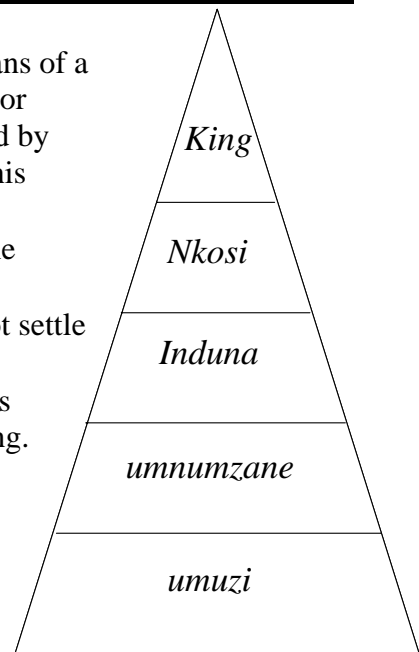


## THE ZULU NATION

### Political Organization

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- The political structure of the Zulu can be explained by means of a pyramid. It consisted of the *imizi* (households) at the base or foundation. Each *umuzi* (household – singular) was headed by *umnumzane* (man of the house). He kept law and order in his household.
- *Umnumzane* reported to the *induna* who was the head of the *isigodi* (district) in which the household was situated.
- *Induna* settled disputes which the household head could not settle or were too important for the head to handle.
- The district formed part of a larger region, *isifunda* and was controlled by *inkosi* (chief) who directly reported to the king.
- This setting helped the king maintain political control over his kingdom.



### Social Organisation

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- Zulu traditional life is mainly based on family whose main focus was *Umuzi* (the extended homestead).
- The homestead would consist of *umnumzane* (the headman) and his wives and children, as well as the headman's younger brothers and their wives and sometimes the wives of their sons.
- Each *umuzi* had its own supply of milk and vegetation.
- The layout of *umuzi* was common with all homesteads.
- The main wife or the chief wife occupied the right-hand side hut. This happened amongst the commoners.

#### Royalty followed a different protocol than the above

- **The chief wife**
  - Not necessarily the King's first wife, but she was of royal descent.
  - The King only took a royal wife when he was ready to wear *isicoco* (a head ring)
  - The main hut was occupied by the chief wife, known as *indlunkulu*.
  - The first born son of the chief wife was the heir to the throne.
- **The right hand wife**
  - The right hand wife, known as *iqadi*, occupied the hut on the right hand of the chief hut.
- **The left hand wife**
  - She was known as the *ikhohlo* and stayed to the left of the chief wife.

- She was often the first to marry the King.

### **The Housing/Homestead**

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- Umuzi was built on sloping ground and in circular form with each entrance, to each hut, facing inward.
- The chief hut would be placed on the highest point of the homestead, overlooking the rest of the huts..
- In the centre of the circular structure was the *isibaya* (cattle byre).
- *Isibaya* was, and still is regarded as a holy place and considered as the place where the spirits of the ancestors linger. The *isibaya* is therefore used for praying.
- Women who were not born in the family may not enter *isibaya*, except on special occasions.

### **Tasks around the homestead**

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- Everybody in the household had a specific role to play depending on age, sex and their rank in the umuzi.
- Traditionally, Zulu women were responsible for many things.
  - They fetched the water.
  - They planted, grew and sold the vegetables.
  - They had to look after the well-being of the whole family.
  - They collected and sold wood.
- Many of these duties are still done by the women and young girls in rural areas.

### **Growing up, initiation and marriage**

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<i>Qhumbuza</i> (ear piercing ceremony)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is the first stage of celebrating the transition from childhood to adulthood.</li> <li>• Every child went through this before puberty.</li> </ul>
<i>Thomba</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next stage was to celebrate physical maturity or puberty.</li> <li>• The ceremony was called the Thomba and both girls and boys went through it.</li> <li>• They were taken into separate seclusion and taught how to behave in society as young adults.</li> </ul>
<i>Insizwa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The boys were called <i>insizwa</i> (young man), after the male <i>thomba</i>.</li> <li>• Now they could court girls, but could still not get married.</li> <li>• He first had to join a <i>ibutho</i> (regiment) and serve the king for 10 years.</li> <li>• On completion, they would sew <i>isicoco</i> (a headband), which signified that they have reached manhood and were ready to marry.</li> </ul>

