

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERED

CELEBRATION OF THE REED DANCE

SHORT ADDRESS TO INTRODUCE HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE ZULUS BEFORE  
DELIVERING HIS MESSAGE TO THE MAIDENS OF THE ZULU NATION AND GUESTS

BY MANGOSUTHU G BUTHELEZI - CHIEF MINISTER

OSUTHU ROYAL RESIDENCE

NONGOMA

7TH SEPTEMBER 1991

My colleagues the Masters of ceremonies, Your Majesty our King and members Your Royal Family, other members of the Zulu Royal House present, members of the Swazi Royal family and the dignitaries who have accompanied them to KwaZulu; Amakhosi present. Their Excellencies the Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, the Honourable members of the Consular Corps, my honourable colleagues in the KwaZulu Cabinet and the Honourable Deputy Ministers; Dr and Mrs Sal Marzullo who are our guests from the United States, other visitors from abroad; Senior officials of the KwaZulu Government; other distinguished guests; our guests of honour and the Flowers of our nation - our maidens! Daughters of KwaZulu, Daughters of Swaziland Daughters of Africa.

Mine is a very minor role today. I stand up first to say welcome to all the guests present on behalf of His Majesty the King and the KwaZulu Government. We are very delighted that many of you have travelled from so far to be with us on probably the most colourful event of all our yearly cultural events. I do not mean that our other cultural events are not colourful. They certainly are as we will see this month at the various commemorative ceremonies we will be holding in various parts of our region, to honour the memory of our Founder - King SHAKA ka SENZANGAKHONA. There is however something very unique about the get together of the young maidens of our Nation.

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Our young maidens embody in their beings the motherhood of the Nation. They are the embodiment of the hopes of our Nation. They represent the regeneration of our Nation. They should as a rule represent the pride of our Nation.

Each time we gather in this way I cannot help feeling a welling up of gratitude within my breast, which I am certain every Zulu that is present feels that our King has been so foresighted in reviving this particular cultural event. For me this becomes a ceremony which reminds me of my late mother Princess Constance Magogo Sibilile Mantithi Ngangezinye ka Dinuzulu - the full sister to the King's grandfather King Solomon ka Dinuzulu the King of KwaDlamahlahla Senior Prince Mshiyeni ka Dinuzulu the Prince of KwaSokesimbone. These are the hills and valleys where she spent her childhood as well as her maidenhood. She was the last Royal Princess to have the title of 'INKOSI YEZINTOMBI' because she gathered young maidens together and divided them into regiments. As I grew up here often some old girl would say to me that she wanted me to know that she was a member of the Secretary-Bird Regiment, one of the Regiments of maidens that my mother gathered and named.

Gathering of maidens of the Nation had many advantages. It strengthened the unity of the people in that not only males were gathered and formed into Regiments, but also the maidens of the Nation. It was a way of guaranteeing the solidarity of the Nation at one level. The maidens also carried out some of the chores in the service of their King. These were various duties such as hoeing, harvesting, collecting grass for roofing purposes, collection of reeds and other duties, such as preparing the floors of the Royal Residences, 'IZINDLU'. So these were more onerous duties than gathering Reeds in a couple of days. But that was in a different era from that in which we are living today. So when I say that the maidens of those days worked harder than just collecting reeds, that is not a judgemental statement.

It is just by way of mentioning the facts of the matter. Life was still very different from life as we live it today. Today many of you are pupils and students at our institutions of learning. Some of you here are professionals and some of you are just ordinary workers.

We have come here to demonstrate our loyalty to our Monarch and to express our loyalty to him. Parents of our Nation have allowed their children to come here to represent them and to demonstrate not only their children's loyalty but their own loyalty to their King as well. We are a poor Nation, a deprived people. We know that in the dire economic straits in which the country finds itself today, many parents and children have sacrificed the pennies they cannot afford in order to be here. I wish to thank the parents and their children for saving those pennies in order to be able to be here with us all, to pay Homage to our King.

We do not even think that there is anything sinister for those youngmen whose presence here today is prompted by much more than an eagerness to join us in paying tribute to His Majesty. Our King is a young King who is at the prime of life and , he will understand this and not think that he is of secondary importance to some of these youngmen. The youngmen know that for the Nation to regenerate they have certain duties to ensure that this happens. We as adults would not have married our wives if we did not first admire them as young maidens.

We as the Zulu Nation wish to thank His Majesty King MSWATI of Swaziland for sending these live flowers from the Kingdom of Swaziland to adorn the Kingdom of KWAZULU at least for today and tomorrow. But who knows what may happen there may be some of the Swazi Princesses and maidens who may end up here just as some Zulu Princesses and maidens may end up in Swaziland.

Gathering young maidens in this way was also a way of building up the Characters of young people. When people are together there is more opportunity for competitiveness even when it comes to good behaviour and the building up of character. No one wants to be disgraced in front of her peers. It was a matter of pride in our society to marry as a young virgin. It was a matter of shame to be seduced before marriage. I know that it was in a different milieu. But it was wonderful nevertheless.

We are proud that our King has re-instituted this gathering as a permanent cultural event of our Nation. It is now my privilege to present to the young maidens and to all present, our reigning monarch - who will now rise to deliver his message for the day.

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