

**TOPIC :DEVELOPMENT OF ZIMBABWEAN SOCIETIES.**

**SUBTOPIC : NGUNI MIGRATIONS - THE NDEBELE STATE.**

### **OBJECTIVES**

**BY THE END OF THE SUBTOPIC LEARNERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO;**

- ✓ Identify settlements established by the Khumalo on their way to Zimbabwe.
- ✓ Identify groups of people who fought against the Khumalo on their way to Zimbabwe.
- ✓ Describe the economic, political and social organisation of the Ndebele state.
- ✓ Evaluate the impacts of the Ndebele rule on its subjects.

### **Background of the State**



The Ndebele village

- The Ndebele State originated from the Mfecane of Southern Africa.

- Initially the “Khumalo” clan was a small ethnic group led by king Zwide of the Ndwandwe chieftaincy.
- After being accused of plotting Zwide’s downfall Mzilikazi’s father Matshobana was killed and his son Mzilikazi reigned in his place.
- The Khumalo army pledged allegiance to the Ndwandwe chieftaincy, however in a battle in 1918 against Tshaka of the Zulu, the Khumalo led by Mzilikazi rebelled and joined forces with the Zulu.
- Mzilikazi did this to avenge the death of his father Mzilikazi.
- Upon joining forces with Tshaka, Mzilikazi was favoured and made one of Tshaka’s generals.
- He was also allowed to continue ruling his people and his Khumalo army.



Portrait of Mzilikazi and the Khumalo army

- Being a general of king Tshaka, Mzilikazi was allowed to raid and hand over all spoilt booty to the king, who would then reward him for his resilience and loyalty.
- Dissatisfied by his reward this prompted Mzilikazi to rebel against Tshaka breaking away with his troops and subjects after another successful raid he had been sent on the Sotho in 1821.
- Tshaka sent messengers to remind him of his obligations, but Mzilikazi ill-treated the messengers instead and sent them back. Tshaka then sent an army to punish Mzilikazi, but Mzilikazi beat off the expedition.
- A second army was sent which defeated Mzilikazi and sent him fleeing with only three hundred soldiers, women and children.

### Mzilikazi breaks away in 1821



Route used by the Matebele people from 1823-1840

## Journey to Bulawayo (Ekuphumuleni 1822/23)

- On leaving Zululand, the Khumalo people migrated to the north, attacking the Sotho first.
- They moved northwards, attacked and raided Sotho cattle, women, children and strong men to expand their State. (It was after this raid that they were given the name **"Matebele" due to the long shields.**
- In about 1822/23 they reached the upper Olyphant River and settled in Nzundza area at a place they called Ekuphumuleni (a place of rest).
- Though this area was good for raiding, the Ndebele could not settle as it was close to Tshaka's territory.
- The Pedi people nearby were also a threat to the Khumalo; furthermore the area was not good for the cattle especially after the 1823-24 droughts.



Ndebele warrior with his war regalia

## **Emhlahlandlela 1826**

- Between 1826 and 1830 the Ndebele settled in Northern Transvaal at a place called Emhlahlandlela.
- They continued with raiding, purging areas such as Botswana and Lesotho to enlarge their State.
- This area was suitable for cattle rearing and raiding.
- It is here that Mzilikazi met and befriended Robert Moffat at Kuruman Mission.
- It was still too near to Zululand and Dingane, who had succeeded Tshaka in 1828 still wanted revenge on Mzilikazi.
- The Rolong and Griqua Warriors ultimately forced the Ndebele to move.

## **Mosega 1832**

- The Ndebele then settled into the headwaters of Morico in Hurutsheland in about 1832.
- Mosega was close to Kuruman and had good grazing land.
- However, the Ndebele were attacked by Tswana-Griqua and Kora-Griqua forces in 1834.
- In 1836 Potgieter's Boer attacked them and they decided to move on.
- The Ndebele separated into two groups from Mosega.

## **Crossing the Limpopo**

- The first group was led by Induna, Gundwane Ndiweni that contained the Ndebele cattle, women and children. .
- It also had most of Mzilikazi sons including Nkulumane and Lobengula.
- The group took a direct route crossing the Motloutse and Shashe Rivers.

