usually distinguished it as “*khoro ya musanda*” which are the last court of appeal, and the authority of final instance, in all matters, tribal and private administration, legislative and judicial.

Today, some of the subjects do not even go to the chief’s kraal to report a case, instead the subjects go to the police stations without the consultation of a headman or a chief. Although the government of South Africa amended Section 81 of the *Local Government Municipality Structures Act* (Act 117 of 1998), in the year 2000, which provided an enhanced representation of traditional leadership, but their roles as representatives of the people in communities are undermined. If the offender is found guilty today, the fine is shared among the chief and the magistrate. Tribal authorities cannot do the payments without the interference of the magistrate, therefore, traditional council’s dignity and its decision-making towards their subjects destroyed, even if their subjects were satisfied with their traditional judgement.

### **3.3.5 CONCLUSION**

It should be borne in mind that traditional leaders have ruled areas under their jurisdiction as their personal fiefdoms for decades. Their ruling powers were not from elections to their positions, but they inherited them from their forefathers as it is done according to the Tshivenda culture. The subjects lived in peace and harmony as evidenced by their honouring their chiefs with what they have reaped. Again children were being moulded by discipline when they were still young by taking them to the initiation schools where good morals were being taught. Also the judgements that were given by traditional leaders were fair as most people had confidence in such decisions.

Traditional leaders cannot rule by laws written in the White Paper and which change time after time. Traditional laws are not written but borne in hearts. Western democracy cannot comply with traditional way of life, therefore, ways has to be found of bringing about cooperation between traditional leaders and elected politicians. After all, both types of leadership’s main goal is to serve the entire population.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE IMPACT OF POLITICS ON THE STATUS OF THE MPHAPHULI DYNASTY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to examine the impact of politics on the status of the Mphaphuli dynasty.

The democratic South Africa has many political parties that had been there for decades. It should be understood that during the apartheid era, they could not operate freely as they were banned. The release of Nelson Mandela from prison, and the unbanning of political parties at the time of Mandela's release, ushered in many political changes in South Africa. Traditional leaders played significant role in as far as land under their control was concerned. In support of the aforesaid, Houston (1996:3) has this to say:

Traditional leaders will find it most difficult to be part of a democratic local government when previously they ruled by decree. While it is agreed that there is a need to extend democracy to the rural areas, no thought seem to have been given to the role of traditional leaders in this new political system. During the previous political system, they enjoyed many privileges as they convinced the government in the enforcement of apartheid.

Traditional leaders reigned supreme in these areas and their powers were reinforced by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and were provided with far-reaching administrative and judicial powers. Local traditional authorities were charged with the allocation of land held in trust with the preme of Law and Order, the provision and administration of services at local government level, social welfare administration, including the processing of applications for social security benefits and business premises; and promotion of education, including the erection and maintenance of schools and administration of access to education finance.

Since 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) has been and is still in government. The powers that traditional leaders used to have have been tremendously trimmed. During the reign of Patric Mphhephu of the former Republic of Venda, chiefs who backed his presidency enjoyed sizeable privileges. However, things have changed drastically ever since the democratic dispensation was sworn in. This is illustrated in detail in the discourse that follows.

## 4.2 TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND NEW SOUTH AFRICA

As indicated earlier, the present government has been under the leadership of the ANC since 1994. Much has been said regarding the roles that kings, paramount chiefs, chiefs and headmen are expected to play at local government level, but nothing has come to fruition if the status quo is anything to go by. Members of different political parties are the subjects of these chiefs who also recruited them. The issue of the roles of chiefs is best illustrated by Houston (1996) when he says that:

The New Constitution is silent on the role which Traditional leaders have to fulfil in the newly created municipalities. Actually, it does not explain what is going to happen to traditional authorities or how they are going to be converted into modern municipalities or integrated into existing municipalities once the constitution is adopted. Traditional authorities have been in existence for more than a century and will probably be resistant to change and embrace a democratic system of local government.

