

A GREAT LEADER'S SPIRIT NEVER SLEEPS

A Memorial Tribute to the late Ndzundza Ndebele King Mayitjha III

By Dr. Adrienne Walker Hoard

The legacy of leadership for any ruler is the forward progress of the subjects being lead. Since 1992, the Ndzundza Ndebele nation has moved steadily forward from the standpoint of a cultural homeland under apartheid, into the 21st century independent global arena guided by their indigenous sovereign, King Mayitjha III. A ruler, who lived in service to his nation, King Mayitjha III can best be described by the roles he lived, as father to twenty, husband to five, counsellor to hundreds, a friend to me for the past nine years and as revolutionary, visionary leader to his nation of thousands.

His life of challenge and overcoming, began in June 1947, in Emtha-mbothini in the province of Mpumalanga, then called the Eastern Transvaal. He was the first born son of King Mabhoko II (Mabusabesala) of the Ndzundza Ndebele nation, thus giving him the family position for future leadership. He was a graduate of Boaparankwe Royal College at Arabi. He had a keen mind for business and pursued his interests in construction, farming, and retail. The King was naturally charismatic, and easily motivated those in his surroundings to participate in his ideas to develop a business environment in the KwaNdebele Homeland.

In 1969, he began his political career as a member of the Ndzundza Tribal Authority, the governing structure of the Ndebele nation. He was passionate about the value of education for all Ndebele children, and in 1979 became the first Minister of Education in the KwaNdebele Homeland. He served in that position until 1984, when he was posted to become Minister of the Department of Health. As a member of parliament, he worked with



The IN Kosi Ka Fene, a grandfather of the royal family, presents the former prince, now King Mabhoko III to the Ndebele nation during the memorial ceremony for his late father.

comrades, including his younger brother, Prince James, to transform the apartheid governance of their homeland. His vision of Homeland Governance was progressive, and his became the Minister of Public Works from 1990 until 1992. While pursuing his business and political career, as a Prince, he never neglected his traditional training by his father and other tribal elders. His experiences in the outer world, coupled with his indigenous knowledge and instruction, groomed him well for his ultimate position of authority. He was a man who could easily be comfortable and effective in the

provinces as well as in the parliament. The Ndebele have a proverb, which translates to say, "when the sun sets, the sun also rises again." Its meaning describes the Ndebele cultural tradition regarding the transition of leadership, when a monarch deceases. Immediately following the death of his Father, King Mabhoko II, in 1992, King Mayitjha was crowned the new King.

In keeping with that tradition, immediately following the untimely death of the beloved King Mayitjha III, on 30 June 2005, his first born son from the first wife, Queen Siphila Dlamini, of the Swaziland monarchy, Prince Mbusi, was crowned King Mabhoko III by the royal family. During the Memorial Service for his Father on 16 July, the new King was introduced to his Ndzundza Ndebele nation. His official transition to the throne will take place, once President Thabo Mbeki comes to Mpumalanga to install him.

The new King became a man in the Ndebele traditional initiation ceremonies in 2001. Since that time, he has worked closely with his Father viewing first hand, how a master custodian of traditional ways and customs, handles the pressing business of leading a nation into economic and cultural empowerment in the new South Africa.

The body of King Mayitjha III may be at rest, but his spirit is not sleeping; it is charged to align with his son, young King Mabhoko III, to guide and strengthen him in the next decades of his leadership of the Ndzundza Ndebele nation. The legacy of protection and preservation of the Ndebele culture by the artistic women and the pivotal men should be maintained under this new leadership. We are grateful for the life of King Mayitjha III. Hamba Kahle Ingwenyama! [Farewell our King].