- They went to the Mzingwane valley which they followed until they came to a place near Matopo Hills in Western Zimbabwe.
- The second group under Mzilikazi assisted by senior Indunas including Maqhekani Sithole took a westward direction.
- They went to the Ngwato territory towards Lake Ngami on the edge of the Kalahari Desert.
- They then moved towards Zambia to raid the Kololo in Balochi.
- It was here that Mzilikazi heard of the installation of Nkulumane as King of the other group.
- Mzilikazi rushed to Matopo and had Ndiweni and other Indunas killed at Ntabayezinduna. The fate of Nkulumane is not known. Some say he was sent back to Zululand and others say that he was secretly killed.

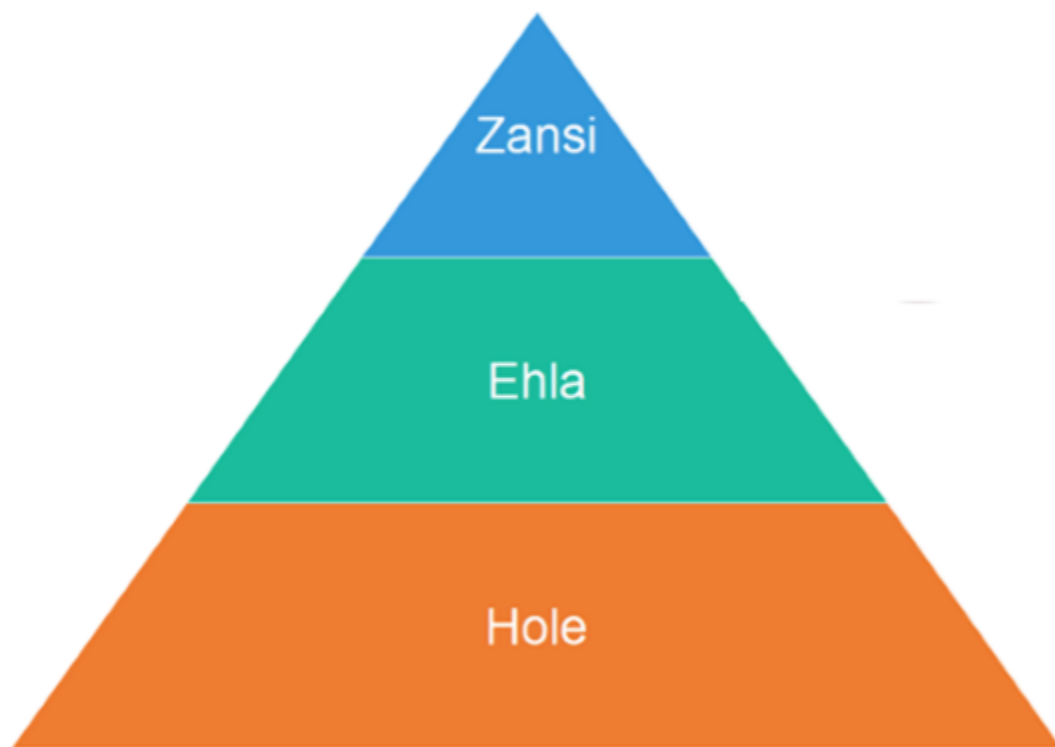
### Ndebele sphere of influence

- The Ndebele established their Headquarters in Western Zimbabwe at Bulawayo. From here they influenced the surrounding areas directly or indirectly. The sphere of influence could be divided into **four zones**:
- **ZONE 1**-The area within 80 km of Bulawayo was under the direct administration of the Ndebele settlement inhabited by the people who had come with Mzilikazi and the Rozvi people who had been assimilated into the Ndebele State.
- **ZONE 2**-The second area, was the areas around Bulawayo not under direct Ndebele administration but whom the Ndebele had defeated. These are Shona and Kalanga elements paid tribute to the Ndebele kings.

- **ZONE3**-The third area included those parts of Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa, which had not been defeated but were subject to occasional Ndebele raids.
- **ZONE4**-Lastly, was the North-eastern part of Zimbabwe never experienced any Ndebele raids. They only heard stories of the Ndebele but never came in contact with them. The area was too far from the Ndebele capital so the army could not wonder that far without exhausting and weakening itself.