The aforesaid is a crystal clear indication that the power of traditional leaders is tremendously diminishing. The ANC as a ruling party does not seem to be doing anything substantial in favour of traditional leaders. Houston (1996:4) illustrates this issue further when he argues thus:

The final Constitution, despite recognizing the institution, does not make provision for its functioning. To all intent and purposes, this structure has been downgraded and has been subjugated to elected municipalities. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) has spoken out strongly against the formation of municipalities in rural areas, as he argued that they were unsuitable for these areas. In Kwazulu Natal, a province ruled by IFP, traditional leaders still wield enormous powers. The IFP brooks no interference with the position of traditional leaders. It goes without saying that the IFP will entrench the powers of the traditional leaders in the Provincial Constitution which it has drafted.

The way things are unfolding in Kwazulu-natal is different from the political state of affairs in Limpopo Province where the Mphaphuli dynasty is situated. The ruling party in Limpopo Province is the ANC, unlike in Kwazulu-natal where the traditional authority is largely under the control of chiefs who are aligned to the IFP. That is why Houston (1996:4) has this conclusion regarding the authority of traditional leaders:

It is quite clear from the 1996 Constitution that Traditional leaders have been stripped off their powers. After wielding powers for decades, traditional leaders will be subservient to elected councilors who used to be their subordinates. The issue of the role of traditional leaders at the local level still needs to be revisited as it could lead to conflict between the modernizing elites and traditional leaders.

Traditional leaders will find it most difficult to be part of a democratic local government when previously they ruled by decree. While it is agreed that there is a need to extend democracy to the rural areas, no thought seem to have been given to the role of traditional leaders in this new political system.

Concerning the role of traditional leaders and their powers, some scholars and experts are skeptical regarding the way the present government is treating traditional leadership, including the situation in the Mphaphuli dynasty. They are of the opinion that traditional leaders should be given roles to play to avoid political instability, especially in rural areas. Hlengwa (1994:35) argues that:

Traditionalists maintain, furthermore, that traditional leaders act as a symbol of unity, maintain peace, preserve customs and culture, allocate land to subjects, resolve disputes and faction fights, conduct mediation, attend to applications for business rights, promote the identity of communities and promulgate tribal regulations.

Some of the roles as furnished above are as yet not at the hands of the chief as far as the Mphaphuli dynasty is concerned. For instance, the Thulamela Municipality attends to applications for business rights, and the same applies to the issue of allocating land to the subjects. For them, traditional leaders, despite past practices, command legitimacy in certain areas to justify participation of chieftainship economically, socially, religiously and culturally. Traditionalists need to see traditional leaders being included at all levels of government. Holomisa (1994:38) argues that:

In order to meet the political aspiration of our people in rural areas, rural local government will have to be constituted also of elected representatives of political parties. The core however, will have to be the traditional authority.

The most important thing in rural local government is to update the traditional leadership in everything done under them. Most subjects under the Thulamela Municipality regard the political local government as an institution with more substantial authority than their traditional leaders. For instance, land is being allocated to residents by the Thulamela Municipality without any consultation with the traditional leadership.

The constitution recognizes the institution of traditional leadership as a system of governance, but their position, powers and functions are not clearly spelt out. *City Press* (2007:32) confirms the aforementioned when it concludes that:

*Section 181 of the Interim Constitution* enabled traditional authorities to continue to remain the primary local government of traditional communities, both in terms of the existing laws, indigenous and customary law. However, their position was not entrenched, but they were merely allowed to continue. This was all subject to the approval and authority of parliament. Furthermore, *Section 182 of the Constitution* made provision for traditional leaders to be ex-officio members of municipal councils within their area of jurisdiction. But the traditional leaders were dissatisfied with these provisions as their positions, powers and functions were not entrenched.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that even the constitution itself cherished by the ruling party and other political organizations, the issue of traditional leadership arguably has not received much consideration, no wonder most subjects no longer honour their chiefs like they used to. The issue of who the owner of the land is, has confused many subjects in the Mphaphuli dynasty. *Capricon Voice* (2007:14-16) had this to report on the subject of land ownership:

Residents were left stranded as bulldozers demolished their homes at a squattercamp at Maniini village near Thohoyandou on Thursday afternoon. Landlords were given permission to occupy the land by the local chief, Ratshilumela Mmbi. They created their fences and squatters behind the Thohoyandou stadium's Zamalek grand stand. Mr Samuel Daswa, one of the victims, said he was ordered to fence his site by the village chief Ratshilumela Mmbi and he estimated his loss to the tune of R8 000 for entire fencing and labour.

