

MMA Hlubi Oral History Project: summary index

Name of the location& date: Quthing

Name of the interviewer: Mr. Nkoka (Lesotho National Broadcasting Channel - LTV)

Name of Interviewee: Masechaba - Ntombi Zulu Kheza (Ndebele woman)

Name of Interlocutor 1: Nomlomzana Kheza (Ndebele woman)

Name of Interlocutor 2: Makopano Kompi (Ndebele woman)

Name of the interlocutor 3: Mr. Kompi (Lesotho National Broadcasting Channel - LTV)

Summary index prepared by: Mojalefa Koloko

Date of summary index: 8th June 2025

Introduction by Interviewer: There are many Ndebele people in Lesotho of which some of them do not even know that they are Hlubi people, they just know that they are Ndebele. We have uncovered that Ndebele people constitute a larger part of the Basotho nation yet their history has not been documented. Therefore, since next year Lesotho celebrates 200 years since the country was established, we decided that it was important for us to look into the history of Ndebele people because we have realized that their culture is different from that of other groups of the Sotho. From the point in which the child is born, to how they are raised up until they become adults, Ndebele people have different tradition to that of other groups of the Sotho. Thus, when I ask you questions, I kindly expect you to first introduce yourself in the following manner; I am so and so, I come from such and such a place, I identify myself as Ndebele and then end off by reciting your clan names. In this way, you would have helped us get a clear understanding of who we are talking to and how you fit into the Ndebele history.

Question by Interviewee: May I ask if each and everyone of us is expected to recite their individual clan names or one of us can do it on our behalf? Interviewer: No it does not need to be everyone of you but just one of you can recite it for all of you if you all agree. Shall we all get started?

Interviewee: Yes we may. I am Ntombi Zulu Kheza, I was born in Mlibazizo , I am Kheza.

Interviewer: May I kindly know your names the three of you.

Interviewee: Masechaba Kheza, Nomlomzana Kheza and Makopano Kompi.

Interviewer: Ladies, I would like to know if you know according to history, how is it that your people ended up here in Lesotho.

Interviewee:No sir, we don't know.

Interviewer: Okay thank you. Let me ask another question, I would like to know if you know since your childhood, the succession of your kings from the times of your fore fathers until now.

Interviewee:There are many families of the Kheza as we all come from different families and it would be very difficult for us to mention them all.

Interviewer: Okay. Let me ask another question. Are there certain cultural practices that are only done by Ndebele people that are different from those practised by the Sotho? In other words, is there any difference in terms of culture between the Sotho and the Ndebele as far as you know? Anyone of you can answer this question.

Interviewee: Yes the Sotho and the Ndebele do not necessarily have the same cultural practices. For example, the way in which the Sotho practice “Lebollo” (initiation) is different from the way in which Ndebele people practice initiation. The Sotho’s initiation is performed in the mountains, in the wilderness or in the outskirts, far away from the villages. While Ndebele’s initiation takes place in the house or indoors. During the initiation period, Ndebele people will stipulate a certain number of months one needs to spend indoors in order to complete their initiation process. During this time, such an individual will not go out for a specific period of time until their completion date arrives. Therefore, their initiation takes place indoors. It is also different from that of the Sotho in the sense that one goes through their initiation period as an individual and not as a group as it is the case with the Sotho who go to the mountains as a group and undertake similar cultural activities.

Interviewer: I would like to ask whether it is a norm for Ndebele boys to go through initiation or is it a practice only done by the girls?

Interviewee: No the boys also do undertake initiation as it is the case with girls.

Interviewer: I think it is important for me to state that this is according to your knowledge because, I came across other people who claimed that according to the original Ndebele tradition, boys do not undergo initiation and that the only reason why Ndebele boys also ended up going through initiation is because they got assimilated into the Sotho tradition and therefore, ended up adopting their practice of initiating boys.

Interviewee: No this is not true, as far as I know, Ndebele boys also undertake initiation as I have explained to you.