## Organisational structure of the state

### A. Social organisation



Social structure of the Ndebele State

- At Bulawayo, the Ndebele State became divided into three groups.
- The nation was based on a caste system, which kept each group separate from the other.

- Intermarriage was not allowed to ensure purity especially of the highest clans.
- Each group had specific socio-economic roles commensurate with its social level and political power.

<b>THE THREE CLASSES</b>	
<b>I. Abezansi:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were at the top.</li> <li>• Made up only 15% of the state.</li> <li>• They originated from Zululand.</li> <li>• They were the pure Khumalo people.</li> <li>• They made up the ruling class and elite.</li> <li>• Occupied key positions like army generals.</li> <li>• Did not practice intermarriage.</li> </ul>
<b>II. Abenhla:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made up 25% of the state.</li> <li>• These were those incorporated during the migration of the Khumalo such as the Pedi, Tlokwa, and Rolong among others.</li> <li>• They held secondary positions such as advisors and assistant generals.</li> <li>• They were higher than the "Hole" caste.</li> </ul>
<b>III. AmaHole:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were the largest and consists 60% of the state.</li> <li>• They were made up of those that were found on the Zimbabwean territory. (Karanga, Kalanga, Tonga, Moyondizvo)</li> <li>• Members from this class were the lowest in the state.</li> <li>• They had distinct Shona totems such as</li> </ul>



(Shoko, Zhou, Moyo, Mhofu)

- They occupied positions such as servants and war troops but their position could rise on merit of performance.

- **It should be noted:** Even though these groups were distinct and separate, together they made what became known as the Ndebele State.
- The State could have been incomplete without any one of these classes.
- They complemented each other and made a conglomerate State bringing together customs, religions, languages, economies and politics from their respective backgrounds.

## **B. Economic organisation**

- The economy of the Ndebele was a mixed economic system based on pastoralism, raiding, tribute payment, cultivation and trade.
- They also had subsidiary economic activities, which included pottery, basketry, blacksmithing, and mat making, fishing, hunting and gathering.

### **a) Pastoralism**

- The Ndebele kept a number of domestic animals such as cattle, goats, pigs, sheep and donkeys.
- These animals were kept for their meat, milk, skins and draught power. Of these animals, cattle were the most important.
- The State rested on cattle production.
- Raiding and tribute payment were done mainly as means of acquiring more cattle.

- Cattle were so important that they were only slaughtered during important occasions such as the *inxwala* ceremony, death or wedding ceremonies and to appease ancestral spirits.

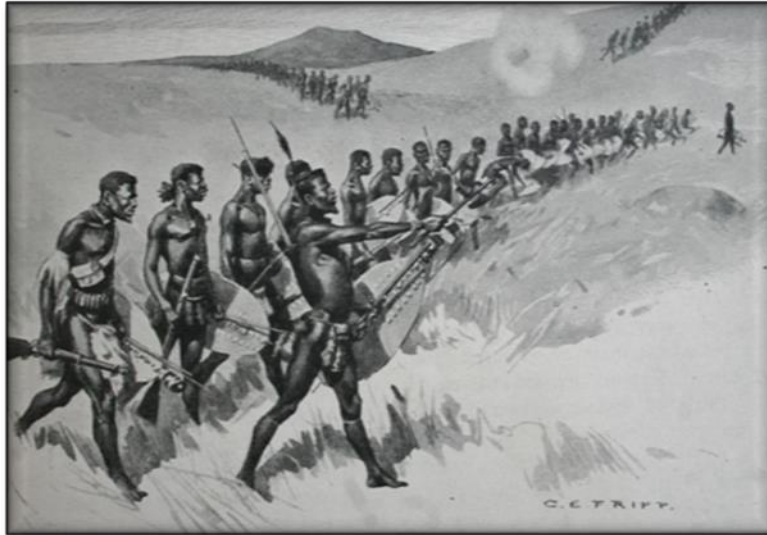


### Pastoralism

- Cattle were regarded as a permanent food source providing milk and meat, which were the major components of the Ndebele diet.
- Meat was consumed fresh or dried while milk was consumed fresh or sour.
- Cattle were also a source of hides for making clothing and shields.
- They provided **draught power** for transportation (this was however a work for donkeys) pulling carts, sledges and even ridden upon.
- They were also important for payment of fines, tribute and lobola.
- They were lent to the poor (*ukulagisa/koroonzera*) to enable them to use for draught power, obtain milk or trade for goats and then raise their herd of cattle.
- Cattle were therefore central to the Ndebele economy and thus were regarded as a symbol of wealth. A man was measured by the size of his herd.