He added that 250 people were prepared to stay there. I bought the site from the chief and the Thulamela Municipality did not warn us to vacate the place, he said. The spokesperson of the Thulamela Municipality, Ndwamato Tshiila, said Chief Mmbi was warned not to give that piece of land to the people, but to no avail.

When one analyses these incidents that took place at Maniini (an area that falls under Mphaphuli's jurisdiction), it is very much clear that some of the chief's powers have been trimmed. Obviously, Mr Daswa now knows that land issues are now in the hands of the Municipality. The honour that he used to bestow to the chief might have been dealt a serious blow. This challenge would obviously not concern Mr Daswa only, it could be a problem to other site seekers also. The question that could be raised could thus be "who are the people who represent the municipality?" The answer to this question is undoubtedly "the ruling party, i.e., the ANC and its alliance." One thus come to the conclusion that the ruling party is implicated in the issue of lack of bestowing honour to the royalty by subjects.

#### **4.3 CONSULTATION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND THE MUNICIPALITY**

The new political dispensation has brought many changes in as far as communication within the country is concerned. It is obvious that some of the things that subjects used to do have been affected. "The right to equality" has not been well presented and well understood by both the subjects and the traditional leaders within the kingdom. The general perception that chiefs had been oppressing subjects has been taken as a serious issue, especially by the youth. This misconception resulted, in some areas in the underestimation of the role that is played by the traditional leaders. Traditional leaders are sometimes to be blamed on how stupid and stereotyped they are by some of their subjects. This is causing misunderstanding and conflicts within the communities especially by the enlightened youth in rural communities, where traditional leaders are still the custodians of land. On this issue, Mabaso (2006:25) illustrates that:

The paradox between the local government and traditional leadership has a history that is rooted in the apartheid era when tribal leaders were given custodianship of land that was then allocated by them to individual members of the community for various uses such as residential, grazing and arable.

The above statement indicates that traditional leaders had too many powers in the past and now, because of new dispensation, their powers are being underestimated by the existence of local municipalities. Many of the problems are caused by the municipal officials who do not give respect and recognition to the traditional leaders. They do not consult traditional leaders and civil society stakeholders in whatever they do within the communities. Meetings are held at schools without the knowledge of traditional leaders. Traditional leaders are always left out in decision making as Mabaso (2006:25) indicates that:

One of the traditional leaders in Sekhukhuni Districts expressed that municipal officials invade the land and provide essential services such as tourism attractions without consulting the traditional leader in charge, hence the swelling antagonism.

Lack of consultation between the two powers is problematic and a cause for concern as the community remains confused. Due to lack of consultation, the development process in the meantime is ruined. Traditional leaders are kept uninformed. They cannot motivate their subjects to pay for services since municipal managers and officials do whatever they like within the communities. Communities under Thulamela municipality such as Miluwani, Magidi, Mbaleni, Maniini and Hatshikovha are in for it as they all fall under the above mentioned municipality.

At Miluwani, under headman Mmbara, a large portion of land falls under the municipality. In the past, it was customary that subjects should be given residential stands by their traditional leaders, and to obtain such a stand, a certain amount is paid to that traditional leader. Today, payment for the site in all areas within the dynasty is presently under the control of the Thulamela Municipality. The chief and the headmen get nothing from their own areas. This is done without consulting the traditional leader who is traditionally the custodian of the land.

#### **4.4 DEMARCATION OF WARDS WITHIN COMMUNITIES**

Besides lack of consultation by the municipality, there is a serious issue within the communities. Demarcation of land into wards which is done by the municipality alone is causing problems. At Miluwani, under headman Mmbara, there is an area called Tshisikule where the subjects are confused. They do not know whether they fall under

the councilors or under a traditional leader. When a traditional leader calls a meeting at the kraal, the councilor also calls a meeting at his place for residence. The subjects who must go to the chief's kraal are those who must also attend the councilors meeting. Miluwani has been demarcated into two wards without the consultation of a traditional leader. When councilors are called to the chief's kraal, they refuse to go and settle the matter concerning demarcation of land as my informer (aged 76) illustrates:

Masipala o khethekanya shango langa a songo nkwama. Zwino vhathu vhanga vho fhandekana. Vhanwe vhe ri ri vhuswa nga masipala, vhanwe vhe rine ri vhuswa nga khosi. Mukhantselara u ita mitangano na vhathu vhanga a songo mmbudza. Hezwi zwi khou vusa vilili kha shango langa.