<p><i>The Reed dance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The girls participate in the annual Reed Dance in September, to celebrate their virginity and to be encouraged to take pride in their purity.</li> <li>• The young girls are also taught how to behave in front of the king.</li> <li>• The above is demonstrated by delivering of reed sticks and dancing.</li> <li>• The procession is led by the princesses.</li> <li>• The virgins wear <i>izigege</i> and <i>izinculuba</i>, which show off their bottoms and beads to show their beauty.</li> <li>• This teaches them to be proud of of being virgins and their naked bodie, and in return be respected by possible suitors during the ceremony.</li> <li>• The <i>Amatshitshi</i> (Virgins) are advised not to respond immediately.</li> <li>• At this stage, the girls should only wish the suitors a safe journey back.</li> <li>• The would then discuss the matter with their older sisters (<i>amaqhikiza</i>), who in turn would approach the mothers regarding a possible love relationship.</li> <li>• The final word lies with the father, only then will the two families come together and exchange gifts.</li> <li>• It is now that amatshitshi are ready to become amaqhikiza.</li> <li>• They too become advisors to other amatshitshi.</li> <li>• They are now ready for marriage.</li> <li>• The Zulu Reed dance is still a very important part of Zulu culture and tradition.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Lobola</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>lobola</i> is the first step in the wedding process.</li> <li>• This is an agreement, by which the groom shows his commitment to his future wife, by giving the requested amount of cattle.</li> <li>• This is also serves as compensation for the father and his homestead, loosing the girl.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Marriage</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zulu weddings are characterised by joyous singing and ululating, dancing and mock fighting by warriors in traditional dress.</li> <li>• The women wear traditional headdresses, beautiful beaded necklaces and soft leather aprons.</li> <li>• Everyone one in the whole community can joining, no need for invitations!</li> <li>• No vows are exchanged as common in western styl weddings.</li> <li>• The marriage is only finalised when the bride is taken to be bathed and examined by her sisters the morning after the wedding.</li> </ul>

## **Zulu Beads and their Meanings**

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The meaning could be opposites, depending on the shade of the colour

Blue	It can mean to be faithful or a talkative disposition.	It can also be the symbol of hostility.
Green	It shows that a person is happy at home and symbolises grass or cattle.	It also represents love-sickness and jealousy.
Pink	It represents high birth or a promise/oath.	It also symbolizes a bit of poverty, ie the husband to be cannot afford <i>lobola</i> .
Red	This can mean strong emotion, passion and physical love.	It can also mean heartache, anger, impatience and blood.
Yellow	It is a sign of wealth and fertility.	Symbol of hate and enstrangement.
White	This has no negative meaning. It symbolises purity, good luck and spiritual love.	

## **Zulu Bead Bracelet Meanings**

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Claw Bracelet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consists of 29 leopard claws.</li> <li>• Worn by the king.</li> <li>• The leopard was believed to be both physically and emotionally strong which befitted the kings status.</li> </ul>
Isongo Loxolo ( Bracelet of peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consist of a ridge within the bracelet depicting a battle throwing spear.</li> <li>• Worn by the wives of the leaders in a battle.</li> <li>• After a battle, where the two sides had made peace, the blades from the two opposing spears (belonging to the leaders from each side) were cut off and hammered into the ridge of the bangle.</li> <li>• The bracelets were exchanged and kept by the leaders' wives.</li> <li>• This meant, that as long as the spearheads were kept by the women, the two tribes would live in peace.</li> </ul>

### **Zulu love letters**

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- These were exchanged amongst lovers or when a man made advances to a young woman.
- It was made from beads of many colours and the size of a postage stamp.
- The colours all had different meanings and here follow some responses:

White	She was telling him of her purity.
blue	If I were a dove I would fly to your home and pick up food at your door.
yellow	I shall never eat if we marry because you own no beast you can slaughter.
Green	I have become thin like the sweet cane in a damp field and green as the first shoots of a tree because of my love for you.
Red	My heart bleeds and is full of love.

### **Religion and Beliefs**

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- Religion has always been an important part of Zulu culture. It was a part of their happiness, sorrow, warfare and in ceremonies. The ancestors have always been an important part of their journey.
- According to Zulu people and their beliefs, a human has:
  1. *umzimba* (a body)
  2. *idlozi* (a spirit/soul)
  3. *inhliziyo* (a heart, which represents ones feelings)
  4. *inqondo* (abrain, mind and/or understanding)
  5. *isithunzi* (shadow, personality, aura and/or dignity). It is believed that the latter becomes the spirit/ancestor after ones death.