- Those who occupied high social and political positions were feared in the society because they had very large herds of cattle.

#### b) Raiding



Warriors on their way to raid

- Another important aspect of the Ndebele was raiding
- Raiding was more of a military activity, raiding was of great importance to the Ndebele State.
- It was a means to obtain more wealth for the State in the form of cattle, grain and captives to expand and strengthen the Ndebele State.
- The Ndebele State right from South Africa was built on raiding.
- The majority of the population and wealth of the State had been acquired through raiding.
- Raiding was the main reason for the creation of a standing army, which provided employment for most of the young and able-bodied men.
- In Zimbabwe they raided Shona communities not only for cattle and captives but also for grain since cultivation was not very important in their society.

#### c) Tribute Payment

- This was also one of great economic significance in Ndebele Society.
- It was a way by which the subjects and citizens of the Ndebele society thanked their king for the protection and safety provided by his army.
- It was used to show their loyalty to his authority.
- Tribute was required from all Ndebele subjects whether under direct or indirect control.
- To avoid being raided vassal States and tribes had to pay tribute to the Ndebele King.
- It was paid in the form of cattle, grain and women.
- Like raiding it was a means to obtain cattle, grain and slaves which will strengthen the States' economy.

#### d) Crop cultivation



Crop cultivation

- Crop production though not pivotal to the economy was also an important aspect of the economy.

- It was not pivotal mainly because that State had grown in transit so there was not much time to develop a sedentary economy.
- They grew crops as millet, sorghum, rapoko, melons, beans and pumpkins.
- Crop production was important as a source of food to supplement pastoralism.
- Millet and Sorghum were mainly for making *isitshwala* (sadza) to be consumed with meat, milk or vegetables.
- They were also important for the brewing of beer *utshwala/doro*, (which was an important intoxicating drink in the society.)



Traditional beer

- The crops were also important for the payment of tribute and for trade.
- It was mainly done by old people, women and children since the men were in military service.



#### e) Trade

- Trade was one of the economic activities of the Ndebele State.
- However, it was not done on a large scale.
- The Ndebele traded on a small scale with the Shona and the Whites of South Africa, with the Shona they traded for iron tools, grain and at times women.
- They traded mainly for guns with the whites.
- The Ndebele also had a basic internal trade system.

#### Other economic activities

- The Ndebele also had a number of subsidiary economic activities.
- They practiced pottery using mud as well as basketry and mat making using reeds and grass woven with wood fibre.
- Some went fishing using nets, mats and fishing spears.
- Hunting and gathering were also very important in this society. They hunted for small and large game using spears and dogs.
- This was mainly a man's job. Women were mainly responsible for gathering wild fruits, insects, roots and tubers.

#### **C. Ndebele's spiritual customs and beliefs**

- The Ndebele religion was mainly a by-product of their migration.
- It was made up of all the tribes. Firstly they believed in a creator God (*uNkulunkulu*) and this was strengthened by the Sotho/Tswana belief in a creator God (*uMlimu*).
- They were also ancestral worshippers, a concept they had brought from Zululand and reinforced by the Shona worship of *Mudzimu* - *Madhlozi* in Ndebele.
- These could be contacted through spirit mediums.
- They also adopted the Venda rainmaking religion, the *Njelele* cult with headquarters at *Matopo*.

- This was similar to the Ndebele first fruit ceremony *inxwala* when they thanked the ancestors and God for rain and farm products.
- In all these religious activities, the king was the Chief Priest since he was regarded as “god” himself.
- His royalty had been divinely inspired therefore he was bound to be closer to them spiritually.
- When the whites came they introduced Christianity to the Ndebele.
- However, the Ndebele did not turn to Christianity openly until the death of Lobengula, and the 1896 defeat by the whites.