(The municipality demarcated my land without consulting me. Now my subjects are divided. Others say that they are under the councillor's control while others say they are under the chief's rule. Councillors call meetings with my subjects without my knowledge. This is causing conflicts within my jurisdiction).

Traditional leaders are the only people, together with their petty-headmen who know the boundaries of their jurisdictions, but not the municipal managers who came from other areas. The demarcation problem is causing disrespect and underestimation to traditional leadership. The land that the municipality should render essential services to is there, but it is under the control of traditional leader. Therefore, consultation with the owner of the land is important. Causing division within the community means the breakdown of bestowing honour on royalty.

#### **4.5 RENAMING OF SOME AREAS BY THE MUNICIPALITY**

Thohoyandou Township is situated in the Mphaphuli kingdom. Due to lack of consultation, it came as a shock to the traditional leaders under the Thulamela Municipality that their areas are given new names without their knowledge. The Vhavenda tribe does not just give a name to a particular area without a meaning. The Mphaphuli areas have been given their names according to their meaning. Traditional leaders are very concerned about the new names that were given to their areas of jurisdiction by the municipality without their concern. Traditional areas have been given names that denote Blocks and Units. My informer (aged 76 years) illustrates thus:

Hafha hune zwino ha pfi Block Q. ndi Haralushai. Miluwani hu vho pfi Unit C, Tshiluvhi hu vho pfi Block P. East. Tshiguguvhale hu vho pfi Block F., Tshivumbe hu vho pfi Unit D., Hamakumule hu vho pfi Block G., Mathaphu hu vho pfi A extention, Hamagidi hu vho pfi Block E.

(The area which is now called Block Q was called Haralushai; Miluwani is now called as Unit C., Tshiluvhi is now called Block P., East Tshiguguvhale is today called Block F., Tshivumbe is now called Unit D., Hamakumule is now called Block G., Mathaphu is today called A Extention; Hamagidi is today called Bock E.)

Looking at the above quotation, it is clear that the powers of traditional leaders have been destroyed. The municipality and the traditional institutions are not in harmonious relationship at all. Headman Mmbara was not consulted during the renaming of these areas. The renaming of these areas without consulting traditional leaders means the destruction of some of the history of the Mphaphuli dynasty, e.g., Tshivumbe comes from petty headman Netshivumbe who was the only petty headman nominated by the Mphaphuli chieftainship to train people to perform the *tshikona* dance at his subward for the installation of other petty headmen. Therefore, Netshivumbe means *u vhumba vuhosi* (to create chieftainship). Giving new names to some of the Mphaphuli areas without consultation means the abolition of some memories that could be beneficial to the coming of Mphaphuli generations. The incident as highlighted above by the municipality indicates the total underestimation of traditional leaders. Today, the traditional leaders who are regarded as the custodians of the land before the advent of the apartheid regime have lost most of their powers. There cannot be a traditional leader without land. Lack of respect and honour by various municipalities contributes largely towards the diminished status of traditional leadership.

#### **4.6 TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND THE CONSTITUTION**

Although the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) was established and inaugurated on April 18, 1997, the respect and recognition of the institution of traditional leaders and their concerns were not addressed during the negotiation process. In his address of support to the NHTL, the former South African President, Nelson Mandela (2007) said:

When the new constitution was drafted, there were concerns that it did not define in sufficient detail the status and role of traditional leaders and that it did not, unlike the interim constitution, oblige government to set up this council. The respect and recognition of the institution of traditional leaders require more than fine-sounding declarations in the constitution. During the negotiation process, traditional leadership was not dealt with and it was postponed.