<i>Ukubuyisa</i>	A ceremony performed for the deceased so their spirit can “come back home”.
Sacrifices	To maintain contact with the ancestors, one needs to make many sacrifices. Usually, cattle or goats are used in sacrifices, accompanied by certain rituals. Should the specific procedures and protocol not be followed, the sacrifice could be a waste and have the opposite result from what was hoped for.

<i>Ukubonga</i> (thanksgiving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sacrifice performed after a good thing/event has taken place like a boy reaching puberty or life in the <i>umuzi</i> has been good in terms of abundance of food and no deaths.</li> </ul>
<i>Ukuthetha</i> (scolding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A a sacrifice that take place when something bad happens unexpectedly, like someone dies suddenly and things seem to go wrong, making the individual feel like he/she are being punished.</li> </ul>
Christianity and ancestral beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a lot of traditional healers started individual churches that would combine both Christianity and allow them to keep in touch with their ancestors.</li> <li>• One of these churches is called <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> and is very popular with the rural Zulu people.</li> <li>• The church was founded in 1911, by Isaiah Shembe.</li> <li>• It is also known as the <i>Shembe Church</i> and the main church is in Inanda.</li> <li>• They wear distinctive garments, which are beaded and worship through singing and dancing.</li> </ul>

### Medicine and magic

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- The use of magic and medicine have been common with the Zulu people for hundreds of years. The Zulu society has a distinctive difference between the traditional healers. Nowadays traditional healers have consulting rooms as well as shops to sell their medication just like General Practitioners.

<i>Inyanga yokwelapha</i> (herbalist)	Administers medication made from plants and animals.
<i>Inyanga yokubhula</i> (diviner)	Divines or “smells out” a problem with the use of throwing bones, shells, seeds and other artefacts which are kept in a special container or bag and throws them on a mat as if he/she were throwing dice. When they land, he/she is then able to divine the person’s problems by looking at the way they land.
<i>Isanusi</i>	A diviner capable of smelling out evil spirits, people and sorcerers.
<i>Isangoma</i>	Makes contact with the ancestral spirits and prescribes the medicine according to what the ancestors tell or dictate to him/her. This medicine is then obtained from <b>inyanga yokubhula</b> .

## Introduction to Isangoma (Sangomas)

- Approximately 80% of South Africans consult a sangoma at least 3 times a year.
- Many *sangomas* undergo training after they have completed their “initiation illness” known as *ukuthwasa*.
- *Sangomas* offered protective *muti* (medicine) to freedom fighters during the apartheid era.
- The *sangoma*’s main function is to heal and protect people in the community.
- The *muti* (medicine) comes in many colours, but three othem forms the cornerstone:

Myama (Black)	Black muti represents darkness, night and danger as well as difficulties.
Bovu (Red)	Red muti is used to change, meaning it brings about transformation.
Mhlophe (White)	White muti represents health, purity and success.

- The method of healing begins with detoxification, using black medicine and then using the red medicine for transformation and white to strengthen the client.
- *Amathwasa* (Initiates) wear red to symbolise the transformation they are going through.

Sangoma dress code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In South Africa there is no specific dress code that sangomas have.</li> <li>• The only thing that sangomas have in common is the wearing of a goats gall bladder. It is tied into the hair at the back of the head.</li> </ul>
Sangoma and ancestors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main and most important thing to a sangoma is his/her relationship with the ancestors.</li> <li>• This relationship is achieved through a trance state. If the relationship is not built, the sangomas identity would be compromised.</li> <li>• The sangoma is the link between the physical world and the afterworld of the ancestors.</li> <li>• Death is understood as one going home. Two types of ancestors exit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The ones that are nameless and are watching their clans.</li> <li>○ The ones who communicate with their descendants through dreams and illness like ones grandparents, parents etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Trance States of the Sangoma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sangoma enters trance states as part of a healing process for both the client, and themselves.</li> <li>• Trances occur under different circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>During a dance</b>, the ancestors speak through them and tell of future possibilities, reveal hidden agendas, interpret strange dreams and also find lost items.</li> <li>○ <b>The dreams of a sangoma</b> may show them a specific plant</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>and/or herb that they should use for a patient, even before the patient comes to them with their problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>During deviation</b>, the sangoma is in a gentle trance and the ancestors speak to them in a small voice.</li> </ul>
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## Music