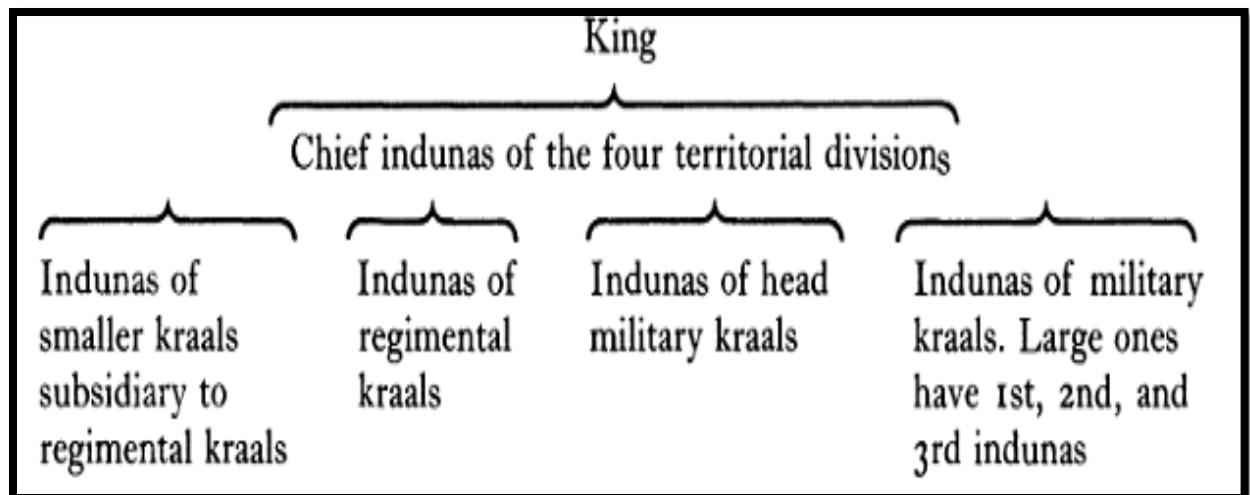
#### D. Political organisation

- The Ndebele State had a centralised political system.
- All power rested on the king who ruled the State through network of Indunas (chiefs) and maintained peace and order through a powerful military
- The king was most top figure with absolute power.
- The king also raised the amabutho (soldiers), co-ordinated military strategy, distributed captives and cattle, allocated land, got rid of opponents, called on the ancestors for rain, organised and oversaw the annual *inxwala* (first fruits) ceremonies.
- He was the Commander in General of the forces, the Chief Judge and Chief Priest.
- He had power **over life and death** of his subjects. His decision was final.
- The King however ruled with the help of an advisory Council. The Council was divided into two Houses, the Umphakhathi and Izikhulu.
  - a) The **Umpakhathi** was the higher body consisting of selected and trusted indunas.

- It discussed more delicate issues affecting the State. It sat in judgement and discussed relations with foreigners.
- However, the King was powerful enough to dominate the Mphakhathi.

b) The second much lower House was the **iZikhulu**.

- This constituted all other chiefs and men of Great wisdom and thus was a much large House.
- It discussed general issues affecting the State.



Political hierarchy

- The State was divided into four main provinces led by *Induna eNkulu*.
- Each province was divided into smaller units each under an *induna* (*chief*).
- The chief's roles included rounding up suspected criminals on rebels using a police gang, limited distribution of captives and State cattle and taking part in the King's Advisory Council.



- The Ndebele State had a large standing army whose main tasks were raiding, collecting tribute and herding the King's cattle when not raiding.
- The soldiers were in age regiments stationed in regimental towns after the Zulu fashion.
- The youngest "Majaha" was stationed at Bulawayo.
- Each town was headed by an "induna" who was both a political and military leader. The towns took the name of the regiment for example, Imbizo, Mahlokohloko, Mhlahlandlela and many others
- Kingship in the state was **collateral and hereditary**.
- Dominion and leadership was to be kept within the Khumalo clan.
- At the death of the King, the eldest son with his eldest wife of royal lineage was supposed to take over.
- Sons of wives not royal lineage were not eligible for Kingship as they were regarded as being of commoner blood.

### The collapse of the Ndebele state



Decline of the state

- It is vital to note that the decline of the Ndebele state cannot be accounted for in a detailed manner.
- However historians largely agree that the downfall of the kingdom was due to the dawning of the imperialist's era.