The above statement indicates that even the constitution of the new democratic South Africa does not say anything about the roles and recognition of the traditional leaders. The constitution has nothing to say about the restoration of traditional leaders' dignity by intergrating the institution with the new governance. Their roles in the legislative process and other matters affecting tradition, culture, religion, cultural activities, customs and values were and are still being undermined. The constitution is silent on the roles that traditional leaders have to fulfil in the municipalities. This is why Houston and Somadoda (1996:2) remark thus:

By failing to be specific on the role of traditional leaders at the local tier of government, the constitution relegates the institution of traditional leadership to a level inferior to that of elected councilors. It accords more power and prestige to municipal councils whose functions have been clearly spelled out. Recognising the institution of traditional leadership and not investing it with any powers, are two different things.

Although the *Interim Constitution* (Act 200 of 1993) was drafted to stipulate that the traditional authority should continue to exercise and perform the powers and functions vested in it, but, in practice, this is hardly happening. It also contradicts the Bill of Rights by the word "equal". Chieftainship is cultural, traditional and it is an inherited practice. Chieftainship cannot treat male and female chiefs equally because this institution differs from tribe to tribe. Some chieftainships do not allow females to be chiefs whereas some do. In the Mphaphuli dynasty, a woman may inherit succession in her own right. In this dynasty, there is a case where there is a total absence of male inheritors to succession of chieftainship, namely, the Bohwana headmanship. My informer illustrates thus:

Fhano kha la ha Mphaphuli ri na vuhosi ha Habohwana.  
A vhu tendi uri hu dzhene muthu wa munna. Li di vha shango la mufumakadzi u bva kale. Arali ha dzheniswa wa munna ha tshili, u a fa. Tshidzimu tsha hone ndi tsha muthu wa mufumakadzi.

(Here at Mphaphuli area we have Bohwana chieftainship. It does not allow male succession. It was a female area since long ago. If a male is installed, he does not survive for a long time, he dies. The ancestors spirit is for a female person).

The above statement indicates that different groups in South Africa have different cultures. Therefore, a constitution drafted without the inputs of traditional leaders cannot be suitable for different tribes with different races, religion, customs and values. The drafting of a constitution during the absence of traditional leaders representatives will always lead to chaos and contradictions and conflicts between the government and traditional leaders.

#### **4.7 CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

During the past decades, traditional leaders have ruled their traditional areas under their jurisdiction without opposition structures. They largely ruled in peace, prosperity and harmony. They have inherited their positions and not elected to positions of leadership such as civic leaders. They even continued enjoying their privileges during the apartheid era as they connived with the government. They reigned supreme within their communities and their powers were reinforced by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. There was nobody above them and their word was final. Traditional leaders were also given more functions to perform within their areas. Houston and Fiken (1996:3) show this as follows:

Local Traditional Authorities were charged with the allocation of land, held in trust; the preservation of law and order, the provision and administration of services at local government level; social welfare administration – including the processing of applications for social security benefits and business premises; and promotion of education, including the erection and maintenance of schools and administration of access to education finance.

Culturally, traditional leaders are not used to seeing somebody within their jurisdiction exercising power except themselves. In other words, democracy as known in the West is not common. In the Tshivenda culture, it is also taboo to stand before a chief and say whatever you like. At the kraal, there are royal elders who are appointed to convey the

message from the subjects to the chief. Within the community, nobody is allowed to voice a word to the subjects without the approval of a traditional leader. If anyone voices a word to the subjects without the approval of a traditional leader, a heavy fine, such as a cow, can be imposed as this is regarded to be a serious offence.

The civic members within the local communities always do whatever they like without the knowledge of traditional leaders. It comes as a shock to them that young boys and girls, who are regarded as civic members within their communities, should assemble their subjects and tell them about municipal services without their consent. This indicates the undermining of traditional leaders by the civic members. Traditional leaders regard this as symptoms of sharing powers between them and civic members. Such civic leaders assemble their subjects in schools and sports ground, whereas traditional leaders only know that meetings are conducted at the chief's kraals and what they know is that all the powers are theoretically vested in them. Keulder (1996:35) points out:

Traditionalists maintain, furthermore, that traditional leaders act as a symbol unity, maintain peace, preserve customs and culture, allocate land to subjects, resolve disputes and faction fights, conduct mediation, attend to applications for business rights, promote the identity of communities and promulgate tribal regulations.

