

/26/ uMgungundlovu Part II

There were many unusual practices (imikhuba) that were performed at this umuzi. When the king wanted to talk to a person, an inceku was sent to call him. [\[Lunguza, vol 1, 320\]](#) The inceku would shout out his name loudly, calling, ‘So-and-So is summoned! So-and-So is summoned!’ (‘Nang’ ubani bo! Nang’ ubani bo!’) This would continually be shouted out until he answered. He had to answer by shouting loudly, ‘Mungane!’ (‘Friend!’) ‘Your call is heard, you who were growing while others lagged behind, you who hurried to climb the mountains, you climbed uMpehlela and uMaqhwakazi!’ (‘Kuzwakele, wen’ owakhula belibele, wen’ owaphangel’ izintaba, waphangel’ uMpehlela no Maqhwakazi!’)¹ He would break into a run, heading for the upper end of the umuzi to find out why he was being summoned.

If he was told to go into the isigidlo, he would make for the king’s ilawu, continuously calling out the king’s izibongo in a loud voice that could be heard far off. [\[Sivivi vol 5, 371\]](#) If there were two people, the senior one would call out the izibongo. At the gateway of the isigodlo stood an inceku, or perhaps two. They were guards who kept a close watch on who went in. It would be they who took charge of people summoned by the king, but they did not go into the hut where the king was to be found; they sat outside at the doorway.

A person so summoned might be given meat to eat. He would not eat it while sitting; he would lie down like a dog and the meat would be placed on a tray in front of him. [\[Lunguza vol 1, 320-1 for next few paras.\]](#) He would continually bite pieces off and chew them without ever touching them with his hands. Some of the meat might smell bad; some might have maggots in it; for in the isigodlo that is how it was eaten.

There were also baskets of beer. The izinceku would take one up for him and let him drink from it. A person of low rank /27/ would be served beer in this way by one of the umdlunkulu girls. Another kind of food eaten there was iwili.² This was made of clotted blood that had been cooked, ground up, and mixed with fat, like ububende, a soft and fatty dish that could be drunk. This was the main food of the umdlunkulu; it was eaten every day.

¹ UMpehlela and uMaqhwakazi are the names of hills situated between the uMhlathuze and uMlalazi rivers.

² Iwili.

A person who was given this would be given whey to drink that had been drained from gourds of amasi curds and strained – he would drink from an umcakulo pot.³

All this would be done with the king present in the hut. He would be sitting on a pile of rolled-up sleeping-mats. While his people were eating he would be laughing and talking with the umdlunkulu. There might be thirty girls sitting there in the hut.

When a person left the hut he would do so on hands and knees, facing the king all the time as he backed towards the doorway. He would stay in this position until he was outside. When he came out he was regarded with awe by others, for he had actually been inside the isigodlo. A person would not laugh when in the isigodlo; he would be asked what he had seen that was funny.

Another distinctive practice had to do with the shaving and dressing of the king's hair.

[[Lunguza vol 1, 318](#); [Sivivi vol 5, 370](#).] This was done in the isigodlo; it was also done in the assembly place (inkundla) outside the isigodlo. While the inceku was doing the shaving, the king would keep on talking to the induna.

The person doing the shaving bowed down; he shaved hurriedly. If he touched the king with the razor he would jump away (as if startled), and go off to a distance. He was fearful from having touched the Fierce One (isilwane). He would then slowly creep closer again, until he saw that the king was engaged in listening to the induna who was sitting with him. He would approach, and shave a little, and then jump away again. And so again, until he had finished. He held the razor in his right hand; in the other /28/ he held a basket into which he would collect up the hair which had been shaved off and had fallen to the ground.

When the shaving of the whole head was finished, outside and inside the headring, the basket of hair was taken off by another inceku. He would take it into the isigodlo and burn the hair there. Then he would go out with the ashes and throw them into the river, into running water.

Dressing the hair was done in the same way as the shaving. The expert (inyanga) who did the shaving was Manukosha kaPhangisa of the Njoko people. He died at the iMtshezi river, at eMthunzini, near kwaNobamba. (Note. Of the white people – Weenen.) It is said that Shaka too was shaved by Manukosha. His razor was made by amaLala in the Zulu country, those who knew how to work metal.

³ Umcakulo pot.

The king's meat dishes were cooked by a man; dishes like pumpkin and isijingi were cooked by a girl of the umndlunkulu.⁴ Amasi were brought by a male inceku. While the king was eating, the shank of a hoe would be beaten with another shank. This was done by the girl who did the cooking; it would be heard far off. This was done so that all the people could hear that the king was now eating. No one was allowed to spit, no one could cough, until the king was finished. A person who wanted to cough would hold their hands against their mouth and sink to the ground so that it would not be heard. [\[Sivivi vol 5, 369, 370\]](#)

If the king was still sitting in the assembly, he would be called by the quick beating of the shank – Nke! Nke! Nke! Nke! Nke! It would be beaten until he had finished and rinsed his mouth. There was no one else in the hut while he was eating but for the girl.