Interviewer: Hello Mrs Nomlomzana, please come forward and introduce yourself to us, tell us who you are, where you come from and recite your clan so that you can be known among the chiefs that you are also one of them. Also weigh in on the question of Mlibaziso and tell us how much you know about it.

Interlocutor 2: I have to be clear that I also struggle with discussing succession as others have said. It is a bit tricky. I know that the chieftaincy was taken to Mbogodwane.

Interviewer: I think there has been a misunderstanding. Are Ndebele people, the people from Lesotho?

Interviewee: No sir they are not.

Interviewer: So please tell us how is it that Ndebele people ended up in Lesotho. Would you be able to narrate how the chiefs succeeded each other up to the point at which they arrived in Lesotho?

Interviewee: No sir, we do not know.

Interviewer: Are there other cultural practices that specifically belong to the Ndebele people?

Interviewee: Yes sir there is what is called, “Mohobelo” or “Indlamo” which is a sporting activity undertaken by Ndebele men in which they sing and raise their feed high while singing.

Interviewer: Okay thank you. I understand that Indlamo is a sporting activity for the men, is there a specific sporting activity for the women as well?

Interviewee: Yes there is, it is called “Umbaxo”.

Interviewer: Would you kindly explain to us what “Umbaxo” is or what it means in Sesotho? Even if you explain it to us in Ndebele language it would be fine.

Interviewee: No we will not be able to explain it to you in Sesotho but the way in which it is conducted is such that, one girl will take the center stage while holding a stick and raising it high. The rest of other girls sing for her as she dances and twists her neck. Then the rest of other girls take turns in doing the same thing while other girls sing for them. That is how “Umbaxo” is played.

Interlocutor 1: There is also igatara – guitar although the Sotho also have a similar thing called “Mamokhorong”.

Interviewer: Let’s talk about clothing: How different is Ndebele attire from Sotho attire? For instance, in Sotho culture a girl child will wear “Thethana” from their childhood until they reach teenage years, then as they grow up they wear a dress made up of cattle skin. So tell us, what happens in the case of Ndebele people?

Interviewee: The girl child as well as the boy child wears any clothes that they can wear to cover their private parts and then as they grow up, the girl child wears “Iscacana” which is a small dress and then attach a few bones, while the boy child wears “ishoba”.

Interviewer: Is Iscacana similar to what the Zulu people wear?

Interviewee: Yes it is the same.

Interviewer: Lets talk about food. Is there specific food that belongs to the Ndebele people, whether it is in the way it is cooked or not?

Interviewee: Yes we have something called “istjabane” although I am not quite sure if it is popular among the Sotho.

Interviewer: What is “Istjabane” in Sesotho, is it not similar to what the Sotho call “Potele”?

Interviewee: Yes “Potele” is “Istjabane”, we call it “Istjabane” in Ndebele.

Interviewer: Are they the same?

Interviewee: Yes they are the same.

Interviewer: As Ndebele people how would you like your culture to be preserved? What is the message that you would like to pass to your children and grand children in the future regarding your culture as Ndebele people? Lets say this place ends up having electricity in the future and one of your grand children is watching the message that we have recorded of you playing on the National Television. What kind of picture would you like to paint for them regarding Ndebele history?

Interviewee: We would like our children and grandchildren to preserve our culture and not completely do away with it. We would like our grand children to remain invested in our tradition as by so doing, they will get to know who they are and where they come from. This is because as it stands, we have lost a lot of our cultural practices and have shifted towards the cultural practices of the Sotho.

Interviewer: Thank you. Mr. Kori do you have something you would like to add or a question you would like to ask?

Interlocutor 3: No sir, I think we have covered majority of the questions that we wanted to ask because one of the most important questions we had was that we wanted to know if there are certain cultural practices that specifically belong to the Ndebele people that used to be practiced before they joined the Sotho but that are no longer practiced currently. In this regard, I think they have answered this question appropriately....