Traditional leaders do not recognize the so-called civic associations as their bonafide leaders. They do not expect any other leader within their areas of jurisdiction. What traditional leaders know is that they are the alpha and omega within their areas. On the other hand, civic associations regard traditional leaders as an archaic and feudal institution that should be abolished or done away with. Civic members only recognize political leaders who struggled for changes during the apartheid regime as their heroes. For them, a freedom fighter is the only person that they should respect and honour. When looking at a traditional leader, they regard him as anybody else with whom they must share equal status within the community. Civic leaders feel they are the most important people who can represent the residents better than a traditional leader. Brown and Malatsi (1994:16) comment on this matter as follows:

One therefore has to conclude that the conflict between the “civics” and the institution of traditional leaders is essentially a political one. The struggle is for power and the right to represent rural interests. Most “civics” are politically affiliated and hence represent partisan interests yet, they claim to be the only “legitimate” community representatives, as the residents are the community, and they represent the residents.

Within the Mphaphuli communities, civic associations regard themselves as rulers. They have forgotten their function of developing the communities, such as installation of electricity, construction of roads, provision of water and initiation of projects. There is always chaos between the two institutions. Residents are confused; they do not know who should be obeyed between civic members or a traditional leader. This is an indication that the power, respect and honour of the institution of traditional leaders are almost diminished. The relationship between traditional leaders and civic associations cannot be described as healthy and sound.

#### **4.8 THE SUCCESSION TO CHIEFTAINSHIP**

Traditionally, succession to chieftainship is done in a secret way by the elders who are to appoint the successor. The *khadzi* (chief’s sister) together with *makhotsimunene* (chief’s brothers) are the only people who have the right of appointment. The final say on succession is, however, on the *khadzi*’s shoulders. This is the time that the *khadzi* is highly respected and honoured by the whole royal family for her final decision. She should be a person with secrecy and faithfulness, who cannot be bribed by any person from the family as this can provoke disputes. There should be no influence from any member or a headman as this can destroy the reality of chieftainship. In the Mphaphuli dynasty, a chief is allowed to marry as many wives as he can, as long as amongst them there is one who is supposed to give birth to a successor. According to the Mphaphuli dynasty’s custom, the woman to bear a successor should be of royal blood from the other related chieftainship. Regarding the appointment of a chief, Nethengwe (2001:150) divulges that:

Within the extensive polygamous family of the Vhavenda culture, no public announcement is made about the heir until after his father's death. Only then will the royal council, in collaboration with the royal family members who form *khoro ya muta*, take a final decision about the successor on the basis of his mother's rank, and any other relevant facts. In the chief's harem, there are usually a few high-ranking women in which case other factors are also considered before making a final choice.

Today, because of this new dispensation in South Africa, succession is no more a private issue controlled by royal members. The final approval of a successor is given by the government.

The royal family is forced to go and inform the provincial government about its choice of a successor. Before approval, investigations are also conducted to ensure that the successor has been chosen correctly. The government is also responsible for the registration of a new traditional leader at the provincial level. The date of installation is also supposed to be confirmed and regulated by the National and Provincial legislation. This is the indication that traditional leaders have no powers even to keep their secrecy in as far as succession issues are concerned. Traditional leaders cannot do their own things alone without the interference of the government.

This means that the impact of politics in South Africa is gaining more influence daily, whereas the powers of traditional leaders are dwindling daily. The impact of modern politics is incompatible with that of the traditional leaders. While some people may not support traditional leadership, there are others who see a lot of value in it.

I reject the notion that Tribal Authorities are stagnant institutions incapable of accommodating social and political change. In our endeavours, to create a fully democratic society in South Africa we must utilize their intrinsic qualities to establish sound local government. Tribal Authorities are essential political, social and economic structures, and they symbolize and maintain socio-political order which is necessary for rural development. (Botha, 1994:33)

The interference of the government in traditional leadership matter is unlimited. Even the

removal of chieftainship is controlled by the National and Provincial government. This is a confirmation that indeed chieftainship has lost its cultural value, which refers to the knowledge and rules of behaviour that members of a community share and which bind them together. *Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act No. 41 (2003)* deals, among others, with the following issues:

- Recognition of senior traditional leaders, headmen and headwomen;
- Removal of traditional leaders, headmen or headwomen;
- Recognition of traditional communities;
- Establishment and recognition of traditional councils; and
- Withdrawals of recognition of traditional communities.