The king did not eat curds made from the milk of a cow that had been seized in war in foreign lands (ezizweni), nor did he eat its meat. [\[Sivivi vol 5, 367\]](#) He /29/ ate only cattle 'of the royal mouth' (ezomlomo). These were the cattle of the Zulu royal house, those of the people of Jama, Phunga and Mageba,⁵ those of the time of origins (zo kudabuka). They stood at the upper end of the enclosure, near the enclosure where the king washed. The water drunk by the king was fetched up the Mkhumbane stream, at the spring. Water for the umndlunkulu also came from there. The cattle of the royal mouth also grazed in that area. [\[Sivivi vol 5, 373\]](#)

When the king was about to leave the isigodlo and sit in the assembly in the central enclosure, one would hear an inceku calling out, 'Let the umphakathi come up!⁶ Let the umphakathi come up! Do you hear?' [\[Sivivi vol 5, 378-9\]](#) From all over would come the response, 'We hear!' The men would come rushing out of the huts. On both sides of the umuzi they would break into song. They came pouring out into the enclosure, and then headed towards the upper end.

Then the king would come forth into the place of assembly (the inkundla), where he would sit with the umphakathi. He would be accompanied by his izinceku, many of them: Masiphula kaMamba, Lubaha, Mtweni, Nkunga, Myabase, Mzilikana – these were mature men. Then there were Maphemvu kaVukuza, Vumandaba kaNtethi, Nhlekele kaMudli, Makedama, Khalakahla, Mathunjana kaSibaxa, Ngidi kaMcikaziswa, Thununu kaNonjiya – these were young men who had not put on the headring. Others were Matshekana, Mgudu, Tshabhu,

⁴ Isijingi

⁵ Jama et al.

⁶ Umphakathi.

Mnwana – junior izinceku. Also Khathangana and Ndleleni, who sat at the gate of the isigodlo, outside it.

The king would be sitting on a chair. (n) It had been carved by a man of the Zulu clan, and had markings burnt into it. It was made of umganu wood.⁷ The person who carved it was Cayana kaMaguya kaMpotsha, of the kwaGcabashe section of the kwaQwabe people. The king gave him five cattle for his work. He later carved another one, for which he was given nine cattle.

/30/ As they approached the king, they would all make salutation, calling out, ‘Bayede! You who grew mighty while others lagged behind! You who are as great as the mountains, uMpehlela and uMaqhwakazi!’ Then they sat down on the ground. This was done when the whole umuzi was summoned into the enclosure.

The assembly sat in front of the king. The big izinceku sat close to it, on either side. The other izinceku sat up front with the umphakathi, close to the king. The izinduna, Ndlela, Nzobo, Msongane, and others, sat close to the king, in front of him.

If the weather was hot, there would be an inceku, a son of Nzobo (the induna), carrying a shield with a long stick in it. He would hold it over the king, wherever he was sitting or standing, to make shade for him. [[Lunguza vol 1, 318; Sivivi vol 5, 369](#)] Also present would be Lubaha, who carried the king’s snuffbox (made of a small gourd). He carried it with him in a basket all the time. [[Sivivi vol 5, 369](#)]

Then the matters for which the man had been summoned would be discussed. Only the king and the great men would speak. After the king had spoken, the induna would say, ‘Do you hear the king?’ The izinceku who were sitting with the assembly would tell the men who were sitting further off. They would ask if they too had heard properly. The whole assembly would respond, ‘Yebo, Baba! Yebo, Silo!’

If the king laughed, he would exclaim, ‘Pu!’, and nod his head. His teeth would not show, for they were small and deep-set. All the umphakathi would laugh, even if they did not know what was being laughed at. [[Lunguza vol 1, 318; Sivivi vol 5, 369](#)] If the king sneezed, they would respond, ‘Grow mighty, Silo!’ (‘Thuthuka, Silo!’). If he spat out while coughing, an

⁷ Umganu.

inceku would go and rub it into the ground until it was invisible. All this was for the king's prestige; it was done so that he would appear mighty, and be held in awe. [\[Sivivi vol 5, 369\]](#)

/31/ On other days they would celebrate war (xoxw' impi). Well-known warriors would dance forth. The chiefs whose cattle had been eaten up would be named. They would also talk of Senzangkhona, Ndaba, Jama, Phunga, and Mageba. This was not done every day. Two weeks might go by without its being done, then they might talk about war for two days.

The umphakathi was summoned every day to give praise to the cattle when it was time for milking. [\[Ngidi, vol 5, 75-6; Lunguza vol 1, 323-4\]](#) They would graze until midday, then come back to be milked. The men would vigorously dance forth. If a beast lowed incessantly, youths would rush out and form an array. They would appear from all over, pour into the enclosure, and dance forth. They would dance into a state of furious excitement, shouting out, 'Bellow, beast of the Zulu, you who will never leave this place!' They shouted in rage, for they were recalling how men of their place had been killed when the cattle were seized far off in foreign lands. The lowing of the beast roused deep emotions in them.