- Dance and music/songs have always been an important part of the Zulu culture, not only for the individual but for the community as well. It maintained a group solidarity especially in times of sadness and stress.
- Musical instruments were not used in most Zulu dances. The only instrument used was *iNgungu* or pot drum, this was made using goat skin that was pulled/stretched over the mouth of *imbiza* (earthen pot) and was played by tapping with the hand.
- It was only later that *isigubu* (wooden drum) was introduced to the Zulu, possibly by the **Tsonga people**.
- A number of stringed instruments were used like *uGubu* which was a stringed bow with a calabash attached to one end and was the most popular one.
- Dancing played a big part in Zulu ceremonies. When girls or boys reached puberty, they sang certain songs and performed certain dances for that particular stage of their lives. The same happened when they reached the stage of marriage.
- When hunting was still common, a ritual dance was performed before the hunt. The men would gather in the cattle byre and dance sing and dance, declaring their strength and how powerful they were. This ignited an enthusiasm for the hunt and giving them confidence.
- The most spectacular of the Zulu dances was the one performed by the king and his warriors in their full dress before a battle and the one that was performed at the king's palace after the Feast of The First Fruits.
- The dance was powerful and energetic, well timed and their posture was always good and well rehearsed.

## **Different Zulu Dances**

Ingoma (song)- Isizingili	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This dance is performed by both girls and boys.</li> <li>• No drums are used. A chant accompanies them.</li> <li>• Girls wear woolen skirts and are topless.</li> <li>• They wear rattles made of seedpod around their ankles.</li> <li>• This dance is performed during transition ceremonies like coming of age and at weddings.</li> <li>• In the past, it was also danced before a hunt or a battle.</li> <li>• It teaches the youth to share experiences and building solidarity through communal dance.</li> </ul>
Ingoma-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performed by girls and boys separately.</li> </ul>

Isishameni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the girls dance, the boys clap and vice-versa.</li> </ul>
Indlamu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This dance is performed with the use of drums.</li> <li>• The full traditional attire is adorned.</li> <li>• It is derived from the war dances of the warriors.</li> <li>• It is performed by men of all ages.</li> <li>• The men wear amabeshu (skirts made of skin), head rings, ceremonial belts, ankle rattles, shields and weapons such as knobkerries and spears.</li> <li>• Indlamu is more calculated than the other Zulu dances, it shows off muscular strength and the control of the weapons by doing mock stabs at an invisible enemy.</li> <li>• Both ingoma and indlamu are performed at weddings. The women perform the former and the men perform the latter.</li> </ul>
Imvunulo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This dance is performed by one participant.</li> <li>• It parades and shows off the traditional attire.</li> <li>• Young dancers do not cover their thighs.</li> <li>• Men wear amabeshu and women wear leather skirts and beaded aprons. ( The skirts worn by women represent a womans' readiness to conceive or is pregnant.)</li> <li>• Girls wear isigege( beadwork girdles) which should never have red beads as they are reserved for married women.</li> </ul>
Isicathamiya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performed by men or boys standing in a straight line or forming an arch.</li> <li>• The music has some ballads and the lyrics are of modern issues but the melodies are old.</li> <li>• Some of the issues sung about include HIV/AIDS, crime and migrant labour.</li> <li>• Lead singer gives the counterpoint or rhythm.</li> <li>• The form of music depicts the life in rural Zululand and the townships.</li> <li>• This dance is known internationally.</li> <li>• An example of a group that performs this dance is The Ladysmith Black Mambaso.</li> </ul>

### **Shaka Zulu Day Celebrations**

- The celebrations annually take place on the anniversary of King Shaka's death.
- He died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1828.
- This day is one that is colourful and full of vibrant song and dance by “warriors” or men and are led by Prince Gideon Zulu.
- Speeches are conducted by the King Goodwill Zwelithini.



### **Resources and further reading**

Magubane, P. *Vanishing Cultures of South Africa*. Struik Publishers. 1998.

<http://www.bridesdiary.co.za>

<http://www.zulu-culture-history.com>

### **Visits and photos**

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Exploration-research Field Trips. Makiti Guides & Tours (Pty) Ltd. 2004; 2007.

Compiled by Sivuyise Zingqi (2008).