The above stipulations designed by the government are not relevant to the traditional leaders' matters. Traditional leaders have their rules and dealing with their traditional matters in a customary way. There is no need for the government to interfere as the constitution and customary rules contradict each other.

The *Government Framework Act 41 (2003)* uses the word "recognition", meaning that if the government does not recognize traditional leaders, nothing can be done by traditional leaders, together with the royal elders. The current restructuring of the institution of traditional leadership in relation to succession addresses political issues rather than cultural issues.

The government is urged to also recognize traditional leaders who fought against colonialism that destroyed the powers of traditional leaders. Some of the traditional leaders were dethroned and harassed by the colonial regime thus forcing them to comply with their government. On this note, Mare and Hamilton (1987:16) illustrate as follows:

It was due to the dismissal failure of the colonialists to completely destroy the ethos of the African society and the institution of chieftainship, epitomizing it, that they resorted to the strategy of moulding and tailoring these institutions in order to serve objective commensurate with their colonialist mission.

The statement above indicates that traditional leaders are also freedom fighters. The new government seems not to respect what they did for the protection of land. Only those who fought against the apartheid regime during the struggle are recognized as the only freedom fighters. Today, they are given high offices and huge salaries in these new government, including driving luxury cars, whereas most traditional leaders are paid only R1 500 as their monthly wages. This is unfair and dishonouring of traditional leadership by the Government.

#### **4.9 THE MPHAPHULI'S RITUAL PERFORMANCE (*THEVHULA*)**

The Mphaphuli dynasty, like other African communities, also performs rituals to pacify the spirits of the earth and to ask them to intercede with gods. Among the Mphaphuli kingdom, the rituals and ceremonies are meant as a form of environmental protection and protection from diseases. Motshekga (2007:21) indicates that: "African communities commanded a thorough understanding of the cosmetic order and environment. Moreover, they observed and celebrated seasonal festivals to honor their solar God, Gods and ancestors."

The Mphaphuli's perform their rituals yearly during September. The very related headmen and *vhomakhadzi* (chief's sisters) are the organizers of ritual dates and the ceremonies. The ceremonies are performed at Miluwani as the place is regarded as *zwiendeulu* or *zwifhoni* (sacred).

All the past chiefs and some senior headmen, who are of Mphaphuli royal blood since Chief Tshilala, are buried there. The *makhadzi* for holding "*thungu*" is chosen by the devine bones of a nominated traditional healer.

During the *thevhula* day, all commoners within the community should stay indoors so that they must not see the great honoured people performing their rituals. If they meet people on their way from Mbilwi to Miluwani, those ordinary people should immediately cover their faces and kneel down. If someone looks at them, a penalty, such as a cow or money, should be paid to the Mphaphuli Tribal Council for not honouring the instructions for the chief. Since ages ago, the ritual performers are expected to use only one path from Mbilwi to Miluwani and visa versa. According to the Mphaphuli cultural rules, they can only rest at Maanea and Gusheta.

The *vhakololo* (princess) usually hold sticks for beating those who like to look at them when passing. They will be clothed with only *mikhasi* (traditional skirts) to honour their ancestors.

On their journey from Mbilwi to Miluwani and vice-versa, ritual performers are accompanied by the *tshikona* dance. Traditionally, females who went to *musevheho* initiation schools and males who went to circumcision schools are not allowed to enter the *tshiendeulu* to be part of *thevhula* activities. Muthige (2001:8) confirms the above as follows:

Ranwedzi o sanda Tshikalange nge a isa nwana murunduni  
zwe zwa vha tshiila nga tshifhinga itsho.

(Ranwedzi criticized Tshikalange for taking his son to the  
circumcision school as it was taboo at that time).

Today, most of these rituals are no more. Because of schooling, there are no more boys for the *tshikona* dance during *thevhula* ceremonies. Only some of the boys from the royal family itself perform the dance.

The path via *Maanea*, regarded as a sacred path, is no longer there. The municipality demarcated the area for residential purposes. The sacred trees, which were used as their resting places when performing rituals, have been cut down. All the above was the result of lack of consultation between the municipality and the traditional leaders. The councilors are seen only during election campaigns, when election campaigning is over they disappear.