When the king heard this, he would come to his side of the fence round the enclosure. Standing on a heap of mats, he would lean on the fence and watch what was going on.

When the cattle had come into the enclosure, the order would be given for the umphakathi to disperse. Then the izinceku who did the milking came forth from the isigodlo. They were carrying milk buckets. They carried them at arm's length above their heads. This was the practice there; it was done so that no dust would get in. (Note. A person was not allowed to scratch himself when carrying the buckets. He could not wear a penis-cover [or should this be ncweba – take snuff – rather than ncweda ??], for he was carrying the food of the king. He had to put on loin-coverings that were without lice or body-dirt; he would take off an old one and put on a new one.) The milk buckets were made of umganu wood; all were covered with imbenge baskets. When the leading inceku appeared, he would shout in a loud voice, 'The order is given!' ('Zi jubekile!') This meant that the king had given the order **/32/** that the milking should take place. The cows would not be milked until they had been praised and danced for.

The amabutho would then return to their huts and have their food. The cows would be milked. This would of course be done in their accustomed place, for the cattle stood in small herds all over the enclosure.

The milk would then be taken up to the isigodlo. The buckets would be uncovered by a small boy whose job it was, for the one who did the milking, an older youth, could not do so: it was prohibited. When he had poured the milk into the gourd, it would be stopped up by the same boy.

At other times the umphakathi would be summoned so that the king could apportion cattle to them; he would do so because they were hungry. He gave freely; they praised him with the name uMpa-nkom-i-na-bele, Giver of Cows with Udders. Some would be given ten, others five; another would get three; another, two; another, one. Then others would be slaughtered for the rest of the umphakathi. [\[Lunguza vol 1, p. 323\]](#)

The cattle were herded by izikhuza. There were many of them. They slept in huts near the gate on both sides of the umuzi. The izikhuza were youths; there were no boys among them. When herding they would carry spears and shields.

The two big gates of the umuzi were closed by imivalasangwana (gate-keepers). There were two of them for each gate. There was in fact a single gate but it had a large post in the middle which formed two gateways. The long poles used for closing up after the cattle had been out to graze rested on the post in the middle.

When slaughtering took place the izikhuza and the imivalasangwana were given the kidneys; it was their part. The kidneys would be taken out of the beasts and placed aside to form a heap.

/33/ The izinceku numbered fifty all told. Those who carried food into the isigodlo numbered thirty. There were many who milked, for there were 800 cows, including those that had recently calved. The izinceku were chosen and appointed by the izinduna. They slept outside the isigodlo, in the isicamelu section near the isigodlo. They were given amasi and meat. Some were presented with cattle.

People were always making their way to uMgungundlovu to go and khonza. After a person had spent some months there, he would be free to go home. When he departed, he would leave a relative behind to look after his hut. If he neglected to do this, even if he had closed up his hut, on his return he would find it full of ashes and filth left there by people of other huts. They would say, 'O! So-and-so is spending his time courting the girls and drinking beer at home.' When the owner returned, he could not immediately make use of his hut for it was full of filth. It would be cleaned up by his mat-bearer, who would sweep it out and plaster it

with cowdung, which would be allowed to dry before the owner could go in. [[Lunguza vol 1, 308](#)]

Even for a person who had khonza'd, uMgungundlovu was a place of death. [[Lunguza vol 1, 308](#)] All who khonza'd would remain in a state of fear and trembling, and would not breathe freely until they were on their way home. At uMgungundlovu, if you simply passed in front of other people's huts, or if you got lost among the huts, they might throw a bone at you or else beat you and drive you away like a dog. [[Lunguza vol 1, 311](#)] They would ask why you were lost, why you didn't look where you were going. One hut looked very much like another, and there were very many of them. Others would recognize their huts by thrusting a stick in at a certain place, so that they would not get lost. Firewood had to be fetched at a distance; when a person returned with it he would place it at the back of the hut. If he placed it at the doorway, /34/ he would find it gone when he came back for it; a thief would long since have taken it.

The king had many dogs; they had come back with Shaka's army when it went to make war in the amaMpondo country. They were called amaGovu. Those which stayed in the isigodlo, and slept there, and were never, ever beaten by anyone, were Makhwedlana, Jimu, and Makhwilana. There was also Nozokoza, a hairy dog, black and white, that had been castrated. It bit people. If anyone raised a stick to it, it would attack him. Others were Mbendeni, Matshekana, Mathubana, Gambuje, Bhozibhozi (a large red dog). There were others which went out with the izinceku when they went to herd cattle. There was also Nomantiyane (their mother) who lived in the lower part of the umuzi (esigabeni). It was said that Dingane sometimes called the amaGovu to come and kill a person for him.