Recently, the Mphaphuli territorial council lodged a case against the municipality because the municipality put up infrastructure at Tshivhumbe (Unit D) without approval from the Mphaphuli dynasty. After the municipality had completed phase 1, it was discovered that the sacred forest and graves were cleared by the contractors. This is an indication that traditional leaders are hardly accorded respect. Traditional leaders have lost most of their power, land and dignity.

#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

The impact of politics on the status of the Mphaphuli dynasty ushered in many political changes. Honouring of chiefs or traditional leaders has declined. Almost every traditional leader has lost his or her status and dignity within the communities. Traditional leaders are no longer viewed as complete authoritative figures within their areas of jurisdictions. The South African constitution does not indicate the role of traditional leaders clearly. This can be seen when municipal managers do not consider the traditional leaders as their co-workers within their communities.

This polarity is still ongoing and one can only hope that a solution would be found soon so as to bring about peace and progress between the Venda royalty and commoners.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to both examine the origin of the Mphaphuli dynasty and show how it was honoured in the past. The relationship between the Mphaphuli chieftainship and the new political dispensation, and the status of Mphaphuli dynasty have also received scrutiny.

**Chapter One** has given the introduction to the study. Aim, methodology and significance of the study have also been highlighted in this chapter.

**Chapter Two** has concentrated on the investigation of the roots and the founder of the Mphaphuli dynasty. The chapter has also discussed the Mphaphuli family tree, Mphaphuli traditional authority, headmanship, petty headmanship and their functions.

**Chapter Three** has indicated how initiation schools play a role in the disciplining of boys and girls. It has also shown how cultural activities play a part in honouring the chiefs and their social responsibilities. The chapter has also discussed the destruction of the powers of traditional leaders by the new political dispensation. Lack of consultation between the chiefs and the municipalities has also received attention.

**Chapter Four** is concerned with the relationship that exists between the ruling party and the traditional leaders. The ANC is in the majority in as far as Thulamela Municipality is concerned. The municipality has trimmed functions that used to be performed by traditional leaders. For instance, people no longer buy residential sites from chiefs, but from the municipality instead. This chapter has also focused on the constitution regarding the powers that traditional leaders have. The position, powers and functions of traditional leaders have not been entrenched in the constitution. Civic associations do not seem to recognize rural communities and their traditional structures.

**Chapter Five** is the summary of the research as a whole, while the problem discovered is “lack of consultation” between the traditional leaders and the government. The sharing of power and understanding of each other can be suggested in order to solve the problem.

## 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to this investigation are as follows:

- One thinks that the *Governance Framework Act* (2003) should be revised in order to give opportunity for municipalities and traditional councils to work together.
- The new name “traditional leader” is not suitable because the word “traditional” means something of the past. The youth cannot take advice or instructions from a traditional leader thinking that the advice or instructions are also outdated. One suggests that the name should be changed to “Royal leaders”.
- The key obstacle to development is “lack of consultation”. Traditional leaders and the municipal officials should sit down and talk about service delivery, demarcation of land and allocation of sites. They must understand each other before any step is taken.
- Most of traditional leaders are not educated in the Western sense. One can suggest that it is high time for traditional leaders to be educated and take their children to schools. The world of today needs rulers who are enlightened. It is difficult for an uneducated chief to give advice to educated commoners. A ruler should have wisdom, confidence and transparency.
- Aspects of traditional culture, such as initiation schools, should be maintained as this will assist a great deal in restoring Ubuntu to our children.

## 5.3 CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the discussion that has been furnished in the foregoing chapters that politics has an impact in as far as the dishonouring of traditional leaders is concerned. One would expect the government to make sure that traditional leaders are given major

functions in matters pertaining to the ruling of their subjects, but it would appear as if the opposite is the case. Traditional leaders are faced with many challenges. They have to deal with some subjects who are no longer loyal and obedient. They also have to work with the local government that, in many people's view, undermines their traditional authority.

As both traditional leadership and modern forms of government cannot be wished away, it is thus crucial that these institutions find a way of cooperating for the sake of serving their people effectively.

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